



# FOCUS

Fostering Caring Masculinities

## Norwegian National Report

by Mona Larsen-Asp and Ingrid Rusnes  
The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud



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Anti-Discrimination Ombud



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### Norwegian National Report

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Likestillings- og  
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# 1. Introduction

The project Fostering Caring Masculinities (FOCUS) aims to examine and improve men's opportunities for balancing work and private/family life in order to encourage the preparedness of men to take over caring tasks. To reach this goal the project focuses on companies' framework conditions to perceive and include men as actors and target groups in equality policies.

FOCUS is a project involving five countries: Germany (Dissens e.V.), Iceland (Centre for Gender Equality), Norway (The Equality and Anti-discrimination Ombud), Slovenia (Peace Institute) and Spain (University of Girona).

The project is funded through EU's Community Action programme to promote Gender equality between men and women. FOCUS is connected to one of the prioritised themes of the program, "the role of men in the promotion of gender equality, in particular the role of men and fathers in the reconciliation of work and private life". The project was initiated by the Norwegian Ministry for Children and Family Affairs which also co-funds the project.

## 1.1 *Work life balance*

According to Fiona Williams (2003) we should not ask ourselves how care and the needs for care are implemented in the work, but how work can be involved and implemented into care. This line of thinking, acting and implementing the work/life balance aims at family-friendly policies as well as at work policies enabling men and women to share responsibilities, caring and family life. In this regard traditional gender roles are challenged, which opens space for rethinking the concepts of men, women, femininity and masculinity. Moreover it changes the perception of caring as a gender-related burden and an undervalued activity in society. It enables us to think of it as beneficial for the public sphere.

Europe is currently characterised by a new type of work life where dual-career adaptations are more common along with increased requirements for flexibility. Responsibility for care is becoming the normal situation for working people. The stereotype of the husband as the main breadwinner is in decline in Europe and is gradually being replaced by ideals of active fathering and equal sharing of care responsibilities (Brandth and Kvande 2003, Holter 2003, Puchert et al. 2005).

At the same time Europe is facing huge demographic challenges, which make care an even more important topic. These challenges are related to family reconciliation and fertility, but also to health care and care for elderly people. It is neither desirable (from a gender-equality perspective) nor probable (from the perspective of ongoing changes) that care maintains the traditional female bias.

In some parts of Europe we can see positive changes among men: their private wishes, obligations and attitudes are undergoing great change, but work life is not keeping pace. Men still live in a state of preparedness for their jobs, women in a state of preparedness for the home (Lilleaas 2003). Hegemonic and traditional gender role models are still effective among men and women, in partnerships and, most of all, in the work sphere (Puchert et al. 2005).

EU-research (e.g.: Work Changes Gender, cf. Puchert et al. 2005) shows that male employees are more family- and care-oriented than earlier. However, development trends

in the post-industrial society appear to support the fact that some groups of men still are attracted to the breadwinner model. Many men let their jobs take precedence over the rest of their life. There are many reasons why men still linger in the sphere of work life. Men's strong identification with their work seems to be a cultural and symbolic solution that has its roots in traditional man's ideals where the father was the breadwinner. Men in general work more overtime compared to women. The breadwinner conduct can be understood as a structural phenomenon that is maintained in society and work life. The breadwinner model refers to deep-rooted masculinity and gender standards.

We have in this project chosen to focus on work life. In particular, we look at how work life affects men's opportunities to practise caring masculinities and examine ongoing shifts in men's work environment in Europe. We also focus on how the work environment interacts with changing masculinities and how this affects opportunities for gender equality. The project places emphasis on organisational cultures, and more specifically on the role of internal innovators in the process of gender changes.

Even though we start in the labour market and inside the companies, we see the work sphere and the private sphere as deeply inter-related. Changes in the labour market will necessarily affect the private sphere. This project aim to acquire more knowledge of what causes gender equality to remain only an ideal rather than something the managers put into action. With the intervening in companies and in the dialog with experts and innovators, the project aims to initiate change and encourage managers to move from an idealistic gender-equality discourse to a more action-oriented practice.

## ***1.2 National reports***

This report is one of five national reports. These national reports provide a brief introduction to the social conditions in each partner country before the analysis of the workplace studies.

Each of the five national partners has carried out qualitative workplace studies in two different companies, one private and one public. In these studies we have interviewed male employees and managers with emphasis on three main topics. These are their private lives, their experiences pertaining to work and their ideas concerning organisational measures for balancing work and private life.

The national reports describe the findings from those studies and suggest possible measures that can be developed on the organisational level within a company. The innovative aspect of this project is the most important one. Our main goal is to help provide good guidelines for what companies can do in this area.

In addition to the national reports there is a report on the European dimension of the project, written by adviser Mari Teigen at the Institute for Social Research in Oslo. This report compares the findings from the five national reports.

A website has been set up, where you will find more information on project partners, our final conference and links to the different reports. When the guidelines are developed, you will also find these posted online ([www.caringmasculinities.org](http://www.caringmasculinities.org)).

## ***1.3 The Norwegian report***

In this report we present the findings from the work place study performed in two Norwegian companies, the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (hereafter NRK) and



Microsoft Norway (hereafter Microsoft). On the basis of qualitative interviews with a total of eleven informants in these two companies we analyse men's relation to work and family life and the balance between the two.

The studies were designed with the intention of integrating action work in its method. This perspective took the form of a wish to emphasise concrete ideas for measures, how one could promote a form of creative brain storming in the interviews and the possibilities for suggesting concrete ideas for measures in the companies that took part in the study.

With the wish to prioritise innovation and an action perspective as a point of departure we have chosen companies on other criteria than representativeness. The companies we looked for should have the potential to do something in the field of men, working life and care. We looked for two companies where there was a certain focus on this issue already.

NRK and Microsoft have some differences with regard to work organisation, the employees' attitudes to the workplace and organisational culture. At the same time they share a number of common traits. They are both knowledge-based companies, both are based on work with technology and both recruit mainly workers with higher education.

In the analysis of the interviews we will discuss a number of general tendencies that emerged in the informants' experiences with work, family and the balance between the two. We will also discuss how differences in the two companies affect the men's possibility to balance work and private life.

## **2. Conditions of the work sphere**

Women's participation in work life has traditionally been, and still is, a decisive factor in order to achieve the goal of full gender equality. From the middle of the 1970s and up until the present Norwegian women's participation in paid work has increased immensely. Today there are almost as many women as men who have paid work. But despite the equality in employment there are still big differences between women and men when it comes to working hours, wages, sectors and pension benefits. Statistics for 2005 show that 43% of the women and 13% of the men work part-time. The Norwegian labour market is among the more gender-segregated markets in Europe. This means that in certain sectors, industries and occupations men are in great majority, while women are in great majority in others. In occupations where women are over-represented wages are lower than in occupations where men are over-represented.

The Nordic model with strong union influence has ensured that employees are guaranteed certain basic rights. But still many experience it as difficult to combine work and family. Time pressure is a key concept here. Both men and women must make choices on a daily basis concerning how to balance work and family. The framework for fathers and mothers is quite similar, but choices and practices often differ.

### ***2.1. Legislation on working conditions***

Working conditions are regulated by several different laws, but first and foremost by the Working Environment Act. In addition the Gender Equality Act and the Welfare Act are important frameworks for employees' possibilities of combining work and family. The Norwegian system is to a large extent characterised by regulation of working conditions through agreements between employer organisations and unions.

Normal working hours in Norway are defined as a maximum of nine hours per day. According to the law a normal working day is 8 hours. Most jobs in businesses that are covered by tariff agreements have a working week of 37,5 hours. The Working Environment Act limits the maximum number of working hours per 7-day week to 48 hours. For shift and rotation work the maximum is nine hours a day and 38 hours per 7-day week.

The act defines a maximum limit on overtime of ten hours per 7-day week and 200 hours per year. At the same time businesses may demand more overtime than this if the employees themselves have agreed to it. Overtime is extra working hours ordered by superiors and should be financially compensated.

The employer's access to dismissing employees is also regulated by the Working Environment Act. Dismissals must have just cause. If an employee feels that the dismissal is unfair, s/he has the right to remain in the position until the case has been settled legally.

The Working Environment Act instructs employers to adjust working conditions in such a way that pregnant women can continue to work. These adjustments may relate to the work itself, technical appliances, working hours etc. It is illegal to dismiss employees on the grounds of pregnancy. Pregnant employees who are sick in connection with their pregnancy have the right to sick leave and sickness benefits (National Insurance Administration).

If mothers return to work while they are still breast-feeding they have the right to up to one hour off for breast-feeding every day. In principle this hour is unpaid unless this is regulated through local agreements. In the public sector this is paid time.

The Working Environment Act gives fathers and mothers the right to work part-time and have flexible working hours as long as this does not constitute a considerable disadvantage for the employer. The same goes for the right to be exempt from overtime. Furthermore, parents have the right to be away from work with pay when children under the age of 12 are sick. Every employer has the right to 10 such days a year. If the employee is a single parent s/he has the right to 20 days. If the employee has more than two children s/he has the right to 15 days a year with pay per year (Source: LOV-2005-06-17 no 62).

### **National machinery on gender equality**

The Gender Equality Act came into force in 1979. The act prohibits gender-based discrimination and aims to promote equality between women and men. It concerns all areas of society, except internal matters in religious communities. The act allows for positive discrimination when the aim is to promote gender equality.

The Ministry of Children and Equality has the main responsibility for the work with the government's gender equality policies, but all ministries have responsibility for gender equality in their areas. For instance, the ministries are responsible for integrating a gender perspective in the national budget. The national machinery on gender equality in Norway consists of the Equality and Anti-discrimination Ombud (hereafter LDO) and The Equality and Anti-discrimination Tribunal in addition to the Ministry.

LDO was established on January 1 2006. The ombud enforces the Gender Equality Act, the Discrimination Act and the equal treatment section of the Working Environment Act. LDO handles complaints of offences, gives information about legal rights, provides aid and guidance in questions relating to the promotion of gender equality and the fight against discrimination. At the same time the ombud works to increase gender equality and to uncover and identify conditions that work against gender equality ([www.ldo.no](http://www.ldo.no)).

The Equality and Anti-discrimination Tribunal tries appeals on decisions made by the Equality and Anti-discrimination Ombud or decisions which the tribunal itself asks to have placed before it. The decisions of the tribunal are binding for both parties ([www.diskrimineringsnemnda.no](http://www.diskrimineringsnemnda.no)).

### **Duty to report on status and measures**

According to the Gender Equality Act and the Accounting Act companies of a certain size have a duty to report on gender equality in their annual report. This duty means first of all that the company has to account for the actual gender equality status in the company. This can be done by detailing gender data of employees. Examples of statistics that can measure the degree of gender equality include: wages, working hours, leaves of absence, sick leaves, increases in competence, recruitment, promotions and the distribution of women and men in different job categories. On the basis of this statistical material companies are required to report on current measures and any plans for work on gender equality.

## ***2.2. Legislation on parental leave***

In 1993 as the first country in the world Norway established parental leave with four weeks reserved for fathers. For births after July 1 2006 this father's quota is extended so that six weeks' leave are reserved for fathers. The purpose of this has been to strengthen the contact between fathers and children and to enable a more active father role in parenting.

In addition there has been a wish to increase gender equality for fathers and mothers in relation to care work.

Legal rights in relation to paternal leaves are regulated by the Working Environment Act and the National Insurance Administration Act. The rules for parental leave for Norwegian employees in connection with birth and adoption give parents the right to leave of absence for a total of 54 weeks. The mother must have the three first weeks before and six weeks after birth. The father must take six weeks (the father quota). The rest of the parental leave period can be shared between the mother and the father. If fathers choose not to take the father quota of the parental leave period the family loses these six weeks. The father quota cannot be transferred to the mother.

If the woman has worked at least six of the last ten months before giving birth and her annual pension-yielding income corresponding to at least half the basic amount of the National Insurance (1/2 G) she has the right to paid parental leave, the so-called birth allowance. The birth allowance is covered by the state and limited to six times the basic amount of the National Insurance (6 G), which for 2006 is NOK 377,352 (1G amounts to 62 892 NOK).

- Parental leave: Used to describe all leave in connection with birth.
- Compassionate leave: The first two weeks after the child is born the father has a right to leave of absence. This right can also be claimed by another care person in case the father is not part of the child's life. This kind of leave is not compensated by the state. A lot of fathers receive half or full wage compensation for the first two weeks from the employer. Such a right is defined in many tariff agreements.
- The father quota: Six weeks of the parental leave period are reserved for the father. The father quota is paid leave of absence if mother and father have earned the right to birth allowance.
- Both parents have the right to 12 months' unpaid leave of absence in connection with birth (National Insurance Administration).

Parents have to choose if they want 54 weeks with 80% pay or 44 weeks with 100% pay.

Men's right to birth allowance is granted on the following conditions:

- He must have held paid work at least six of the last ten months before his leave of absence.
- His pension-yielding income must be at least 1/2 G.
- The child's mother must hold paid work, be in full-time public education or sick. If the mother works part-time, i.e. less than a 75% position, the father's birth allowance will be reduced accordingly. If the mother works 75% or more, the father has the right to full birth allowance (National Insurance Administration).

If the mother does not have the right to birth allowance, a lump sum is paid at birth. The sum is fixed by Stortinget (the Parliament) and is at present NOK 33,584 (last regulated January 1 2003). In cases where the mother has not earned full birth allowance rights, the father's rights are limited. The father can take leave of absence for 29 weeks with full pay or 39 weeks with 80% pay (National Insurance Administration).

Self-employed have limited rights to birth allowance.

The Norwegian legislation allows for flexible use of the parental leave period through the so-called *time account*. Parental leave can be part-time (maximum 50% leave). Both

parents have the right to use the time account, either simultaneously or consecutively (National Insurance Administration).

When parental leave was established in Norway, the motivation was the mothers' health. Today the focus of reforms in the legal rights to parental leave is primarily related to a wish to strengthen the ties between fathers and children (Leira 1996).

### **2.3. Statistics on employment and working hours**

Norway has a working population of 2.3 million people between the ages of 16 and 74, 47% of which are women. In 2005 69% of all women and 76% of all men in this age group held paid work (Statistics Norway). In the age group 25-64 77% of all women and 85% of all men hold paid work (Lohne and Rønning 2005). At the same time there are big differences between Norwegian women and men when it comes to choice of line of work, working hours and wages.

In 2005 an average paid working week was 38.1 hours for men and 30.3 hours for women. There has been a significant reduction in men's working hours since 1970 when the average was 44 hours. In the same period women have reduced their number of working hours by one and a half hours a week. The changes in men's working hours can partly be explained by the fact that there were two different reductions in working hours during that period. In 1976 a 40 hours working week was introduced and in 1987 the 37,5 hours week was introduced. For women the reduction is primarily due to the fact that more women have taken employment and that a lot of women work part-time (Statistics Norway 2006).

Most women who work part-time are mothers of young children. Part-time work is used as an instrument for women's accommodation of work to family life. Men do not use part-time work in this way. Most men who work part-time are students or older employees (Statistics Norway 2006). In total 98,000 work part-time involuntarily, which means that they want to work more. Of these 74% are women and 26% are men.

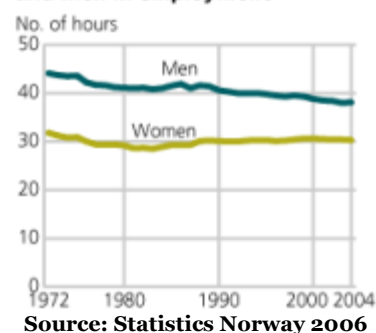
Men dominate in the statistics when it comes to overtime. 24% of Norwegian men work overtime, while the corresponding number for women is 17% (Rønning 2006). If we measure overtime in number of hours men's share is three fourths of the total. Around 16% of all overtime is not compensated with money or time off. 80% of this type of overtime is done by men (The Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions 2006).

In the period from 1980 to 2001 mothers of young children have increased their participation in paid work by 30% (Lohne and Rønning 2005). But still children have a great effect on women's participation in worklife. We see this both in the figures for part-time work and the number of women who leave the labour market completely when their children are young.

**Economic activity rate for women and men. 16-74 years**



**Weekly hours of work for women and men in employment**



In the group of mothers where the youngest child is over three years old work participation does not vary much with the number of children. The work participation ratio for these women is 81-85%. The group of fathers in the same situation shows greater variation. 88% of fathers with only one child over three years of age have paid work. The corresponding number for fathers with three children is 96%.

Among parents where the youngest child is under three years of age the tendencies are somewhat different. In this group the work participation of fathers does not change with the number of children. 95% of these fathers work. It seems as if the number of children has greater significance for mothers. 69% of mothers with one child under the age of three hold paid work. The corresponding number for mothers with two children is 54% (Kitterød 2005).

In other words, the number of children has the opposite effect on work participation for women than for men. Mothers work fewer hours the more children they have while men work more hours. The traditional breadwinner role is still strong for fathers. According to Statistics Norway's analyses of parents' working hours 78% of all fathers have longer hours than mothers. In 11% of the couples the mother has longer working hours than the father. In the remaining 11% mothers and fathers have the same number of working hours (Kitterød 2005).

The total number of working hours for parents increases in relation to the age of the youngest child. Interestingly, the number of working hours increases when couples have their second child, but decreases again with the third child. At the same time working hours for mothers and fathers are different. The biggest effect can be seen on mothers with three children where the youngest child is under the age of three. These mothers have less than 15 hours of paid work a week.

Parents have been asked if they would like to reduce or increase the number of working hours. Only 3% of mothers and 2% of fathers say that they would like longer hours. 14% of mothers and 20% of fathers want shorter working hours. Most are content with the number of working hours. 70% of fathers and 45% of mothers are content (Kitterød 2005).

When the wish for change in working hours is compared to the individual's and the couple's total number of working hours, the results become all the more interesting. Fathers who have a lot of overtime (those who work 45 hours or more a week) to a larger extent than women in the same situation want to reduce their number of working hours. The numbers are 36% of the fathers and 29% of the mothers. In couples where both work a lot the mother and the father's wishes for a reduced number of working hours are very similar. In couples that have a total of 80-89 working hours a week 32% of both fathers and mothers want to work less. Among couples that work more than 90 hours a week 40% of the mothers and 43% of the fathers want to work less (Kitterød 2005).

## ***2.4. Statistics on wages for men and women***

Men earn more than women in all industries. On average for all industries full-time-employed women earn 87% of what men earn. The statistics show that the wage differences between the genders are larger between employees in the private sector than in the public sector. Moreover, in the public sector there is a smaller difference between women's and men's wages in the council and county administration than in the state administration (Statistics Norway).

The main reason for the large wage differences between the genders is that women work in other sectors of the labour market and have different occupations from men. The male-dominated sectors and occupations have a higher wage level than female-dominated sectors and occupations. In addition, men and women are placed in different kinds of positions, and men more often benefit economically. Some of the wage differences between the genders can also be explained by the fact that men to a larger extent than women receive compensation for overtime. The wage difference between the genders is amplified by the fact that men more frequently receive different kinds of benefits and bonuses (Statistics Norway 2006).



The average monthly salary for full-time employees was NOK 30,600 for men and NOK 26,500 for women in the third quarter of 2004. Only 19% of working women have an annual income over NOK 300,000. The corresponding number for men is 45% (Statistics Norway 2006).

## ***2.5. Statistics on executives and boards***

Women are still very much underrepresented in leading positions and on boards and committees. Furthermore, management positions occupied by women in the labour market are often in female-dominated occupations and these positions are frequently associated with less influence and lower status. 77% of the Chief Executives Officers in the private sector are men and 23% are women. The figures for the public sector are a little better. Among the executives in the state administration 65% are men and 35% are women (Statistics Norway).

In the boardrooms of the largest Norwegian corporations, the publicly listed companies, there are only 18% women. Increasing the number of women on Norwegian corporate boards is an expressed political aim. From January 1 2006 publicly listed companies are required to have at least 40% of both genders on their boards. This requirement also applies to state-owned companies. Limited companies are not included in this act. As of January 1 2006 state-owned companies had 40% women on their boards. Publicly listed companies had 16 % women. Among chairmen in all businesses 14% are women and 86% are men (Statistics Norway, Ministry of Children and Equality).

In other words the Norwegian work market is gender-divided both horizontally and vertically: the higher up in the organization, the fewer women there are. This is an example of the fact that power is unequally distributed among men and women in Norway.

## ***2.6. Statistics on gender-specific types of employment***

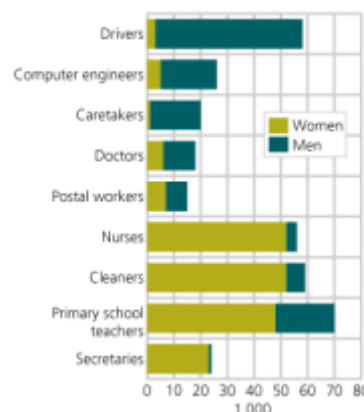
The horizontal segregation of the labour market is preserved through young peoples' choice of education and occupation. Young boys and girls in Norway choose traditional professions and careers. The choice of education leads to a situation where the majority of women end up in less well paid occupations than men.

Only in two industries is there approximately equal representation of women and men. These are distributive trade, hotel and restaurant businesses and financial services, insurance, business services or real estate operations (Statistics Norway 2006).

Men dominate the private sector. The public sector is by and large a female workplace led by men. Women make up two thirds of the 886,000 employees in the public sector (Statistics Norway 2006).

There are a few bright spots. The gender distribution among students who complete elite educations is encouraging. Among medical students there are 57% women and 43% men, among bachelors of commerce there are 39% women and 61% men and among law students there is equal gender distribution (Likestillingsbarometeret 2005).

No. of women and men in employment, by selected occupations. 16-74 years. 2004



Source: Statistics Norway 2006

## 2.7. Statistics on parental leave

Around 80% of all parents who have the right to birth allowance choose 54 weeks' parental leave with 80% pay (Ellingsæter 2005). Three quarters of all Norwegian mothers have the right to birth allowance (Statistics Norway 2006). The number of live-born children in 2005 was 56,756 (National Insurance Administration).

71% of fathers on paternity leave in 2004 used the four-week father quota. Only 17% of the men took more than the father's quota (Likestillingsbarometeret 2005). The length of men's leaves has not increased notably in later years. The corresponding numbers for 2000 were 11%. The numbers from the National Insurance Administration show that it has become the norm that fathers take their allocated quota of the parental leave while the mothers take the rest. According to a survey conducted by Norsk Gallup the reason why fathers do not take a larger portion of the leave period is that mothers are unwilling to give up what they see as "their" part of the leave period. Other surveys show that men are expected at the workplace not to take more than the obligatory father quota (Likestillingsbarometeret 2005).

The time account scheme is in little use. Less than 5% of parents use this option. Relevant explanatory factors include complicated rules, lack of information, practical problems with the combination of work and leave and the fact that one has to negotiate a solution with the employer (Ellingsæter 2005, Brandth and Kvande 2003). Another possible explanation, on which no research has been done, is the lack of kindergartens for children under 1 year.



### 3. Conditions of the non labour sphere

Gender equality at home is an important prerequisite for gender equality outside the home. Over a number of years it has been an equality policy goal in Norway to increase men's participation in the private sphere and to create changes in men towards more equal parenting. However, there are still great differences in the time that women and men spend on housework and care for children. On average, women spent just under four hours on household work in 2004 and took out most of the parental leave. The same year, men on average spent two and a half hours on household work and took out little or no more than the father's quota.

Gender equality at home is also a matter of power relations between the parties in a household. Where there is an unequal distribution of power between women and men who live together, the risk of use of physical and psychological violence against the partner increases. Today, violence in close relationships is recognized as a global problem and one of the greatest obstacles in the work to achieve real equality between women and men.

The Norwegian government now focuses on men and care, and a white paper on the male role has been announced.

#### 3.1. Family law

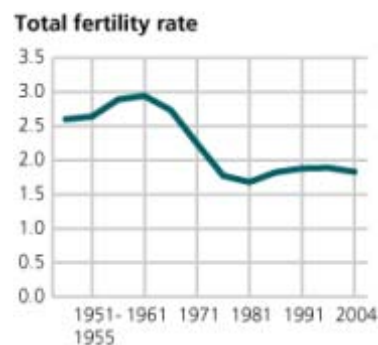
Custody laws, practice in divorce cases and financial support arrangements for child families influence men and women's possibilities as parents and also the equality between them. In recent years some legislative changes have been introduced to strengthen men's rights as fathers so that they now are more equal to the mothers.

Monthly child benefits are paid to all parents until the month the child turns 18. The system and rate is equal for all. Single providers receive extended child benefits. The rates for ordinary child benefits for 2006 are 970 NOK. Single providers may also receive support for child supervision.

#### 3.2. Statistics on reproductive arrangements

On average Norwegian women give birth to 1,8 children. This figure has been stable over the last years. Over the last decades, the age when Norwegian women and men have their first child has risen in step with the length of their education. The average age of first-time mothers is now 28 years. Men become fathers for the first time when they are around 31 years old (Statistics Norway 2006).

The share of childless women sank from 20% for women born around 1910 to 10% for those who were born around 1940. After this the share of childless women has risen again and for women born around 1960 it is 13%. The corresponding figures for men born around 1960 are much higher, as much as 25%. This indicates that some men have children with different women, while other men never become fathers. In the article "Fewer men become fathers" Kari Skrede, research director at Statistics Norway, argues that women have become more critical in their choice of men as fathers. There are great differences between men from different social groups. Men with higher education, high income and



Source: Statistics Norway 2006

high-status professions have much greater chances of becoming fathers and to live together with their children than men with lower social status (Skrede 2004).

Norwegian men and women also get increasingly older before they marry. On average, women are 30 years old when they get married and men just over 32 years. The number of marriages has remained relatively stable over the last five years, and in 2005 the figure was 22,392. The same year 11,040 couples were divorced and 12,800 couples were separated. More than 1 out of 5 Norwegians over 20 years lives alone (Statistics Norway).

In 1993 Norway introduced a new law on partnership between gay and lesbian couples. In 2005 200 new partnerships were contracted, and a total of 2,823 people were registered partners (Statistics Norway).

In 2004 75% of all Norwegian children lived with both their biological parents, 20% lived with one of the parents and 5% with one of the biological parents and one step parent. The same year, 60% of Norwegian children lived with married parents and 15% with cohabitating parents (Statistics Norway).

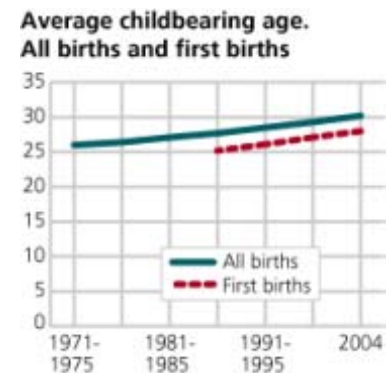
Statistics Norway's surveys of the distribution of parental responsibilities and access to the children indicate that fathers have taken a more active part in caring for their children. Still only a few fathers have sole custody (4%), but the share of fathers who share custody with the mother has risen from 29% in 1995 to 42% in 2002. Still the mother has sole custody in 53% of the cases (Sætre, 2004a and 2004b).

The strengthening of the father's right to parental leave through the father quota is assumed to have a positive effect on the father's position with regard to custody after a break-up. The time they have spent with the child during their leave has a positive effect both on their own confidence with regard to caring for children, their security in their role as a father and their status as present fathers. These are important prerequisites for equal rights with regard to parental responsibilities (Jensen 2003, Sætre 2004b).

### **3.3. Statistics on education among men and women**

Women are in a majority among students in Norwegian universities and colleges. Six out of ten students are women. Teacher training, educational science, social and health studies and sports studies are female-dominated studies. Science, engineering and different types of crafts are dominated by men (Statistics Norway). When we look at current data on young people's educational choices, there are few indications that the gender-segregated labour market in Norway will change significantly in the foreseeable future.

In the article "*Et kjønnsdelt utdanningssystem*" Arnesen and Støren write that in the efforts towards a more equal society it is important to understand the processes that frequently lead young men and women to continue to make traditional educational choices. A widespread perception is that the continuing gender segregation in education is connected to the socialization of boys and girls, i.e. that is how we raise boys and girls. Støren and Arnesen point out that girls often explain their educational choices by the fact that they want to work with people and would like to help others. Boys much more rarely give such reasons, whereas they more often say that a high income is important to them (Arnesen and Støren 2003).



Average Childbearing age of women.  
Source: Statistics Norway 2006

The gender distribution among professors is still very unequal. Men hold 84% of all professorships. Mathematics and science have the lowest share of female professors, with nine percent. There is a slight predominance of female research associates or university or college lecturers. Among doctoral scholarship recipients the female share is now 46 percent (Likestillingsbarometeret 2005).

The female share among those who complete their doctor's degree is 39%. In a historical perspective we see positive tendencies. In 1980 the female share of those who completed a doctoral degree was only 10%. More women than men earn a doctor's degree in agricultural studies and veterinary medicine, while more men than women obtain doctorates in mathematics, engineering and sciences. In the humanities, social studies and medicine the gender distribution in completed doctorates is relatively even (Likestillingsbarometeret 2005).

### **3.4. Statistics on child care**

Full kindergarten coverage is an important measure to increase equality between women and men. It is necessary to provide safe care for children when parents are at work. The figures for 2004 show that 95,700 children had a kindergarten place in private kindergartens, while 125,200 children had a kindergarten place in public kindergartens. In 2005 the real kindergarten coverage for all children of kindergarten age was 72%, an increase from 69% in 2003 (Statistics Norway). Since the 1980s full kindergarten coverage for all who want a place has been an expressed political goal that has not yet been fulfilled.

Norwegian services for care of children under school age consist of private and public kindergartens and facilities for child care in private homes, either by nannies/au pairs who look after children in the family's own home or by childminders who look after the children in their private homes (Leira 1996).

Most public kindergartens are open between 07.00 and 17.00. Some private kindergartens have longer opening hours (Ellingsæter 2005). According to figures from Statistics Norway (Statistics Norway), 69% percent of the country's kindergarten places are full-time places (2004).

Recently a maximum limit on how much kindergartens may charge parents has been introduced. Per 1 January 2006, this maximum price has been set at NOK 2 250 per month (Ministry of Education and Research).

### **3.5. Statistics on men and women in political positions**

The State has a special responsibility to promote equal opportunities, rights and obligations for men and women. This is because the Stortinget (The Norwegian Parliament), the Government and the State decide over, govern and administer society's resources for the benefit of the community. Equality has come a long way within the State, but not far enough.

In autumn 2005 there was an election to the Stortinget and Sámi Parliament. The Stortinget election resulted in the election of 64 female and 105 male representatives for the period of 2005-2009. The female share constitutes 38%, while the male share is 62%. For the last Stortinget elections the female share has been relatively stable. In the Stortinget period 1997-2001 the share was 36%, while in the period 2001-2005 it was 37%. However, if we look at the female share in politics in a longer historical perspective, the increase has been significant. In 1965, only 8% of all representatives in the Stortinget were

women. The statistics show that there are great differences in the share of female representatives between the different parties (Likestillingsbarometeret 2005).

In the period 2005-2009, 51% of the representatives in the Sámi Parliament are women. Correspondingly, the female share in the last Sámi Parliament period was only 18%. The Sámi Parliament has also got its first female president now (Likestillingsbarometeret 2005).

Local politics has a direct influence on our everyday lives. It is important that both women and men are equally represented here so that both genders have the same real influence where political decisions are made. Despite the fact that women constitute half the population, they are in minority in local politics. 83% of all municipal council chairpersons are men and 17% women. In the country's municipal councils there are on average 36% women and 64% men (Likestillingsbarometeret 2005). The figures illustrate lack of equality, and that men still are in clear majority in local politics.

In 14 of the country's 433 municipal councils the female share is lower than 20%. The municipality with the worst gender balance is Luster in Sogn og Fjordane, with a female share of 17%. 131 of the country's municipalities have 40% of each gender represented in the municipal council. Nine of the municipalities have more than 50% female council members. The municipality with the highest share of women is Skjerstad in Nordland county with 61% women (Likestillingsbarometeret 2005).

### **3.6. Statistics on time use**

Men spend 2 hours and 41 minutes on household work every day. Women spend 3 hours and 56 minutes. Even though the gender differences in the time spent on household work are great, there has been a significant equalization over the last 30 years. In 1971, the time men spent on household work was only 15% of that of women. In 2000 the corresponding figure was 41% (Statistics Norway 2006). The equalisation is less due to men increasing their efforts than to the fact that women have reduced the time spent on household work (Likestillingsbarometeret 2005).

The statistics show that there are relatively significant differences in the type of household work that women and men do. Women spend one hour more a day on traditional household work than men. Women are responsible for 85% of the total time spent on laundry. Men also spend significantly less time on cooking, laying the table and serving food. Men are responsible for 32% of the total time spent on the preparation of meals. When it comes to dishwashing men are responsible for 28% of the time. The time spent on shopping groceries and services is relatively equally distributed between the sexes. Among the activities that come under household work, there is particularly one area where men spend more time than women. That is maintenance and repairs. However, maintenance and repairs constitute a small part of the total household work. 22% of all household work that men do is spent on maintenance. For women, the corresponding figure is 7% (Likestillingsbarometeret 2005).

The gender role pattern in time use among parents of young children is more evident than for other men and women. On average, mothers of young children spend close to 6 hours per day on household work, while fathers spend approximately 3 and a half hours per day. The clear gender differences in time spent on household work is connected with the fact that women to a greater extent than men reduce their career work when they have children (Likestillingsbarometeret 2005).

## 4. Selected companies

When we set out to do the workplace study we contacted several companies, both private and public. We inquired about their interest in participating in the project. Microsoft was contacted based on knowledge of their efforts to encourage male employees to take longer parental leave ("the daddy package"). Thus they were an example of a Norwegian company that already has taken a conscious initiative to provide men with greater opportunity to spend more time with their family. NRK was contacted because of their new life phase policy initiative. A greater focus on the dilemmas that men encounter in trying to balance work and family life can be integrated in this new initiative.

### 4.1. Short presentation of the companies

#### 4.1.1. NRK

NRK is the national public broadcasting company in Norway. They run two TV channels and three radio channels in addition to publishing news on the Internet. NRK is a publicly owned company that is financed through the general broadcast receiver licence. The broadcast receiver licence is paid by all Norwegian residents who own a TV-set.

At NRK we interviewed employees and managers in the Regional and news division (NYDI). NYDI has more than 1000 employees spread over 50 locations in Norway and 12 abroad. NYDI produces news for radio, television and interactive media.

Some figures for NRK

- Total number of employees: 3440
- Full time employees: 1843 men and 1294 women
- Part time employees: 193 men and 343 women
- Temporary employees: 188 men and 24 women
- Top level management: 7 men and 2 women
- Mid level management: 162 men and 115 women
- Company board: 6 men and 5 women. The Chairman is a man.
- Unions: 3000 of the employees are members of a union. Five unions are represented in the company: Journalistlaget, Tverrfaglig forening, Kringkastingens Landsforbund, Musikerforbundet and Tekna.
- Average employment time at NRK is 14 years.

#### **Existing measures to promote caring masculinities in NRK**

Most of the employees in NYDI work shifts. This means that they have fixed, but varying working hours. Most of the work in the division must be done on the company's premises. The possibility of a home office is therefore limited to a few professions. These are mainly executives and administrative employees. The same is true for the possibility of flexible working hours. Many executives and administrative employees have such flexible structures and do not report work-hours.

Possibilities of accommodated shifts:

- Possibility of accommodated shifts for parents of young children
- This is based on an initiative from the individual employee. He or she must ask their closest superior for such an arrangement.
- Accommodated shifts are not a formal right, but a solution that many managers in the division use to make it easier for employees to balance work and family.

- In reality, the arrangement has been most useful for mothers of young children, since fathers rarely ask for this type of arrangement.

Schemes for parental leave:

- Like other public companies NRK has good schemes for parental leave.
- Economic compensation for salary if it is not completely covered under the birth allowance limit of 6G for both fathers and mothers. Applies to the entire birth allowance period.
- Fathers receive full payment for the two weeks they are entitled to leave after the birth of a child (compassionate leave)
- No specific initiatives to encourage fathers to take longer parental leave.
- No specific initiatives to encourage male managers to take long leave to act as role models.
- Good job security when the employee returns to work after leave.

Focus on mobility:

- Both the personnel manager and other executives point to mobility as a measure to promote good balance between work and family.
- By mobility is understood the possibility to change jobs, department or division in order to get other and more family friendly working conditions.
- Several of the informants at NRK explain that they have chosen to take the position they have today because of working hours, less travel etc., or that for a period they changed jobs for this kind of reason.

Kindergarten facilities:

- The company has two kindergartens.

Life phase policy:

- NRK focuses on a life phase policy as an element in the development of the company's personnel policy.
- The life phase policy is organised by allocating a fixed sum to this type of projects every year. Departments in the various divisions may then apply for funding for concrete projects oriented towards employees' life phases.
- For 2006 the company particularly focused on two target groups/life phases: employees over 60 years and pregnant women. With this as a starting point we believe that FOCUS will be a useful supplement for these two target groups.
- At the same time, the personnel managers use the life phase approach to think more broadly with regard to other life phases. They also consider making life phase and special related needs a separate topic in the company's annual employee performance appraisal interview.

#### **4.1.2. Microsoft**

Microsoft is a private company involved in software marketing, sales and customer support. The company is part of the multinational corporation of the same name. Since Microsoft is a relatively small company, we chose to recruit informants from the entire organisation.

Some figures for Microsoft:

- Total number of employees: 174
- Full time employees. 125 men and 49 women
- Part time employees: none

- Temporary employees: 0 men and 5 women
- Top level management: 13 men and 5 women
- Mid level management: 4 men and 8 women
- Company board: 2 men and 1 woman. The Chairman is a man.
- Unions: The number of employees that are organised in unions is unknown, and according to the management it is so low that trade union representatives are not a reasonable option.

The number of employees has doubled in size in the period 2003-2006. Out of a total of 174 employees, only 38 have worked there for more than five years (i.e. from six to 15 years). 66 employees have worked for Microsoft for less than two years, and 70 employees have worked there between two and five years.

### **Existing measures to promote caring masculinities in Microsoft**

With the exception of a few jobs (receptionists etc.) all employees at Microsoft have flexible working hours and the possibility of a home office. It is quite common that most of the working hours are spent at the customers' premises. Many of the employees spend only one working day a week at Microsoft's offices. The rest of the working days they either work at customers' premises or from their home office. The fact that they have flexible working hours in practice means that they do not report working hours either. At Microsoft the employees can work anytime and anywhere as long as they have a portable computer and are available on the telephone. As the analysis will show, this affects the working conditions for the employees and their possibilities to balance work and family life.

Schemes for parental leave:

- Targeted initiatives where Microsoft encourages fathers to take more parental leave through the "daddy package". In the long term the goal for the company is that both female and male employees should take six months leave.
- Economic compensation for salary if it is not completely covered under the birth allowance limit of 6G for both fathers and mothers. Applies to the entire birth allowance period.
- Fathers receive full pay for the two weeks that they are entitled to compassionate leave after the birth of a child.
- Targeted initiatives to encourage male managers to take long leave (i.e. more than the father quota and a maximum of six months) to act as role models.

Focus on flexibility:

- The flexible work structures are seen as the most important measure to promote the balance between work and family life by both employees and executives.

Cooperation with the non-governmental organisation MOT:

- Since the flexible work structures places a heavy responsibility on the individual employee to set limits, the company has entered into cooperation with the non-governmental organisation MOT.
- The purpose of this cooperation is to raise employee awareness of the need to set limits at work. More specifically, the cooperation consists of two annual seminars where the focus is on limit setting.
- Some information about MOT: The main work of the organisation is directed at children and young people and is concretised in pedagogical programmes for junior secondary school and upper secondary school, sports, culture and leisure time activities. Moreover, the organisation cooperates with kindergartens, primary schools and work life. The organisation's goals: *"Individuals who are conscious and*

*confident to make and defend their own choices”, “An environment where individual choices and differences between people are accepted”, “An environment where people make each other valuable and significant” ([www.mot.no](http://www.mot.no)).*

Kindergarten facilities:

- The company has no kindergarten

Other:

- There were attempts to run a vacation club where employees could bring their children to work during school holidays. The idea was to employ/hire people who could look after the children and provide them with a programme of activities. Initially, this idea was well received by the employees, but when the vacation club was organised there were few entrants. The scheme was therefore discontinued.

## **4.2. Key informants**

Both at NRK and Microsoft the contacts for the workplace study were the personnel managers. These were Bjørn Hopland, HR-director of Microsoft, and Unni Buer, who is personnel manager of NYDI. As contacts they contributed information about the companies and helped us get in touch with the first informants. After this contact was established, we used the so-called snowball method to recruit the remaining informants, i.e. one informant suggested other employees who could be of interest, and we then invited them to participate in the study. After each interview we asked for new suggestions about relevant informants. The snowball method is a good way to avoid a narrow sample of informants.

The steering committee decided that in each of the workplace studies there should be a sample of informants where executives, trade union representatives and ordinary employees should be represented. Furthermore, men with children and full time working partners should be prioritized.

In total we got five informants at Microsoft and six at NRK. Out of these eleven informants, ten were men. The one female informant was an executive at NRK. Since this study focuses on men’s experiences, her interview is only used as a source of information about the organisation.

To preserve the anonymity of the informants, we have given them fictitious names and use only two employment categories, executive and employee.

Key informants in NRK:

- Christer, executive
- Fredrik, executive
- Dag, executive
- Erik, employee
- Birger, employee

Key informants in Microsoft:

- Ingvar, executive
- Gaute, executive
- John, employee
- Helge, employee
- Kjetil, employee

All the key informants have and live together with children. Some also have children who live with them either part of the time or only live with their mother. All the informants are married and live in heterosexual relationships. Both the informants and their partners have higher education.



About the informants at NRK:

- Three out of five informants have executive functions, but only two of them have personnel management responsibilities. One of the informants is a trade union representative.
- Four out of five informants work full time. One informant works 75%.
- Three of the informants are under 40 years old, one is between 41 and 60 years, and one informant is over 60 years old.
- On average they have worked at the company for 16 years. On this point there is considerable variation. Service duration varies from seven to more than thirty years.
- Three of the informants have partners who work full time, one has a partner who works part time, and one has a partner who is unemployed.

About the informants at Microsoft:

- Two of the informants have executive functions.
- One of the informants is under 40 years old. The other four informants are between 41 and 50 years.
- On average they have worked at the company for eight years. Service duration varies from two to eleven years.
- Three of the informants have partners who work full time, and two work part time.
- Since Microsoft does not have trade union representatives, this group was not represented among the informants.
- All informants work full time.

The informants' income level is high compared to the average income in Norway. The informants from Microsoft have a very high income. All the men earn more than their partners. However, many of the partners also have high incomes compared to the national average.

## 5. The workplace study

### 5.1. Findings from the interviews

With the exception of one interview, all interviews were conducted at the informants' workplace. The planned duration of the interviews was approximately two hours. None of the interviews lasted shorter than this, some lasted longer. All the informants had a lot to say about the topics that were raised during the interviews and had reflected on the balance between work and private life.

We mainly focused on topics connected with the balance between the informants' work and their role and daily life as fathers. But we also raised topics related to the men's private life in a broader sense and how they draw the limits between work, family life and their personal time e.g. for hobbies and friends.

Before the interviews the informants had answered a questionnaire with questions related to their age, marital status, profession, education, number of children and what caring responsibilities they had. In addition, we asked about time use connected with different types of activities such as housework and care for children. We also asked some questions about the informant's partner, such as age, education and participation in work life.

We need to point out that the informants use the concept of *overtime* in a different way than the formal definition referred to in chapter 2. When the informants talk about overtime, they talk of all working hours exceeding what they perceive as the regular working day (7,5 hours). Our analysis of overtime uses the informants' concept and not the more formal definition.

#### 5.1.1. Work life

##### Loving your job

*"You know, it's my childhood dream to work at NRK. Here I get to practice all my hobbies at once. Well, except golf, then. It's a challenging and exciting job."* (Dag)

The informants at both companies express great enthusiasm for their job. For instance, informants at NRK emphasised how working at NRK as a cultural institution is an important motivating factor in their work, and that this pride can compensate for what they perceive as a low income level compared to the industry in general.

*"NRK is now down to 43rd place among Norwegian media companies when it comes to salaries. People work here because of the status, and not because of the paycheck."* (Fredrik)

The pride in working for NRK can act as a glue to retain employees in their jobs and may be an important factor when employees choose to continue in their jobs instead of changing to a higher income job in competing businesses.

*"My job is kind of a hobby, you see. I don't get to think much in terms of visions when I am at work, so I usually do that at home in the evening. Then I often sit and think with my PC in front of me. My family probably doesn't think of me as present at those times. I usually do it one night a week and sometimes at our cottage. I don't think of it as work, but as a kind of brain exercise. You know, there are many people who work with programming who spend their free time playing computer games. I*

*don't do that, you know. Instead I develop visions and ideas for work. But what I fiddle around with on those occasions are different aspects of my job than all the routines that I deal with every day at work. I develop concepts. And that's useful both for Microsoft and for me.” (Gaute)*

Employees who see their job as a hobby or as a passion will regard long working hours and great workloads differently from those who do not have such a passionate relationship to their job. It is more difficult to establish clear boundaries at work when you also see it as your hobby.

*”Amazing! My job is my hobby. Microsoft is a great place to work. I have flexible working hours and great work tasks. I am very happy in my work! (...) Both me and my wife sometimes work at home in the evening. After the kids have gone to bed, that is. Then we often sit on different sides of the living room table and work. In those cases I define it as work. At the same time, my job is so closely tied to my hobby, which is computers. So it's not always easy to separate between work and free time. For instance, occasionally I sit and work with stuff just for fun. Perhaps refine something that I've made at work. I do it because I want to and not because it'll be used by a specific customer. Then I don't define it as work. But if it turns out good, I'm happy to give it to customers later. So that's in the intermediate stage between work and hobby.” (Helge)*

If love for work becomes boundless or if it becomes a norm in the company where you work there is a risk that this will make it more difficult for employees to set clear boundaries between work, free time and family life.

### **Flexibility or shift work**

Amongst the informants we find two different kinds of organisation of work time, shift work and flexible working hours. Both these ways of organising work time can be said to strengthen men's possibilities of balancing work and family life. Shift work at NRK creates clearer boundaries between work and private life because working hours are more limited and more predictable than in the case of flexible working hours. On the other hand, shift work presents some obstacles to accommodating the needs of the family, for instance it may be difficult for the employee to be flexible and pick up children in kindergarten. When NRK also has both night and weekend shifts, which many people feel interfere with the time spent with children and family, it demonstrates that shift work may be an obstacle to a good balance between work and private life. Moreover, the informants at NRK report that the shifts are not always predictable. Even though the day shift is supposed to end at 17.15, it may take much longer because a difficult news story has come up.

*”Rotation in itself is not a family friendly arrangement. There's a lot of night and weekend work. But I try to accommodate individual needs. At the same time there's a limit to how many people can have such specially tailored arrangements, you know (...) many of those who have kids transfer to other departments. Both women and men. They transfer to departments with more family friendly working hours and ways of organising work (...) I think you can continue working here in this department, but not if both parents are on rotation. In that case, I don't think it'll work.” (Christer)*

On the other hand Microsoft has flexible working hours, which in the most extreme form means that an employee can work anytime and anywhere. The informants at Microsoft perceive the company as family friendly in itself solely based on the flexible arrangements regarding working hours and work place.

*"I feel that I have a good balance. Work is very flexible. I can do as I want. For instance it is easy for me to take my kids to the doctor or to parents' meetings. That's because my job allows me to organise my own time. I don't have to be at the office a specific number of hours a day. And in addition I can work from home. After all, the most important thing is that I get the job done. I don't have to be physically present at the office."* (Helge)

This flexible organisation of working hours can also be found at NRK. All the informants in executive positions at NRK had this kind of arrangement. Fredrik says the following about changing from a job where he was working shifts to a job with flexible working hours:

*"Now I take my job home with me. I often get phone calls after work. But at the same time I have more freedom. And I have flexible working hours. I usually come to work at nine and can leave whenever I like. That enables me to have peaceful mornings with my children. And in addition I am home every weekend."* (Fredrik)

Among the informants with flexible working hours and the possibility of a home office it is quite common to divide the working day into two sessions. First, they have a work session at the office or at a customer's office until four o'clock. Then the children are picked up from kindergarten or school, everybody goes home and eats and they spend some hours together. After the children have been put to bed, the second session starts at the home office.

*"The time I spend with the children is in the morning from a quarter to seven until eight. After work I usually go and pick them up from kindergarten at four thirty. Then we go home, cook dinner, eat, watch children's television, read some. And then they go to bed around eight. In addition there's quite a lot of time at the weekends, of course. (...) I always work flexible hours. In practice, this means that I work two shifts a day. I usually work in the office until around four, and then I work a couple of hours after the kids go to bed. So does my wife."* (Ingvar)

The advantages and disadvantages of the two ways of organising work time can be summed up as follows:

	Shift work	Flexible working hours and home office
Advantages	Clear boundaries between work and family life	Flexibility Easy to adapt to the family's needs
Disadvantages	Little flexibility Difficult to adapt to the family's needs	Unclear boundaries between work and family life

### **Expectations of accessibility**

*"On vacations I bring my mobile phone and they can reach me on that, but I am not available on e-mail and I don't bring my pc to work in my vacations (...) In principle, I am accessible for my workplace 24 hours a day. But we executives agree among ourselves and give each other periods off, so that from time to time we don't have to be accessible at all (...) I don't feel that having to be accessible is a problem."* (Christer)

In both the companies the informants describe expectations of accessibility. For employees at NRK these expectations differ whether they have executive positions or not. For executives accessibility applies all the time. Executives should be available on the telephone at any time of the day. For regular employees who work shifts accessibility primarily applies in exceptional cases. These may be extreme situations when there are big news stories that have to be covered immediately and require extra personnel. In these cases it is regarded as normal that the employees should be able to come to work on short

notice. It is also expected that employees should be available in the sense that they should be able to work a couple of hours longer than the normal duration of their shift.

At Microsoft there are expectations of accessibility that apply to all employees and are connected with the company's flexible organisation of work time. The employees are expected to be available to executives and colleagues on mobile phones and e-mail no matter where and when they work. This expectation applies not only to office hours, but also to evenings, weekends and vacations.

Expectations of accessibility may be a problem with regard to the balance between work and family life. The boundaries between work and family life are blurred. Kjetil expresses this by talking about his partner's frustration:

*"It would have been nice not to have things hanging over you. My wife says 'Ok, so you're not at work, but you think about work all the time!" (Kjetil)*

### **Flexibility and individual responsibility**

*"The job at Microsoft is flexible, but carries a lot of responsibility". (Ingvar)*

With flexible working hours, home office and strong expectations of accessibility, setting limits becomes an individual responsibility. Flexibility may be a threat to a good balance between work and private life. The informants who have such freedom in their work do not report working hours to their superiors. The companies thus have few possibilities to actively limit these employees' working hours or work methods.

*"When you work in knowledge professions it is difficult to limit your work. It isn't stressful for me to think about work when in fact I have time off. I think I'd be more stressed out if I weren't allowed to think about work outside of the office and eight to four. (...) I wish it were more accepted to have less strict boundaries between work and private life. But at the same time it requires that you're disciplined and that you're able to strike a good balance for yourself." (Gaute)*

Particularly among the informants at Microsoft the need for personal strategies to limit work becomes evident. As previously mentioned, most of the informants at Microsoft regard the company as family friendly because of the flexible organisation of work. At the same time, they emphasise how this flexibility, or freedom as they also call it, gives them the responsibility for drawing their own boundaries. The employees must be able to use their flexibility in a way that works both for the company, for themselves as workers and their family.

We asked the informants to describe the company culture. Ingvar, who holds an executive position, described it as following:

*"Action oriented. You're supposed to get things done. People do many things at once. And there's a positive vibe among the employees. People aren't self-important. At the same time there's a focus on performance. What matters are results. Therefore it is important that the individual employee knows what he or she delivers. You have to be on top of your game. The employees are responsible for setting limits for themselves. You have to be able to limit your workload, prioritise tasks and plan your own development. (...) Many people at Microsoft have no hobbies. They often have their work as their hobby. I think that's because the job is so interesting. You can use all of yourself in your work at Microsoft. But this attitude to work results in*

*a lot of people working too much. They get worn out by the long hours. That's why it's so important to learn responsibility and to set limits."*

Brandth and Kvande (The Norwegian University of Science and Technology) also discuss this need for limit setting in relation to the unlimited work life in their book "Fleksible fedre". *"There is a tension between the father's desire to be a present father and work life, which produces paternal absence. The fathers stretch a lot to be able to meet the demands of work life. For instance, this is reflected in the fact that many fathers work overtime although neither economy nor demanding employers force them to do so. Their work ethic and their interest in their work is what drives them. This must be seen in connection with what we have called the seductive and greedy elements of some parts of modern work life. When the work is individualised and the individual is responsible for the work tasks, it is more difficult to get away (...) In such a context, limit setting is important, but also difficult because of the organisation of work and the significance of paid work for masculine identity."* (Brandth and Kvande 2003, our translation)

One of the informants at Microsoft described a period when he was on sick leave for several months. In the time before he got sick he worked with a big project that had to be completed. He worked extremely hard (80 hours a week the last two weeks). We asked the informant what he felt about the balance between work and family in such work intensive periods. His response was *"No, of course at those times there's no balance. In those periods I'm only home to sleep and then I hardly see the kids."*

Nonetheless, throughout the interview this informant had emphasised that Microsoft is a good workplace where conditions promote a sensible balance between work and family life. This story illustrates that flexible working conditions are beneficial for men's balance between work and private life only if the employee is able to set limits and has a personal strategy on how to demarcate the boundaries between work, family life and free time.

### **Wage systems**

The companies' wage systems also influence men's scope of action and choices. This is evident both at Microsoft and NRK. The wage system at Microsoft is based on a combination of a fixed salary and a bonus depending on the individual's revenue for the company. This system is based on individual negotiations, and there is little openness about salaries in the company. The share of the wages that is based on results varies between different job categories. For those who work in pure sales jobs, revenues are particularly important for their salary. Some informants emphasise that the wage system can be an obstacle to men who want to prioritise family life. For some employees, revenue demands may be so heavy that flexibility does not improve the balance between work and family life.

*"A lot of people take paternity leave and drop off the kids in kindergarten. At the same time, of course, we are a sales organisation. We have to make money. The people who work here are kind of left to their own devices to achieve this goal. After all, it's not a valid excuse that you couldn't manage between eight and four."* (John)

At NRK there is a dual wage system. Journalists have an individual wage system, while other employees follow a wage system with a wage ladder. Informants at NRK regard the wage level in the company as low compared to competing companies.

*"But the wage level is too low for all groups in the organisation. You can't compete with similar companies in the market in terms of wages. The result is that NRK loses some good job candidates. I could work another place and earn much more*

*than I do here. But I'm happy at NRK, and therefore I want to stay on. You get to meet a lot of interesting people here. And as a man it would be more difficult to combine another job with family. As I see it, NRK is almost too kind-hearted in its personnel policy." (Christer)*

In addition to this motivation they see the opportunity to take out overtime in wages as a compensation for what they perceive as a low fixed salary. Many of the employees have become economically dependent on overtime pay. This makes it difficult to encourage men to work shorter hours. The personnel manager at NRK comments on this dilemma:

*"Overtime pay has been an important part of many NRK employees' wages. Over a period of time many have become economically dependent on a certain amount of overtime pay. (...) We have tried to reduce the use of overtime among employees, but it has proved difficult."*

Erik touches on this when he explains why he is the one who works overtime, and not his partner:

*"I guess there's an economic element when it comes to our work patterns. I have a fixed salary and get paid for overtime. We've come to depend on this money. (...) The wages at NRK are low, but this is compensated by good overtime pay. In her job, on the other hand, it is difficult to predict how much she will be paid for the working hours she puts in. She works a lot without getting paid. (...) She prepares proposals for projects. That means she has to spend a lot of time on preparations of a proposal without knowing if she will be paid or not. Thus her working hours aren't as financially secure as mine. She believes this is the reason why it's easier for me to accept that I work overtime than that she does." (Erik)*

Fredrik holds an executive position with personnel management responsibilities. He tries to make arrangements so that employees with children are able to combine work and family in the best possible way. But many times this is difficult. He feels that for many employees a solution would be to transfer to other positions within NRK that have more family friendly working hours. He did this himself when he chose to transfer from his former position, which entailed a lot of travel and shift work, to the executive position he has today. But he feels that better wages are an important reason why many people stay in jobs with shift work despite the fact that it is difficult to balance with family life.

### **Individualism or collectivism**

The two companies differ markedly when we look at what the informants expect from their employers. NRK has a long tradition of strong unions. The unions still have significant influence on the organisation of the company. At Microsoft, on the other hand, there is no organised union activity. The management of the company does not know how many of the employees are organised, and there are no trade union representatives at the company.

*"I don't see it as a problem that we don't have trade union representatives. (...) It's because so few people are organised, you know. And that again is because the people who work here are very self-reliant. Most of us don't believe in joint action to achieve what we want. Instead, you should manage on your own. The company has an individual reward system. I think that's fine. I think the other employees think it's fine too. Otherwise you wouldn't choose to work at Microsoft." (Helge)*

Similarly, there is a difference in the informants' perception of what they can expect from their company. The informants at Microsoft express a strong sense of individualism and

feel that they cannot expect the company to adapt to their needs. They have few ideas when asked what measures the company could implement to promote the balance between work and private life.

*"Actually, I don't miss much. I feel that Microsoft offers good conditions for achieving such a balance. Among other things, we have 6 weeks vacation and flexible working hours. These are family friendly arrangements." (Ingvar)*

Most of the informants feel that Microsoft already is a family friendly place to work because of the flexible working conditions.

*"It boils down to individual responsibility. You have to choose an education and a job where it is possible to combine work and family in a satisfactory way. That is not the employer's responsibility. But perhaps this is also a political value. I guess it says something about where I stand politically. People have to face the consequences of their own choices. Laws or politicians should not safeguard us here." (John)*

Such expectations regarding what the company can do for its employees are not expressed among the informants at NRK. These men have many ideas on what the company can do to promote a good balance between work and private life. They point to the unions and the issues they have raised with the management of the company.

*"I don't think the management of NRK thinks about these things. NRK only thinks about broadcasts. But the unions care. The management only cares about it when they're asked to." (Erik)*

The informants at Microsoft express a strong sense of individualism with regard to their jobs and in relation to their employer. The informants at NRK have a strong faith in collective demands and collective solutions. This difference may affect FOCUS' possibilities of encouraging the development of new measures on the organisational level in the two companies. At the same time, there is another contrast between the two companies that runs counter to the first. The Human Resources manager at Microsoft is very open to spending money on this kind of measures, since he is convinced that it will benefit the company in a number of ways. He believes that a reputation for being a family friendly company is important for recruiting the best candidates and he wants to take care of the employees in order to retain them in the company. His goal is to keep the employees over a 15-year period. He believes that the company must include the private life and family situation of the individual employee in the equation on how to keep them and ensure that the employees perform well over time. The personnel manager of NYDI, on the other hand, expresses a certain degree of scepticism towards developing new measures. This scepticism is due to experiences with strong union influence at NRK and a perception that if she gives them a little, they will demand more.

### **Men and women make different priorities**

Even though the informants and their partners to a large extent are equal with regard to education and career, the traditional gender differences in priorities in relation to family and work are also evident in the informants' relationships. Many of them have partners who work within similar professions as themselves. The men describe career-oriented partners in fulltime jobs, or who worked full time until they became mothers.

Only one of the informants works part time. In this case the partner also works part time. The reason for their choice of part time positions is the lack of a kindergarten place for



their child. The remaining informants work full time, but two of their partners work part time and one is unemployed. In the interviews we discussed whether the informants themselves would consider working part time. Some of the informants said that they would have liked to, but that they would have to have a different job to be able to do so. Others explain that as a couple they have decided that she should work part time for financial reasons:

*"She has worked part time ever since she returned from parental leave with our youngest son. At that time the reason was that she wanted more time off to spend with him. Back then she worked 80%. As time has gone by, he's no longer the primary reason why she works part time, it's because she enjoys having a little more time off. (...) When we started out with this arrangement we discussed whether it was possible to manage financially. Since she earned less than me, part time work was always only an option for her. When we decided how much she should cut back on her work, we discussed where the limit was before part time work would hurt her career opportunities. I think that working 60% is a career obstacle. Working 80 or 90%, on the other hand, has no consequences for your career. 60% would be a problem in her job, both with regard to customers and for her employer. If it had been necessary to cut back so much, it would have been better if we both reduced our work to 80% instead."* (Helge)

There are also gender differences when it comes to overtime. Overtime is common among our informants. On average they work six (NRK) and eight (Microsoft) hours overtime per week. Only two of the informants reported that their partner worked overtime. These women are partners of Microsoft employees and work approximately the same amount of overtime as their husbands.

Eric explains that his wife feels that their child should not stay long days in kindergarten. They disagree on this and he therefore argues that as long as she is the one who thinks the child should be picked up early, she must take responsibility for this herself.

*"My wife used to work long hours before we had kids. Back then she often worked 10-hour days. She is just as engrossed in her work as me. But now she doesn't want our daughter to be in kindergarten more than 7 hours a day. That's irreconcilable with my working hours. Therefore I have told her that if she insists on that, she has to pick her up. So she picks her up in kindergarten every day."* (Erik)

Most men feel that it is more difficult to cut back on their job than on their partner's job.

*"The reason I work more overtime than her is that I have an executive position. It requires me to work around 10 hours a day."* (Christer)

Moreover, several of the informants explain that their partner has changed jobs since they had children to find work that is closer to home or to their child's kindergarten. Dag's wife quit her permanent position to go to a temporary and less interesting job.

*"She quit there after our oldest son was born. She thought it was too far to travel to work. So she found a job closer to home instead."* (Dag)

In the interview Dag describes how travel time and rush hour traffic to and from work are a problem. The job his wife had before they had children was in the same area as NRK. In other words, he worked just as far from home as she did before she changed jobs. However, she is the one who has chosen to change jobs to get closer to home and

kindergarten. Even though Dag's wife had an exciting job and takes a strong interest in her career, her choices were nonetheless quite different from his after they had children.

Business travel is another area where there are differences between the informants and their partners. None of the informants have partners who travel in their work. But several of them are themselves in jobs where quite a lot of travel is required. Others report that they used to be in a job where a lot of travel was required, but that they chose to change jobs after they had children because travelling was stressful for their family.

*"The work piles up at times. Then there's a lot of work and a lot of travel. At those times I don't see the kids so much. Sometimes I'm gone an entire workweek. Of course that's stressful for my family. Especially for my wife, because then she has to take care of all the practical stuff and look after the children. (...) Frequent business travels create unpredictability for the family. My wife feels that she's in a constant state of preparedness with regard to picking up the kids in kindergarten and stuff. (...) It's because I travel a lot in my work. Or that I may easily be stuck in traffic on my way home from work." (Kjetil)*

In a recently published article, professor of psychology Hanne Haavind (University of Oslo) writes about how the differences between parents' ways of prioritising and acting in the family can be explained by different ways of relating to the organisation of time. She argues that mothers still organise their family day in accordance with a cyclical understanding of time where the rhythm of the day is connected with the child's need for sleep, food etc. *"As long as one of the parents – i.e. the mother – has this cyclical wheel of care spinning in her head, the father may step in and practice quality with the child when he 'has time'. Then the feeling of time pressure is smaller, at least for him."* (Haavind 2005, p 687, our translation) Here Haavind illustrates how women and men's priorities differ, and how women tend to prioritise their family first, while many men first and foremost prioritise the needs of their workplace, despite the fact that they wish to be and regard themselves as active fathers. It is left to the mothers to organise and take the main responsibility in the family, while the fathers fill in when they can.

### **5.1.2. Family/private life**

Harmonious but busy. That is how most of the informants describe their family life. The informants feel that they live in relatively equal relationships and that they are generally satisfied with their own role as fathers.

#### **Being fathers**

Few of the informants mention the role of provider when asked what they feel that their family expects from them. Instead they mention presence, that they give the children attention, that they participate on an equal footing and take as much responsibility as the mother, and that they keep their promises.

Even though most of them stress that they live in equal relationships, they still point to some aspects where they feel that there are differences between mothers and fathers. Several of the informants say that the mothers are more present for their children, or that they are more patient with them.

*"There is a difference between us. She prioritises the kids more. I often get impatient to finish practical projects that we have started. She's more easily interrupted and goes to be with the children instead of finishing what she was doing. I don't. I am never as present as she is." (Kjetil)*

Several of the informants also report that they feel they have more or less contact with their children depending on whether they are boys or girls. They explain this connection or lack thereof with gender, i.e. that as men they are better equipped to play with and communicate with sons than daughters.

*"The girls are more drawn to their mother, I guess. I suppose I'd have been more involved if they'd been boys. Then I could do more boys' activities with them."* (Fredrik)

*"Since I'm a man and better at playing on boys' terms it turns out that way. For instance I can help our son make a wooden rifle. My wife doesn't even want him to have toy guns. (...) My oldest son isn't so good at playing. With him it's more often games. But my youngest son likes to play. Cars, mechanical stuff and war. As a father I don't get to join in the play so much anymore. But I can help him and his friends get started. For instance by building a playhouse. Or I can fix their toys if they get broken."* (Helge)

Some of the informants feel that as men they have limited possibilities and skills to take care of very young children. They feel that they have more to offer when the child gets older and learns to communicate, and that mothers are better equipped to satisfy children's needs at a young age.

*"I think that it is difficult for men to have responsibility for children between six months and a year. The children are too young. Women have different innate skills in this area than men. They have empathy and something to offer young children. (...) I'm afraid the extension of the paternity leave may have unwanted consequences. As I see it, the basic needs of an infant are better taken care of by mothers. But three months' father's leave is a good arrangement. One month is too short. It's easier for the father to take over the responsibility for the child when it is nine months rather than six. But this of course depends on the individual father. Anyway, I think there is a biological difference between mothers and fathers. Even though it may be good for the father to stay home with the child from it is six months old, it may not necessarily be good for the child."* (Helge)

This contrasts with the way many of the other informants perceive their role as fathers and the positive experiences they describe after a long parental leave. The differences in perception reflect two different ways of understanding gender differences with regard to parental roles.

In the questionnaire prior to the interviews, most of the informants reported a relatively equal distribution between themselves and their partner. However, there were often differences in the concrete tasks that they performed. For instance, a number of the informants cooked most of the food in the family. With regard to the children, there was often a difference in who played with them most. In many cases one parent played with the children more often, while the other spent more time helping them with their homework. It appears that most of the couples are relatively equal with regard to the distribution of responsibilities and tasks in the home. Most of them share the tasks based on who likes what, who is better at it, and who finds that specific task least stressful. Several of the informants report that they look at cooking more as a hobby than as housework, and that it therefore is quite pleasurable for them. One informant also reports that he is the one who cleans at their house because it is so stressful for his wife. Therefore he does it, and preferably when she is out of the house.

### **Organized family time**

One strategy that the couples employ to balance work and family is to plan the time with their family carefully. Several of the informants say that they have a certain day every week where they sit down with their partner, and with their calendars in front of them they divide the responsibility for the different weekdays, who is going to pick up the children what days, what activities they will participate in with their family and what days each of them are able to work longer hours. This planning functions as a positive solution to ensure that both have the opportunity to prioritise both work and family. Furthermore, many of them use this planning to create space for free time. Several of the informants explain that they and their partners each have their nights during the week when they are free to meet friends, work out, go to the movies etc.

Some of the men report that they and their partners set aside special days for quality time. This means that they take time to enjoy themselves as a couple. Some also have strategies for how to protect the family's time together, for instance by going to the cottage every weekend to get away from obligations and expectations connected with life at home.

Some couples use the e-mail programme Outlook to organise their family life. They register all appointments and activities in connection with work, family and free time in their electronic calendar. They also have their partner's appointments and activities registered in the calendar. In this way they are able to solve the problem of the distribution of time and responsibility as a couple. At the same time, they also use this method to set limits at work by sharing information about their private commitments with their co-workers.

### **No limits**

Accessibility and the possibility of a home office means that many of the informants bring their work home with them. The boundaries between work and family are blurred. A number of the informants feel that accessibility on mobile phones and e-mail is a stress factor for themselves and their family. One example is that Kjetil's wife says she wishes for more presence and not having to relate to his work on their private time.

For the informants with flexible work arrangements this flexibility means that on the one hand they have some freedom to adapt to the family's needs, and on the other hand it also means that they work very long hours. For many there is not time for much more than work and family.

### **Changing priorities**

Some of the men explain how they have changed as fathers and how they have learnt to balance work and family better as a consequence of the experiences they have had in life. Some of them have children with more than one woman, and they describe how their earlier relationships broke up because they prioritised work too much.

*"I was more ruthless back then. Never considered my family. My ex-wife had to pay the price. (...) When I was married to my first wife, I had just started working and was very eager to establish a career. Back then I guess I was quite absent as a father. In my line of work it is important to maintain relations and show people that you're doing a good job. That's how you get the most exciting jobs. During my first marriage I hardly dared to take time off from work. To get into position you need to be accessible. Career-wise you need to get as much experience as possible and show that you're doing a good job." (Fredrik)*

In this way, Fredrik has gained some experiences that have caused him to change some of his priorities. However, he also feels that this has to do with the fact that he is older and

already has established a career and therefore feels that he does not have so much to prove anymore.

Another informant, John, explained how a lot of travelling in his last job was an important reason why his last marriage ended and that he now wants a job where he does not have to travel so much. *"I still want to prioritise less travelling. I don't want this marriage to break up, too."*

### **Kindergartens**

Most of the informants have one or more children of kindergarten age (between one and six years). Most of these children have places in kindergartens. But one of the informants has a child who did not get a kindergarten place. As a result both he and his partner have cut back on their work to be home and take care of the child. Both have 75% jobs and work shifts. This makes it possible for one of them to stay home with the child most of the time. In addition, his family helps to look after their son on the days when their shifts don't match. They hope for a kindergarten place so that they can start working full time and have two full incomes again.

When we asked the informants about ideas on measures that the companies could develop in the area work/family life, more kindergarten places was one of the most common initiatives mentioned by the informants at NRK. Erik had this to say about his experiences with the company kindergarten.

*"More kindergarten places to ensure better coverage. Today there's only 20-30% coverage. This could have made the loyalty towards NRK even stronger. At least that's how it was for me. There was a time when I considered changing jobs. Do something different and get better pay. But then we would have lost our kindergarten place. So therefore I stayed on." (Erik)*

One of the problems with NRK's kindergartens is that the opening hours are not adapted to the shifts at the company. While the day shift ends at 16.45 or 17.15, the kindergartens close at 16.30. Public kindergartens have similar opening hours. Several of the informants mentioned that NRK's kindergartens should have longer opening hours:

*"Kindergartens with longer opening hours. 06.30 to 17.30 would be good. Either at NRK or somewhere else. Then the employees can work longer. You know, it's a problem with opening hours with all the traffic in Oslo." (Dag)*

The issue of night open or 24-hour kindergartens is a recurring topic in the Norwegian media, most recently in winter 2006. There are 24-hour kindergartens some places in Norway (e.g with the Military Services), however this has not attracted much attention.

*"She's usually the one who picks up the kids in kindergarten. But that's because her work is closer to where we live and the kindergarten. I use approximately 40 minutes to work and 45-50 minutes home from work. (...) If I were to be an even more present father than I am today, I would have to take a part time job. I could also pick up more often from kindergarten. But then I would have to change jobs." (Christer)*

Many of the informants report that they share the dropping off and picking up from kindergarten equally with their partners. At the same time, this is a frequent source of conflict for the couples.

*"All the conflicts arise from working hours, picking up and dropping off. The time squeeze is first and foremost from 16 to 17 and partly in the morning." (Erik)*

### **Parental leave – experiences**

As much as nine out of ten informants have taken a relatively long parental leave (more than two months) for one or more of their children. The one father who has not used his father's quota has children who are so old that the arrangement did not exist when they were born.

As explained in chapter 2, still only a minority of Norwegian men take more than the father's quota. This means that the informants in this study are among the group we can define as male innovators with regard to the use of parental leave. Most of them had two or three months leave. Two of the informants took four and six months parental leave respectively.

*"I took extra parental leave. I was home with our son for three consecutive months. (...) That was everyday life. My wife was back in a full job. (...) Having parental leave was very rewarding. But it took me about a month before I managed to tear myself away from work. In the beginning I thought about work a lot. It was difficult to set limits. And also it took a while before the employees got used to not being able to contact me when they had questions. But I followed the situation on e-mail throughout the whole leave period. It was important for me to know what was going on at work." (Christer)*

Most of the informants say that they felt it was very rewarding to stay home with their children. A number of them explained that during this period they felt that the child was more closely tied to them. One informant compares the relationship he has with his two children on the basis of how much time he spent at home with them.

*"After I had long parental leave with our youngest daughter I realized what I had missed when I didn't get to stay home with the oldest. (...) I never had a contact point with my oldest daughter. (...) It is important that fathers take long leave so that they see for themselves that they can take care of the children. And then the mother becomes confident that the father can handle it. I had a lot of conflicts about that with my ex-wife. I was not allowed to take responsibility for our daughter. (...) The situation is different now. When I had parental leave with my youngest daughter, my wife was back in a full job. That's why she's confident now that I can take care of our daughter." (Erik)*

Here Erik describes how he developed close ties to his child and acquired caring competence during the parental leave period. Brandth and Kvande (2003) argue that it is important that the father is alone with the child during the leave period, like Erik was. Only then will men have the opportunity to develop caring competence and get to know the child on their own terms, and not only through the mother's competence and ties to the child. Many fathers never get this chance and will therefore be dependent on the mother's signals and directions with regard to the child's needs and how care should be carried out. Men's use of parental leave may thus strengthen their chances of taking the step from active supporters to equal protagonists in caring for their children (Brandth and Kvande 2003, Haavind 2006).

But not all the men we interviewed were equally comfortable with parental leave. Some of them therefore chose to take out shorter leave when they had their next child. John had long leave the last time he had a child and is planning a new leave of absence soon, but this

time he will only take out the father's quota. The reasons are that his wife wants to stay home as long as she can and that he was not happy with long parental leave the last time:

*"When I had a child with my ex-wife I took six months leave. But I wasn't happy with that. I was bored. I got to cycle a lot, of course, with our daughter in a bicycle trailer. So that was good. But I think I would feel that the leave had been more meaningful if I could work from home at the same time."* (John)

Some of the informants say that they would reduce the length of their leave if they had more children, because they feel it is too much of a burden on their work or their colleagues.

*"If we had another child I would only take five weeks leave and a couple of vacation weeks. If I were to stay away for a longer period I would have to get a replacement. And that's difficult to arrange in an executive position. Also it takes too long to get settled in at work again when you get back from leave."* (Christer)

At the same time there are informants who took longer leave when they had their second child because they felt that they had greater job security, they had established a career and it felt easier to ask the employer for extended leave.

*"When my son was born I had almost just started at Microsoft, and work was very busy. Back then I hardly had any parental leave. I was even out travelling for three consecutive months. To the USA. From my son was one month until he was four months. (...) When our youngest daughter was born, Hopland (Human Resources manager) had banged the drum. So then I took four months leave. I feel that this has given me a completely different connection with her than I have with my son. She will as soon call out for me as for her mother if she needs help or is upset, while our son, he's a real mummy's boy."* (Kjetil)

Several of the informants explain that they felt it was difficult to shut off work when they were on leave. For some this was only a transitional phase where they needed time to get used to not being at work and not thinking about work. For others it lasted throughout the leave of absence. Most of these informants chose to work a little while they were on leave. In most cases the contact with work consisted in staying updated on what was going on at work, reading e-mails and being accessible on the phone. However, for most of them this was a rather limited part of the leave period.

*"When I was on leave with my daughter, I was also available for work. Not 100% focus on the children, but they didn't suffer from it. I prefer to stay in touch with work and be up to date there. You know you're going back in a short while. It's important to stay involved in the processes during that period. You see, your job becomes a lifestyle."* (Kjetil)

We asked this informant how he felt about being available for work while he was on parental leave. To this he answered the following:

*"I think it was less stressful for me to take a leave when I could stay in touch with work at the same time and stay up to date."* (Kjetil)

Other informants felt it was important to shut off work completely in the leave period.

*”When I had leave I had three months completely off. I wasn’t at work at all. It felt really good. But three months leave was enough. It’s hard to be around children for three months. It’s limited what you can do with such young infants. (...) The leave period was rewarding in a number of ways. I got to think through my life, I connected more with my daughter, and I got to show my wife that I was capable of taking care of our daughter.” (Erik)*

Particularly the informants at Microsoft prefer to work a little during the leave. The informants at NRK think it is more important to shut off work in this period. This difference may be connected with cultural differences between the two companies. At Microsoft we see tendencies that love for work becomes a norm. Furthermore, it is communicated that the employees are irreplaceable. These factors may make it more difficult for employees to set clear limits vis-à-vis their job during a leave of absence.

**Parental leave – Driving forces and obstacles**

With the interviews as a point of departure we can suggest some driving forces and some obstacles to fathers taking longer parental leave.

Driving forces	Obstacles
Economic measures	Lack of cultural acceptance
Role models	Job insecurity
Targeted initiatives	Lack of replacements
Job security	Loving your job

One of the most important driving forces is the economic compensation that employees receive both from the government and from the company. Both Microsoft and NRK give compensation if the employee’s salary is higher than 6 times the national insurance basic amount.

Another factor that seems to be important to get men to take longer leave is to have male executives who act as role models. Informants from both companies point to such role models and say that they have been important to signal acceptance for long parental leave for employees in the company and because it shows employees that it is possible, even for men, to take out long leave without hurting your career. Other studies have also pointed to the importance of executives as role models (Olsen, 2005).

*”My former boss took four months paternity leave. This was in the middle of (a very busy period for the company) and many reacted when he took a leave of absence at that time. But I thought it was really good. It was an important signal that it was acceptable for men to take out leave.” (Erik)*

This illustrates the importance of job security. The employees at NRK experience a greater degree of job security than we find at Microsoft. Ingvar, who is one of the executives at Microsoft, describes this insecurity:

*”When you’re on leave for an extended period of time, frequently an entire year, this will hurt your career whether you’re a woman or a man. I think this is inevitable. (...) That’s just how it is. After all, I think the important thing is that the two who make this choice are conscious of what they choose and what they give up. I think expectant mothers need to be more aware of the choices they make with regard to parental leave. They need to see the consequences of their choices and not just do what’s expected. They need to realize that they cannot expect to come back to their old job after one year leave.” (Ingvar).*



Most of the informants at Microsoft point to the "daddy package" as one of the reasons why they believe that the company cares about helping employees balance work and family. The scheme is thus an important signal that the company wants male employees to take longer parental leave.

One of the obstacles that is particularly evident at Microsoft is the informants' love for their work. The informants regard their job as a hobby and a passion. Several of them therefore feel that it is difficult to take long parental leave because that means that they have to stay away from their job. Some of the executives also describe this as an obstacle to wanting longer leave.

*"I guess I wouldn't take six months paternity leave myself. But generally I believe that the employees at Microsoft should. Personally, I'm probably too fond of my job to be able to take such a long leave. I would take two or three months leave. Six months would be too long for me."* (Gaute)

John is the only informant at Microsoft who is critical of the company's focus on paternity leave. He feels that it has gone too far and that the company's productivity suffers. He criticises some of the male executives in the company for drawing too strict lines between work and private life, for instance by not being accessible during leave or by taking too long leave.

*"There are too many executives who are on paternity leave. Some of the executives have too tough boundaries between work and family. They shut off work too much. (...) I don't like executives who are only at work from eight to four. In the long term I think many qualified employees will quit if it continues like that, with executives who don't care more about their work. (...) Executives who are on leave need to be more involved in their work. Executives have to work more and they need to follow up their employees more closely. The executives must work longer days to be in step with the market."* (John)

Another obstacle that emerges from the interviews both at Microsoft and NRK has to do with replacements. The lack of replacements means that many people feel that work has piled up when they get back.

*"I didn't have a replacement in this period. My tasks were shared among the other executives. However, this meant that only my everyday operational tasks were carried out. The more strategic aspects of my job were not taken care of while I was gone. I came back to work in the middle of summer, and I guess that was quite fortunate for me because that's a very quiet time of the year. There's not much going on and you have time to catch up on what's happened."* (Christer)

The lack of replacements also means that many of the informants feel that taking long leave is a burden on their co-workers.

*"At that time I felt I couldn't do that to my job. Back then I had only been in the position for three years and felt that there was much going on at work at the time. We were only six people in my department then. I felt that it would be too much of a burden on the others if I stayed away for long. And at that time very few men took more than a month's paternal leave. Taking two months was radical in itself."* (Helge)

*"I'm a bit uncertain as to how long paternity leave I would take if it became an issue again. It's a good thing that fathers take long leave. Preferably three or four months. I'd like to do that too. But if I were to stay home longer than that, I'd have to get a replacement, and that's difficult in an executive position, you know."*  
(Ingvar)

### **Other care responsibilities**

Even though the main focus of this project is men's care for children, the steering committee has decided also to include care in a broader sense. In the questionnaire that the informants filled out in advance, they were asked whether they had other care responsibilities. The response alternatives that were given referred to parents, partners or other relatives who are old or sick.

Among our informants very few stated that they have other care responsibilities. This may be because many of the informants are so young that they have relatively healthy parents and a healthy partner. Most of them stated that their female partner did not have such care responsibilities either.

Those of our informants who reported that they have or had had other care responsibilities described periods when their partners needed special care because of sickness. One of the informants at Microsoft had been through a period when his wife was ill and needed extra care. Over a period of half a year he therefore had an arrangement that he *"worked like before, but with reduced activity"*. He said the following about this situation: *"I wouldn't have thought in advance that Microsoft would be so flexible. It's a lifestyle and a work place that can swallow you 100%."*

#### **5.1.3. Work/life balance**

*"I have experienced that after having a child, and especially after a long paternity leave, work has become less important to me. This may have made me less productive at work. At the same time, I may be better at prioritising at work than I used to be, so it doesn't necessarily mean that I get less done than before."* (Ingvar)

Most of the informants feel that they have a good balance between work and family life. At the same time they say that it would be wonderful not "to have things hanging over you", as Kjetil put it. This is not so easy to achieve since most of them prefer somewhat blurred boundaries between work, family life and free time. After all, the flexible organisation of work and the merging of work and hobby are important reasons why they love their job so much.

*"If I compare myself with my network, I guess most of them have clearer boundaries between work and private life. My wife relates to her job that way too. She goes home from work and leaves it there. But that also means that she doesn't have the same flexibility that I do. (...) I met my wife in our last job. There were clearer boundaries between work and private life. But I wasn't happy with that. I think it depends on what type of person you are. Some people like to get engrossed in their work and not have clear boundaries. Others prefer clear limits at work. My wife and I related very differently to work while we were at the same place, even though the structures were the same for both of us. I worked more or less in the same way there as I have done at Microsoft, while she set clearer limits. (...) We often discuss the limits between work and private life. It's a source of conflict, I guess. I feel that she should be able to leave work before four sometimes. And she thinks that I should take more time off work mentally."* (Kjetil)

Kjetil says he feels that his family would want him to have a different balance than the one he has. They want him to be more mentally present and they would like his job to be more predictable, for instance with regard to job travels.

Fredrik renovates a house in addition to his executive job. Most of his time is therefore spent on either work or renovation. He calls the renovation project his second job.

*"I wish I could spend more of my time with my family. We have two cottages that we don't get to use so much. But that's also limited by school. (...) I have a job in addition to my work, you know. As a result, I have a need for more free time. It's a situation that I have created for myself. I could spend the time differently with my family. I guess I kind of exploit myself. But I hope this'll be over by Christmas. It affects the family. (...) If I take a critical look at myself, work does have priority at the expense of family and free time. It was much easier when I had a regular position. Then I could take time off in-lieu and stuff. But now I can't do that anymore."* (Fredrik)

Erik is one of those who are frustrated about the possibilities of balancing work and family life. He expresses bad conscience towards his children, especially his oldest daughter, who only lives with him part of the time. He says he feels that the children are only stowed away in today's society.

*"There's got to be some drastic changes for new families to get enough time. There's too much work and too little time with the family. I feel that there's too little quality time with the children. That's not fair towards them. You always have kind of a bad conscience either towards your work or your family. When I prioritise my family, my colleagues suffer. There's a limit to the activities we have time for with the family. The weeks are logistics, and in the weekend you have to relax. Then we have the kids all the time. I think society needs to change the way we live our lives. The 6-hour work day is just the start of that change. Our lives are badly organized! We need to reformulate some values."* (Erik)

We asked the informants whether they felt that the company makes a point of promoting a good balance between work and private life for the employees. Four out of five informants at Microsoft felt that the company cares about this balance, and point to work flexibility as the most important example.

*"Nobody interferes with how you do your job, as long as it gets done. We have flexibility, freedom and responsibility. In that sense I think they promote it."* (Kjetil)

Other factors that were mentioned in this context were the initiative to encourage fathers to take longer paternity leave, executives' behaviour and the annual organisational climate survey where the balance between work and family is one of the topics.

*"I feel that the executives at Microsoft communicate that it is important to find a good a balance between work and family life. The company also measures this in the climate survey. If we find out that the employees don't achieve a satisfactory balance, we implement measures, either on the department level or companywide."* (Ingvar)

Among the informants at NRK the answers are more varied. The informants who hold executive positions had a more favourable impression of the company in this area than the other informants. At the same time the executives felt that this depended quite a lot on the

individual executive. Christer argued that NRK cares about this and explains how he as an executive tries to consider the employees' need for a balance vis-à-vis family life.

*"I sympathize with the fact that you have to adapt your work day to your family when it is necessary. As a boss I have to consider that how the individual feels at home will affect how he or she feels at work and vice versa. Therefore it's important to encourage a balance between work and family life. I try to make sure that the employees don't work too much." (Christer)*

Fredrik, who is also an executive, is more sceptical about the company's interest in the balance between work and family.

*"At the central level of NRK there are a lot of nice words, but little action. They are very politically correct. But when it comes to demands on workloads, rotations and such, those things aren't very conspicuous. But on the local level there is great freedom of action, so in practice we favour families." (Fredrik)*

Erik does not feel that NRK cares about this balance. As an example he points to executives' lack of understanding.

*"When we've had performance appraisal interviews the balance between work and family has never been on the agenda. But I have raised it as a topic myself, of course. (...) If NRK wants to show that they care about this issue, it has to be a mandatory topic for performance appraisal interviews, and it's also important that executives get more training and information about it. They need more info about this issue to become better bosses for their employees. For instance, the executives are often unaware of problems with picking up in kindergarten." (Erik)*

### **Advice for fathers to be**

The informants were asked what they would do to improve the balance between work and family if they expected another child, and what advice they would give to male colleagues who were about to become fathers for the first time. They suggested a number of different strategies.

Strategies with regard to working hours:

- It is better to work a couple of hours extra after the children have gone to bed than to stay late at the office. If you are able to work that way, you can go from work early, pick the children up from kindergarten and spend a couple of hours with them before they go to bed.
- Fathers need to be present and spend time with the child and the mother. Kjetil says the following: *"Become better at not working late. Especially the first year. As a father you feel so unnecessary the first year. At that time daddy falls short. But he should still put in that time and be there."* (Kjetil)
- Fathers should consider working part time. Dag gives the following advice: *"You should work less overtime and perhaps even work part time if it's possible. It could be smart to work out a flexible working arrangement with your boss."*

Strategies with regard to parental leave

- Men must take parental leave, preferably between three and six months.
- When fathers take out leave there must be a replacement at work.
- Prioritise parental leave, even if it is not the best alternative financially.

- When fathers take parental leave it is important that they are alone with the child, without the mother interfering in how they do things

Other advice:

- *“When school age arrives, there are some things that are especially important to follow up. Some examples are participation in leisure activities, helping with homework and showing up at end of semester celebrations and such.” (Kjetil)*
- *“Plan regular vacations and holidays, and don’t just take one long vacation in summer!” (Christer)*
- A number of the informants mention the importance of being present during special transitional periods in the child’s life. One example is when they start in kindergarten and school. *“When the kids start in school I’d like to be there more for them, either by taking a leave, by working more from home or by changing to a less demanding job.” (Ingvar)*
- *“When the child is an infant – get up with it at night so that the mother gets to sleep.” (Gaute)*
- Change jobs! *“When our oldest daughter was young I chose to take a management job where I had office hours, nine to four. I felt that this was family friendly. It was good to get away from the rotation. Executive jobs can more easily be done from home, so that I could work at home in the evening. I felt that was a good solution.” (Erik)*
- *“It’s important to plan doing things with your wife. Your wife shouldn’t get the feeling that she takes all the responsibility. But as partners you have different strengths and preferences. So it’s important to adjust to each other in that respect.” (Dag)*
- *“It’s important to prioritise your kids. At least over hobbies and free time. (...) And it’s important to kiss perfectionism goodbye. At least on the home front. You have to accept dust balls and clutter.” (Dag)*
- *“It’s important to have a dialogue with your employer with regard to the number of tasks you take on and what deadlines you set. At NRK of course there’s a tendency that everything should have been done yesterday. (Dag)*

#### **5.1.4. Suggested new measures/action work to promote caring masculinities**

On the basis of the study we have suggested some concrete ideas to the companies on what they can do to help men achieve a better balance between work and family.

The following measures have been proposed to NRK:

- Adapted shifts: The company should consider whether the informal arrangement that exists today with adapted shifts for parents of young children who ask for it, can be formalised and made into a right for all employees with care responsibilities.
- Wage system: The company should consider measures to raise employees’ awareness and make it more attractive to work less overtime. This must be seen in context with the wage system, where many employees now have come to depend economically on a certain amount of overtime pay and regard it as part of their regular salary.
- Possibility of home office: There are a number of jobs in the company that could benefit from the possibility of a home office and where such an arrangement may facilitate the balance between work and family for the employees. On the other hand the company should be aware of the disadvantages of home offices and balance these against the advantages.

- Kindergarten: NRK should consider the possibility of establishing more kindergarten places to meet the employees' needs. The opening hours of the kindergartens must be coordinated with the length of the day shifts at the company.
- Parental leave: The company should encourage male executives to take out long leave to act as role models for male employees. Furthermore, it is important to find replacements when men take parental leave, so that they do not feel that work piles up until they get back or that they are a burden on their colleagues. It may also be a good idea to focus explicitly on men's parental leave in general. One element in such an initiative should be the collection of statistics on male employees' use of parental leave, so that the company can track the effect of the various measures that are developed in this area.

The following measures have been proposed to Microsoft:

- Limits with regard to overtime: Currently the employees are left with a lot of responsibility for limiting their own overtime. The company tries to take a share of the responsibility by emphasising that the employees must set their own limits, e.g. through the cooperation with MOT. As we see it, this is insufficient. It leaves too much responsibility to the individual employee. The company should consider measures that reduce the individual responsibility in this area.
- Parental leave: Microsoft already has a good initiative to encourage more men to take out long parental leave. Six months leave for both women and men is the goal of "the daddy package". However, the company does not get full results from this initiative because of a number of cultural and structural obstacles. Some of these obstacles can be removed. When men take leave, the company must find replacements. The company should also consider taking a closer look at how love for work can act as an obstacle for men to take longer leave, and what is possible to do to counteract this. Employees in positions with revenue related bonuses should not be punished financially for taking long leave. The company should therefore consider if it is possible to calculate salaries and bonuses in a different way during and after leave.

For both companies there are two additional needs that emerge. One is the need for executives with competence and an understanding of the importance of a balance between work and family life. The other is the need for increased awareness among male employees. We believe that both these needs will be covered by our proposal for a life phase consultation.

### **Life phase consultation**

- The idea behind a life phase consultation is to develop a routine for a consultation between male employees who are about to become fathers and their closest superiors.
- The purpose of the consultation is two-fold: awareness raising and information. The aim is to start reflections on how best to balance work and family and to provide information about the rights and possibilities of the expectant father, with national legislation and company measures as a point of departure.
- Relevant topics: What does the employee think about how he will balance work and family life? Information about rights with regard to parental leave. Information about rights as an employee with children when he returns to work after leave. Information about the company's measures and initiatives in this area.

Both companies were very interested in this measure and have expressed a wish to collaborate with FOCUS and The Equality and Anti-discrimination Ombud in developing it further.

## ***5.2. Strategic plan within the companies on gender issues***

### **5.2.1. NRK**

NRK has a special agreement on gender equality that among other things addresses:

- **Recruitment:** When advertising vacancies in job categories where there are less than 40% women, women should be explicitly encouraged to apply. Moreover, women should be preferred in these jobs if they have the same qualifications as the male competitor. One of the prioritised areas is that at least 40% of the hosts in both radio and TV channels should be women.
- **Wages:** "Women and men with approximately the same work tasks and responsibilities in similar positions are given the same salary at NRK."
- **Training and development:** The company shall provide women and men with the same opportunities to learn and acquire new qualifications through the tasks that they are assigned, as well as equal access to training.
- **Promotion:** Women and men shall have the same opportunities for promotion. There shall be targeted courses for women to encourage them to take executive positions or other types of positions where women are underrepresented.
- **Balance between work and family life:** "NRK should, to the extent possible, accommodate employees with care responsibilities and make it possible for them to change their working hours/rotation in periods."

Implementation of this agreement at NRK is a management responsibility. In addition, the management has an explicit responsibility for ensuring that the company's programming operations reflect the needs, interests and experiences of both genders, and that "working conditions accommodate both genders in all parts of the company." Executives are responsible for reporting about gender equality activities every year. A joint report for the entire company is prepared.

The company has its own gender equality committee that ensures that the gender equality agreement is followed up. The committee is responsible for proposing targets and action plans for the company's gender equality work. Furthermore, they act as a hearing body on issues related to gender equality and follow the national and international development in gender equality work.

### **5.2.2. Microsoft**

Microsoft does not have a special gender equality agreement, but says that they work consciously with issues related to equal opportunities in two areas:

- **Recruiting and development:** The company makes efforts to increase the number of women in the organisation and promote women where necessary to achieve the best possible gender balance. They do this by recruiting, development programmes and the selection of executives.
- **Balance between work and family life:** The company aims to be a family friendly workplace, and in that way make it possible for women and men with care responsibilities to work there.

In addition, the company has its own women's group that focuses on issues related to women, work and career.

Furthermore, on the global level Microsoft has a special focus on diversity. These efforts are targeted at recruiting people from different social groups, different ethnic backgrounds, disabled people and on the basis of gender. An emphasis on recruiting women to the company is explicitly mentioned.

## **6. Good practices**

On the basis of the workplace studies that each of the five partners in FOCUS has carried out, proposals for measures/guidelines will be drafted during fall 2006.



## 7. Summary

In this report we have analysed the data from the workplace study that was carried out at two Norwegian companies, Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation and Microsoft Norge. On the basis of interviews with male informants in these two companies we discuss how men feel that they are able to balance work and family life, what challenges they face and what possible solutions exist to the various challenges.

Both NRK and Microsoft are knowledge-based companies, but at the same time there are a number of differences with regard to the organisation of work time, wage systems and organisational culture. The organisation of work time is crucial for men's possibilities of balancing work and family. Different ways of organising work time provide different possibilities of flexibility for individual adaptation and setting limits. Shift work is beneficial to men's boundaries between work and private life, but may be problematic with regard to flexibility. On the other hand, flexible working hours and the possibility of a home office is good for men's possibility of finding solutions that are adapted to the family's needs, but at the same time they are a challenge because they easily blur the boundaries between work and private life.

Men's love for work is beneficial for the individual's experience of self-fulfilment and job satisfaction, and as a motivational factor. At the same time this love is a challenge for the individual's ability to set limits at work. You can work until you drop when your job is your hobby and passion.

The informants' experiences support a description of men's gender roles that emphasizes significant changes in their ideals and roles as fathers, but small changes in their behaviour and roles as employees. The men in this study stress the need for strategies to combine work and family. At the same time, the work ethic and the work identity are so strong that priorities nonetheless often favour work rather than family.

A common characteristic of both Microsoft and NRK is that the responsibility for the balance between work and private life mainly lies with the men themselves. There are few organisational structures that are developed in this area so far. Most of the solutions are found in cooperation with executives on the initiative of the individual employee.

Organisational measures to create more favourable conditions for men's balance between work and private life are a relatively new field. Through the five national FOCUS studies, where a total of ten companies participate, we will be able to contribute ideas to the road ahead. Nonetheless there is a need for more studies and more research in this area.

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## **Legislation**

The Working Environment Act/Lov om arbeidsmiljø, arbeidstid og stillingsvern med mer (arbeidsmiljøloven), The Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, [www.lovdatab.no](http://www.lovdatab.no)

The Gender Equality Act/Lov om likestilling mellom kjønnene (likestillingsloven), The Ministry of Children and Equality, [www.lovdatab.no](http://www.lovdatab.no)

## **Other sources**

The Ministry of Children and Equality – [www.odin.dep.no/bld](http://www.odin.dep.no/bld)

The Ministry of Education and Research - [www.odin.dep.no/kd](http://www.odin.dep.no/kd)

National Insurance/Rikstrygdeverket - [www.trygdeetaten.no](http://www.trygdeetaten.no)

The Equality and Anti-discrimination Ombud - [www.ldo.no](http://www.ldo.no)

The Equality and Anti-discrimination Tribunal - [www.diskrimineringsnemnda.no](http://www.diskrimineringsnemnda.no)







Fostering Caring Masculinities (FOCUS) seeks to examine and improve men's opportunities for balancing work and private/family life, and in turn increasing their ability to develop their role as caregivers in the home.

To reach this goal the project will focus on companies' framework conditions to perceive and include men as actors and target groups in equality policies.

This trans national project involves five countries:  
Germany, Iceland, Norway, Slovenia and Spain.

The project is funded through EU's Community Action programme to promote Gender equality between men and women. FOCUS is grounded in one of priority themes of the program, "the role of men in the promotion of gender equality, in particular the role of men and fathers in the reconciliation of work and private life".

FOCUS was initiated by the Norwegian Ministry for Children and Equality, co-funders of the project.

**For more information see [www.caringmasculinities.org](http://www.caringmasculinities.org)**



Dissens



Centre for Gender Equality



Peace Institute



University of Girona



The Equality and Anti-discrimination Ombud