

Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

Opinion on men, boys, and gender equality

The Opinion of the Advisory Committee does not necessarily reflect the positions of the Member States and does not bind the Member States

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Introduction

The objective of this Opinion of the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men is to provide input for the EU Commission’s work on gender equality, in particular the **next Gender Equality Strategy**, by considering the **impact of stereotypical gender norms on men and boys, how men and boys can benefit from gender equality, and the ways in which men and boys and a masculinities-aware approach can contribute to gender equality.**

Masculinities are not a homogenised identity. There exist hierarchies between various narratives of masculinities, shaped by intersecting social, cultural, and economic factors. Within these narratives, **pressures and privileges coexist with perceptions of masculinities and diverse experiences.** Recognising this complexity is essential for policies and practices aimed at gender equality to be inclusive and effective.

At the same time, it remains crucial that efforts to engage men and boys are accountable to the struggles and movements led by women and feminist organisations, and by LGBTIQ people, who are most directly affected by patriarchal systems. Rather than positioning men merely as helpers or supporters of women's rights and gender equality, **a holistic, rights-based gender sensitive and transformative approach** that addresses the role of hegemonic masculinities as barriers to gender equality and affirms the right of all individuals to equality, dignity, and safety is the way forward.

To strengthen the conceptual clarity the following definitions inform the Opinion: **discriminatory social norms** as institutionalised rules or standards of society, which are based on intersecting ideologies that uphold social hierarchy, such as patriarchy, ethnicity, class and so onⁱ; **gender stereotypes** as oversimplified representation, imagery or classification of men, women and gender relations, based on discriminatory norms, that presents a conventionalised and selective picture of men’s and women’s livesⁱⁱ; and **patriarchal or hegemonic masculinities** are those ideas about and practices of masculinity that emphasise the superiority of masculinity over femininity and the authority and power of men over women.ⁱⁱⁱ

Key Issues and Policy Implications

Efforts to engage men in gender equality—such as parenting classes, fatherhood campaigns, or workshops addressing violent or hegemonic masculinities—can have significant **personal impact** but does **not invariably lead to transformation in gender relations.** When such initiatives are viewed in isolation, they risk reducing gender equality work to individual transformation and male identity development and may **unintentionally reinforce gender inequality, stereotypes, or certain gender/social norms** if they do not incorporate **a gender transformative approach** centered on the redistribution of power, resources and opportunities.

Thus promoting gender equality and addressing inequitable gender relations in Europe **requires understanding how men and boys are both shaped by and contributors to patriarchal norms**. Masculinities-informed approaches provide opportunities to promote men's wellbeing, prevent gender-based violence, support equitable caregiving, and strengthen inclusive institutions.

Addressing these issues necessitates **interventions at multiple levels: individual behaviours, institutional reforms, and structural policies** that consider economic, social, and digital transformations, as well as militarisation and climate-related pressures.

Evidence demonstrates that **engaging men as allies and co-creators of gender equality is essential for sustainable social change**, and that **failing to address structural drivers risks reducing efforts to isolated, individual-level initiatives**.

1. Rigid Gender Norms, Socialisation, and Men's Health

Boys and men experience **profound pressures to conform to hegemonic masculinity**, including dominance, emotional restraint, risk-taking, and rejection of caregiving responsibilities.

Socialisation from early childhood **discourages vulnerability and** also creates an atmosphere of perceived power and privilege for men and boys that leads them to dominance, risk-taking, disengagement from caregiving roles, as well as **leading to emotional suppression, bullying, alienation, and limited help-seeking behaviours**. As a result, men exhibit higher rates of premature death, suicide, substance abuse, and risk-taking behaviours. In 2019, 13% of men in the EU consumed alcohol daily compared to 4% of women, and 22% of men were daily smokers versus 15% of women (Eurostat, 2021a; 2022b). Men also visit healthcare providers less frequently, delaying detection of both physical and mental health conditions.

Conformity to restrictive norms underpins not only health risks but also men's **overrepresentation in positions of power, criminal justice involvement**, and perpetration of violence. Patriarchal expectations, honour-based codes, and cultural sanctions often tie male identity to control, competition, and dominance, reinforcing cycles of gender-based violence, which is mostly perpetrated by men.

Digital environments magnify these effects through exposure to misogynistic content, violent pornography, and algorithm-driven influencer cultures, normalising harmful masculinities and distorting male sexuality. **Militarisation similarly valorises aggression and dominance**, demonstrating the need for masculinities-informed approaches in peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

Policies addressing men's health and socialisation should **combine individual support with structural interventions**. Early programmes fostering emotional literacy, life skills, and caregiving engagement improve wellbeing, **while systemic reforms in education, health, and labour, ensure supportive environments**. National and EU-level policies should include **non-**

transferable parental leave, flexible work arrangements, and incentives and goals for men to equally share unpaid work and care, promoting both equality and health outcomes.

2. Education, Youth Engagement, and Norms Transformation

Educational institutions play a decisive role in either reinforcing or challenging stereotypes and hegemonic masculinities. Boys often underperform in reading, disengage from care-oriented subjects, and face social pressures that encourage disruptive behaviour. **Inclusive curricula** that integrate and promote **STEAM subjects, care-related topics, and comprehensive sexuality education (CSE)** equip boys and girls with **knowledge about bodies, relationships, consent, and gender equality.**

Peer-led interventions, mentoring programmes, and youth-led campaigns are particularly effective in shaping positive masculinities. These include programmes which combine awareness-raising, skills training, and normative change, encouraging boys to engage in caregiving, respectful relationships, and non-traditional career paths. Embedding gender-sensitive teaching practices and inclusive mentoring not only improves academic outcomes but also **fosters empathy, emotional literacy, and social responsibility.**

EU and Member State strategies should **prioritise gender-transformative education, including mental health and wellbeing curricula, anti-bullying initiatives, and engagement with digital citizenship.** **Intersectional approaches** ensure boys from migrant, minority, LGBTIQ, or disability communities receive tailored support to address compounded pressures, promoting inclusive learning environments and equitable opportunities.

3. Men and Boys as Allies and Participants in Social Change

Men are **not only beneficiaries of gender equality policies—they are essential co-creators and allies in promoting systemic change.** By reflecting on privilege, rejecting stereotypes, modelling cooperative behaviours, and challenging misogyny, men and boys can influence peers, reduce gender-based violence, and contribute to inclusive social norms.

Peer-to-peer programmes, community-based interventions, youth -and fatherhood initiatives provide practical pathways for men to engage. National campaigns can leverage male role models and public messaging to normalise caring, pluralistic masculinities.

In **peacebuilding and security contexts,** men can **adopt non-violent leadership models, address militarised norms,** and participate in conflict-related sexual violence **prevention programmes.** These interventions reinforce the importance of men's engagement across all levels—individual, institutional, and societal.

4. Digital Transformation, Online Misogyny, and Gender Equality

The **digital environment is a central arena** for shaping masculinities and gender norms. Unregulated content, violent pornography, AI-generated material, and algorithm-driven influence networks **can reinforce harmful masculinities, distort sexual norms, and exacerbate social polarisation**. Online radicalisation and extremist content can perpetuate violence and **undermine gender equality initiatives**.

Policy responses **must combine regulation, accountability, and digital literacy**. Platforms should implement content moderation, age verification, and transparency in algorithmic processes, while Member States and EU institutions should fund programmes promoting **critical thinking, healthy masculinities, consent education, and counter-narratives**.

Youth-targeted interventions that **engage boys as critical consumers of digital content can prevent the internalisation of toxic online masculinities and mitigate the impact** of harmful material on behaviour and attitudes.

5. Labour Market, Care, and Work-Life Balance

Rigid gender norms and stereotypes **affect men's participation in caregiving and reinforce occupational segregation**. Men are often underrepresented in care work, while women remain overburdened in unpaid domestic labour. Equal participation in caregiving benefits men in many ways: fosters autonomy, mutual respect, increased personal well-being, richer relationships and relief.

Policies promoting **non-transferable paternity leave, flexible work arrangements**, and the equal sharing of unpaid work and care between women and men and within the household have proven effective in **fostering equality and enhancing wellbeing**.

Labour market reforms should address **gendered pay gaps, improve conditions in the care sector, and support men pursuing careers in traditionally female-dominated professions**. Guidance, mentoring, and outreach programmes for boys and young men can challenge stereotypes and expand opportunities. At the EU level, **funding instruments** can support innovative **initiatives promoting shared care, equitable employment, and inclusive work environments**.

6. Violence Prevention, Peacebuilding, and Security

Hegemonic masculinities are closely linked to men's perpetration of violence, including gender-based, domestic, and conflict-related forms. **Patriarchal norms and militarised cultures reinforce aggression, domination, and coercion**. **Integrating masculinities-informed approaches into prevention, law enforcement, and peacebuilding programmes is essential** to reduce violence and support inclusive governance.

Member States should **implement perpetrator accountability programmes, community-based interventions, and peer-led initiatives targeting men and boys**.

EU frameworks should **mainstream gender-transformative approaches in peace and security operations, aligning with the Women, Peace, and Security agenda**. Non-violent leadership models, gender-sensitive training, and institutional reforms within military and civilian hierarchies promote inclusive and sustainable peace, while addressing militarisation as a potential structural driver of harmful masculinities.

7. Intersectional, Evidence-Based Policy, and Research

Understanding men and boys' engagement in gender equality requires **robust research, monitoring, and evaluation**. Policies should be grounded in **intersectional analyses**, considering intersection of factors such as ethnicity, migration, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, disability, and local context.

Longitudinal and qualitative research can track evolving masculinities, measure intervention outcomes, and identify structural drivers of inequality, applying an intersectional perspective.

EU institutions should **promote coordinated research** using Eurostat, EIGE, and Eurobarometer data, while Member States conduct gender audits and integrate monitoring mechanisms into policy frameworks. **Evidence-based interventions can then be scaled, ensuring systemic change while enabling men and boys to contribute positively to gender equality, social cohesion, and collective wellbeing.**

Recommendations for EU Institutions

1. Mainstream a Gender-transformative Approach with Masculinities and Male Engagement in Gender Equality Policy and Governance

- Promote a dual-track gender transformative approach combining targeted masculinities and male engagement with gender mainstreaming across all EU policies. Integrate a gender transformative approach within all post-2025 EU gender equality frameworks (e.g., Gender Equality Strategy, LGBTIQ Equality Strategy, Anti-Racism Strategy, European Care Strategy, European Pillar of Social Rights) with the aim to challenge structural inequalities.
- Promote the earner–equal carer model and update social and economic indicators in social policy, economic planning, and data collection accordingly, to reflect changing norms and equal sharing of responsibilities.
- Base measures on current scientific research and international standards and account for intersecting drivers such as militarisation, economic volatility, and climate impacts.
- Develop participatory public engagement campaigns—particularly involving men—to gather perspectives on strategies for eliminating gender stereotypes, strengthening existing policy

frameworks, and designing new, effective measures that uphold and advance the rights of both women and men.

2. Enhance Digital Accountability and Regulation and Address Online Misogyny and Digital Radicalisation

- Ensure full gender-responsive enforcement of the Digital Services Act (DSA) and AI Act, requiring platforms to implement robust age verification, conduct risk assessments, and enforce content moderation addressing gender-based hate and abuse. Strengthen the use of gender sensitive algorithms to improve content moderation and support platforms in combating online misogyny.
- Tackle algorithmic bias and harmful masculinist influencer cultures through coordinated EU policy, algorithmic accountability, and regulation. Platforms must be held accountable for online misogyny, gender-based violence, and violent pornography and access of minors to those.
- Invest in digital literacy and positive counter-narratives, especially for youth, using EU programmes (EU4Health, Digital Europe, CERV), including critical analysis of violent pornography, consent, and healthy masculinities.

3. Invest in Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation

- Conduct coordinated EU-wide research on gender norms, masculinities, and the social impact of inequality on men and boys using Eurostat, EIGE, and Eurobarometer. Capture how stereotypes shape educational paths, caregiving roles, labour market outcomes, and mental health across the life course and identify gender transformative interventions.

4. Mobilise EU Funding Instruments

- Use ESF+, Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, and other funding instruments to support caregiving initiatives, educational measures, and pro-equality men's organisations.
- Align male-focused measures with feminist policy goals; avoid diverting resources from women's and feminist initiatives.

5. Support International Cooperation and Peacebuilding

- Apply a gender-transformative, masculinities-informed approach across EU peace and security frameworks, including Women, Peace and Security (WPS), Strategic Compass, The Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – Global Europe, and the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) missions.
- Monitor militarization impacts through for example Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), and support norm change in post-conflict recovery.

Recommendations for EU Member States

1. Enact and Strengthen National Laws and Gender Equality Frameworks

- Fully transpose and implement EU directives on violence against women and domestic violence, ensuring robust prevention, perpetrator programmes, community-based interventions, and targeted outreach to men.
- Fully transpose and implement EU directives on Work-life Balance and Gender Balance on Boards, ensuring inclusion of gender transformative and masculinities aware approach.
- Promote well-compensated, non-transferable paternity and parental leave, flexible work models, and equal sharing of caregiving responsibilities for children, elderly and domestic tasks.
- Anchor men's engagement in broader social reforms including taxation, welfare, and labour laws, to advance equitable caregiving and economic participation.
- Promote equal representation and parity in leadership, tackling legal and cultural stereotypes that limit women's opportunities in leadership.

2. Promote Gender-Transformative Education and Youth Engagement

- Introduce or develop comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in schools, aligned with WHO and UNESCO standards, focusing on mutual respect, consent, emotional expression and regulation, and digital literacy, as well as mental health. This should be informed by an intersectional approach.
- Revise school curricula to be more inclusive, to challenge sexist discrimination against women and girls, gender stereotypes and promote non-traditional career-choices.
- Train educators to challenge gender stereotypes and to support boys' emotional development and gender expression.

3. Promote Labour Market Equality and Care Economy Reform

- Tackle gender stereotypes in legal, institutional, and cultural settings that limit equal representation and reinforce occupational segregation and caregiving expectations.
- Invest in and improve pay and conditions in the care sector to attract a diverse workforce and raise the visibility and value of care work.
- Develop targeted career guidance and mentoring programmes to encourage boys and men in female-dominated sectors.
- Expand flexible work policies and structural incentives to support equal sharing between women and men of caregiving and domestic responsibilities and increase participation in caregiving roles.

4. Fund Community-Based Engagement

- Support local centres for perpetrator accountability and community-based violence prevention initiatives.

- Run national campaigns using male influencers to challenge harmful masculinity norms and violence.
- Scale up peer-led mentorship programmes engaging men and boys in gender transformative GBV work and gender equality work.

5. Strengthen Digital Literacy and Protection

- Enforce the Digital Service Act nationally, with safeguards for youth against online gender-based harm and violence.
- Develop and implement national digital literacy curricula promoting gender equality and ethical media use.
- Support content moderation and algorithm transparency to counter online misogyny.

6. Advance Intersectional and Inclusive Approaches

- Tailor interventions to multiple intersections of gender with ethnicity, socioeconomic status, migration, disability, age, religion, and sexual orientation.

7. Address Men's Health and Emotional Well-being

- Expand access to gender-sensitive mental health services designed to address the emotional costs of rigid gender norms and train healthcare providers to recognise male distress and emotional suppression.
- Develop programmes to reduce male suicides and raise awareness of health risks.

8. Institutionalise Gender Audits and Accountability

- Conduct regular gender audits of public institutions, education systems, and service delivery.
- Mainstream transparent monitoring mechanisms into male-focused policies to ensure alignment with broader gender equality outcomes.

Joint Recommendations for EU Institutions and Member States

1. Mainstream Gender-Transformative, Rights-Based Approaches

- Frame male engagement as integral to human rights, democracy, social cohesion, and inclusive governance within EU and MS policy development.
- Counter anti-gender pushback with unified EU-MS strategies with unified EU- strategies, including regulation, education and campaigns.

2. Promote Cultural and Narrative Change through public campaigns

- Co-develop campaigns highlighting benefits of gender equality for all genders, e.g., healthier relationships, emotional freedom, and mental well-being.
- Feature diverse male role models in care, activism, leadership, and mental health.
- Engage with networks such as HeForShe, MenEngage, White Ribbon, Songke Gender Justice, and others to amplify role models and campaign visibility.

3. Support Violence Prevention, Peacebuilding, and Security

- Integrate knowledge on masculinities into conflict related sexual violence prevention and peacebuilding initiatives.
- Promote non-violent masculinities within military and civilian hierarchies through training, including peace-keepers and enhanced reconciliation processes.

4. Scale and Sustain Grassroots Engagement and Sharing of Best Practice

- Provide long-term funding for grassroots organisations, and cross-sector partnerships, including men's groups in alliance with feminist networks.
- Promote EU-wide forums for sharing evidence-based practices.
- Support national and cross-border initiatives promoting evidence-based practices to shift societal norms.

5. Strengthen Monitoring, Research, and Evidence-Based Practice

- Invest in longitudinal research on masculinities and male engagement in gender equality work and its impact.
- Develop shared metrics and toolkits for evaluating transformative change and policy effectiveness.
- Encourage EU-wide research collaboration and coordination of research hubs and integration of national data sources.

Selected Good Practices

Across the EU and Member States, a range of innovative policies and programmes demonstrate how gender-transformative, masculinities-informed approaches can effectively engage men and boys, challenge stereotypes and harmful gender norms, and advance equality across education, health, digital environments, and peace and security.

This section lists examples of selected initiatives and projects across Europe from government, civil society, research, and digital initiatives showing various interventions which target

individual behaviours, structural inequalities, and societal norms and stereotypes. The practices are clustered according to the key policy implications above.

1. Rigid Gender Norms, Socialisation, and Men's Health

Denmark – National Action Plan on Gender Equality for Men and Boys (2024). A government-wide strategy addressing men's mental health, loneliness, fatherhood engagement, and harmful gender expectations. It frames masculinity as socially shaped and focuses on health, wellbeing, and inclusion. ([Action plan on gender equality for men and boys 2024 - Miljø- og Ligestillingsministeriet](#))

Denmark – National Suicide Prevention Plan (2024–2027). Introduces male-targeted awareness campaigns, improved early detection in primary care, and support systems recognising that men underutilise mental health services. ([National handlingsplan og anbefalinger - Center for Selvmordsforskning](#))

Spain – Suicide Prevention Action Plan (2025–2027). Includes male-specific outreach, training for primary care to recognise gendered expressions of distress, and integration with youth and social services. ([Iniciativas autonómicas — Plataforma nacional Para el estudio y la prevención del suicidio](#))

Austria – Männerinfo 24/7 Helpline. A professional support service offering crisis counselling to men experiencing emotional stress, relationship breakdowns, or mental health crises. ([About MÄNNERINFO | MÄNNERINFO](#))

Denmark – Reintegration Support after Prison (2025). Pathways for men leaving incarceration, addressing identity stigma, unemployment, and social isolation to reduce recidivism and Crime Prevention and Reintegration. National coordination and knowledge-sharing efforts funded through 2027 (SSA Reserve, 2024).

Denmark – Support Networks for Men Experiencing Divorce (2024). Community-based peer support to reduce isolation, financial stress, and suicide risk among separated fathers.

Austria – MEN Health Centre. A dedicated health clinic offering physical and mental health services tailored to men's help-seeking patterns, including outreach to underserved groups. ([MEN Männergesundheitszentrum](#))

Finland – Boys' Houses (Poikien Talo). Safe drop-in spaces for boys and young men emphasising emotional literacy, belonging, and relational support. [Poikien Talo – Kaikkea ei kannata hautoa vain omassa päässä](#)

Sweden – Positive Masculinity Project (Karolinska, 2019–2022). Comparative research and development of evidence-based approaches to strengthen empathy, emotional expression, and pro-social norms among boys and young men. ([The Positive Masc project | Karolinska Institutet](#))

Sweden – Maskuliniteter och ohälsa – en litteraturoversikt 2011-2020 Swedish Gender Equality Agency report and literature review analysing links between masculinities, norms, shame, and mental health outcomes. ([Titel publikation](#))

Austria – Umbrella Organization for Men's, Boys', and Fathers' Work in Austria (DMÖ) - The association of Austrian men's counseling centers works with a gender equality orientation and sees itself as a voice for men's concerns and as an ally of women's organisations in the effort for equal rights. [Umbrella organisation | DMÖ](#)

Germany – Wippermann Study (2025). Longitudinal qualitative research on young men's identity insecurity, socio-economic precarity, and attraction to online hypermasculinity. ([An Analysis of Hyper-Masculinity in Magazine Advertisements | Request PDF](#))

Czechia – Government programme on minimum standards for programmes targeting perpetrators of violence, along with support through the Government Office's gender equality grant scheme. A new grant scheme is under preparation.

United Kingdom –2020 engagement toolkit for countering toxic masculinity. Peer-led interventions in gaming environments also offer promise for shifting norms in real time. [Engaging with men and boys about gender norms: engagement toolkit - GOV.UK](#)

UN Women's [TPM: Learning from Practice](#) and [Discussion-paper-Work-with-men-and-boys-for-gender-equality-en.pdf](#), as well as reports by initiatives convened by or affiliated with UN Women – for example the [HeForShe](#) or the [Stereotype Alliance](#)

Key Insights

Male health risks are structured by gender norms, not individual preference; emotional literacy and social connection are protective factors, policy must integrate health, social support, family policy, and identity.

2. Education, Youth Engagement, and Norms Transformation

France – EVARS Programme (2025). Nationwide integration of consent, sexuality, emotional skills, and respectful relationships into school curricula. ([National education -A new program of education on emotional, relational and sexual life | Service Public](#))

Germany – Federal Sex Education Framework (SchKG). Legal requirement for comprehensive sexuality and relationship education, reinforcing gender equality and emotional development. ([080255 Germany.ppt](#))

Sweden – The Swedish Schools' Inspectorate's Review of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (2025) Systemic audit of schools' delivery of sexuality, consent and relationship education, identifying gaps and enforcing national standards. ([Undervisningen om sexualitet, samtycke och relationer](#))

UNESCO and WHO/Europe Standards for Sexuality Education. Used across Sweden, Germany, and France to embed empathy, non-violence, and healthy sexual development in curricula. [Comprehensive sexuality education](#); UNESCO. [Standards for sexuality education in Europe: guidance for implementation | Health and Education Resource Centre](#)

Sweden – MÄN School Programmes. Peer-led workshops addressing masculinity, empathy, bullying prevention, and consent. [MÄN - For an equal world without violence](#)

Malta - Comprehensive Sexuality Education model which includes intersectional approaches to disability and cultural considerations.

Sweden - Youmo.se – Multilingual website providing youth aged 13–20 with resources on health, sexuality, mental wellbeing, and rights. It targets newly arrived youth and integrates access to youth guidance centres across Sweden. It is available in many languages. [Youmo](#)

Netherlands – “What Do You Think? When Is It Still Fun for Both? “Campaign. National multimedia initiative promoting respectful sexual communication and challenging coercive norms, addressing group dynamics and peer norms to shift attitudes towards sexual violence (Government of the Netherlands, 2025).

Belgium - "Masculinity – It’s Your Choice" – German-speaking Awareness Campaign. Vie Féminine and Prisma campaign to challenge harmful masculinity stereotypes and support women facing violence aimed at redefining masculinity in a positive and non-violent way.

Finland – Media Literacy Week. Integrates critical digital consumption, gender stereotypes, and emotional wellbeing into school programmes. ([Finland’s Media Literacy Week highlighted the relationship between media use and well-being | Medialukutaito Suomessa](#))

France – #ZeroCliché Youth Media Contest. Engages young people in critically analysing and rewriting gender-reinforcing media narratives. ([Zéro Cliché | CLEMI](#))

Norway – Recruitment of Boys into Care Professions (UiT). University-led programme increasing male representation and challenging gendered vocational pathways. ([Program | UiT](#))

Austria and Germany – Boys’ Day Initiatives. Nationally coordinated programmes placing boys in care, health, and education settings to expand vocational identity options. ([English Information | Boys' Day](#))

Denmark – Education and Youth Engagement. Recommendations from a 2022–2024 expert group aim to address the growing gender gap in education, with boys lagging in academic outcomes. Also Boys' Day in Care (2025), inspired by Girls' Day in Science, and diversity recruitment into social and health education to counter gender imbalances (Center for Digital Pædagogik, 2024).

European Women’s Lobby –Report and training module on Sexuality Education: Ensuring safe, uncoerced, egalitarian and mutually pleasurable sex and relationships for the next generation, which contains fifteen feminist principles. [lef_sexeduc_web.pdf](#)

Key Insights

Schools are decisive sites where masculinity norms are shaped; peer-led and participatory models outperform top-down messaging; linking comprehensive sexuality education with emotional development can reduce harm.

3. Men and Boys as Allies and Participants in Social Change

Norway – Men’s Equality Commission (2022–2024). First national commission examining men’s wellbeing, fatherhood, labour market participation, violence, and socialisation, producing policy recommendations. ([Information in English – Mannsutvalget](#))

Finland – Subcommittee on Men and Gender Equality (TANE). Long-standing advisory body integrating masculinity considerations into national policy across health, labour, security, and youth fields. ([Subcommittee on Men and Gender Equality | Tane](#))

Spain – Plan Corresponsables. Funds regional and local programmes supporting care-sharing, fatherhood engagement, and male allyship in equality work. ([Plan Corresponsables - Ministerio de Igualdad](#)) and Basque Region – Gizonduz. Public service developing training, campaigns, and community interventions to promote positive masculinities and shared caregiving. ([Gizonduz Hombres Igualdad - Berdintasun Proiektuak](#))

Sweden – MÄN Fatherhood Groups. Supports fathers in developing nurturing caregiving identities and peer accountability for gender equality. ([MÄN - Promoting equal parenthood](#))

Netherlands – Emancipator. Civil-society organisation mobilising men to challenge misogyny, unpaid care inequality, and gender-based violence. ([Home - Emancipator](#))

UN Women HeForShe Alliances and MenEngage. Transnational networks promoting male accountability, anti-violence advocacy, and norm transformation. ([MenEngage Alliance - MenEngage](#)), ([Home Page | HeForShe](#))

Denmark – Health and Social Inclusion Programmes (2024–2027). Municipal-level programmes inviting men into community engagement, mentorship, and wellbeing-focused activities. ([Danish Health Care Reform 2024 – an overview](#))

Finland – Vieraasta Veljeksi Programme (Miessakit Association) – Mentoring and peer support for immigrant men to integrate into Finnish society, strengthen professional networks, and encourage active citizenship and gender-equitable participation. ([Miessakit Ry](#))

UN Women – Engaging Men as Allies in Gender Equality. Focuses on supporting and encouraging male engagement in gender equality efforts, particularly by working with men in influential roles—such as political leaders—to resist peer pressure and challenge harmful gender norms.

HeForShe’s Male Ally Toolkits, [Male Ally Toolkits](#) designed to help men in workplaces become effective allies. Practical guidance, language, and strategies to promote gender equality, foster inclusive environments, and support cultural change from within male-dominated spaces.

Key Insights

Male allyship is most effective when embedded in community identity; co-creation and peer accountability outperform awareness-only models; fatherhood remains a primary entry point for cultural norm change.

4. Digital Transformation, Online Misogyny, and Gender Equality

Sweden – Digital Kvinnofrid. A project run by Uppsala Women’s Shelter and the cybersecurity company Sentor. Coordinates schools, parents, and police to address digital harassment, controlling behaviours, and online misogyny. [Digital kvinnofrid - Uppsala Kvinnojour](#)

Sweden - Government assignment to the Swedish Gender Equality Agency to investigate in what ways, and to what extent, girls’ and young women’s life choices and quality of life are affected by the content to which they are exposed on social media. Link: [Sociala mediers påverkan på unga kvinnors livsval och livskvalitet ska undersökas - Regeringen.se](#)

Netherlands/EU – MenABLE. Research-to-practice network countering online gender-based violence and developing educational interventions for boys. ([HELPLINES - MenABLE](#))

Germany – HateAid. Legal and psychological support service for those affected by online abuse, addressing gendered targeting patterns. ([Non-profit organization for human rights on the net — HateAid](#)),

France – Age Verification for Pornography and Deepfake Harassment Law (2024). Introduces legal safeguards against exposure to violent sexual content and criminalises non-consensual sexual deepfakes. ([Article](#))

Germany -The family media guides. SCHAU HIN! Was Dein Kind mit Medien macht. (LOOK! How your child uses media) supports parents and educators with practical, age-appropriate, and up-to-date recommendations for children’s media usage. [Growing up digitally - The family media guide](#)

France – Online Gaming and Respectful **Digital Spaces** (DILCRAH). “Civility and Video Games: Let’s Reinvent the Codes!” Launched in 2022, this initiative tackles toxic behaviour in online gaming—such as sexism, racism, and anti-LGBT hate—through industry collaboration, awareness tutorials, and a youth-informed code of conduct. [Watch campaign videos. More info – DILCRAH](#)

EU – AI Act (2024). Mandates transparency and accountability in algorithmic moderation relevant to misogynistic content amplification. ([High-level summary of the AI Act | EU Artificial Intelligence Act](#))

Netherlands – National Algorithm Register. Ensures visibility of public sector algorithm use to prevent discriminatory or radicalisation-linked outcomes. ([Algorithms - Digital Government](#))

Finland – Media Literacy Week (Digital Component). Teaches youth to recognise manipulative, misogynistic, and extremist online messaging. ([Finland’s Media Literacy Week – reaching people of different ages, languages and all parts of the country. | Medialukutaito Suomessa](#))

France – Digital Safety and Media Education (Ministry for Solidarity, Autonomy and Equality) “Parents, parlons numérique” Awareness Campaign. This campaign equips parents with tools and advice to help children develop healthy, respectful digital habits, especially in relation to online risks such as pornography and peer violence. [Le projet P@rents, parlons numérique | solidarites.gouv.fr](#)

Netherlands – Act4Respect. Campaign using micro-behaviour framing to show how small online actions normalise or disrupt harmful norms. ([Act4Respect](#))

Sweden – The Swedish Media Authority- Support and guidance for individuals, especially youth, on online harassment or abuse. Informing about rights online and offer assistance to those affected. [Utsatthet på nätet - Mediemyndigheten](#)

France – “Je protège mon enfant” **Digital Parenting Platform**. A government platform offering tutorials, advice, and parental control tools to help families navigate media consumption and reinforce digital boundaries. [Je protège mon enfant](#)

Key Insights

Online misogyny and radicalisation are infrastructure-driven, not just cultural; youth need analytical tools, not only warnings, to interpret digital environments; and regulation and education must operate together.

5. Labour Market, Care, and Work-Life Balance

Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland and Denmark – Shared parental leave benefit reforms and father’s quota. Non-transferable parental leave portion that normalises men as caregivers and increases shared domestic responsibility. ([Paid parental leave and social sustainability in the Nordic countries](#))

Germany – “Sorgearbeit fair teilen” Alliance. Coalition of state and civil actors promoting equal distribution of unpaid care work through campaigns and workplace reform. ([BSFT_EN_Flyer_200903.indd](#))

Germany – “Initiative Klischeefrei.” Addresses gendered career guidance and supports schools and employers in preventing stereotyping. ([English | Klischeefreie Berufs- und Studienwahl](#))

Austria and Germany – Boys’ Day. Provides practical exposure to caring professions, expanding boys’ vocational identities. ([English Information | Boys'Day](#))

Spain – The consecutive royal decree-laws on birth and care, have replaced former maternity and paternity leaves. All individuals, regardless of sex or gender, are entitled to a 19 weeks

birth and care leave with the aim to increase the rights of both parents (including same sex parents), encourage men's involvement in care and promote its acceptance in society.

Sweden – Swedish Gender Equality Agency. Report: Analysis of the Gender-Segregated Labour Market: - Conditions for a Broader Recruitment Base in the Welfare Sector. [underlagsrapport-2023-8-analys-könssegregerade-arbetsmarknaden-23-04-27](#)

Norway – Recruitment to Care Professions (UiT). Strategic campaign making male care work socially visible and valued. ([What we can learn from Norway's approach to recruiting men in social care](#))

[UN Women together with UNFPA](#) through the EU funded initiative EU4GenderEquality, has started Fathers' Clubs. Through these clubs, fathers find support and access to resources to empower them to actively engage in child rearing responsibilities and regional programmes such as the [Dare to Care programme of UN Women Arab States](#),

Key Insights

Structural incentives are required to shift care distribution; workplace and vocational systems shape identity as much as home environments; and norms change over time, when caregiving becomes institutionally expected, not optional.

6. Violence Prevention, Peacebuilding, and Security

Denmark – Equal Crisis Centre Access for Male Victims (2024). Ensures support for men experiencing domestic violence while avoiding minimisation of violence against women. A national campaign under the 2023–2026 Action Plan on Partner Violence also targets male victims to raise awareness and promote help-seeking ([Forside - Dialog mod vold](#))

France – Recognition of Children as Co-victims and Perpetrator Centres. Reforms treating exposure to domestic violence as direct harm and expanding mandated counselling for perpetrators. ([Child-friendly justice – perspectives and experiences of children involved in judicial proceedings as victims, witnesses or parties in nine EU Member States](#)) This is what I read but need a link to the actual legislation or regulation instead!

France – “Ne frappez pas” Helpline. Anonymous support line for men wishing to prevent violent behaviour. (["Ne Frappez pas" : Un numéro national pour les auteurs de violences conjugales - RÉSEAU DE SANTÉ SEXUELLE PUBLIQUE \(RSSP\)](#))

Belgium - Organization Touché – Managing Anger and Aggression in Flanders, funded by the Flemish Community, offers individual and group programmes to better manage anger and channel aggression constructively. It also raises public awareness through campaigns, publications, and events promoting “positive aggression.”

Netherlands – Men’s Alliance in Stop Femicide Strategy (2026). National role for men in public messaging and peer accountability against misogynistic violence. ([Gender- en LHBTI+-gelijkheid 2022–2027 | Subsidie | Dienst Uitvoering Subsidies aan Instellingen](#))

Sweden – Gender Coach Programme (Military). Transforms command culture by training officers to recognise and mitigate militarised masculinity models. ([Microsoft Word - Gender Coach.docx](#))

Belgium - Project M – Training on Non-Violent Masculinity in Prisons. A federal initiative, by the organisations Zijn (MoveMen) and RoSa, provides inmates with training on non-violent models of masculinity to prevent recidivism and gender-based violence. Based on Promundo’s internationally recognized H/M/D programme.

Sweden – Relationskompassen (REKO) – Adapting the U.S. “Dating Matters” programme, REKO teaches adolescents about healthy relationships, consent, and peer influence in preventing gender-based violence. It includes workshops, school outreach, and engagement with parents and teachers to foster supportive environments for behaviour change. ([Rapport](#))

Finland – Lyömätön Linja– Finland’s first domestic violence intervention programme for men. Offers individual counselling, group sessions, and workshops on nonviolent communication and conflict resolution. Focuses on transforming harmful behaviours, emotional literacy, and preventing repeated abuse. ([Home - Lyömätön Linja Espoossa](#))

Czechia - Government project on the prevention of GBV. , Gender Equality Department cooperated with NGOs to deliver workshops at schools for students and pedagogical staff on the importance of consent along with training for police on technology-facilitated violence against women.

Belgium - "What if it’s Domestic Violence?" Campaign. Campaign by French-speaking entities targeted men as potential perpetrators by highlighting controlling behaviours often seen as trivial, featuring audiovisual spots and posters designed to spark reflection and prevention.

Council of Europe –The Place of Men and Boys in Gender Equality Policies and in Policies to Combat Men’s Violence against Women - Guidelines. (2023) Defines standards for engaging men in preventing violence while centring survivors’ rights. [1680ac7900](#)

Key Insights

Violence prevention requires shifting masculinity norms, not only penalties; perpetrator programmes are most effective when integrated with social norm change; and security institutions require explicit masculinity-focused reform.

7. Intersectional, Evidence-Based Policy, and Research

Sweden – National Strategy to Prevent and Combat Men’s Violence Against Women (10-year) Framework integrating violence prevention, perpetrator accountability, housing, healthcare, policing, and education. ([informationmaterial-swedens-work-to-combat-mens-violence-against-women-003.pdf](#))

Sweden – Report by Swedish Gender Equality Agency 2024. “Men’s Participation and Responsibility – A Knowledge Review on Promoting Gender Equality and Preventing Men’s Violence Against Women.” ([Rapport](#))

Belgium: Oog voor Jongens – Raising Awareness on Gender Roles for Boys. Supported by the Flemish Community the “Jongens en Mannen” association explores how gender norms affect boys, through dedicated research, aiming to promote awareness of the issues boys face.

EIGE – Gender Equality Index (with male wellbeing indicators). Measures multi-dimensional gender outcomes, including areas where men experience disadvantage. ([Gender Equality Index | European Institute for Gender Equality](#))

Eurobarometer Stereotype Index. – Tracks public attitudes toward gender norms, enabling trend monitoring and targeting interventions. ([Gender stereotypes - december 2024 - - Eurobarometer survey](#))

Eurostat – Comparative Health and Behaviour Data. Identifies gendered health patterns such as male under-utilisation of healthcare and risk behaviours. ([Overview - Health - Eurostat](#))

Sweden – SOU 2014:6 (Men and Gender Equality). Foundational report mapping structural dimensions of masculinity and inequality. ([Män och jämställdhet - Regeringen.se](#))

UN Women / Unstereotype Alliance Global Attitudes Studies. Cross-country evidence on masculinity ideals, identity anxieties, and normative change readiness. ([the levers of change 2022.pdf](#))

EU ESF+, Erasmus+, Horizon Europe. EU funding streams enabling scaling of gender-transformative research and practice.

Nordic Council of Ministers. Masculinity in Nordic Gender Equality Report.. Examines how concepts of men and masculinity are used and how problems, causes and solutions are constructed? Based on current scientific discussions, perspectives are provided on previous initiatives and a basis for how research can guide Nordic gender equality policy going forward. Link: [Masculinity in Nordic gender equality 2019-2024](#)

Key Insights

Intersectional analysis and monitoring are essential to avoid reinforcing dominant-group male experiences as universal; longitudinal research is critical to capturing norm change over time; and policy must be adaptive to evolving digital, economic, and identity conditions.

8. Key international networks

MenEngage Alliance is a global network of over 1,100 organizations and individuals across more than ninety-two countries, dedicated to engaging men and boys in advancing gender justice, human rights, and social justice. Rooted in feminist principles, the alliance works to transform patriarchal masculinities and dismantle harmful gender norms by fostering inclusive collaborations and promoting accountability to women's rights and LGBTQI movements. <https://menengage.org/>

White Ribbon Campaign is the world's largest movement of men and boys working to end violence against women and girls, promote gender equity, healthy relationships, and a new vision of masculinity. Ribbon Campaign initiatives have been organized in over sixty countries around the world. Among its many calls to action, White Ribbon asks men to wear white ribbons as a sign of their pledge to never commit, condone or remain silent about all forms of gender-based violence. ([White Ribbon | Gender Equity & Violence Prevention](#))

The Men's Development Network is a non-profit organisation headquartered in Waterford, Ireland, with the key focus on being leaders in promoting change and equality within society. Approaching our work from a transforming masculinities and gender-justice perspective, we have over twenty five years of positive engagement with men, boys, women's organisations, and other like-minded partners. ([Men's Development Network - "Better Lives for Men; Better Lives for All"](#))

Engaging men and boys in gender equality is critical for creating inclusive, equitable, and resilient societies. Comprehensive policies must integrate masculinities-informed approaches into education, labour, care, health, digital environments, violence prevention, and peacebuilding.

Intersectional, evidence-based strategies that combine individual interventions with institutional reforms and structural change can foster positive masculinities, enhance men's wellbeing, and support sustainable gender equality outcomes.

EU institutions and Member States must collaborate to mainstream these approaches into governance, research, funding, and community programmes, ensuring that men and boys are co-creators and beneficiaries of a more equitable society, producing sustainable societal change across the EU.

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