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Project news

1. Iceland - leading fathers: 80 % take up rate in paternity leave!
2. Parental leave: part of an integrated support system
3. Get EU-knowledge on fathers on paternity leave: Hungary

Our favorite link for this summer

Our project websites: www.leadingfathers.info



Leading fathers

Icelandic role models for men

Group of mentors in Iceland

In the frame of the European project "Breaking Patterns" an interesting event took place in June in Reykjavik, Iceland: Men from Iceland, Sweden, Austria, Estonia, and Hungary, who have experienced taking paternity leave, talked about their views and challenges. They provided recommendations for men who will be fathers or leaders in the future. Special attention was given to 'The Icelanders', as the take up rate of paternity leave in Iceland is more than 80 %, whereas in most of Europe it is around 3 - 6%

- **Ari Edwald**, managing director of the Confederation of Icelandic Employers, had no doubt about the positive effects of fathers on paternity leave: "What do employers gain? There is a lower turnover of employees, less burn-out, more productiveness, when fathers take paternity leave as well. Why should it be a bigger problem for a father than for a mother? The hardest task is to fight the masculine culture, similar to long working-hours-culture."
- **Friðfinnur Hermannsson**, director of a District Hospital, brings it to the point: "We all know that it is difficult to be a housewife or -man. But to feel it, that is something else!"
- **Jón Viðar Matthíasson**, Chief of the Reykjavik Fire Brigade, recommends a two-sided agreement: "In the fire brigade I have noticed that when the time for the paternity leave is decided by the father himself, usually the employee chooses the time that is also suitable for the company. I hired eight new men, so I am able to have two on leave. Parental Leave is a right. It is the decision of the employees how they use it!"

Can the experiences from the Icelandic role models help future leaders? On 21 November 2005, we will see. On that day the final conference of the project in St. Pölten/Lower Austria will conclude the work, present the outcomes of the trainings tested and the feedback of participants of the leadership training module.

Newsletter of the European Project Breaking Patterns

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Save the date! 21st of Nov. 2005

You just have to come and join us in Austria for our final conference of the project Breaking Patterns!

Venue:

NÖ Landhaus, St. Pölten,
Lower Austria

Registration:

office@4noel.at
Electronic registration will be available very soon on:
www.leadingfathers.info



Parental leave: part of an integrated system

A curriculum for a leadership training module has been developed by 2 Swedes

Our Swedish partners from the Gender Management Institute of the Kvinnoforum, network and forum for women, men and equal participation, have developed further the idea of a module in leadership training.

Objectives of the training

1. To break open traditional patterns that responsibility to reconcile family and work is assigned to women only
2. To sensibilise men in future leading positions for work-reconciliation responsibilities
3. To motivate fathers to take paternal leave.



*Bam Björling,
Well known from leading and training
the Kvinnoforum in Stockholm*

Although the trainings of the couple usually take "at least 2 days!", when it comes to gender perspectives, Bam & Sten agreed to put the basic principles for future leaders into a curriculum, which will serve as a frame for a 2-hour-basic-training.

The curriculum will help trainers in Austria, Estonia, and Hungary, where the module will be tested, so there will be the opportunity for a good comparison on European level:

- What do the different countries and institutions take into account?
- What do participants feel is important?
- What are the results of the trainings?



*Sten Lindeberg,
Trainer of the Gender Management Institute,
with own experiences in parental leave*

Sten Lindeberg: "The module should take into consideration the concrete experiences of the participants at the training and use them as a starting point. That is the most important step to start, I think."

Then it goes on with a reflective observation of the topic. All this leads to an abstract generalizing and then to a plan of application.

Bam Björling: "Men have to incorporate the new knowledge about leading fathers into their daily life, that really is what counts in the end!"

Trainer's guidelines

An additional guide for designing the module serves as a suggestion for trainers all over Europe. Content and schedule can be adapted to the specific framework of the country and the target group in question.

An introduction of the guide leads into the issue and shows the learning approach. Key issues are defined, the preparation phase, planning stage and logistic questions are explained and a training schedule suggested.

The guide gives trainers a helping hand and motivates institutes to test the module.



Contact

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From man to man

*Mentoring for men
Virtual meetings with men experienced in parental leave and invitations of mentors can enrich leadership trainings.*



This should make visible that there ARE already a lot of men who take over the responsibility for child care and the reconciliation of family and work.

A mentor in the context of BREAKING PATTERNS has to be a reflective character, good in listening. He shares his experience and gives advice as a kind of resource person.

The relationship to the male mentee is based on a reflective dialogue:

1. Individual scenario for mentorship

- Men in leadership training choose their mentors from a list of men with experiences in parental leave
- They get directly into contact with their mentors
- They meet once for a longer talk or regularly in 3 - 6 months
- They talk together for 1 - 2 h about challenges and experiences

Group scenario for mentorship

- In the leadership training group, on a certain day, a mentor will be invited for 1 h to the training
- He tells the group, face to face, about his own experiences and answers questions out of the group, so 'peer-learning' takes place as well
- Information is also put on a website, where mentees can read about experiences on paternity leave, they bring their questions, which will be answered by the mentors in the project.

The dialogues will focus on managerial issues on fatherhood and other challenges of men on paternity leave.

Kindergarten: a crucial point for child care

Kindergarten turns out to be one of the crucial elements in child care leave

Austria: Children can go to state kindergarten at the age of three. Some kindergartens have special regulations, depending on the state. So, e.g. in Lower Austria the state kindergarten is free of costs until midday. If the child stays longer, parents have to pay. In Vienna you have to pay for half a day, too, the whole daycare costs around 250 € per months. Some kindergartens are only open from 9:00 - 11:15, that makes it impossible for mothers or fathers to work regularly, in fact. For the younger children often crèches are provided, but the most wide spread help is the 'daycare mother' and in Lower Austria, there are also 'flying nannies' provided by the state government.

Hungary: A child has the right to go to kindergarten at the age of 3. Additionally there is a network of crèches, from half a year on. But the mother has to prove that she works. The capacity of the crèches is much less than the need. So a lot of parents rely on grandparents for taking care of the children. Women used to retire quite early, so a lot of grandmothers are available and may also receive childcare allowance on top of their pension for this task. In the bigger cities there is a huge black labour market of nannies.



Estonia: Before the age of 3 children can be taken to the creches, but usually not in very young age. Especially for younger children there is also lack of free places in municipal kindergartens/creches, so parents have to use private kindergartens or nannies. All of these three options are for fee, so parents cannot always afford them. In addition to "nanny agencies" there is also a black labour market for nannies. There are plans to introduce the register of certified nannies to grant a reliable standard.

Iceland: In Iceland there is a comprehensive system. There is no difference between crèche and kindergarten. The demand seems to be really met. The level of services is very high. The staff is also trained to deal with disabilities. There is a high satisfaction with the 'playschools', 80 % of the parents say they are even very pleased.

Facts & figures

How to take parental leave ...

... in Hungary

Demographic changes are much debated in the country, and our partners shared the results of polls and surveys that give a general picture of the situation in Hungary. The population is on the decline, the average age when people get married is going up, and about 32% of babies are born into families where the parents are not married.



A recent research showed what people think about gender roles. The part of the population with more traditional thinking includes more men than women, but on average higher educated men are more open-minded.

Men seem to be quite responsible for the maintenance of traditional gender roles, although the traditional concept of 'Head of the Family' is changing. More and more people reject assigning this role to the man and want more democracy within families. The poll demonstrated that out of the families where the concept lived on, in 92% of the cases the men were the heads of the family.

Regrettably, even in families where decision-making was more democratic, most of the unpaid household work was still done by women. Nevertheless, childcare was more often shared than other tasks in the household.

Regulations & traditions

The childcare benefit system is quite comprehensive in Hungary. Women are eligible for a paid birth leave for 6 months after childbirth, while men are entitled to a paid leave of 5 days within the first 2 months. Both women and men can take parental leave then, but available benefits differ according to the labour market status of the parent:

- Childcare allowance is available to all regardless of previous employment up to the 2nd birthday of the child, but the fixed sum only reaches the minimum amount of the old age pension (EUR 99 in 2005).
- From the first birthday of the child, a grandparent living in the same home can also get this allowance on top of his or her pension for looking after the child.
- The childcare fee is only available for a parent employed for at least 180 days in the previous 2 years, and it is based on average earnings but limited to EUR 332 a month.

Despite men's extensive rights for parental leave, each year only between 1.5% and 2% of all recipients of such benefits are men. Many of them are students. Why so few?

It is partly economical. Men seem to be very much afraid of losing their jobs. If fathers stay home, this mostly is out of financial reasons, as they have no other choice. It is partly cultural as well. Most of the mothers of the men do not appreciate when their sons go on paternity leave, so even young people adopt quite conservative ideas on that. One grandfather also reported that the respective authorities did not know about the regulation, so it took him 3 months to realise his wish for (grand)parental leave. So, to conclude, men are threatened to lose their position when going on leave, but those who make the experience are very happy about it.

Any questions or remarks? We will be happy to put them forward to the authors!
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