European Commission

Exchange of good practices on gender equality

The Role of Men in Gender Equality

Finland, 28-29 October 2014

Discussion Paper - Austria

ISTITUTO PER LA RICERCA SOCIALE irs

österreichische sozialbau CONSULTING

Justice

This publication is supported by the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity - PROGRESS (2007-2013).

This programme is implemented by the European Commission. It was established to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment, social affairs and equal opportunities area, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the Europe 2020 Strategy goals in these fields.

The seven-year Programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-28, EFTA-EEA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries.

For more information see: http://ec.europa.eu/progress

“Papa-Monat” – a very first step to support men’s involvement in childcare

Nadja Bergmann
L&R Social Research

1. Description of the Main Elements of the Good Practice: “Daddy’s Month” (“Papamonat”) in Austria

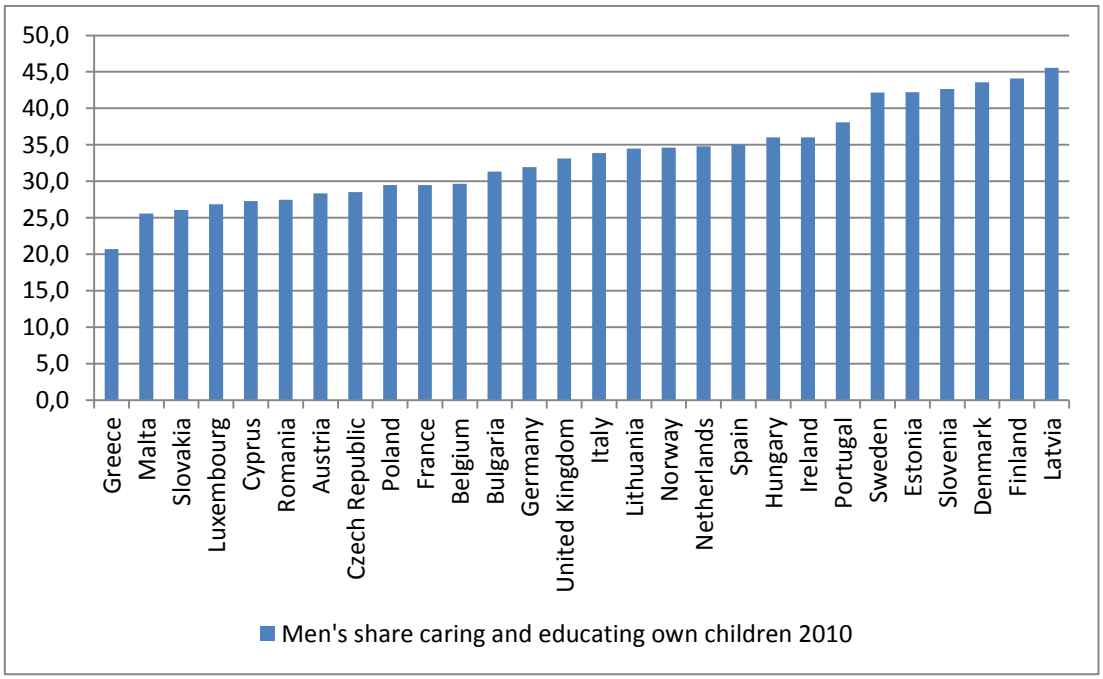
1.1. Background and General Policy Context of Austria

Although – following recent research on gender equality in employment, unpaid work and reconciliation of work and family life – a general trend towards more equality being practiced between women and men can be noticed in Austria, much inequality is still evident (see Bergmann & Sorger 2014).

In general, Austria’s socio-economic and welfare state tradition had long been described as a conservative strong male breadwinner model but in the meantime, modernised variations of the male breadwinner model have emerged. Austria is one of the *“countries in which the male breadwinner marriage has up until now prevailed, but are transforming more and more into a ‘modernised breadwinner model’*, in which one partner works full time and the other part time. Austria is among these countries” (Statistik Austria, 2011, 32). From a gender perspective, Austria’s welfare system mainly focuses on the familial role of women and the breadwinning role of men, and consequently reinforces the gendered division of work and the resulting gender hierarchy (see Appelt 2009).

A European-wide comparison about men’s share in caring and educating duties of own children (see figure 1) indicates that the respective pattern in Austria is quite traditional. Approximately only one quarter of caring and education duties are carried out by men (see Scambor, Wojnicka & Bergmann 2013).

Figure 1 Men's share of caring and educational duties of own children in %, 2010



Source: EWCS 2010; hours of caring and educating for own children (included are persons with children aged less than 18 living in the same household); EWCS includes only persons in employment/self-employment; own calculations.

An EU-wide study about the role of men in gender equality (see Scambor, Wojnicka & Bergmann 2013) compares different patterns of men's share in domestic work and care and concludes that Austria, together with Germany, Spain and Italy, is situated in the "low integrated" country cluster, which is characterised by a low participation rate of men in both domestic work and care. Time spent on domestic tasks and care activities remains gender-divided – especially in Austria.

Research indicates that many factors might have an influence on men's participation in caring activities, including labour market conditions, politics, gender arrangements, family make-ups and paternity leave systems (see Scambor, Wojnicka & Bergmann 2013).

Concentrating on topics concerning care-giving and the reconciliation of work and family and also on gender equality in general it has to be said that these have been seen as women-specific concepts for a long time in Austria. Gender equality was long discussed as a women's issue in Austria with a focus on raising women's economic integration by way of raising female (full-time) employment participation. The other side of the coin – men's participation in care und unpaid work activities – has mostly been neglected. Men were seen as obstacles rather than allies on the road to gender equality.

Hence work-life balance as well as parental leave schemes were mainly discussed as to whether they supported women's participation in the labour market while men were somewhat "neglected" for a long period.

Recent studies indicate for example, that reconciliation of work and family life is more developed in female-dominated branches while male-dominated branches can be characterised by a lack of awareness regarding this topic (see Bergmann, Danzer & Schmatz 2014).

New studies and critical men's studies might have had a positive influence on these issues, as well as EU-wide discussions and studies. This is especially true for the parental leave system which has undergone relatively large transformations in Austria in the last decade (as well as in many other countries).

1.1.1. Parental Leave System in Austria

Since about the beginning of this century, parental leave regulations have been subject to public debate and discussion. A flat rate of approximately 430 euros as wage compensation for those on parental leave and the relatively long leave period was seen as the main problems, as this encouraged the lower income earner of a couple (usually mothers) to take parental leave, and encouraged the higher income earner (usually fathers) to stay at work (see Riesenfelder et al. 2006). Awareness-raising campaigns and a father quota of two months did not make up for the disadvantages of the parental leave regulations, resulting in very low male uptake rates throughout the decade (2% of entitled fathers, computed as a monthly average, compared to up to a third who could imagine taking parental leave, see Brauner 2006). Pilot projects such as the "Competency Centre for Parental Leave and Careers" at abz*Austria, an Austrian NGO, were initiated to promote parental leave for fathers and to raise awareness in companies, but the system did not support men's involvement in parental leave on the broader level.

After manifold discussions – public, between social partners and ministries – a new leave scheme was introduced in 2008. Three different types of parental leave regulations were introduced, on a flat rate basis:

1) a long-term model (30 + 6 months for both parents, with a 6-month quota for either of the parents) based on a daily flat rate of €14.53 (€436 per month).

2) a medium-term model (20 + 4 months) based on a daily flat rate of €20.80 (€624 per month).

3) a short-term model (15 + 3 months) based on a daily flat rate of €26.60 (€800 per month).

On the one hand, this new scheme was assessed positively because it broadened the choice of alternatives and sent the "signal" that men should also take parental leave, otherwise a certain amount of monthly income would be lost. On the other hand, it was heavily criticised because the long-term model especially continued to encourage women to stay out of the labour market and, taking the low flat rate into account, continued to offer less incentive for men to take parental leave.

Indeed the take-up rate of men was very low, at around 4% in 2008.

As the issue of involving men in caring was higher on the agenda, a relatively broad public debate arose and in 2010 two additional models were implemented:

1) a very short-term model (12 + 2 months), based on a daily flat rate of €33 (€1,000 per month) and

2) a wage compensation model of 14 months (12 + 2), with an 80% net income wage compensation (lowest monthly compensation rate: €1,000) was introduced. This model is based on a 6-month employment-status.

The data provides evidence that almost all (93-95%) of eligible (i.e. formerly employed) mothers took parental leave in the last years of the previous scheme.

The involvement of fathers is still quite modest: the official monthly statistics (cross-sectional data at one point in time) on childcare benefits indicate a very low percentage of participating fathers. This is due to the fact that fathers mainly take shorter periods of leave than mothers - they choose the shorter option more often than women, as the benefit is higher than the more lengthy options - and therefore appear less often in the statistics. Looking at fathers who have taken any period of childcare benefit, the percentage is much higher, varying between the different options from 11.8% to 30.4% (April 2013, see Rille-Pfeiffer & Dearing 2014).

Evaluation results of September 2010 show the highest participation rates of men (11%) in the short-term model (15 + 3 month) and the very short-term model (7%), followed by the medium-term model (5.8%) and the long-term model (3.9%). Surprisingly, the net income compensation model showed the lowest participation rate of men (3.8%).

1.1.2. "Daddy's Month"

In 2011 a "daddy's month" without wage compensation (unpaid leave) for civil servants was introduced at various levels of public administration by the Federal Ministry of Women and the Civil Service (at the federal level; in eight out of nine provinces; in some cities, e.g. Linz) (see more in the next chapters).

The importance of supporting men's involvement in care activities is very often seen as a means to support women's labour market participation but not as a goal and benefit for men.

Many studies – especially from Nordic countries indicate the beneficial effects of men's involvement in caring on better well-being, better relationships with children and the broadening of their own perspectives (see Axelsson 2014) and although this is gaining more importance in public debate in Austria, it is not yet being frequently discussed.

Research indicates that "Experiences from the past decades show that policies for men will be less successful if presented from what can be seen as a women's point of view. There must be a men's point of view as well, and even more, these gender views need to be integrated into a democratic policy that reaches out to all" (see Scambor, Wojnicka & Bergmann 2013, 78).

1.1.3. Parental Part-time Work

It is additionally worth mentioning that in 2004 a new law for parental part-time work was implemented in Austria. A parent is entitled to parental part-time work if he/she has been working for the company for at least three years and if the size of the company is more than 20 employees. Based on the parental part-time work regulation, a parent may reduce weekly working hours to any extent and he/she may change working hours (specific days or day times) until the child is seven years old or starts school. Evaluations have shown that 6% of all parents who were eligible made use of parental part-time work in 2007. 14% of parental part-time work users were men, which is rather high compared to male participation rates of other family policy measures, such as the parental leave regulation. Parental part-time work users were predominantly tertiary-educated (university graduates). Among them, a remarkable rate of parents were employed in leading positions and had a comparatively higher income. Men tend to make use of parental part-time work for a short period of time (shorter than women) accompanied by a higher amount of weekly working hours (an average rate of 25 hours a week). Therefore, men seemed to have fewer disadvantages (e.g. fewer career possibilities or poorer working conditions) after parental part-time work than women.

1.1.4. Institutional Background

As background information, it is also important to reveal that in Austria, The Ministry of Women's Affairs together with the Ministry of Family Affairs, as well as the Ministry of Finance, play an important role in the question of leave regulation and in the support of work-life balance approaches. Since 2001 Austria has had its own Department for Men's Politics, situated in the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs (see Bergmann, Scambor & Wojnicka 2014).

While this department was very controversial in the beginning, after its implementation under the conservative (right-wing) government in 2001, its profile has become clearer under the new government (since 2006) and its activities are considered as useful by a wide range of political actors and professionals in the area of gender equality. Although its policy is now orientated to a more gender equality approach, it is not part of the overall national equality strategy mostly due to its location in another Ministry. Especially the "daddy's month" has been greatly supported by the Minister of Social Affairs where generally a central focus is on new male roles as fathers and carers in families.

The Department for Men's Politics is currently presented in the following way:

"Core topics of men's politics are awareness-raising for equal partnerships, men's health, standing up against violence against and by male youth and men, positive identity development of male youth, further development of male roles as well as service for men-specific requests. The Department for Men's Politics of the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection is a unique institution in Europe, which functions as an addition to women's politics, in the sense of gender politics based on partnership."
(http://www.sozialministerium.at//site2/Soziales/Maenner/Maennerpolitische_Grundsatzabteilung/; own translation)

1.2. The Goals and Target Groups of Good Practice

Since the first of January 2011, employees in public service have had the possibility to claim a “daddy’s month” (“Papamonat”), which is early parental leave for fathers. It can be up to four weeks, is unpaid and has to be obtained during maternity protection (thus within the first two months after the child´s birth). Aim of the “daddy’s month” is to increase men's participation in child care by fostering shared responsibility beginning at birth.

The father is free to choose the start and duration of the paternity leave within the time frame of the child´s birth and the end of the mother´s employment ban (usually within the first two months).

Requirements are a joint household with child and mother. One week before the intended accession the father has to inform the employer. The time-dependant rights of the work contract are fully taken into account during “daddy’s month”.

The “daddy’s month” is currently without financial compensation but national insurance contributions continue to be paid by the employer.

The “daddy’s month” has been offered to civil servants and employees in the public service and in the meantime is also being implemented for civil servants and public employees in most provinces and some cities (e.g. Linz). Some companies, NGOs, chambers and trade unions are also offering this possibility; some even paid leave.

1.3. The Legal and Financial Provisions in Implementing Good Practice

As the “daddy’s month” for the public service sector is unpaid and only national insurance compensation is paid for the time it is taken, the measure is relatively cost neutral. The “daddy’s month” is part of the legal framework of the service and pay legislation (Dienst- und Besoldungsrecht) for civil servants. Since January 2013 fathers employed in public service have the unrestricted right to take this leave.

1.4. Institutional Arrangements and Procedures of Implementation

As the “daddy’s month” is part of the leave regulation system there are no major changes in institutional arrangements following its implementation.

2. Results of the Good Practice and Its Impact on Achieving Gender Equality

2.1. Key Results in Relation to the Baseline Situation and to the Goals and Target Groups

Since the first of January 2011, around 700 (1 out of 8) fathers have claimed the "daddy's month" in Austria (status November 2013; Federal Chancellery of the Republic of Austria 2013); most of them in the Ministry of the Interior (251), Defence (148), Justice (91) and Education (84). A few fathers took this leave in the Federal Chancellery, the Court of Auditors and the Administrative Court and the other ministries.

Comparable figures from provinces and other companies are not available, but it seems to be the case that the relatively modest take up rates are more or less the same across federal and provincial levels. Only in organisations where the "daddy's month" is paid is the take up rate considerably higher.

As no specific evaluation has yet been conducted on the daddy's month in Austria (due to data problems but also due to the relative short time-period the daddy's month has been implemented) there are no results available which indicates if men taking daddy's month are also taking parental leave or are more involved in caring generally. In a comparative study Moss concludes, if "daddy' *leave is a family entitlement only, fathers' use is low (i.e. where leave can be shared between parents, fathers take only a small proportion). However, where Parental leave has both an individual entitlement element and is relatively well paid, fathers' use is higher – though not equal with use by mothers. This can be seen in the four Nordic countries in this study, where Parental leave meets these two conditions"* (see Moss 2014, 42). Moss (2014) concludes that leave specifically for fathers (e.g. paternity leave, daddy's month, fathers' quotas in parental leave) is well-used if paid at or near the income replacement level.

2.2. Encountered Challenges, Obstacles and Constraints

As mentioned in the introduction, the background and tradition of a male-breadwinner/female-co-earner-model is still prevalent in Austria. Concerning paid and unpaid work, there is a trade-off of job/paid work and domestic/caring work between women and men; men spend more time in jobs, women more in the reproductive area, although attitudes and values of women and men clearly have changed in the last decades towards more similar standpoints.

The regulations concerning parental leave/paternity leave make a somewhat scattered impression at the moment, with different variations in public and private sectors, but this is probably due to current dynamics of change, as new models have just been introduced. As many researchers and political actors have emphasised in the last years, an income-related wage compensation and a father' quota seem to work better than the previous models.

Introducing the daddy month in public service was also thought as example and model to learn for the private sector.

After elections to the national assembly in autumn 2013, the newly elected government proposed in December 2013 a programme including a package to support families. The programme proposes the 'evaluation' of an obligatory "daddy's month", not an actual implementation of this measure. The government programme also proposes an additional reform of the Parental leave benefit scheme in order to allow for more flexible usage of the four flat-rate payment options. Whereas the duration of parental leave will stay the same, the introduction of a 'child benefit account' would allow parents to choose the duration of payments. In addition, the programme proposes the launching of an expert group to evaluate the adaptation of the income ceiling of the Parental leave benefit scheme. In addition, the programme proposes the development of child care institutions up to 2017, with a budget of €350 million. But it also foresees some cuts in the entitlement to part-time work reducing the age limit of children during which this applies from seven to five years (see Rille-Pfeiffer & Dearing 2014).

At the moment a new model is in discussion: while women take maternity leave (compulsory), men should have the possibility to stay at least one month at home with the new born baby and together with his partner. A new "daddy's month" should be based on wage compensation (while at the same time the 12+2 month models would be reduced to 11+(1) +2months).

3. Assessment of the Strengths and Weaknesses of the Good Practice

The "'daddy's month" can be seen as the first step in involving fathers more in caring and educating their children.

Although many questions are not possible to answer with the existing data – such as if men who take the "daddy's month" are more likely to take a (larger) share of parental leave in general – one can argue that it might have some positive effects, especially when taking into account that many studies refer to the public sector as the sector with the best conditions for men to take parental leave in general (see Schiffbänker & Reidl 2013). Therefore the combination of "daddy's month" and a more "father-friendly" approach in the public sector might lead to promising results in the long-run.

Additionally, one can say that the introduction of the "daddy's month" has had quite a positive impact on enabling the discussing of the issue to a broader public and also amongst civil servants and employees of the public sector.

As no research has been conducted yet on the subject at the federal state level I have to refer to a recent and on-going study which we are conducting for the city of Vienna where also a "daddy's month" has been introduced.

Qualitative interviews with male civil servants indicate that the introduction of the measure was perceived quite positively as a new possibility for men to get involved in care responsibilities (although not in every unit as there are some "hidden mechanisms" to hinder men to take it). The introduction of and information spread throughout the intranet, of union's representatives were seen as a "door opener" and stimulus for discussing these issues on the basis that there is kind of political willingness to support men's involvement in caring activities. On the other hand it is seen as discouraging that the "daddy's month" is unpaid leave (as it is in the public

sector). This underlines the assumption – as was stated by many men interviewed – that “daddy’s month” is mainly a token measure with no real determination behind it. Also it was problematic that only better-situated families can afford to dispense with one month’s income. Most employees could not afford to do so.

Some public organisations and also some enterprises have included a “’daddy’s month” or shorter periods of paid paternity leave within collective agreements. In these organisations the take-up rate is very high as there is a real incentive to take it.

In summary: an unpaid “daddy’s month” can be seen as a first step in the right direction and might provide incentive to some men to also take a share of the parental leave or to reduce working time and share some responsibilities. As in Austria no evaluations have been made yet about it, it is not possible to give any empirical facts if the same case is true in the public sector.

International research is not consistent if “daddy’s month” has positive effects on men’s involvement in care. For example, Kimmel (2007) wrote about the importance of the first months of the child as being crucial for father’s involvement in care. In his opinion it is not a question of time quality that will create the deep and intimate relationship with children, it is time quantity. On the other hand other studies raise the question – as mothers are present during the “daddy’s month” – if it would not be necessary to provide time off for the father during which he would be alone with the child. A Norwegian study indicates that paternity leave has a more sustainable effect if exclusively father-child time is provided (see Brandth & Kvande 2003).

All in all, one conclusion supported by many studies is that fathers who take longer leave are more involved in care giving activities (see Moss 2014, Reidel & Holzinger 2014) – therefore the “daddy’s month” is an initial but not a sufficient step on the pathway to sharing caring responsibilities.

4. Main Questions and Issues for Debate at the Meeting

- To increase the take-up rates of men different ministers are requesting a paid “daddy’s month” for all employers also in the private sector. Are there any studies etc. underlining positive long-term effects of “daddy’s months”?
- What conditions should be met to extend the solution to the private sector?
- “Caring masculinity” – which could be an important concept in supporting men’s involvement in family and unpaid work – seems to be better supported in Nordic countries and are of a broader approach. In addition to leave regulations, what policy and legal measures support equal sharing of caring? (like tax incentives etc.)
- How to support a family-caring-oriented policy in times of higher pressure on labour markets, working time flexibilisation etc.?
- Active fatherhood etc. is often a „middle-class“ project – e.g. unpaid “daddy’s month” – how could the idea become a broader one?

- “Active fatherhood” and equal sharing of caring activities very much focuses on the first years of a child and leave regulations. What incentives support equal sharing of caring and also household activities in the long-run?

References

Appelt, Erna (2009): Rahmenbedingungen und Etappen österreichischer Gleichstellungspolitik Innsbruck: Studien Verlag.

Axelsson, Tobias (2014): Men's parental leave in Sweden: policies, attitudes, and practices. Report for the research project 'Paternity leave: Impacts on male careers'. Vienna: Joanneum Research.

Bergmann, Nadja & Sorger, Claudia (2014). Country Fiches on Gender Equality and Policy Developments. Austria. Wien: Country Fiches im Auftrag von ENEGE – European Network of Experts on Gender Equality.

Bergmann, Nadja, Danzer, Lias & Schmatz, Susanne (2014). Vereinbarkeit von Beruf und Familie. Betriebliche Rahmenbedingungen aus Sicht berufstätiger Eltern. Wien: Studie im Auftrag der Wiener Arbeiterkammer.

Bergmann, N., Scambor, E., & Wojnicka, K. (2014): Framing the Involvement of Men in Gender Equality in Europe: Between Institutionalised and Non-Institutionalised Politics. Masculinities and Social Change, 3 (1), 62-82. doi: 10.4471/MCS.2014.42.

Brauner, S. (2006): Maßnahmen zur Väterförderung. In H. Werneck, M. Beham & D. Palz (eds.), Aktive Vaterschaft. Männer zwischen Familie und Beruf, Gießen: Psychosozial Verlag, 52-67.

Federal Chancellery of the Republic of Austria (Hrsg.): Personalbericht 2013. Vienna.

Kimmel, M. (2006). L'égalité de genre: Pas seulement pour les femmes. (Proceedings of the conference Men and Equality, 2005-2006). Brussels, Belgium: Institut pour l'égalité des femmes et des hommes.

Moss, Peter (Ed., 2014): International Network on Leave Policies and Research. 10th International Review of Leave Policies and Related Research, London.

Reidl, Sybille & Schiffbänker, Helene (2013): Karenzväter in Zahlen. Ergebnisse einer Analyse von Daten des Hauptverbandes der Sozialversicherungsträger. Wien: Studie gefördert von Bundesministerium für Wissenschaft und Forschung.

Reidl, Sybille & Holzinger, Florian (2014): Organizational Practices of Paternity Leave. Vienna.

Riesenfelder, Andreas, Sorger, Claudia, Wetzel, Petra & Willsberger, Barbara (2006): Evaluierung der Einführung des Kinderbetreuungsgeldes. Wien.

Rille-Pfeiffer, Christiane; Kapella, Olaf (2009): Ergebnisse einer quantitativen Studie zum Kinderbetreuungsgeld (KBG) nach der Reform 2008. Wien.

Rille-Pfeiffer, Christiane & Dearing, Helene (2014): Austria country note. In: Moss, Peter (Ed., 2014): International Network on Leave Policies and Research. 10th International Review of Leave Policies and Related Research, London. 58-65.

Scambor, E. & Kirchengast, A. (2014): „Gleichberechtigte Teilhabe“. Zur Wahlfreiheit von Männern und Frauen in der Übernahme von Betreuungsaufgaben. Graz.

Scambor, E., Wojnicka, K. & Bergmann, N. (Hg.) (2013): The role of men in gender equality – European strategies & insights [AutorInnen: S. Belghiti-Mahut, N. Bergmann, M. Gärtner, J. Hearn, Ø.G. Holter, M. Hrženjak, R. Puchert, C. Scambor, E. Scambor, H. Schuck, V. Seidler, A. White & K. Wojnicka]. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Scambor, Elli & Scambor, Christian (2006): Männer zwischen Produktions- und Reproduktionsarbeit. In M. Beham, H. Werneck, D. Palz (Hg.), Aktive Vaterschaft. Männer zwischen Familie und Beruf (S. 167-181). Gießen: Psychosozial-Verlag.

Statistik Austria (2011): Familien- und Haushaltsstatistik 2010. Wien.

Tazi-Preve, Mariam I. (2009): Politik zu Vaterschaft. In: SWS-RUNDSCHAU 49, 491–511.