



Exchange of good practices on gender equality

The role of men in
gender equality
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Comments Paper - Spain

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Spain comments paper

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1. Equality policies targeted at men in Spain

1.1. Introduction: The Spanish case

Spain is among the countries where not very much attention has been paid to equality policies targeted at men. There is little institutional sensitivity and a lack of strategic vision in addressing the challenge of including men in the gender perspective.

The Law against Gender Violence 1/2004 and, more especially, the Equality Law 3/2007, introduced some measures that were targeted at promoting equality for men. The most noteworthy of these was the extension of paternity leave from two days to two weeks; with the provision of extending it to 4 weeks during the 2008-2012 legislature.

Furthermore, during this period the Government Bureau against Gender Violence set up a free call service with the aim of informing and offering guidance to men concerning equality. The service was closed down in 2010 when the cutbacks began because of the economic downturn. Also worth noting is the governmental support provided for organising meetings and congresses concerning the issue of men and equality. One of these was the *CIME, Congreso Iberoamericano de Masculinidades y Equidad: Investigación y Activismo*¹, held in Barcelona in October 2011. At this congress the Spanish men for equality movement reached consensus on a common agenda, the Barcelona Declaration².

With the arrival of the conservatives to power in November 2011, the economic crisis and the neoliberal austerity policies and the ensuing cuts in public spending, equality was pushed to the back of the political agenda. In this state of affairs men's inclusion in gender equality policies looked even less promising. For example, there are hardly any references to men and equality in the *Plan Estratégico de Igualdad de Oportunidades 2014-2016* (PEIO)³. One of the few times the issue is mentioned, in the section on Reconciling private, family and working life, the plan acknowledges the objective of promoting parental leave in accordance with the principle of equality between men and women.

In Spain women are entitled to 6 weeks of compulsory maternity leave following the birth of their child, on full pay. Mothers can also take the 10 remaining weeks until the 16 weeks of maternity leave are completed or they can transfer them in part or in

¹ See Iberoamerican Congress of Masculinities and Equality (CIME 2011), www.cime2011.org

² Barcelona Declaration, Spanish men and Equality common agenda, http://www.cime2011.org/home/cime2011_DeclaracionDeBarcelona.pdf

³ The Strategic Plan for Equal Opportunities 2014-2016 (PEIO), <http://www.inmujer.gob.es/actualidad/PEIO/docs/PEIO2014-2016.pdf>

total to the father. As occurs in other countries, when there is a transferable part it is the women who make use of it. In 2013 only 1.7% of fathers took up this option (MESS, 2014). Since 2007 men have been entitled to 2 weeks of non-transferable paternity leave on full pay. Approximately 80% of fathers request it. It has been a very successful measure and the original intention was to extend it to 4 weeks. However, this has been put off to January of 2016, as is set down in a ruling of the draft bill of the State General Budget for 2015⁴.

This confirms the lack of interest in including men in gender equality policies given that a measure that was approved by law in 2009 has not yet been implemented, a significant measure in reconciliation and parental corresponsibility.

The PEIO section on education mentions the absence of masculine gender models for children; given that 79.1% of infant and primary school teachers are women. In order to address this, Article 122 proposes "Awareness raising campaigns to promote a better gender balance in the teaching profession, especially in infant and primary school education". It is yet to be seen how this measure will be implemented.

Although on a national level the state of affairs is not very bright some programmes that are worth mentioning have been introduced by local and autonomous community administrations which include men in equality measures. Since 1999 the City Council of Jerez de la Frontera in Andalucia has set up a *Men for Equality*⁵ programme that focuses on the prevention of violence towards women and on promoting equality and responsible parenthood. Along the same lines, the City Council of Barcelona set up a similar programme in 2008, *Canviem-ho*⁶. But the initiative that has had the greatest social impact and the most resources is the *Gizonduz*⁷ men for equality programme set up by the Basque Government in 2007, which has become the insignia of men for equality initiatives in Spain⁸.

The final stakeholder that completes the men for equality panorama in Spain is the grassroots association movement: groups, associations and men for equality networks. This movement emerged from 2001 to 2007. It is for the most part made up of volunteers, not very professionalised, and its objective is to raise awareness on, give visibility to and provide training on alternatives to hegemonic masculinity. It is an active movement especially if we take into account the lack of institutional support and resources.

⁴ EFE News Agency. 30/09/2014.

⁵ Programme "Men for Equality" City of Jerez de la Frontera, <http://www.jerez.es/index.php?id=7113>

⁶ Canviem-ho Programme of men for equality, the City of Barcelona, http://w110.bcn.cat/portal/site/Homes?lang=es_ES

⁷ Gizonduz, Basque Government programme of men for equality, www.euskadi.net/gizonduz

⁸ Gizonduz Initiative report 2013, http://www.berdingune.euskadi.net/contenidos/informacion/material/es_gizonduz/adjuntos/G_2013_ESP.pdf

1.2. Policy Debate

The debate on men and equality in Spain is centred around two big issues: men's paternity and corresponsibility, and sexist violence.

As regards active, responsible fatherhood and corresponsibility the main debate is centred around extending paternity leave. Society demands longer leave for men. With this objective in mind, a platform was set up in 2005 demanding longer leave for men, the *Plataforma por Permisos Iguales e Intransferibles de Nacimiento y Adopción* (PPIINA⁹). This platform, made up of over 100 associations, feminist networks, women and men for equality, is focused on pulling down an important bastion of inequality among men and women: the imbalance between maternity and paternity leave. Its demand is a law approving 32 weeks of paternity leave on full pay, 18 weeks of which would be non-transferable for the mother and 18 weeks also non transferable for the father. This platform views the approval of equal and non transferable parental leave on full pay for both parents as the key to social change, in that it gives recognition to women's worth in production and not just in reproduction and it defends the caring role of men.

Other issues are related to corresponsibility (men's participation in household chores is less that of women, one of the highest differences in Europe); the reconciliation between work and family life, especially as regards rationalising work and school timetables; and children's custody in the event of divorce or separation which tends to favour women.

As regards sexist violence, despite having one of the most advanced laws in Europe on this issue (Law against Gender Violence 1/2004), the problem of violence against women still persists in society: 124,893 reported cases of sexist violence and 54 women were killed (MSSSI, 2014). The debate in this case is centred on better law enforcement and more resources for protecting the victims. As far as men are concerned, the demand is for more support to programmes that work with men who have committed gender violence in the past in order for them to give it up, on the one hand, and on placing an emphasis on prevention with youth and men. In this case, equality constitutes a violence protection factor (Holter, 2013). So the demand is to address with men and especially with youths the questioning of the patriarchal system of male privileges and replacing it with alternative and egalitarian masculinities, involved in paternity, co-responsible and that renounce violence. In order to achieve this, awareness campaigns are needed, teacher training and youth programmes as well as initiatives targeted at the "hardcore" of traditional hegemonic masculinity: sports, communication media, masculinised sectors, etc.

Homophobia is also an expression of sexist violence. In this respect we should applaud the passing of the Law for the Rights of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transsexual People and for the Eradication of Homophobia¹⁰ by the Parliament of Catalonia on October 2nd 2014. This a groundbreaking law on a world level in that it guarantees the rights of LGBT people, facilitates their participation and representation in all fields of social life and introduces penalties and fines for acts of homophobia.

⁹ Platform for Equal, Non-Transferable and 100% paid parental leave, <http://www.igualeseintransferibles.org/>

¹⁰ Eradication Homophobia Law, <http://www.parlament.cat/activitat/bopc/10b363.pdf>

2. Transferability issues

2.1. Iceland: Paid parental leave

The Icelandic report outlines in great detail the introduction of parental leave, one of the most egalitarian in the world, as well as its positive outcomes in the sharing of caring between men and women.

From my point of view, as we have seen in the Nordic countries, legislation that provides, extends and equates paternity leave has enormous positive repercussions in involving men in gender equality. It constitutes the most revolutionary measure in promoting equality and the one that has accomplished changes in values and practices in the least amount of time as well as changes in the social structure and the gender hierarchy.

There are a series of aspects I would like to highlight from the case of Iceland and which should be taken into account when implementing similar measures in other countries:

- Equating the length of leave between mothers and fathers. When the length of leave is more closely matched the fathers get more involved in caring.
- It is paid leave. The key to its success with men is that it is paid either in part or in full.
- The paternity leave is non-transferable. As we have seen from other countries when a part of the leave is transferable it is most often the women who take it.

On the other hand, the Icelandic report also discusses the convenience or not of simultaneous leaves. There is evidence that shows that when men care for their child by themselves their bonding with their child is greater whereas if both parents take the leave at the same time the men tend to delegate the child caring to the mother more and invest their time in doing other things. (Abril et al., 2012).

Other outstanding aspects of the Icelandic report are the fact that it addresses the issue of men's involvement when the couple doesn't live together, or the need for more information about the potential obstacles that fathers may come across in their companies during the first years.

2.1.1. Transferability issues to Spain

The President of the *Círculo de Empresarios de España* (Spanish Business Owners Association), Mónica Oriol, stated in a forum of business owners that she would prefer to hire "a woman who was over 45 or else under 25" in order to avoid "the problem" of her getting pregnant¹¹. Her comments were very controversial and received criticism from different social sectors and they bear witness to the difficulties faced by Spanish women in reconciling their family life with work.

¹¹ October 3, 2014, <http://www.elmundo.es/economia/2014/10/03/542e76a0ca4741b67e8b4582.html>

From her comments we can gather that if paternity and maternity leave of the same duration were introduced, equal for both men and women, from the point of view of company owners “the problem” of children would not exclusively rest on the women. Egalitarian parental leave benefits women and their position in the job market. It benefits the children who can be with their father and it benefits fathers who can develop their facet as carers. What’s more, the existing legal framework in Spain, if there existed political will to do so, would make it quite easy to introduce reforms concerning leaves making them equal, non-transferable and with full paid.

In fact a bill already exists for reforming the system of parental leaves, drawn up by the PPIINA in 2011 which sets down that each parent has two types of leave:

- A 2-week “initial parental leave”, that is compulsory and therefore simultaneous, to be taken on the birth of the baby, the beginning of the adoption or fostering.
- A 16-week “parental leave for raising the child”, 4 weeks of which are compulsory. This leave can be taken in one go or, pending prior agreement with the company, over various periods, within the first 18 months following the birth, commencement of the adoption or fostering.

This reform would be introduced gradually over a maximum period of 7 years until the leaves are equal and non-transferable, fully paid and 18 weeks long for each parent, 6 of which would be compulsory.

In October 2012 the House of Representatives passed a Non Binding Motion with the unanimous support of all the parliamentary groups, requesting the Government to “make progress in equating birth, adoption and fostering leave between both parents so that both of them are entitled to the same personal and non transferable period, thus doing away with the dysfunctions in the current legislation on this issue, and more specifically, preventing the subrogation of rights, which must be individual”. However, this motion contained a “but” clarifying that this should be done when the economic situation allowed it.

There is social consensus. Political representatives see the need for reform that will equate parental leaves, and most of the population wants a family where both parents work with similar dedication and both share household chores and looking after the children, if there are any (CIS, 2010). The economic situation shouldn’t be an obstacle either if we take into account that Spain is among the countries in Europe that spend the least on family policies. Roughly, the cost to the budget of parental leave on full pay could rise from 900 million euros which it is now, 0.17% of Spain’s GDP, to 2 billion or 0.36% of GDP. In addition to the benefits for society and equality that a reform of this kind would entail, the extra cost could be compensated through less penalisation of maternity, an increase in women’s employment rate, in the number of women who work full time, thus generating more revenue for the state (Personal Income Tax, Social Security contributions, etc.) (Albert López-Ibor, R et al., 2008).

So it seems that the obstacles have to do more with political will and a lack of strategic vision of the people who govern us in seeing how profitable investing in equality is to society.

2.2. “Daddy’s Month” (“Papamonat”) in Austria

A prominent aspect of the Austrian report is that it shows how conservative family policies reinforce the society model with a strong gender division and hierarchy.

“Daddy’s Month” (“Papamonat”) is an example of why some measures targeted at men are not successful. The same report points out that paternity leaves must be individual, non transferable rights and well paid in order to be successful. When the leave is transferable, the fathers usually pass it on to the mothers. When it is a non-paid right fathers don’t take it either, as in the Austrian case. For paternity leave to have a social impact it must be non-transferable and well paid. The aim should be to equate the length of maternity leaves with paternity leaves, non-transferability and full pay.

Other measures, that the report outlines, such as shorter work schedules may be interesting. In Spain parents also have the option of asking for a shorter work schedule, from an eighth up to half of their daily schedule, with the subsequent proportional reduction in salary, in order to take care of their children until they are 12 years old. This is a measure that is mainly taken up by mothers. Despite the fact that the percentage of men who have applied for it over the years has increased, they are still a minority. Only 6.5% of parents who reduced their daily work schedules in 2013 were men, according to the figures published by the Employment and Social Security Ministry.

Finally, one other aspect we would like to highlight from the Austrian case is the mention it makes to the Department for Men’s Politics of the Ministry for Employment and Social Affairs. We consider this a very interesting and useful measure for supporting policies with a view to reinforcing men’s role in gender equality. Without institutional support and bodies that can draw up and promote men’s policies for equality it will be difficult to achieve the necessary changes for more just and egalitarian societies.

2.3. The Finnish case

The Finnish case recognises that even in societies such as Finland that have achieved high levels of gender equality, policies are still necessary, especially those focused on getting men to participate more in equality, that help to counteract traditional patriarchal forms and even new neutral forms of gender.

The key, as it points out to us, lies in that “gender equality needs men, and men need gender equality”. From my point of view, this is one of the most interesting learnings that one can extract from the Finnish experience, the need to incorporate men in the gender equality debate. Gender equality policies need to institutionalise the men’s perspective, even though this means including in the process issues that may be polemic such as fathers’ rights to the custody of their children. In this respect, the setting up of bodies that deal with men’s and equality issues, the Men’s and Gender Equality Subcommittees, is a measure worthy of mention.

Other aspects worth mentioning are, as in the previous reports, the need to extend paternity leave. The 6+6+6 reform follows the Icelandic model, which will guarantee good results for men’s involvement in caring.

It also mentions the need to pay attention to fathers' rights in divorce or separation circumstances, because they often suffer from inequality and neglect. There is therefore a need to seek out more egalitarian and inclusive formulas for fathers, such as legislation that promotes shared custody if the circumstances are favourable.

Of the other examples it mentions I would highlight the need for more studies and statistics with a gender perspective, for example on health issues. In general, there is also a need for more awareness and training concerning gender and masculinity among workers who offer a service to the public (social services, healthcare, security, etc.). Finally, I would like to point out the need to raise awareness among young people, through formal and non formal education, on gender identity building mechanisms, stereotypes and mandates and the prevention of violence. On this last point there is a need to keep an eye out for and work in order to prevent violence and bullying that uses new formats via information and communication technologies.

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