



Exchange of good practices on gender equality

The role of men in
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The Role of Men in Gender Equality – Luxembourg

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Introduction

In 1995 the Ministère de la Promotion Féminine (promotion of women and girls) was created which was transformed into the Ministère de l'Égalité des chances (equal opportunities) in 2004. The focus though remained on encouraging women in the sense of gender mainstreaming. In 2011, the newly elected female minister Françoise Hetto-Gaasch showed fresh political determination and charged an independent expert team with an inventory of all gender specific offers for men and boys in Luxembourg. It appeared then that apart from one organisation offering antenatal courses with selective offerings for future fathers, there was not much. A counselling service for perpetrators of family violence existed whose clientele was composed by approx. 90 % of men.

In 2012 infoMann was then founded as an NGO financially supported by the state.

InfoMann was meant to create offers addressing men and boys, centralise them and make them clearly visible for the public as well as to promote information and raise awareness for specific men's and boy's themes.

We were a 3 men's team from May 2012 till September 2014 and since we are 3 men and a woman on two and a half job posts.

Info Mann is offering:

- Advisory and counselling for men in all kinds of difficult moments in their lives;
- Awareness raising for gender sensitive working with boys for professional educative teams;
- Conferences and interactive workshops on men's health issues;
- Workshops for boys on 'fair battling', violence prevention;
- Conferences and workshops on engaging men in children's day care structures;
- Men's groups for personal reflection, growth and empowerment.

For the future, we are quite free to develop more offers and to promote men's involvement in gender equality.

It is meritorious for a country to have a ministry exclusively in charge of equality issues. For the future and without releasing on women's empowerment, the focus should be put on specific men's issues and the government, represented by its Ministry of Equal Opportunities, should proactively integrate these issues into public

debates. It seems not to be enough to make declarations about intentions, and men's and boy's issues should be more systematically discussed in public.

The situation in Luxembourg

Equal opportunities for women and men are quite often referred to in various governmental strategies such as Equality and Work, Equality and Society, Equality and Youth. This all remains on a rather general level. Men are specifically addressed with respect to parental leave only.

The father and mother can each take a parental leave of six months (full-time) or twelve months (half-time) within the first five years after the birth of a child. It cannot be fractioned nor be given over to the other parent. Both parental leaves are referred to as the first and the second. The first parental leave starts automatically the day after the regular maternity leave and can be taken by any of the parents. The second parental leave can be taken by the other parent within the first five years of the child's life. Two half time leaves (the first and the second) can be taken by both parents at the same period of time (following the maternity leave of the mother) but full time leaves cannot. The lump sum payment for a full-time parental leave (6 months) is 1.778 euros, for a half-time leave of 12 months it is 889 euros, plus of course at least half (50%) of the usual income (the average income per month and per adult in 2012 was 3.077 euros).

The overall take-up rate for fathers is approx. 25 % compared to 75 % of mothers, which is comparable to other countries. More precisely, the very great majority of fathers chose the part-time modus for the second parental leave, and mothers mostly chose the full-time modus of the first leave (more details can be found here <http://www.mega.public.lu/fr/statistiques/conge-parental/index.html>).

Just a few days ago, the government announced its decision to introduce more flexible duration possibilities as well as the payment modalities of parental leave, in order to encourage more men to make use of it.

In addition to this and in the case where the first leave has not been consumed, the renouncing parent has the right to take a non-paid 4 months off during the first 5 years of the child's life. I don't know any take-up rates here. Of course, during all parental leave, employees are protected by the common labour legislation. Only, parents taking the full-time parental leave will have their career interrupted for the period of six month, regarding advancements for example.

We have no information about the rate of fathers who leave compared to those who could leave but don't for any reason. Mainly men with low incomes take the parental leave, as they don't lose too much of their income, as well as men working in the public sector, as they feel better protected by law than men in the private sector, who seem to be afraid of being pointed out in some way.

After all, we have to admit that there is very few public discussion, be it on part-time working, be it on health issues, be it on gender sensitive involving men in the care for children or elders or gender sensitive education, in Luxembourg. The intention was commendable to charge an NGO with spreading men's and boys' concerns, though the means that could generate a substantial change in gender roles and men's involving in gender equality issues are quite limited.

Policy debate

Five men not knowing each other in the beginning, after having been provided advice by infoMann, were finally brought together in a group session in order to share their experiences with heavy divorce procedures, especially with big difficulties regarding custody of children. They founded a new NGO and provoked a public debate about equal duties for fathers and mothers and children's rights.

As far as I know, there are presently no other debates on the involvement of men on all social levels.

Transferability

A combination of both Icelandic and Finnish approaches seems useful and transferable. Charging a 'men only' working group, like in Finland, whose mission would be to formulate proposals and communicate them to the government, so that « gender-specific interventions and practices on, **by** and around men have direct and indirect impacts on the climate of discussion on gender and feminism (...) » (cf Hertta Vuorenmaa).

To assess gender equality issues from the male point of view in the governmental gender equality programmes should be interesting for Luxembourg.