



Exchange of good practices on gender equality

The role of men in
gender equality
Finland, 28-29 October 2014

Summary Report

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Summary of the exchange seminar

The exchange of good practices held in Helsinki, Finland on the 28th-29th October 2014 focused on the role of men in gender equality. In addition to the exploration of the approach in the host country Finland, there were presentations from associated countries Austria and Iceland on measures they have adopted and a further 13 countries participated in the debate.

The first day of the seminar was arranged into three separate, though interrelated sessions reflecting the wide-ranging nature of the seminar focus. The first session looked at *mainstreaming gender equality policy for both women and men* from the Finnish perspective. The focus of the second session was solutions *supporting men in taking up care responsibilities* and received inputs from host country Finland and the two associated countries, Austria and Iceland. The third session was on *overcoming segregation in education and occupational choices* from the Finnish perspective. The first section below provides a summary of all three sessions as presented by each of the three respective countries. Subsequent section provides a concise summary of the main points raised by each of the 13 participant countries, with following sections summarising the debate and drawing overall conclusions.

1. The good practices of the host country and associated countries

1.1. Finland

By international standards Finland has a high level of gender equality in a context of a typical Nordic model of a supportive welfare state with relatively low social divisions. This equality is found in many aspects of life and while the country's history has played a part in attitudes towards the roles of women and men in Finnish society, it is also the direct result of gender mainstreaming and state support for women, exemplified through the availability of universal child day care. There is also a commitment from government (and other stakeholders) to promoting gender equality through ongoing policy developments and in some case backed up by legislation. This dual approach means that consideration of gender equality runs through the political and administrative processes (the basis of mainstreaming) thus providing the best chance that appropriate attention will be given to ensuring equality issues are properly addressed. However, Finland has still more progress to make in gender equality. In particular employment is often highly gender segregated especially in the private sector where management continues to be male dominated.

Finland is also characterised by the high degree of involvement of men in the development of gender equality. For example the Men's Subcommittee which is part of the government machinery has been credited with improving such aspects as parental leave quotas among other gender equality goals pursued by the Finnish government over the past decade or more. This thinking comes from the view that gender equality applies to both genders and this means also taking into account the views of men channelled through various men's organisations and through specific actions.

Over the past 18 months the working group on men's issues in gender equality has been tasked with identifying concerns for men and how they might be tackled under the Government Action Plan for Gender Equality. The composition of the group was all-encompassing and interim and final reports have been published containing proposals for future actions. One recommendation, for example, focuses on the necessity to recognise that men need a more diversified image, breaking away from traditional stereotypes. More specific points for attention emerging from the working group include the following:

- There should be more gender-sensitive statistical information on all levels and areas of society;
- The educational system should be under the regulation of equality laws including a requirement to evaluate the gender effects it has;
- Work against the social exclusion of men should be supported and further developed starting with work with young boys and youths;
- There is a need for more education for the health care professionals in maternity care and social services so that they are better equipped for fathers and boys;
- Male and female labour market participation should be re-evaluated and gender segregation in employment should be tackled with policy and specific measures instead of projects.

However, having set out some of the challenges, turning good intentions into effective policy and practice remains a challenge.

The second session focused on presentations of parental leave policies in Finland, and the two associated countries. Finnish parental leave policy has a long history and contains a range of schemes. An entitlement to some parental leave for fathers has been in place since 1978 and subsequently enhanced with provisions for transferable parental and home care leave (1985), part-time parental leave (2003), father's month in various guises (2003-2013) and more lately a combination of paternity leave and the father's month to a maximum of 13 weeks, introduced in 2013. But entitlement to such leave does not necessarily translate into fathers actually taking it. There remain some issues in the workplace where the context (such as the attitudes of management and work colleagues) may deter participation and individual family circumstances which may view the role of fathers and taking time off in different ways. Nevertheless, the Finnish approach of gradually increasing the statutory entitlement provides an effective way of helping maximising take up.

There was also a presentation from Finland on overcoming segregation in education and occupational choice. Data reveals that women tend to be better educated at all levels with, for example, half of women aged 30-34 having a degree compared to just one third of men. Part of the gender difference in educational achievement is attributed to the variations in the way girls and boys are treated from an early age, with stereotypical imagery permeating many aspects of their lives. This is still the case in education and there are current attempts to eliminate this from teaching materials and the core curriculum taught in schools. The need for greater attention to gender equality extends to teacher training. In response, the Ministry of Education and Culture is currently preparing a new act on early childhood education which follows other measures that clearly recognise that the process of changing attitudes must start at the earliest ages. Furthermore, gender consciousness needs to

permeate all learning environments so that young people can move through the education system without gender stereotyping.

1.2. Austria

In Session 2 there was a presentation from associated country Austria on its approach to encouraging more men to take leave shortly after the birth of their child with the so-called '*Papamonat*' or '*Daddy's Month*'. The situation in Austria is markedly different to that in the host country with the prevalence of a more conservative society where the notion of the 'male breadwinner' still prevails. This is evidenced in the labour market where there remains a large gap between the participation rates of women and men, some of which is attributed to the traditional parenting roles that are still common. There has been some form of parental leave entitlement since the early 2000s but only in 2008 was a new leave scheme introduced following a consultation process. This consisted of three different types of regulation summarised as follows:

- A long-term model (30 + 6 months for both parents with a six-month quota for either parent) based on a daily flat rate of EUR 14.53 (or EUR 436 per month);
- A medium-term model (20 + 4 months) based on a daily flat rate of EUR 20.80 (EUR 624 per month);
- A short-term model (15 + 3 months) based on a daily flat rate of EUR 26.60 (EUR 800 per month).

The offer of choice was seen as an encouragement for men to take some parental leave according to their circumstances, though criticism was levied that the long-term option in particular with its low flat rate failed to help women back into the labour market. In the case of all three options, take up by men has been disappointing.

The introduction of '*Daddy's Month*' in 2011 in public sector employers at national and federal levels (though other organisations can voluntarily offer it to their employees) was squarely aimed at encouraging fathers to take a more active role in parenting shortly after the birth of their child (it must be taken within the first two months of birth). Fathers are entitled to take one month's unpaid leave (though social insurance contributions are covered) which may then be combined with other existing parental leave entitlements later on. Part of the benefit is seen as awareness-raising among fathers of their parental responsibilities and options but after three years of operation the take up (at around one in eight of the eligible employees) has been relatively low. Furthermore, to date there has been no evaluation that would show whether it has had an effect on the take up of other parental leave options. The main problem with the policy appears to be that it is unpaid and this is likely to be why take-up by fathers is so low. As a result there is some discussion about extending the scheme to the private sector but with a requirement that wages (but probably at a flat rate like the other parental leave provisions) are paid during the month.

1.3. Iceland

Associate country Iceland also gave a presentation in Session 2 on its parental leave system. Its context is one more closely allied to that of the host country and is acknowledged to have the smallest gender gap in the world, though even so there was felt to be no room for complacency. Providing for parental leave has a comparatively long history in Iceland with the first attempts made in the 1990s, though the debate on how women and men can share their parental responsibilities started well before this date. The period also saw the issue of the reconciliation of work and family life given wider attention from policymakers, the social partners and other stakeholders. This is particularly relevant in a country with high levels of labour market participation for both genders and comparatively long working hours and both factors have influenced subsequent policy. Furthermore, companies with more than 25 employees must have a gender equality plan in which issues such as equal access to parental leave are covered.

Major revisions to the legislation in parental leave were made in 2000 which gave much more support and the further changes mean that the current provision has the following features:

- Nine months leave entitlement in total based on a 3/3/3 system with each parent entitled to three months each which is not transferable between fathers and mothers, with a further three months that either parent can take;
- The sharing of the leave entitlement between the parents is regarded as compulsory;
- The system is funded through an insurance levy on employers and 80 per cent of current pay is covered (subject to an upper limit) and with minimum payments given to those not employed at the time of taking the leave;
- All fathers have the same entitlement regardless of their relationship with the other parent – the focus is on the needs of the child to have care from both parents;
- The self-employed are also entitled to the parental leave.

The system has wide support from all the major stakeholders and is considered to be very flexible. Since the end of the economic crisis, take up by fathers has been high, with 84 per cent of applications now from fathers and majority of fathers take at least three months leave. But it is not without its criticisms and even its flexibility can be seen as a weakness. Also, take up by fathers who do not live with the mother is lower and it suggests a need for better information and advice for such groups of fathers.

2. The situation in the other participating countries

In addition to Finland, Austria and Iceland, the following 13 countries participated in the seminar: Czech Republic, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain and the United Kingdom.

In the **Czech Republic** there has been some progress on most aspects of gender equality, though the country still mostly falls short of the EU average. The comparatively large gender pay gap is a symptom of the fact that virtually all early years childcare is carried out by women. While the government has given attention to improving gender equality, there has been little overt mention of the male perspective until in 2011 the government issued the *Starting Points for Equal Opportunities Strategy for Men and Women 2011-2015*. For the first time this included a horizontal requirement that men should actively participate in the promotion of gender equality and this theme is expected to be continued in a follow-on strategy covering the period 2015-2020. For parental support there is twin-track approach with a paid parental allowance that can be paid for a maximum of four years and parental leave that offers job protection for up to three years for those taking it. Recent changes have brought greater flexibility to the policy, though this does not directly address the issue of encouraging more fathers to take up care of their children and so the effect on gender equality in this respect has been modest. More effective has been the work of NGOs in promoting the role of fathers in childcare, some of which has been supported directly or indirectly by government.

The labour market in **Denmark** is typical of the situation in other Nordic countries with high levels of female participation (also with a high proportion of women working in the public sector) and strong childcare provision. Children are guaranteed a place in public day-care as soon as parents return to work which, for most, is just before the child's first birthday. Since 2000 gender equality permeates government policy and is led by a government minister specific to that role, an independent centre for knowledge on the subject and a gender equality claims board to deal with violations brought to its attention. There have been attempts at focusing the gender equality debate on the views of men (notably the *Knowledge About Men* initiative of a leading think-tank) but through a lack of commitment and funding, this has not been fully developed. Current policy on parental leave has evolved over the past few years and now offers both parents a total of 12 months, six of which is on full pay and the remaining six paid equivalent to unemployment benefit levels. The first four weeks before birth and 14 weeks after is reserved for the mother and the remaining amount can be shared between each parent, but two weeks must be used by the father close to the birth of the child. Apart from this provision there are no specific measures to persuade fathers to get more involved with childcare and in some senses efforts in this direction might be interpreted as interference in the private decisions of parents.

In **Ireland** the process of improving gender equality in most aspects of life is embodied in the *National Woman's Strategy 2007-2016* under the responsibility of the Department of Justice and Equality. However as the name of the strategy implies, it fundamentally takes the perspective of women without any significant focus on the role of men and so tends to focus on how the women can be helped with their family role (including childcare) rather than focusing on how men can take a more equal share in the domestic responsibilities. Nevertheless there is a growing

recognition that a cultural shift is needed and this includes improving information in the education sector to help reduce the gender imbalance in subjects studied and in subsequent career choices. In terms of parental leave, since 2013 there is an entitlement to a total of 18 weeks per child which can be taken by either parent and which is in addition to the long-established maternity leave provisions. The parental leave is unpaid and there are no paternity leave provisions and this means that the focus still tends to be on women having the primary responsibility for childcare with relatively few men taking up the parental leave option. Furthermore the economic crisis reduced the impetus for efforts towards greater gender equality under the pressure of fewer jobs and falling public expenditure.

To fully understand the situation in **Italy** it is necessary to appreciate the influential cultural and social context of the family. In effect this means that the family unit is central to providing material and emotional support for immediate and extended family members and this is inevitably reflected in the way in which gender equality has developed. While a strong family culture can provide an effective social support framework, it is often focused on women and this can mean them losing out in the labour market, as evidenced by the comparatively low participation rate for women. Breaking through this cultural barrier has proved difficult though some progress was made in 2012, for example, with the adoption of legislation to improve the gender balance among local and regional legislatures and executive bodies. Legislation has been in place for many years on the provision of maternity leave but there has been only scant attention to the involvement of fathers in childcare. In 2000 new legislation specifically applied to each gender separately under which men had the option of taking up to 10 months off work until the eighth year of their child, paid for at 30 per cent of salary until the child is three years old and then unpaid. However take-up by fathers has been low with just 6.9 per cent of those eligible in 2011 and most of these take only a short period off work. Outside the legal impetus there have been various initiatives to try and break down barriers to getting more fathers involved in the care of their children and there is growing pressure from groups representing the rights of fathers.

In **Latvia** the basis for a mainstreaming approach to gender equality was embodied in the 2001 *Concept Paper on Gender Equality Implementation*. Subsequent measures were affected by the economic crisis but culminated in the latest action plan covering the period 2012-2014, though the issue remains subject to political support which can vary. In terms of a specific targeting of men, after accession to the EU in 2004 there were some awareness-raising measures on gender equality and how men perceive their roles, particularly in terms of work and family life. However currently men do not figure specifically in gender equality policies and there is little going on outside the legislative framework to address their role. This is less the case in the role of fathers in parenting (though there is still an implicit assumption that mothers will be the primary carers) and the current legislation provides for a father to take up to 10 days paternity leave to be used not later than two months after the birth of the child. This is recompensed at a rate of 80 per cent of the person's income after tax and take up has gradually increased to the extent that in the first half of 2013 over two in every five fathers took advantage of the leave. Further measures came into force in October 2014 which were more favourable to employed parents (mothers and fathers and whether working full or part-time) who are now entitled to various enhanced provisions up to when a child is 18 months old.

There have been various legislative and other measures to develop gender equality in **Lithuania** but the record on gender mainstreaming in policy making, institutional

structures and the workplace remain underdeveloped. Particularly since accession to the EU in 2004 there has been a growing interest in the issue but invariably this examined gender equality from the female perspective and so has contributed little to raising awareness among men of their role in achieving equality. However the role of fathers in parenting is to some extent recognised in the *Law on Sickness and Maternity Social Insurance* which provides for maternity leave, but also paternity leave of one month to be taken at any time until the child's first birthday. Parental leave is also available and can be taken up to when the child reaches two years old with the first year fully compensated if the parent decides not to return to work, or partially compensated if the parent returns to part-time work in the second year. But take up of both fathers' leave and parental leave is low for men and is largely attributed to the widespread belief that women should be the principal child carers, with men providing the traditional role of 'breadwinner'.

The terminology used by government for equal opportunities in **Luxembourg** ranges over a number of titles such as equality and work, equality and society and equality and youth and men's perspective on gender equality is not explicit and only addressed directly in parental leave policy. However there is a long history of equal opportunity policy in the country starting with the creation of a specific ministry for the promotion of equality of opportunity for women and girls (*Ministère de l'Égalité des Chances*) in 1995 which has continued to develop its remit. In 2011 the ministry supported the setting up of a NGO, InfoMann, with the express purpose of raising the awareness of the issues affecting men and boys and highlighting their role in the development of gender equality. InfoMann offers a range of activities including advisory and counselling, awareness-raising, conferences and seminars, and facilitating men's groups for reflection on the issues affecting them. But despite this overt attention to the male population, there is little evidence that the information gathered is filtering through to policy. In terms of parental leave, fathers and mothers are entitled to take up to six months full-time or 12 months half-time leave within the first five years after their child's birth but the entitlement is not transferable between parents and is subject to some other conditions. Parents taking leave are recompensed at the rate of 50 per cent of their salary plus a lump sum payment of EUR 1,778 for those taking full-time leave for six months and EUR 889 for those taking half time leave for 12 months. Typically the take-up rate for fathers is low at around 25 per cent (mostly for the part-time option) compared to 75 per cent for mothers (who mostly choose the full-time option).

By some international measures **The Netherlands** is performing comparatively well in equality of opportunities such as in care and the labour market, though less well in, for example, positions of power where men still tend to predominate. At the national level there have been some signs that suggest an increase in the level of debate on the role of men in gender equality, though this has tended to be indirect such as in the recent parliamentary attention given to the role of marginalised men in gender equality. This led to policy that set up 'father centres' and fatherhood and participation programmes to persuade men to get more involved in bringing up their children. Outside government there has been some debate in the media on the role of men in both gender equality and in civil society more generally. Fathers are entitled to take two days (generally unpaid) paternity leave and this is likely to be extended by a further three days subject to parliamentary approval. The parental leave entitlement is equal for fathers and mothers with up to 26 weeks that has to be taken before the child is eight years old and around 27 per cent of men and 49 per cent of women take up the option. This leave is generally unpaid except where there are provisions for recompense in collective agreements and since these cover a

high proportion of workers, it is estimated that around 56 per cent receive some payment.

The debate in **Poland** on the role of men in gender equality tends to just focus on fatherhood and so virtually all policy developments in the equal opportunity sphere are focused on women. The traditional view of the man as the breadwinner and the woman as responsible for childcare and the home still tends to predominate and this has meant that the focus of policy is in two key areas – tackling domestic violence and encouraging men to take a more active role in bringing up their children. In response to the latter, in 2013 a reform of the Labour Code has not only seen an extension of voluntary paternity leave to two weeks (fully paid), but also introduced parental leave of up to 26 weeks duration and which can be transferred between parents according to their own wishes. The parental leave entitlement can be taken in up to three parts provided no part is shorter than eight weeks and with the 14 weeks of mandatory maternity leave, six weeks of optional maternity leave (which either parent can take) and six weeks of additional maternity leave (also which either parent can take), it means that there is a total of 12 months potential leave at parents' disposal. One obstacle to take up can be the insurance record of the mother (which is mostly related to the period of working) which regulates who is eligible. Overall, take up by fathers of either paternity or parental leave is low and new efforts are underway (principally through NGOs) to encourage fathers to play a bigger part in the care of their children.

Portugal is considered to have a comparatively conservative approach to gender equality which means that the role of men tends to be seen as the traditional breadwinner model, with the care of children and the home mostly in the hands of women. Nevertheless, the situation has greatly improved in the post-revolution period and with the impetus derived from membership of the EU. In this formative period women's rights dominated the equality agenda but this has grown into a more expansive approach to gender equality and there are two commissions looking at the issues, one from the perspective of the labour market and the second with a much broader remit covering other issues. There will also be efforts to gather the views of men and women (through focus groups for example) and the intention of the government is for this to lead to a new White Paper on gender equality.

The past decade has seen a higher profile for gender equality issues in **Romania**, though progress in setting up an effective infrastructure since EU accession has been chequered. The various instruments from government such as legislation on equality of opportunity and the two rounds of strategic planning (2006-2009 and 2010-2012) have tended to see the role of men in gender equality from two main perspectives – in gender violence and in the labour market. This is partly because the traditional approach of the woman's perspective has predominated and there is little direct involvement of men in the key debates on gender equality. Furthermore, the economic crisis meant that there was a loss of momentum in moving forward on gender equality. In the area of parental care there has been more activity with a number of NGOs involved in promoting the role of fathers. Current provision for parental leave for children less than one year of age means that parents taking advantage of it can receive three quarters of their previous net earnings (based on the prior 12 months earnings) with the option of a further 12 months but paid at a flat rate. Also important in the decision of parents is the availability of childcare, which is considered to be inadequate and so reliance is placed on the family support mechanisms (grandparents, for example).

In **Spain** there has been little attention at a national level directly addressing the role of men in gender equality and this is echoed in the latest strategic plan on equality of opportunity covering the period 2014-2016 where the only direct reference to men is in the context of efforts to better reconcile the private, family and working aspects of life. In some regions there are examples of more focused activity, with the most developed considered to be the 'Gizonduz' Basque Government programme of men for equality. There is a range of measures in place to encourage fathers to take a more active role in parenting and, following the birth of a child, the mother must take six weeks maternity leave (which is fully recompensed). But after this there is an option to take a further 10 weeks (unpaid) which is transferable in total or in part between the parents, though the most recent figure (2013) on take up show that just 1.7 per cent of fathers participated. More successful has been the statutory right of fathers to two weeks paternity leave on full pay which has attracted a take up of over 80 per cent and this will be extended to four weeks from 2016. The difference between the paternity and parental leave options is that the former is paid and the latter is not and this greatly influences the incentive to participate.

A strong commitment to gender equality has been a feature of **United Kingdom** government policy since the late 1990s and has remained broadly intact through changes in government and the austerity measures arising from the economic crisis. This commitment is evident across the four constituent home nations, though with different emphases and with Scotland perhaps having the more interventionist approach to family policy. The debate on the role of men in gender equality takes its focus from issues such as the low number of male teachers in primary education and males working in childcare, plus the plight of absent fathers and access to their children. Much of the activity is centred on NGOs and other bodies and is generally seen as beyond the scope of government to change through legislation and hence the emphasis on awareness-raising and reshaping attitudes. This is particularly evident where the perceived problems affecting boys are concerned, such as educational under-achievement and participation in crime and anti-social behaviour. Currently paternity leave for fathers consists of two parts, the first consists of one or two weeks fully paid 'ordinary' leave, which can be followed by 'additional' paternity leave of up to 26 weeks but which is unpaid and is transferable between the mother and father (or co-adopters). Take up by fathers of the paternity leave option is relatively low and partly reflects the lack of recompense.

3. Summary of the discussions at the exchange seminar

In general the participant countries felt that the seminar highlighted the need for a focus on the role of men in gender equality, but at the same time recognised that there is great variation in current practice on this and in the ability of countries to move forward. In one aspect of the discussions, the role of men in parenting, all countries present had some provisions for this enshrined in legislation, though with great variation in such aspects as the amount of leave, payments and flexibility in its use. Nevertheless, take-up of such leave by men was generally low in all but a few countries.

The presentations by Finland and Iceland in particular focused on how to engage men more in the debate on gender equality and this meant setting up forums comprising a cross-section of male representatives in order to better understand their concerns and views. Both countries are recognised for their comparatively

enlightened approach to gender equality which is predicated on a typical Nordic model of a welfare state with relatively low social divisions. This has created a supportive environment for the high labour force participation rate of women and a smaller pay gap than most other countries, though neither country would suggest there are grounds for complacency in improving gender equality. But this relative success comes at a price and the generous policies in such areas as maternity/paternity and parental leave, plus child care, would be difficult to replicate in some of the countries at the seminar, many of who have been severely affected by the economic crisis with attention to gender equality in some cases moving down the agenda of government.

The prevalence of some degree of paternity and/or parental leave policy in all countries at the seminar was seen as a positive, though the sometimes large variations in structures were less encouraging. Apart from the length of time for such leave (which varied considerably), there was much support for a flexible approach where both parents could decide how it should be used and the policy in Iceland of three segments each of three months with a 'use it or lose it' approach was much admired, as was the level of financial compensation available for those that took it up. There was less support for any compulsion for fathers to take either paternity or parental leave, though plenty of support for trying to structure policy as much as possible towards encouraging men to participate in looking after their children. Here the so-called 'Daddy's Month' initiative in Austria was viewed with interest, though even this comparatively generous incentive for fathers to take a more active role close to the birth of their child had failed to attract a high take-up rate.

The discussion on take-up rates of existing policies to encourage more fathers to participate in the care of their children often referred to the role of employers in creating the right conditions for this to happen. While many employers took an enlightened approach to this, there was evidence that others did not and it appeared to be a particular problem in small and medium-sized enterprises where the temporary loss of staff is likely to be more disruptive. Even the prevalence of legislation allowing paternity and parental leave was no guarantee that fathers would find their employer receptive to them taking time off, which ultimately affected take-up rates. Attitudinal change was a key to improving the workplace environment for fathers taking time off, but in some instances it was felt that a tighter legislative regime might help focus the minds (and subsequent actions) of some employers.

In the seminar there was much discussion on the importance of awareness-raising of gender equality for women and men so that attitudes can be changed from the earliest point. This means starting with the education system (even from early years learning) and permeating the curriculum and careers information, advice and guidance to break down traditional gender stereotypes. There was also recognition that men need to be better represented in child-minding providers and in primary schools. In general terms government has a pivotal role in mainstreaming gender equality throughout its spheres of influence and operation but at the same time there was felt to be a crucial role to play for NGOs and other agencies. There were plenty of examples among the participant countries where NGOs were often the prime movers in efforts to change attitudes and so it was felt that they should form part of any gender equality strategy.

4. Conclusions

It was clear from the seminar discussions among the 16 countries represented that there were sometimes wide differences in the role of men in gender equality and in efforts to improve the situation. However there were examples of good practice among some of the countries which provides an evidence base for moving forward, though due to resource constraints and the time it can take to develop and implement policy, it is likely to be an incremental activity. The activities involved with moving forward fall under three main areas for action, as described below:

1. *Mainstreaming gender equality programmes for both women and men* – this requires a commitment from government to permeating gender equality throughout all activities. It also means recognising the need to move away from targeting just women in gender equality and to include men, recognising their roles and rights. This may involve developing forums for men in order to better understand their concerns and in awareness-raising activities of their role as fathers, for example, as well as in other areas such as household tasks, elder care, etc., many of which are currently dominated by women;
2. *Supporting men in taking up care responsibilities* – while all countries had some form of paternity and parental leave provision, there were wide variations in its extent and the conditions under which it can be taken. Best practice here was seen as offering a degree of flexibility where leave can be shared between parents but with adequate recompense to encourage take up by both. Improving the take-up rates by fathers also requires changes in societal attitudes in some cases and this will take time, but the role of awareness-raising in its widest sense is paramount here, and employers need to be encouraged (through legislation if necessary) to recognise the role of parents and be responsive to their needs where parenting and childcare is concerned;
3. *Combating segregation* – changing attitudes and eliminating traditional gender stereotyping was considered fundamental to bringing about lasting improvements in gender equality. This needs to start at the earliest levels and includes the education sector in what is taught in the curriculum and in the career counselling and guidance. In many countries there also needs to be more males in child care and in primary school teaching. The labour market gender segregation must be addressed through a combination of awareness-raising and legislative measures to ensure gender equality in the workplace.