

# MEN AS CAREERS




**European Commission Network on Childcare**  
and other Measures to reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities



# MEN AS CARERS

**TOWARDS A CULTURE OF  
RESPONSIBILITY, SHARING AND  
RECIPROCITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND  
MEN IN THE CARE AND UPBRINGING  
OF CHILDREN**

*Report  
of an  
international  
seminar  
Ravenna,  
Italy  
May 21-22  
1993*



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"Workers with Family Responsibilities" Programme by the Office of the Status of Women,  
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This report has been prepared by the European Commission Network on Childcare and other Measures to Reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities for Women and Men.

The contents of the report reflect the opinions of the authors. It does not necessarily represent the European Commission's official position.

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# SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS

**An international seminar was held in Ravenna in May 1993. It was organised by the Regional Government of Emilia-Romagna and the European Commission Network on Childcare and Other Measures to Reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities (the EC Childcare Network).**

**The aim of the seminar was to examine how to support increased participation by men in the care and upbringing of children. Member States in the European Community have committed themselves to this objective in Article 6 of the Council of Ministers' Recommendation on Child Care: "Member States should promote and encourage, with due respect for freedom of the individual, increased participation by men (in the care and upbringing of children), in order to achieve a more equal sharing of parental responsibilities between men and women".**

**T**he seminar focused on specific measures to promote increased participation by men in the care of children, as fathers and as workers in services. Participants presented examples of initiatives already taken by governments, services, employers and trade unions, including: leave arrangements; education and media programmes; projects in nurseries and other services for young children to increase involvement by fathers and the employment of male workers; and action in the workplace.

The seminar also considered the broader issue of 'men and change', starting with a comparison of the experience in Italy, Australia and Sweden. The report summarises the main points in the seminar papers and subsequent discussion; the full proceedings of the seminar will be published.

The report presents the conclusions and recommendations of the members of the Childcare Network present at the seminar.

## THE CONCLUSIONS INCLUDE:

**1** There is an urgent need for change, to increase men's participation in the care and upbringing of children. Change has potential benefits for children and women, as well as men - but also potential risks and disadvantages which must be recognised and taken into account.

**2** Change - of expectations, attitudes, behaviour - is already occurring, although it is not uniform, either between or within countries. There are many forces working for further change. It is not a case of whether or not change should happen, but rather what type of change will occur, how far and fast it will go and to what extent it can be mediated by policy and other interventions.

**3** Increased participation by men in the care of children means new roles, new identities and new relationships for men and women. Some women may not want change;

many feel ambivalent. Strategies must recognise that change is a sensitive issue, for men and women, capable of generating negative feelings. Men and women need safe opportunities to explore new roles, identities and relationships as well as their feelings about change. Individual men and women will vary in how far and how fast they want to change, and change cannot be forced on men or women who do not want it. Men must accept and share responsibility for the process of change; they must share all family responsibilities, not just the more positive and rewarding aspects of caring for children.

**4** Change takes place at many levels and in different settings (the family, services, the workplace, the wider community); support for change must also take place at different levels and settings. Change is promoted by informal practices, negotiations and relationships and by formal interventions, such as law, policies and programmes. The conclusions seek to clarify the potential contribution and the limitations of formal interventions; these can support, but not initiate change, being most effective as a response to changes already underway.

**5** The conclusions identify points to be considered when developing a strategy to encourage and support change. These include: analysis of the context within which change is sought; recognition of difference (for example, class and ethnicity); supporting existing informal processes and networks; targeting 'golden opportunities in life' when men and women are more responsive; providing role models; finding appropriate and effective incentives; and recognition that change will take a long time and will require sustained support.

**6** The seminar demonstrates that there is no excuse for government, employers, trade unions and other agencies to argue that intervention to promote increased participation by men in the care of children is impossible, undesirable or unwelcome. A range of interventions have already been tried and welcomed by men and women (although there are few examples of workplace measures). However, there cannot be a standard package of measures applied uniformly in all contexts; the choice of measures should follow from an analysis of the current situation, current assets and current obstacles in a particular country, region, community or workplace.

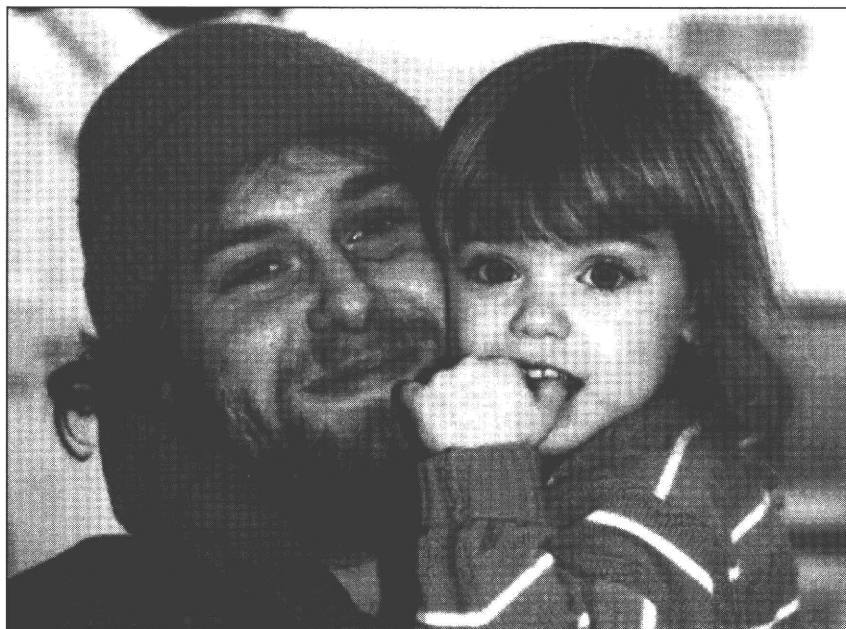
**7** The seminar focused on 'men as carers' for children, but men have caring responsibilities throughout adult life. If men are to increase their participation in all forms of caring, a life-course perspective must be adopted. This requires redistribution of paid and unpaid work not only between men and women and the employed and unemployed but also over the individual's adult life.

## **THE RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDE:**

**1** Government at different levels, social partners and private organisations should make a clear commitment to the objective of increased participation by men in the care of children; and draw up proposals for action, including targets and timetables, based on an analysis of their particular context. Within this broad approach, priority should be given to: pilot projects; exchange and discussion of experience; support for networks; establishing systems to monitor and evaluate; and developing research.

**2** The European Commission can play an important role. It can support the exchange of experience between Member States and pilot projects especially in less advantaged regions. It can mainstream support for increased participation by men in the care of children in its many programmes and initiatives as part of a wider approach to mainstreaming equal opportunities. As an employer, it can take a lead in developing workplace initiatives.

**3** The European Community should adopt a strong Directive on leave arrangements.



**There is an urgent need for change, to increase men's participation in the care and upbringing of children.**

# INTRODUCTION

## BACKGROUND TO THE SEMINAR

**This report presents the conclusions and recommendations from an international seminar held in Ravenna in May 1993; it also includes a summary of the seminar papers. The seminar had a distinctive title: *Men as Carers: Towards a Culture of Responsibility, Sharing and Reciprocity between Women and Men in the Care and Upbringing of Children*. The seminar was organised jointly by the Regional Government of Emilia-Romagna and the European Commission Network on Childcare and other Measures to Reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities (referred to below as the EC Childcare Network).**

**W**

hy was the seminar held? And what was the common interest of a regional government in Italy and an expert group established by the European Commission as part of the Community's Equal Opportunities Programme? The purpose of the seminar was to exchange information and explore issues about how to promote increased participation by men in the care and upbringing of children and, by so doing, create a more equal sharing of family responsibilities between men and women. The organisers of the seminar were particularly concerned with men as fathers and men as workers in services for children. They recognise, however, that this is not a comprehensive approach: this would have to consider, for example, grandfathers and other male relatives, and the responsibility of men in decision-making positions (such as politicians) for children's care and upbringing.

**In 1991, the Regional Government of Emilia-Romagna began a Project on Fatherhood.** The region was convinced of the importance of promoting greater participation by fathers in the upbringing of their children and a more equal sharing of family responsibilities between mothers and fathers. An important factor in this commitment is the high level of employment among women with young children in the region (nearly 70% of women with a child under 10 were employed in 1991)<sup>1</sup>.

The project has included the funding of research into fatherhood in the Emilia-Romagna region, undertaken by researchers at the Universities of Bologna and Parma. Another component has been a project to use early childhood services - and the region has an extensive system of high quality services for children from 0-3 - as centres







to promote cultural change concerning the roles of fathers and mothers; this project has involved training workers who have then established groups for fathers and mothers in selected nurseries, where they can explore gender identity and parental roles. There has also been a trans-national project including exchanges between workers involved in the Emilia-Romagna project and workers at Pen Green Centre in Corby, United Kingdom, a service for young children and their families which has been working on the same issues for a number of years.

Men's participation in caring for children and the achievement of more equal sharing of family responsibility between men and women has been an issue for the EC Child Care Network since it was first established in 1986 by the European Commission's Equal Opportunities Unit, as part of the European Community's Second Equal Opportunity Action Programme. Other relevant work undertaken by the Network has included the preparation of reports on parental employ-

ment (in 1991 and 1993, see footnote 1), which have covered fathers as well as mothers; reviewing leave arrangements for employed parents in the European Community, including Paternity Leave and Parental Leave and the use fathers make of leave (a report is expected later in 1994); and an earlier European seminar, held in Glasgow in 1990, which began to explore some of the issues involved in the subject of men as carers for children<sup>2</sup>. Since 1991, the Network has had a small Working Group on Men as Carers (with representatives from Italy, UK, Denmark, Belgium and Spain) to develop its work in this area which will continue until the end of the Community's Third Equal Opportunity Programme in 1995.

1. For further information on employment among mothers and fathers in the European Community, at regional and national level, see *Mothers, Fathers and Employment 1985-1991*, prepared by the EC Childcare Network and published (1993) by the Equal Opportunities Unit of the European Commission. The report is available in English and French from the European Commission (DGV/A/3), 200 rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels.

2. The report of the seminar *Men as Carers for Children*, is available in all Community languages from the Equal Opportunities unit of the European Commission (see footnote 1 for address).

The Network's interest in men's involvement in the care of children reflects the European Community's recognition of the importance of the issue. The Community has a long-standing commitment to equal treatment between men and women in the labour market; it has recognised that the achievement of this objective requires 'reconciliation of employment and family responsibilities', with caring for children as a particularly important family responsibility. To complete the equation, the Community has further recognised that reconciliation requires, among other measures, more equal sharing of family responsibilities between men and women. The Community's interest in more equal sharing therefore derives from an equal opportunities perspective.

The commitment of the European Community to the idea of more equal sharing of family responsibilities between men and women has been expressed on a number of occasions. In the early 1980s, the Commission argued that "the sharing of family responsibilities between parents is an important development in the achievement of wider policy objectives regarding equal opportunities in society"<sup>3</sup>. The Council of Ministers, in a Recommendation on Positive Action adopted in 1984, challenged "the prejudicial effects on women in employment and seeking employment of existing attitudes, behaviour and structures based on the idea of a traditional division of roles in society between men and women". More recently, the Community's Third Equal Opportunity Programme which runs from 1991 and 1995, reaffirms the importance of reconciliation between employment and family responsibilities, if women are to be integrated into the labour market: "this situation also requires that men - as well as women - should be able to benefit from the full range of measures directed towards the reconciliation of working and family life and thus be enabled to take on a fair share of family responsibilities". Within the Programme, the Commission commits itself to reviewing and disseminating the experience of countries "which have introduced successful measures" to encourage more equal sharing of family responsibilities between men and women.

Most recently, Article 6 of the Council of Ministers Recommendation on Child Care says that "it is recommended that Member States should promote and encourage, with due respect for freedom of the individual, increased participation by men (in the care and upbringing of children), in order to achieve a more equal sharing of parental responsibilities between men and women". It is important to emphasise that the Recommendation on Child Care, including Article 6, has been adopted by the Governments of all Member States, who have therefore made a political commitment to the issue of supporting increased participation by men in caring for children.

Moreover, all Member States are committed, in Article 7 of the same Recommendation, to "informing the Commission (in 1995) of the measures taken" to implement the Recommendation, including Article 6.

The Ravenna seminar therefore was not an isolated event. It constitutes part of continuing programmes of work on more equal sharing of family responsibilities between men and women, undertaken by the Regional Government of Emilia-Romagna and the EC Childcare Network in the context of a long-term commitment by the European Community. There was a history of collaboration between the Region and the Network, facilitated by a senior official of the Regional Government, Patrizia Ghedini, also being a member of the Network.

The seminar was timely for both the Region and the Network. It provided an opportunity to report on the transnational project, as well as to exchange information about other measures and policies which have been initiated to promote increased participation by men in the care and upbringing of children. It provided an opportunity for the Network to reflect on its future work in this area.

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children.**

The seminar may also make a broader contribution. By comparison with other areas covered by the Council Recommendation on Child Care - childcare services, leave arrangements and the workplace - the issue of how to promote more equal sharing of family responsibilities has received less attention, at all levels of government and also by social partners. The organisers hope that this report from the Ravenna seminar will assist Member States when considering how they might implement Article 6 of the Recommendation and their commitment to promote and encourage increased participation in the care and upbringing of children.

A final point should be made by way of introduction. Despite the theme of 'men as carers', the seminar organisers have long been aware that you cannot look exclusively at men and children. Changes in men's relationships with children involve women's relationships with children, and many other aspects of the lives, roles and identity of women. In effect, we are exploring new roles, new identities and new relationships for men and women - and the opportunities and risks involved in moving towards these new relationships, identities and roles. The theme of gender and gender relationships pervaded the seminar.

3. Explanatory Memorandum, Proposal for a Council Directive on Parental Leave and Leave for Family Reasons, para.4 (COM (83) 686 final - Brussels, 22 November 1983).

## **THE SEMINAR: PROGRAMME, PARTICIPANTS AND ASSESSMENT**

The seminar was jointly planned by the Regional Government and members of the Network's Working Group on Men as Carers. The seminar programme (see Appendix 1) began with a session on the general theme of men and change, with papers presenting experience from three countries - Australia, Italy and Sweden. The following sessions then looked at more specific areas and measures for the promotion of increased participation by men in the care and upbringing of children: childcare services (their potential as centres for raising awareness and increasing the number of men working in these services); the organisation and culture of the workplace; Parental and other types of leave; the media and education.

There were 35 participants (see Appendix 2), 16 from Italy and 19 from eight other countries - Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Spain, Sweden, UK and USA - including two representatives of the European Commission. Participants were invited on the basis of particular and relevant knowledge and experience in areas to be covered by the seminar. There was simultaneous translation in Italian and English.

When reviewing the seminar afterwards, the planning group concluded that there had been a high standard of written papers. These papers had offered a wealth of knowledge, understanding and experience, covering a wide range of subjects. They regretted, however, that the time devoted to presenting written papers meant that there had not been sufficient time for discussion and exchange in the formal sessions; a longer seminar, or fewer topics, would have been needed to deal with the topics exhaustively and to reach detailed conclusions within the seminar group.

It was also recognised that there was, in some cases, a difference of approach between English-speaking and Italian-speaking contributors, which reflected cultural and linguistic differences. This had caused some frustration on both sides. Italian-speakers were sometimes seen by English-speakers as too theoretical and philosophical, while some English-speakers might be regarded as too simple or even, sometimes, banal, by Italian speakers. Respecting and understanding this cultural and linguistic diversity (and indeed the diversity that exists between all cultures in Europe, to a greater or lesser extent), and finding ways of working that recognise and make constructive use of this diversity, is an important challenge for future European seminars and conferences.

## **THE SEMINAR REPORT**

The full proceedings of the seminar will be published in 1994 in Italian (by the Regional Government of Emilia-Romagna) and English (by the European Commission). This report provides an overview of the seminar. Part One of the report, in addition to the background material above, presents conclusions and recommendations. These conclusions and recommendations come from the Childcare Network's Working Group on Men as Carers; they do not represent the position of either the Regional Government or the European Commission. Part Two provides a summary of the main points contained in the papers presented at the seminar and subsequent discussions.

**Reconciliation of employment  
and family responsibilities  
requires, among other measures,  
more equal sharing of family  
responsibilities between men  
and women.**



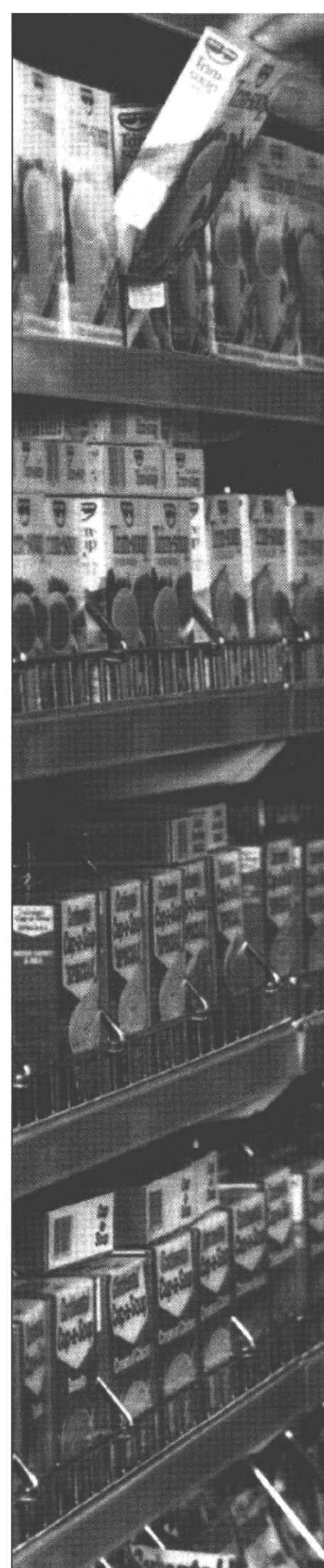
# CONCLUSIONS

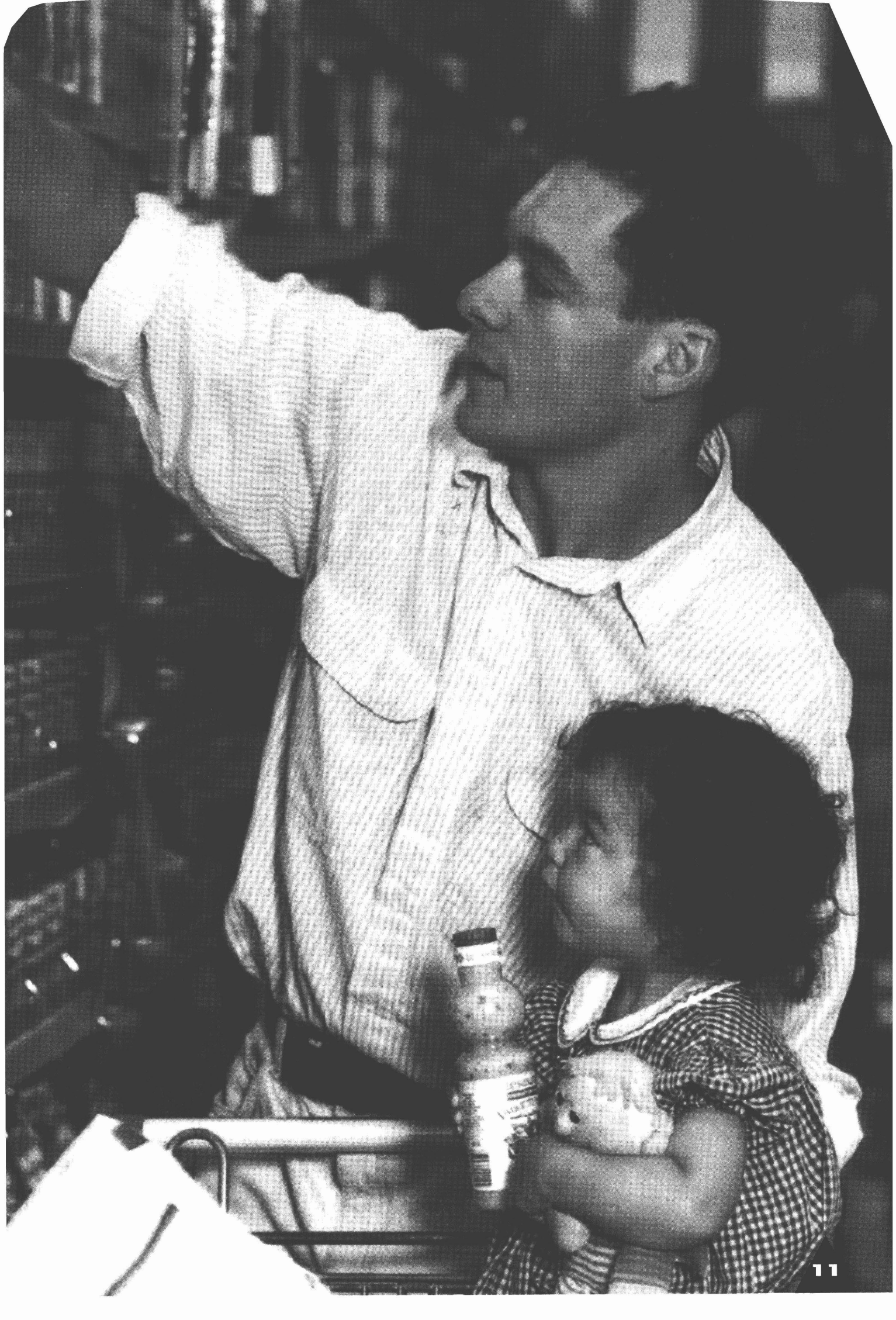
## THE NEED FOR CHANGE

**The seminar was concerned with the question of how to support change, leading to men assuming more responsibility for the care and upbringing of children. This is an issue which all Member States of the European Community have committed themselves to address through adopting the Recommendation on Child Care, which in Article 6 contains a specific proposal for action. But before asking how to achieve change, it is important to be clear about why change is needed.**



he Recommendation on Child Care was adopted within the framework of the European Community's equal opportunities objectives and Action Programme. More equal sharing of the care and upbringing of children has been emphasised as one means to achieve reconciliation between employment and family responsibilities in a way that promotes gender equality in the labour market. It is an important way of reducing women's 'double load' of work; at the same time, it will help to challenge the 'traditional' male model of work and to promote new models of work, for both men and women, which are based on the assumption that both genders have caring responsibilities. In theory, at least, increased participation by men in the care and upbringing of children is a necessary condition to ensure that reconciliation of employment and family responsibilities is not achieved through special measures for women, which will disadvantage them in contrast to men;





it is necessary to make reconciliation a 'men's and women's issue', not just a 'women's issue'.

There are however other arguments, apart from the equal opportunities case, to support increased participation by men. Several speakers at the seminar referred to the benefits to children of being cared for by women and men - and indeed their right to care from men as well as women. Men also may benefit in many and profound ways, through opportunities to share in the upbringing of children on a more equal basis, and through the re-definition of identity and other changes that will accompany this change in behaviour. More equal sharing may also improve the health and well-being of men and women, and also create a healthier society through decision-makers and people in power (still mainly men) having greater awareness of and understanding about children and what it means to take care of them.

The potential benefits are very great. Having said that, it is important to recognise that there are also potentially substantial risks and disadvantages involved, for all concerned, and in particular women and children. These risks and disadvantages must be recognised and taken into account when deciding how best to proceed to encourage and support change.

## THE POTENTIAL FOR CHANGE

**The seminar emphasised that it was not a case of whether or not change should happen, but rather what type of change and how far and fast it will**



**Today's young fathers are more involved with their children, and find this closer relationship gratifying.**

go - and to what extent could it be mediated by policy and other interventions. Today's young fathers are more involved with their children, and find this closer relationship gratifying. There are new expectations on fathers that they should be nurturers as well as providers. In some countries, especially in Scandinavia, this process of change has gone further than elsewhere; both a Swedish and a Danish participant said that, based on the experience from their countries, they held an optimistic view about the possibility of change in men's involvement with children.

On the other hand, change has been uneven. Fathers' increased participation with their children has often involved the more enjoyable aspects of care, leaving women continuing to carry the major part of the more demanding work and responsibility. Change has hardly occurred in the area of paid work with young children, with very few men employed in services for pre-school children.

There are also forces - economic, social, demographic - working for change, or which at least may help to put on the agenda the issue of how responsibility for children is shared between men and women. The most obvious is the increasing numbers of women in the labour force, as well as improved levels of education among women; men in Sweden are more likely to take leave where their partners are well educated and have well paid jobs, though it is not clear whether this is due to increased demands by women, or to men feeling more able to relax their traditional provider role. Men, or at least some men, wish to be more involved in family life; to take just one factor involved, rising divorce rates, and the consequent risk to men of losing both partners and children, may be leading some men to re-consider their contribution to the family. This shift in men's attitudes may have to be taken into account by employers, especially if the men concerned are well qualified and valuable to the enterprise. Employers will also have to recognise and take account of the increasing number of male workers who report work/family conflict and stress, because of the potentially adverse effects on performance and productivity.

More generally, more employers are aware of the need to take account of the family responsibilities of their workforce through 'family friendly' measures. The desire to increase productivity and the need for a motivated 'core' workforce to achieve this objective open up a range of possibilities for new working conditions that favour reconciliation and more equal sharing. Underlying these trends are major structural transitions - for example, from industrial to service societies - which may both require and facilitate changes in social relationships.

At the same time, these trends are not uniform. There are growing inequalities in household resources and in the labour market. Workers, both male and female, with high qualifications and skills in demand are more likely to benefit from working conditions - both formal and informal - that support reconciliation and more equal sharing. But large, and growing, numbers of workers occupy a precarious and marginal position in the labour market; their access to such beneficial working conditions will be far more limited, because they lack skills or qualifications that are in short supply.

Even among workers who are well qualified, and whose skills are in demand, developments are not uniform. Some may use their stronger bargaining position to increase their involvement in family life. But others are working longer hours and increasing their involvement with paid work, either because of increased personal commitment to their jobs or because of 'traditional' expectations among many senior managers about what it means to be a 'good' worker.

Economic changes offer great possibilities for supporting a reconciliation of work and family life - but also the likelihood of growing inequalities between families in access to measures that may support reconciliation and more equal sharing of family responsibilities between men and women. There is scope for alliances between employers and workers on reconciliation and more equal sharing: but the limits of these alliances must be recognised, and supplementary strategies adopted. Underlying the relationship between employer and employee, workplace and family is the value attached to production and reproduction in society and whether that balance is such that it assists or hinders reconciliation and increased participation by men in the care and upbringing of children.

Finally, it must be recognised that it is harder to promote change at a time of economic recession and high unemployment. Adverse economic circumstances, however, are not an excuse or explanation for nothing to be attempted. Many employers may be preoccupied with survival, but some will be in a stronger position. Modest action projects and initiatives can be supported. Discussion and planning, to be prepared to take advantage of better times, can be undertaken.

## THE MEANING OF CHANGE

**Increased participation by men in the care and upbringing of children means new roles, new identities and new relationships for men and women.** While 'men as carers' may be a useful slogan, it can be dangerous if it is taken to imply an exclusive preoccupation with men which omits women from the process of change. Indeed, not only does change for men affect women, and of course vice versa; but unless women want to see men assume more responsibility for children and support this process of change, then it will be difficult to achieve.

Increased participation by men in the care and upbringing of children requires changes in identity for men and women, but it does not imply a merging into one identity. More equal sharing of care and responsibility does not mean men and women having the same identity, either in general or as parents. Indeed, it is important that gender identity is neither "assimilated nor annihilated" (to use the powerful phrase of a man working in a nursery) in the process of change, a point that applies as much in paid work with children as in the parental relationship with children.

Increased participation by men in the care and upbringing of children may mean greater social value being placed on care work (both unpaid and paid). At present, care work is very important for women, but has relatively low social value; many men (as fathers or potential workers in services for children) would regard undertaking care work as a step backwards, due to its low social value, reflected in the low economic value placed on paid work with young children. It is difficult, as with so much to do with the process of change in this area, to clarify the relationship between different types of change - does men's increased involvement in care depend on increased social value being placed on care? or will increased social value follow from more men taking care or children? or is the relationship more complex and inter-active?

Either way, this relationship between the value of care and men's involvement raises uncomfortable issues. We may say that in order to attract more men into working in services, pay and conditions need to be improved. We might argue that in order to encourage more men to take Parental Leave, payment and other conditions must be strengthened. Women who already work in services or take leave may welcome these improvements: but at the same time, they may justifiably ask why the value of caring is only recognised when men enter the picture. Similarly, women may fear that once men enter the picture, they as women will lose one area where they have an established position, as well as some power and control; in short, as in so many areas of life, men will take over.

So women may want change, though some may not: yet wanting change may be combined with feelings of justified anxiety and doubt. This ambivalence must be a central consideration in developing appropriate strategies to encourage and support change. Indeed, strategies must recognise that change, or the prospect of change, is a very sensitive issue, for men as well as women, generating a range of negative feelings, including anger, guilt, hostility and frustration. The need to provide men and women with safe and secure opportunities to explore new roles and identities, and emotions generated by this process, is of prime importance, as is a recognition that men and women will vary in how far and how fast they want change to occur. We return to this issue below.

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doubt.**

While women's support for the process of change is necessary and helpful, ultimately men must assume responsibility for the process. They must want change and own it. They must make demands of government and in the workplace. They must address change in their roles and identities. In this respect, they have a lot of ground to catch up: women have been engaged in their own process of change for many years, in particular as their involvement in the labour market has increased.

Finally, taking more responsibility for children must also involve men taking more responsibility in other areas. They must take more responsibility for themselves. They must acknowledge, take responsibility for and deal with negative male behaviour - family violence and abuse, sexual harassment etc. They must take a more equal share of all other family responsibilities, including housework. If women are being asked to share the positive and rewarding aspects of caring for children, they can reasonably expect to share the less appealing work involved in running a home - the tasks that are boring, time-consuming, unsatisfying or downright unpleasant. If men do not begin to take responsibility for this side of family life, women's ambivalence or hostility to change may increase rather than gradually reduce.

## THE PROCESS OF CHANGE

**A recurrent theme in the seminar was that change took place at many levels and in different settings -** and that supporting and encouraging change also had to take place at different levels and in different settings. Settings included the workplace, services for children and parents, the wider community and, of course, the family. Participants talked about the need to consider: macro and micro levels; the relative contribution of the law, policies, practice and cultural change; and the impact of informal practices, negotiations and relationships as well as formal interventions, such as Government policy and company programmes.

Within this complex process of change, it is important to try and clarify the potential contribution and the limitations of social intervention. The initial impetus for change, and its subsequent speed and direction, will depend heavily on the powerful structural forces - economic, social and demographic - that have already been mentioned. Change is also driven by the many initiatives and movements occurring 'at the grass roots' or from 'the bottom up', for example in the context of family relationships and of other settings like the workplace where work groups may informally negotiate their own arrangements to support reconciliation and by so doing find ways themselves to exploit possibilities or 'space' in the workplace. More formal interventions will be a response to a process already

underway. They are unlikely to initiate that change in the first place: change in gender roles and relationships cannot be decreed from the top, nor can change be forced on men or women who do not want it.

But having acknowledged the limitations of formal interventions - directives and laws, positive action measures, public education programmes and so on - it would be wrong to assume that they have no contribution to make in circumstances where there is an evident need for change and some desire within the society, or parts of it, for change. In these circumstances, social intervention can play an important role, not by coercion, but by providing opportunities, support and encouragement; in short, government, employers, trade unions and other organisations can play an important role as enablers. More specifically, social intervention can promote change in at least three ways:

### Change in gender roles and relationships cannot be decreed from the top, nor can change be forced on men or women who do not want it.

- by contributing to cultural change, addressing the complex issue of what is considered appropriate behaviour and redefining 'caring for children' as an issue for men and women;
- by providing support and increased opportunities for men and women who want change in their lives and relationships, or who are at least interested in exploring the idea of change; and
- by influencing the power balance in negotiation in the family, workplace and other settings where change may take place.

A two day seminar, covering a lot of ground and focusing very much on specific measures and initiatives, will not be able to arrive at a clear and comprehensive view of the many issues involved in considering the process of change, let alone resolve them through preparing a refined and coherent theory of the process of change. At the best, it can suggest a number of points to be considered when deciding how to proceed in encouraging and supporting change:

- the strategy adopted for promoting change should be based on a detailed analysis of the context within which change is sought - be it the country as a whole, a region, a commune, a workplace, a nursery. This analysis will define where the strategy must start from; the economic, cultural and political context; the assets available to support change; and the obstacles to change. The strategy should not only follow from this analysis, but should be based on making specific and explicit the objectives and reasons for change, and the assumptions and values underlying these objectives;
- a successful strategy to support change must also recognise differences, not only gender difference, but also along other important dimensions, for example



class and ethnicity, and understand the implications of these differences for change;

- on the basis of this analysis and understanding, a strategy can be defined which includes measures in different settings and at different levels; the strategy can also define a balance between 'top down' measures, and supporting existing informal processes and networks (for example, supporting men negotiating for their needs in the space provided at the workplace for family needs);
- as already noted above, a successful strategy will need to recognise the strong and sometimes negative feelings that can be aroused by change in this area, and provide means of recognising and responding to these feelings and concerns;
- support for change may also benefit from being targeted on certain 'golden opportunities' in life when men and women are more responsive to examining issues of equality, sharing, role and identity. These 'golden opportunities' include major transition points in people's lives, in particular the transition to first-time parenthood;
- strategies for change may involve new measures and initiatives, but they should also build on what already exists - established services that are well-used by parents, improving existing leave arrangements, using media, trade unions and community groups. This also means making good use of informal networks and processes that already operate in workplaces, communities and so on;
- an important element in any strategy for change is the provision of role models - individuals, families, workplaces, services and, indeed, societies where more equal sharing has been achieved or is being seriously worked towards;
- another important element is identifying appropriate and effective incentives to promote and encourage change. Incentives may take the form of specific policy devices (for example, extra payments or benefits to men who take leave); alternatively they may take the form of showing men the personal benefits they may derive from taking more responsibility for the care and upbringing of their children - in other words, motivating them in terms of personal development to want to be more involved. A related issue that requires attention is whether, in some specific instances, incentives should be accompanied by limited pressure or sanctions. The most obvious example comes in the area of Parental Leave and how to encourage more men to use leave. There has been a debate in a number of Nordic countries on the idea of a 'quota' system for

allocating leave, and the recent introduction of this system to the Parental Leave schemes in Denmark and Norway will provide important opportunities for evaluating the contribution of this approach to an overall strategy;

- the process of change will take a long time, running into decades; for example, in Sweden it has taken 20 years to reach the stage where nearly half of fathers take some Parental Leave. This long haul will require sustained support. The support provided will need to be adapted, on the basis of regular reviews, to changing circumstances and needs and assessments of the effectiveness of existing measures. It is important to remember what has not yet been achieved, and not become complacent, but equally important to assess, recognise and celebrate what has been achieved.

## **SPECIFIC MEASURES AND INITIATIVES**

**The seminar demonstrated that there is no excuse** for governments, employers, trades unions and other agencies to argue that intervention to promote increased participation by men in the care and upbringing of children is impossible, undesirable or unwelcome. Participants presented examples (few, but significant) of national and regional governments, trade unions and employers who have taken important initiatives, explicitly to promote increased participation by men in the care and upbringing of children. Interventions to support change have already been tried and welcomed by men and women.

The seminar also showed that there cannot be a standard blueprint, or a single package of measures, applied uniformly in all contexts. As already emphasised, the choice of measures should follow from an analysis of the current situation, current assets and current obstacles in the particular country, region, community or workplace.

**A strategy to support change includes measures in different settings and at different levels.**

Having said that, a few more specific conclusions can be drawn. Nursery and other services for young children can provide an important means for promoting cultural change in society, as well as providing, at a more personal level, places for safe and secure exploration of roles, relationships and identity by both men and women. These services have direct contact with parents at one of the 'golden opportunity' moments, when men and women may be particularly open to considering roles and identities.

To make best use of this opportunity, although also for other reasons, it is important to have men as well as women working in these services. There should also be a broad and coordinated approach, linking work in services for young children with 'parent education' (for



example during pregnancy) and leave arrangements that enable men and women to develop competence as parents and find ways of negotiating and applying more equal sharing in their everyday family lives. In short, every effort should be made to use this important transition period to enable men and women to establish equal relationships right from the start of parenthood - if that is what they want - and to establish effective ways of negotiating future relationships.

Leave arrangements have an important role to play for this and other reasons; for example Swedish experience shows that Parental Leave is potentially valuable for the opportunity it provides for men to discover their own ways of caring for children and undertaking domestic work. Although there are some questions to be resolved, it is increasingly apparent that certain features of leave are important if men are to make significant use of it, including length, payment and a supportive attitude to leave-taking in the workplace.

At present, the workplace provides fewest examples of policies or programmes specifically intended to encourage men to take more responsibility for children or, indeed of cultural change. Workplace culture continues to assume that the care of children is predominantly a 'women's issue', and this is reflected in the development and implementation of reconciliation and 'family friendly' measures by employers. The need for formal policies and programmes is important, based on a recognition of men's caring responsibilities and supporting them in meeting these responsibilities. But it is also important to recognise and support informal developments and networks of workers, and to encourage men to use the opportunities available to negotiate within these networks.

**Nursery and other services for young children can provide an important means for promoting cultural change in society**

Education and media programmes have a role to play in raising awareness and promoting cultural change - as do governments and other powerful institutions by recognising and advocating the importance of change. An important issue here is how far these education and media programmes use and work with organisations and individuals who have an established position and relationship with 'target' groups, such as men and women expecting babies or in early parenthood - for example, trade unions, parent educators and health workers, services for young children. Media programmes also raise important issues about what images of fathers (and mothers) will support, rather than hinder, change.

Finally, as well as specific measures and initiatives, more attention needs to be given to research, monitoring and evaluation and the role of pilot projects. A range of research is needed, both quantitative and qualitative, giving better understanding not only of actual behaviour and attitudes, but

also about processes, for example whether and how couples negotiate the division of work connected with the care and upbringing of children and whether and how the workplace supports or hinders men assuming a more equal share of family responsibilities. Research has an important role to play in understanding obstacles to change and evaluating measures and initiatives and developing effective strategies. Monitoring how measures work is vital; for example, at present there is very little data on how leave arrangements or 'family friendly' workplace measures are actually used, by men and women. Finally, pilot projects have an important role to play not only as part of a process of developing more effective measures, but also as 'role models', to stimulate more initiatives.

## **CHANGE AND THE LIFE-COURSE**

**The seminar concentrated on the theme of 'men as carers' during one stage of the life course** - when children are young. But the issue of men as carers is a life-course issue: men, like women, have caring responsibilities, as well as other family responsibilities, throughout their adult life - for partners and for older relatives, as well as for older children and grandchildren. Similarly, increased participation by men in paid caring work is an issue that goes well beyond services for young children.

If men are to be encouraged to increase their participation in all forms of care, so that there is more equal sharing of all caring responsibilities between men and women, a life-course approach must be adopted. This approach is essential if the culture and structure of the workplace are to become compatible with, and supportive of, the life-time caring responsibilities of men (and women). This approach is the starting point for changing the current dominant model of employment amongst men, which ignores men's life-time caring responsibilities. Finally, a life-course approach is necessary to discern and reverse a trend in the way paid work is distributed, which hinders reconciliation of employment and caring responsibilities.

Throughout Europe, there is a trend towards increasing concentration of paid work, so that it occupies a shrinking proportion of the life course. The result is that a growing proportion of the labour force is in the 25-49 age group - up from 51% in 1960 to 62% in 1990 with a further increase projected for 2010. This is partly due to increased employment among women in this age group. It is also because of the high level of employment among men in this age group: in 1991, the employment rate for men aged 25-49 in the European Community was 90%, compared to 68% in the 20-24 age group and 64% in the 50-64 age group. Not only are men aged 25-49 nearly all employed, but nearly all work full-time and many work very long hours.

This age range of 25-49 coincides with the period when most men and women face the intensive demands and caring responsibilities of bringing up children; in 1989, the 'average' woman in the European Community had her first

child at the age of 26. The most intensive demands from paid and unpaid work increasingly coincide in the lives of men and women; the individual parent increasingly experiences work/family conflict and stress, the family is increasingly overworked. There is an urgent need to redistribute the workload, both paid and unpaid, not only between men and women, but also between the employed and unemployed and over the individual's life-course so that he or she has greater opportunities to increase or decrease involvement in paid work as the demands of unpaid caring work fluctuate.

The seminar suggested some examples of how this life-course perspective might be applied in practice. Becoming a grand-father may be one of the 'golden opportunities' when men are particularly open to arguments about equality and particularly motivated to address the issue of caring responsibilities. Replacing Parental Leave tied to early parenthood by a system of 'career breaks' available for a far wider range of reasons would provide recognition and support for other caring responsibilities throughout working life. More flexible ways of working, including greater variety in career paths, could also play an important role in promoting and supporting this process of redistributing work over the life-course.

The European Community may have a serious unemployment problem. It does not have a shortage of work. Only by recognising the value - economic and social - of reproductive and other caring work, redistributing this work more fairly and taking a life-course perspective can issues of unemployment, inequality and work/family conflict be resolved.

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# RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM THE SEMINAR

**Article 6 of the Council Recommendation on Child Care provides a commitment by, and an encouragement for, Member States in the European Community to initiate or develop work to promote and encourage increased participation by men in the care and upbringing of children. The organisers of the seminar hope that the experiences presented in Ravenna act as an inspiration and a challenge - to governments, at all levels, employers, trade unions and so on. At the same time, we have already emphasised that diversity within the Community makes it inappropriate to prescribe a specific course of action; many possibilities for action exist, but the final choice should depend on careful initial analysis.**



The Council Recommendation makes it clear that, in addition to mothers and fathers, a range of institutions have responsibility for supporting reconciliation between employment and caring for children, in a way that promotes equal opportunities between men and women - "national, regional and local authorities, management and labour and other relevant organisations". A first step therefore is that these groups should make a clear and explicit policy commitment to the objective of increased participation by men in the care and upbringing of children: this commitment should include a clear statement of what this objective is intended to achieve (for example, for equal opportunities, for children, for men and so on). This should be

accompanied by an analysis, by each group, of their particular context, leading to proposals for action, selecting the most appropriate measures on the basis of this analysis. Proposals for action should include timetables and measurable targets, which may vary in scope and ambition according to circumstances. For example, targets might include achieving a certain level of male staff in services for young children within five years<sup>4</sup> or achieving a certain proportion of fathers taking at least three months Parental Leave, again within a defined time period.

Within this broad approach, priority should be given to: establishing a range of pilot projects; ensuring opportunities for regular exchange and discussion of experience and knowledge; supporting the development of networks, for example of men working in services for young children or of workplaces with initiatives or of parents within workplaces; and establishing monitoring systems and developing research targeted to help overall objectives.

The European Commission can play an important and supportive role, in a number of ways. First, as an employer it can take a lead in developing workplace initiatives to support and encourage increased participation by male workers in the care and upbringing of their children.

Second, it can play a continuing role in supporting the exchange of experience between Member States (and with non-EC States with relevant experience); this can be done in a number of ways, including support for further seminars and conferences, funding cross-national links between projects and

4. While it is lawful to set goals or targets, in most cases positive discrimination is unlawful; other means would need to be used in a strategy to achieve these goals or targets.



initiatives and establishing a data-base of projects and initiatives.

One specific proposal, intended to stimulate action and disseminate experience and information, is that the Commission produce a series of discussion papers on the promotion of men's involvement in caring for children in a number of areas (for example, in leave arrangements, in the workplace, in services for children). Produced in an accessible and attractive format, these papers would look at the issues involved, present examples of existing initiatives, raise questions for discussion and suggest ways of developing initiatives.

Third, the Commission can support pilot projects, especially in less advantaged regions where public funds for such projects may be less available. For example, the Commission might fund the development of a community education programme, designed to meet the circumstances and needs of a particular country or region; or support a positive action initiative to train, place and support male workers in services

for young children; or projects in a number of workplaces.

Fourth, the European Community should adopt a strong Directive on Leave Arrangements, covering Paternity Leave, Parental Leave and Leave for Family Reasons. The Directive should include conditions to promote a high level of use by men, and should require regular monitoring on use of leave by men and women. The Commission should monitor leave arrangements (statutory, collective agreements, individual company or workplace level) across the Community and their use by men and women.

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**The European  
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supportive role in a  
number of ways.**

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Finally, the Commission should use opportunities in its many programmes and initiatives to 'mainstream' the issue of promoting increasing participation by men in the care and upbringing of children as part of a wider approach to 'mainstreaming' equal opportunities in general.

# OVERVIEW OF THE MAIN POINTS AT THE SEMINAR

## Day 1: May 21

**The seminar was opened with an Introductory Session, at which short contributions were made by Elsa Signorino (Regione Emilia-Romagna), Tina Anselmi (Italian National Commission for Equal Opportunities) and Irene Kingston (Equal Opportunities Unit, European Commission).**

**M**

ost sessions in the seminar focused on specific measures (for example, leave arrangements) that could be taken to promote increased participation by men in the care and upbringing of children, or specific areas (for example, the workplace) where change was necessary to achieve this objective. The first session of the seminar's first day - **Men and Caring for Children: analysis and strategies for change** - took a more general issue. The three speakers were asked to consider the theme of 'men and change' and, drawing on experience in their own countries, to address some of the following questions: has men's involvement in the care and upbringing of children changed in recent years? If so, why? What are the obstacles to further change? What can be done to remove these obstacles?

Drawing on research undertaken as part of the Emilia-Romagna Project on Fatherhood, *Carmino Ventimiglia (Italy)* suggested that the evolution of men's social image and role as fathers is not a linear and progressive process, but involves the mixing of old and new approaches, often with ambivalent and contradictory elements. The re-definition of the role of fatherhood and its practice cannot be considered in isolation from a

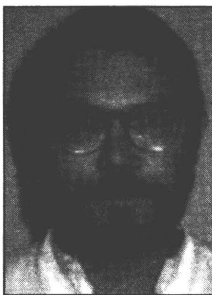




new definition of the relationship between the man/father and his partner. The major changes which have occurred at a social level and from a structural viewpoint (for example, falling birth rates, increased numbers of single parent and reconstituted families) have brought about a change in man-woman and parent-child relationships. These changes, however, are not accompanied by an equal sharing of responsibilities for the care and upbringing of children, the burden of which still falls almost completely on the shoulders of women.

Young fathers in Italy today are more able to express feelings and emotion for their children and enjoy this, but find that with this increased intimacy they cannot discipline their children. It is important for parents to set boundaries, but fathers see this as negative and a threat to the gratifying relationship they have with their children. This leaves discipline increasingly to the mothers, who are more able to say 'no', not least because they have to combine caring for children with many other activities in the home. Comparing the situation in Italy with the situation in Denmark and Sweden, where discipline was often dealt with by negotiation between parent and child, young fathers in Italy have no history or memory of negotiating conflict, since their fathers had been disciplinarians.

Despite young Italian fathers being more involved in caring for their children, a contradictory signal came from the process of young children learning and identifying with gender roles. Research conducted in several nursery schools in Emilia-Romagna showed that children's perceptions of the roles of fathers and mothers were totally traditional.



Eric Sundberg

To promote new behaviour among fathers, it is necessary to address different levels: structural; relationships; and communication. It is only possible to promote a new fatherhood role by acting simultaneously on these three levels. Fathers have to move from 'being fathers' (the dimension of social identification) to 'doing fatherhood' (the dimension of daily relationships). Two other conditions are important if fathers are to develop new relationships with mothers and children: they should not copy women's behaviour, but develop a distinctive male way of relating to children; and they must assume responsibility for themselves, as well as for children.

**Donna Edman (Australia)** noted that, despite a large increase in women's employment, the division of domestic work between men and women has scarcely altered in Australia; the amount of unpaid domestic work undertaken by men is growing, but only slowly. Men who have recently become fathers do not increase their unpaid work overall, spending more time with their children (much of this time as play), but devoting less time to other domestic work.

Australian society is still based on *"the idea of a worker (being) a man with a wife at home to relieve him of his private responsibilities...(and) "women are admitted as*

*workers as if they too are 'like men'".* Employed women suffer a 'double load', though both men and women suffer stress due to trying to combine employment and family life: *"for many Australians, home life is under pressure (and) researchers report sadness, tension, resentment, bewilderment and pessimism over attempts to adjust to the new roles of the sexes"*.

The Australian Government had taken an initiative to promote more equal sharing of family responsibilities through a community education programme (Working Families: Sharing the Load - see Day 2 for more details) as a result of ratifying ILO Convention 156 on Workers with Family Responsibilities. A number of lessons had been learnt that were important if obstacles to change were to be removed:

- changes at home need to be complemented and supported by workplace changes - *"men will not have an incentive to take up increased responsibilities for child rearing unless they have access to flexible working conditions (such as paid parental leave)"*;
- negotiating new gender roles is very sensitive and, without care, can be met with resistance and hostility. Employed mothers can feel guilt and some do not want to share responsibility for the one area of their lives where they have some power; men can feel guilt, frustration and pressure. There is nothing to be gained by blaming men;
- there are differences in the language, expectations and motivating factors for change. Men and women attach different meanings to terms like 'fair', 'responsibility', 'share'. Different standards can hinder change. Men may be motivated to change by the prospect of better relationships, greater recognition of their role in the family etc.;
- families vary and diversity should be recognised and respected. Parents should be offered options for change;
- more men want to be more involved in the upbringing of children - but there is a lack of role models and of opportunities for young boys to learn necessary skills for domestic work. Schools, parent education classes and identifying men who do take a major part in childrearing are all important.

Growing numbers of Australians recognise that more equal sharing is necessary if family life is not to become intolerable - *"those who would like to explore new patterns of sharing can be presented with choices or options for change and others who are content with their domestic arrangements can feel at ease"*.

**Eric Sundberg (Sweden)** was optimistic about the possibilities for change, based on Sweden's experience. In the 1950s, men were hostile to everything to do with equality; now 45% of fathers took some Parental Leave. So there had been very good results, mostly in the last 20 years, although much remained to be done; for example, a recent report showed that inequality in domestic work developed after couples had their first child.



Donna Edman



The experience of Parental Leave in Sweden suggested that it was very important for men taking leave to have at least three months at home, because only then did men get fully involved in all aspects of domestic work and find their own way to do the work.

Obstacles to change included many women who gained their main sense of identity through motherhood, perhaps because their employment was not rewarding, and did not want to give this up. Fathers were most likely to take Parental Leave if their partners had higher income jobs and higher levels of education. Change was least common in working class families. Immigrant fathers also make less use of Parental Leave, which suggests finding new ways to give information to men from other cultures. Many young parents say they receive little understanding from older generations; *“it is vital to emphasise that the message is important for the community as a whole”*.

As families with young children are often under financial pressure, fathers in these families tend to work more than other men. Men frequently say they do not take Parental Leave because they are afraid of their employer’s reaction, but several reports have shown their worries are often exaggerated. Fathers do however often need active encouragement from their employers to take leave and there are many ways in which this can be done, such as promoting bosses who take leave and giving extra support to small employers who do have problems when workers take leave (for example, an insurance company has a programme to encourage men to take Parental Leave, which offers every man (and woman) a cash bonus if they stay at home for at least six weeks, and a recent report shows that more men have been encouraged to take leave as a result of this programme).

Old theories, propagated by some ‘experts’, were also barriers to change and had a remarkable capacity for survival. There was a need for new research, new knowledge and new experts to challenge the old theories, with parental education as one important means of dissemination. It was also important, in promoting increased participation by men, to address both men and women.

*“Changing men’s role is a long-term process (with action needed) in the economy, the labour market, politics and the family”*. Guidelines, a plan of action and measurable targets and criteria are needed; in Sweden, money and effort has been put into projects where the results could not be evaluated.

An important issue concerns single parents. After separation, many children lose contact with their fathers. But this should not happen; parents without custody must have the right to contact, and use that entitlement to be more involved with the care of their children - *“parents should not be able to get a divorce from their children”*.

While men and women gained from these changes, Eric Sundberg now thought that children gained the most from more equal sharing of the care and upbringing of children. Children have a fundamental right to the care of both

parents, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child should be amended accordingly.

Finally, equality is essential for the good life of the future. But men are not to be trusted in dealing with equality unless they address men’s involvement in and responsibility for domestic violence, sexual harassment and prostitution. Increased participation requires men to get closer to their feelings, but this means both positive and negative feelings.

In his concluding comments on the session, **Søren Carlsen (Denmark)**, shared Eric Sundberg’s optimistic view about the possibility for change in men’s involvement with children, but emphasised the importance of remembering that we all still live in unequal societies. The Scandinavian experience was, to some extent, similar to Italy, with a difference between what men say and do. Søren Carlsen identified a number of obstacles to change:

- *“it is as if 20 years of developing a more equal society has not reached workplace culture. The workplace forgets men are fathers after the return from taking leave”*;
- women may also be ambivalent about change;
- lack of cultural support for new fathers’ roles.

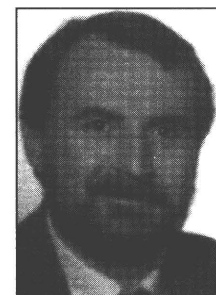
Change could be encouraged in various ways. Legislation can support change, but not initiate change. Positive role models are important: for example, the fact two Government Ministers took Parental Leave in Norway had been important. Finally, positive action could be used to assist develop a new culture.

The second session - **Fathers and Childcare Services** - considered the potential role of services for young children as a means of raising awareness and promoting cultural change. The session focused particularly on the experiences of the project in Emilia-Romagna to promote nurseries as centres for cultural change and of the Pen Green Centre in the UK.

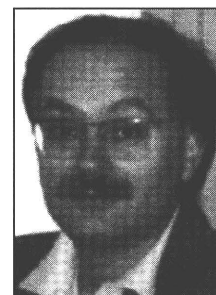
**Davide Minguzzi, Sergio Spaggiari, Andrea Papi and Carlina Rinaldi (Italy)** explained how the project in Emilia-Romagna built on an established network of high quality early childhood services, which already provided care and education for young children, and a strong tradition of parent involvement in social management. The aim of the project was to explore the potential of these centres in promoting cultural change among parents, including more equal sharing of the care and upbringing of children between mothers and fathers. Preparation for the work included training courses for workers in selected services, covering motherhood, fatherhood and group work techniques, as well as involvement in the



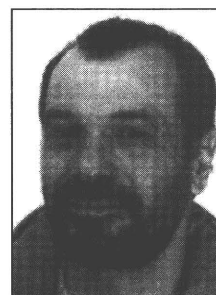
Søren Carlsen



Davide Minguzzi



Sergio Spaggiari



Andrea Papi

exchange with Pen Green. One hundred parents had been involved in the initiative.

Fathers and mothers had met in separate groups in participating nurseries (*asilo nido*), which provide for children aged 0-3. Overall, the experience with the groups had been very good, and should be applied more widely. The main constraint on expansion was the need to train more workers.

Fathers, in their groups, had stressed the importance and pleasure of meeting with other men - *"it was the first time they had a place to meet and share experience without being judged"* - and in this context had been very willing to talk. They were interested in redefining their identity as fathers, although it was important not to focus on only one aspect of identity. Men are changing attitudes and relationships with their children - but the work and responsibility is still mainly carried by women. Sharing work was seen by fathers as something you offer - *"men feel very good when they do some housework"* - but it was not seen as a priority. Managing conflict and negotiation had emerged as important issues, with men referring to the lack of negotiation in their relationships with their own fathers. The importance of recognising and supporting gender difference was also stressed, although there were also strong differences between fathers.



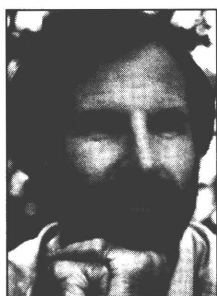
Margy Whalley

Emotional involvement in the mothers' groups had been very intense. But while, in theory, all mothers said sharing with fathers was fundamental and liked the 'new' father who can express tenderness and love, there were doubts. Men take over the most positive parts of mothers' relationships with children and mothers lose power - but fathers may also now expect mothers to assume discipline and authority and they do not take responsibility for the organisation and planning of family life. Not surprisingly, fathers perceive some resistance to change in mothers.



Angela Malcolm

**Margy Whalley, Angela Malcolm and Trevor Chandler (UK)** described the work of the Pen Green Centre, which over 10 years had developed a variety of services for young children and adults; each week, 2-300 adults spend time in the Centre, many attending a range of groups. Work with both children and adults emphasises increasing self-esteem and autonomy, and supporting and caring for others.



Jim Levine

As part of the cross-national project with Emilia-Romagna, a questionnaire was used to explore attitudes to gender and parenthood among parents; this showed considerable similarity between parents in Corby and Emilia-Romagna. Women felt fathers were increasingly involved with children and fathers felt they were more involved than their own fathers had been - but the division of work in the home was not really challenged.

The staff at Pen Green Centre have a high commitment to involving fathers and recruiting male

workers. They want to make the Centre more 'man friendly', having started by making it a 'woman friendly' service where women felt they had safe space. There is a policy of positive action to recruit male workers, and there has been in-service training on issues around 'Working with Men'.

The Centre's experience was that men found it easier to attend meetings or courses rather than groups; they come particularly to meetings on their children's educational development. New strategies to involve fathers include an adult education course on 'Men and Masculinity'. However, a Men's Group has operated for four years, to overcome isolation, explore gender roles and male identity and offer support for personal change. Although the group only attracts some men, nearly all group members report increased quality in their lives.

It is important for men and women to have opportunities to explore gender roles. Men need the opportunity to define their own roles and have the right to do things in their own way. Women need to allow this, although it may mean adjusting their ways of thinking, working and parenting.

The work with fathers at Pen Green had built on the Centre's strengths - *"on (the) success we had in engaging women...a strong, supportive, stable work group...a creative/intimate way of working together as a multidisciplinary team and we were at least intellectually committed to the idea of encouraging men both to use the centre and to be employed as child care workers...The difference was that in Italy they started with a clear political commitment to the project including a research programme and comprehensive training (for workers) on gender issues"*.

**Jim Levine (USA)** referred to a new book - *Getting Men Involved: Strategies and Models that Work* - which identifies childcare services which have had successful programme to involve men, both as fathers and as paid workers; a three year national training programme on this issue is beginning in the US. In discussion with other contributors to the session, a number of conclusions emerged about effective strategies to involve men in services:

- there need to be men around (for example, as workers);
- workers, male and female, need training. Women workers have to change how they relate and react to fathers;
- offering a diversity of ways and forums for involving men (not only groups or meetings), including informal contacts when fathers bring children to centres or pick them up;
- the need to reach men as men, rather than fathers (for example, having a job is so important to male identity, that unemployed men feel they do not count as fathers).

**Dino Giovannini (Italy)** concluded the second session by referring to the wide range of information that had been presented. The basic problem concerned how participation, consensus and sharing of goals (personal, social and within families) could be built. The recognition given to what an individual does affects the value that individual gives to himself or herself. Participation makes people visible, it enables them to move from a passive to an active role. Within this context, participation by fathers in a group in childcare services provides a way for them to stress and value their own identity.

The third and final session of the first day was on the subject of **Men as Carers in Childcare Services**. Only a small number of men work in childcare services and hardly any work with the youngest children. **Jytte Juul Jensen (Denmark)** argued that childcare services need more male workers because this would: have a positive influence on achieving equal opportunities in society; improve the quality of services by offering children more varied experience; safeguard children's rights to have contact with both genders; be a benefit to men.

Little work has been done on this issue. Not enough is known about barriers to change and strategies to promote change. Jytte Jensen suggested four strategies:

- improved salaries, conditions of employment and status;
- policy (including a statement of intent to recruit more men, for example 20% of childcare workers should be men by the year 2000);
- implementation (targets, timetables, information, and pilot schemes in which staff are not gender-biased);
- advice and support (including opportunities to meet other male workers).

Training colleges have a vital role to play, through recruiting more male students. There is also an urgent need for more statistics, research and information to guide the choice of strategies for change.

Men as carers in childcare services raises issues about gender difference: "it is important to realise that men and women have different cultural traditions and the value of both sets of traditions must be recognised...It is important to discuss whether the staff wishes to stick to traditional sex roles or whether they would like a change...Centres must consciously try to make use of the different resources men and women have to offer".

**Fidel Garcia Berlanga (Spain)** emphasised a particular dilemma: how to encourage change when services in his area of Spain were threatened with closure. However in 1992, there had been a number of activities, including contact with male workers in other areas of Spain, an attempt to promote cooperation between groups of male workers and Trades Unions and an exchange with workers from Emilia-Romagna in Italy. Work in childcare services offered the possibility of rich cultural development for men, but it could also be difficult for men, especially

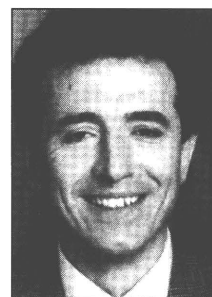
where they were the only man working in a centre.

Like Jytte Jensen, **Fidel Berlanga** stressed the importance of pilot projects, establishing centres with 50/50 male/female staff, to study the relationships between staff and between staff and children. A general improvement in the quality of services can also increase the presence of men in services, through the impact of improved training programmes for the service.

**Marco Fibrosi (Italy)** focused his presentation on his long-standing experience as a worker in a nursery. He defined this experience as "a passage from a state of undifferentiation to a state of differentiation, a progressive awareness of gender difference". It was from this growing awareness that he came to see himself as a man working in a 'woman friendly' environment and within a system of relationships, experiences, images, symbols, representations and codes belonging to women. A man working in childcare services does not only suffer from isolation. He also enters territory that does not belong to him: he cannot share his experience with other men and carries out a role that is not generally associated with men. This influences parents' attitudes, sometimes in an ambivalent way. Mothers can act differently when they have to entrust the care of their children to someone who does not share their experiences, culture or sensitivity - but towards whom they do not feel jealousy or a sense of competition as sometimes happens with female workers; fathers, seeing a man working in a nursery, may be encouraged to enter this environment for women and children -but may possibly feel jealous.

The experience of leading a fathers' group was positive, as the approach adopted had been based on listening and talking together, which fostered mutual sharing and analysis. The respect for differences could be the common denominator of the whole experience - with children, female colleagues and parents. Strategies for increasing men's presence in childcare services cannot be developed without a process of enhancing these services and increased importance being given to children's upbringing and education.

**Trevor Chandler (UK)**, another male worker, identified with Marco's experience, and emphasised the need for support and support systems for male workers. "You have to redefine 'masculinity', you have to make sense of who you are as a man". **Inge Maerkedhal (Denmark)** considered education policy to be vital - "if we want more men (in childcare services), we must demand formal education of a high quality for staff", combined with educational guidance at school. Women's studies also discussed 'critical mass' - how many men or women are needed to



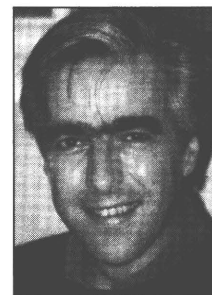
Dino Giovannini



Jytte Juul Jensen



Marco Fibrosi



Trevor Chandler

ensure permanent change in a sex-segregated occupation; this implies the importance of recruiting more than one man into individual centres.

**Bjorn Flising (Sweden)** closed the session with the conclusion from a recent Scandinavian seminar about male workers. Children had the right to meet men and women in services, and male workers could contribute to children developing understanding, attitudes and social skills concerning similarities and dissimilarities in the roles of men and women. To get more men into childcare services, it is necessary to have:

- information and marketing (to help boys and men discover childcare as field of work);
- support for male workers;
- the development of a tradition and culture of childcare work as professional work;
- change in public opinion;
- improved salaries and status; and
- good education and training.

## DAY 2: MAY 22



*Inge Maerkedahl*

The first two sessions focused on the workplace - **Changing the organisation and culture of the workplace to support increased participation by men in caring for children.** **Jim Levine (USA)** has been examining fatherhood and social change in the USA, as part of the Fatherhood Project at the Families and Work Institute in New York. He proposed three dimensions that will influence whether and how men take more responsibility for childrearing: policy; programmes; and culture. At a policy level, the US has no policies explicitly designed to encourage men to take more responsibility for the care of children; indeed "when it comes to men and children, American social policy has attended to only one issue: the enforcement of child support after divorce". However, the first law of the new Clinton Presidency was a Family and Medical Leave Act, which gives men and women the right to 12 weeks unpaid leave to take care of a new baby or sick family member. In fact many men already take some time off (on average five-six days) when they have a new baby, using vacation, sick leave or informal arrangements: "our new law will not create radical change, but it is an important element in creating a climate in which it is seen as normal for men to care for their children...and in which they can talk about doing so openly".

Policies are a necessary but not sufficient condition for change. During the last decade, there has been a "dramatic emergence of corporate programmes to help employees balance work and family responsibilities...(but) although

available to both women and men, most were initiated and continue to be defined as if they were exclusively a response to the needs of working mothers". To challenge this idea, Jim Levine has begun identifying the best companies for working fathers, publishing them annually in a parent magazine; his top choice is a Fathering Programme run at the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, which was introduced by a woman executive to increase productivity. "I would like to see us discussing family friendly companies with an understanding that family means mother and father (but) for now the identification of 'father friendly' companies is a necessary transitional step... (otherwise) 'family friendly' will keep getting interpreted as mother friendly".

At a cultural level, America is redefining the 'good' father, as both a provider and nurturer - "but the culture of the workplace has not been redefined", and it is the culture of the workplace, the unstated assumptions about appropriate behaviour, that affects men most. The result is an "invisible dilemma", where fathers experience the same work-family conflicts as mothers - invisible because men do not talk about it openly. There are small examples of change in company culture - managers recognising men's family responsibilities - and perhaps these can be linked to "one of the most important workplace initiatives in the US: the diversity movement...(while) paying attention to 'new groups' joining the workforce, our diversity programmes largely ignore that there has been a growing value shift among (working fathers)".

Jim Levine concluded by asking how you change the workplace culture? "In part through changes in policy and the introduction of programmes, because (culture, policy and programmes) cannot be so neatly separated out in real life. In part, through a variety of small changes in management practice...and in large part by making the invisible dilemma visible - by making it more apparent than it has been that men are carers too".

**Inge Maerkedahl (Denmark)** reported on a project being undertaken in four Nordic countries, to examine the potential for combining work and family responsibilities in a variety of occupations and workplaces, some male dominated, some female dominated and some gender balanced; the focus is on the workplace culture and innovation, rather than structures, rules and organisation. In each country, three to five workplaces have been studied in depth, while a large number of men and women in different occupations have been interviewed. Three components of parenting have been considered: economic support; practical care; and social and emotional care.

An important concept is the 'space' available to workers to combine work and family life, and within which they can negotiate options; this space is often rather large in workplaces, due to informal rules, in other words members of the workforce have possibilities to negotiate arrangements amongst themselves, to help them meet family needs, as long as the work is done. In a male-dominated workplace that has been studied, this space is

used primarily by men to help meet economic support needs; by contrast, in a female-dominated workplace, the priority of the women workers is the practical and emotional care needs of parenthood. There are however signs of change; younger men act as innovators in the workplace culture, though more traditional workplaces still exist where work/family issues are not on the agenda and fathers have little space for family life.

Finally, recent Danish research has found that work/family stress was lowest where the working hours of mothers and fathers in families had the least overlap. Flexible working hours did not reduce stress since they were used by men to stay longer at work, a trend also increasingly apparent among women. *"Individual flexibility is needed for families to make the (work/family) jig-saw fit...but flexible production systems, with demands for high work commitment and decentralised work organisation, make individual workers vulnerable and press men and women to prioritise work"*.

**Klaus Burian (Germany)** reported on recent German research, into work and family life for qualified male employees and executives in six companies. A number of fundamental social changes were apparent including: pluralisation of aims and ways of life; an increased need for flexibility within the families concerning care of children and others; re-evaluation of the relative importance of income and time; and increasing male orientation to family life.

Although management recognise an interdependence between work and private life, which affects the efficiency of all workers, *"there are considerable uncertainties...about how the enterprise (should respond)...the present personnel paradigms (assume) that male employees still live predominantly in traditional family formations and that as a consequence they are rarely confronted with family problems"*. Work/family issues are still seen mainly as women's issues. Where 'family friendly' policies exist they are officially for men and women, but are used mostly by women.

There is an important generational change apparent among young executives, who are more independent and critical of company demands interfering with private needs: *"the young and higher qualified employees whose partners have a similarly high educational level are described as the most interested fathers"*. However this is hardly reflected in personnel policies or concepts and has found little acceptance within companies. Companies are not informed about what men want, and men do not risk telling their employers.

Senior staff do recognise that family life can have a negative impact on male workers, but the higher the position, the lower the acceptance of family-related measures. The amount of time spent at work, rather than actual performance, is still the main criteria for executives: *"female and male employees*

*who are family-oriented have little chance to compete for better positions...(and) long working hours are understood to express a position's importance"*. One reason why it takes so long to respond to social change is the subordinate position of personnel management in big companies and the priority given to product and process innovation.

A number of factors are working in favour of businesses taking more account of men's and women's family needs: increased competition for skilled workers, both male and female, and more women in employment; skilled male workers wanting to share more family responsibilities; increased wealth among the younger generation, partly due to inheritance, and decreasing importance attached to income maximisation; and management realisation that a motivated workforce is important. In this context, the compatibility of work and family life becomes a strategic challenge in the discussion of a company's personnel policy.

**Carla Passalacqua (Italy)** argued that reconciliation of work and family life had not been part of the political discussion in Italy, but this is now changing due to restructuring of the labour market (in particular the need to develop human resources) and more employed women, which challenges traditional employment models and can promote change since women have different expectations, needs and demands. Change must recognise gender difference; the aim is not to remove this difference but to benefit from it: *"introducing change means interpreting male and female genders as two different systems which interact"*. Women want equal access to jobs, but not to copy the male identity.



Carla Passalacqua

A law, introduced into Italy in 1991, a great challenge to the culture of the workplace. The aim is to enhance women's employment through positive action (although it is recognised that this must be part of an overall strategy). One area of positive action is promoting different organisation of work to enable a better balance of employment and family responsibilities and a more equal sharing of work between men and women. There is funding to support the law, through support for projects proposed by companies, trade unions etc.

A second area for promoting change is through the collective bargaining process and labour contracts. But trades unions adopt a traditional approach, where the needs of women are not sufficiently recognised and employers do not understand that innovation and change must depend on human resources, with gender at the centre of all policies.

In the subsequent discussion, **Mia Wyns (Belgium)** emphasised the continuing gender inequalities in the labour market, including unemployment and vertical and horizontal occupational segregation. She proposed that the significant

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point in women moving into male-dominated jobs (or vice versa) came at about the 20% level; below that a minority (male or female) lacks power and influence. Moreover the 20% had to be at all levels, including middle and top management.



Ivan Thaulow

**Irene Kingston (European Commission)**

stressed that the issue of more equal sharing of care between men and women was an equal opportunities issue. Employers still discriminate against women, partly because they do not recognise men's family responsibilities, but also because they believe women's lives are dominated by family responsibilities. At present, measures to reconcile employment and family responsibilities are regarded as means of recruiting or retaining women and are marginalised as extras or 'gifts' by companies to women. Measures should be applied at all levels of the workplace, not just as benefits for higher status jobs; they should also recognise the family responsibilities of men. The process of change in the workplace required: commitment at highest level; role models, including decision-makers; asking the workforce exactly what they want; achieving 'critical mass'; training managers and supervisors; and recognition that change might sometimes be harder for smaller enterprises.

**Marco Bossi (Italy)** described an innovative project initiated by the Zanussi Group, the second largest private manufacturing company in Italy. Within the framework of its industrial relations with social partners, the Group signed an agreement in 1992 that included, among other provisions, positive action measures intended to promote equal opportunities. An ad hoc committee has been created consisting of twelve members, six nominated by the company and six by trade unions. In addition to other measures (for example, against sexual harassment, to promote women's training), a specific project is being implemented in the Susegana plant, one of the most advanced factories in Europe. This involves blue-collar workers in the definition of their working hours and shifts. There is a system of flexible shifts which are managed and agreed upon by workers themselves according to their personal and family responsibilities and in keeping with the production needs of the company. The project is mainly intended to respond to the needs of women in reconciling their work and family responsibilities, although many male workers participate in the project.

**Giuseppe Casadio (Italy)**, speaking from a Trade Union perspective, argued that in Italy the presence of national bargaining agreements between trade unions and employers produced guarantees and higher protection for workers - but also slowed down the process of acquiring new cultural approaches. Today, innovative goals have become secondary in a period of recession, which forces trade unions to focus mainly on the defence of jobs and salaries. It becomes harder to bargain on non-wage issues and, faced by a drop in real wages, people work longer hours. There was also more resistance to innovation in small enterprises, making new

cultures harder to establish. Only now is the Italian National Council for Labour attempting to create a data-base to enable information to be exchanged on advanced experiences, while the Trade Unions have demanded the establishment of an Institute of Work Planning in Emilia-Romagna.

In concluding the session, **Ivan Thaulow (Denmark)** suggested that the two most important social forces for change were women demanding equal opportunities and enterprises wanting more productivity, and that an alliance was possible between these two forces. At the same time, it was important to see the limits of this alliance - "*enterprises can only be trusted up to a limit - if an initiative is not productive, it will not be supported*". There was a danger of talking too much about recession as an obstacle to innovation and change. The labour market is not uniform, and there are areas where recession has little impact and there are skill shortages. It was also important to challenge the breadwinner role being solely for men; women have increasingly become breadwinners and we must fight to recognise and support this role. The more women become, and perceive themselves to be, breadwinners, the more they will demand a new situation in the home.

A central issue was to change the male model of employment, based on a high commitment to paid work and long hours. He agreed with Jim Levine that supporting change for men in the workplace needed three levels of action: legislation and collective bargaining; specific changes in the workplace (flexible hours, part-time work); and cultural or informal change, for example supporting men negotiating for their needs in the space provided at the workplace for family needs (for example, the Nordic research project has observed young Norwegian policemen negotiating hours with colleagues so they can pick up children from day care centres).

The next session considered the **Contribution of Parental and other types of leave to promoting more equal sharing between mothers and fathers in caring for children.** **Mia Wyns (Belgium)** argued that Parental Leave had to be situated within the system of production and reproduction. The segregation of the labour market is profound; moreover until the pay and conditions of 'caring' jobs are improved, men will not be interested to undertake these jobs or caring tasks in the home.

Looking at leave arrangements, there are two approaches: equal treatment or special treatment. The 'special treatment' approach has its roots in labour laws intended to protect women and their maternal status; pregnancy, childbirth and infant care are viewed as unique to women. This approach has been most influential in labour and social laws. "*Leave systems until now were more related to the caring role of women. If we want them to result in more equal sharing between the sexes, it is necessary to give at the same time more impetus to the equality of the labour market*"

Belgium has a system of 'career breaks' rather than Parental Leave<sup>5</sup>. The system was introduced in 1985, with the objective of reducing unemployment. Workers can take 6-12 month breaks from paid work at any time and for any

reason, and receive a flat-rate payment, which is higher in the case of workers taking a break within six years of the birth or adoption of a second or subsequent child - on condition that their employer agrees and is prepared to accept a previously unemployed worker as replacement. Men account for one in eight workers taking a 'career break'; men taking a career break are mainly aged over 50, while women are mainly aged 30-35.

A new variant of the 'career break' scheme will soon be launched, enabling older workers (over 50), to take a part-time break. Mia Wyns noted that older men are now more interested in increased family involvement: "*the generation of men who 'built' the welfare state are now (retiring and) 'missed' a lot of caring in the upbringing of their own children...they are now experiencing a will to participate in caring for their grandchildren*". For this and other reasons, it was important to move away from a narrow emphasis on Parental Leave, and place the discussion of employment and leave into a life-course perspective.

**Paola Bottoni (Italy)** stressed that the promotion of a culture of reciprocity between men and women required a new balance between freedom and responsibility: women must acquire more freedom, while men ought to assume increased responsibilities. In recent years, women have engaged in a cultural debate, which has produced many innovative ideas and actions. Emilia-Romagna has played an important role, not least because of the high level of employment among women and the perception now among women that employment is a life-time 'project'. Most women in Emilia-Romagna carry the so-called 'double load'; in their daily life they have to juggle their work for the labour market and their work for the family. The flexibility which characterises their life, and which today is considered valuable in employment and training, can be a relevant resource for women if responsibilities are shared in a more balanced way and if society becomes more flexible as well.

The Italian Parliament will shortly discuss a 'popular initiative' bill, which includes the organisation of leave and opening hours of public offices and shops; the bill on 'time and opening hours' has been promoted by women in the Left Democratic Party (PDS), and 500,000 people have signed their support for the initiative. The bill proposes improved parental leave and leave for family reasons, with State benefit equivalent to 50% of earnings and the possibility of additional payment from employers; the provision of sabbatical leave (available every seventh year of employment) to be 'repaid' by postponing retirement age; and a set amount of time for professional training.

5. Statutory leave and 'career break' arrangements (including Parental and Paternity Leave) in the European Community, as well as in Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden, are fully described and discussed in *Leave Arrangements for Workers with Children*, prepared by the EC Childcare Network and published (1994) by the Equal Opportunities Unit of the European Commission (for the address, see footnote 1).

There is also an important need to redefine the hours of public and private services so that they can respond better to the needs of citizens, especially women because they are the ones forced to juggle with time. A recent law envisages that local authorities should be responsible for harmonising time and schedules within their areas, by undertaking a form of 'urban planning' on this subject. Some important pilot projects have already been carried out, for example in Modena in Emilia-Romagna.

**Eric Sundberg (Sweden)** considered the Swedish experience with leave arrangements, and men's use of these arrangements. The Swedish experience had to be seen in the light of the "*Swedish mentality to approve whatever the authorities do and say*", and also showed that there had to be some incentives - 'carrots' - if men were to take leave.

Paid Parental Leave was introduced in 1974, with two incentives: earnings-related benefit (favouring parents, especially fathers, with higher incomes); and a special 10 day period of paid Paternity Leave specifically for fathers. The latter incentive was successful, but not the former; men were not interested in staying at home longer and most children were still breast-feeding during the 6 months leave period. Subsequently, Parental Leave has been increased, so it is now 15 months (12 months at 90% of earnings, 3 months at a flat-rate payment). Though 45% of fathers now take some period of Parental Leave, they only use 10% of the total time available to families - in other words, many only take a few weeks of leave. "*Due to this, women have stood up and said that it*

*is not only a question of men's rights, it is also important to all women that men increase their share of parental leave. Otherwise the prolonged leave period will function as a trap, making only women stay at home for a longer time and thus miss more of the chances in working life*". But since men usually change only when they have something to gain, it is necessary to find new incentives - for example, men are beginning to see the importance of close relations with children from an early age if they are to avoid divorce and losing partners and children.

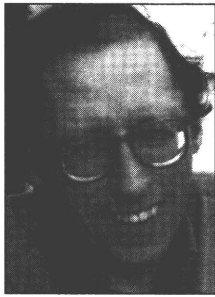
Statistics show men increase their use of leave when mothers are well educated and well paid. Is this because of higher demands by these mothers? Or because when men feel the role of breadwinner is shared, they feel they want to enjoy being with their children?

Swedish parents have other leave available to them. Temporary Parental Leave entitles parents to 60 days of leave a year per child under 12, if the child or its normal carer is ill; leave is paid at 80% of salary, rising to 90% after 14 days. This leave is shared almost equally by men.

Leave arrangements are supplemented by various projects to increase men's use of leave. For four years, the Government has given money annually for information and local projects

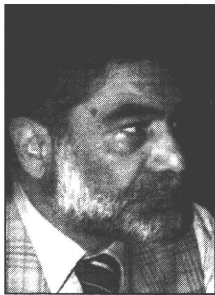
**Statistics  
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on men and leave. Local projects have also been supported as part of a national equality project Men and Women Together. The Government has appointed a Dad's Group (a working party of eight men), to assist the Minister of Equality on how to encourage more men to take leave. But if incentives are insufficient, then more forceful measures may need consideration. Parliament is currently considering the promotion of equality by ensuring that part of the leave period can only be used by men (a quota system). One argument for this is that men taking leave at present are usually better educated and better paid; leave is not used by the average industrial worker: *"these are the men we need to reach with our information on parental leave...and who could benefit from a quota system in order to be backed up by a law when facing their boss or colleagues who do not care about equality"*.



Peter Moss

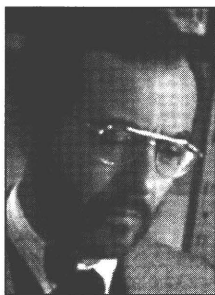
The context of this debate is economic stagnation where it is hard to maintain benefit levels. More incentives are unlikely: *"hence there will either be a quota system, to enforce men to share parental leave, or men will have to do it all by themselves - I may be naive, but I think that young Swedish men will do it on their own for their own sake and the sake of their children"*.



Carmine Ventimiglia

In the subsequent discussion, **Carmine Ventimiglia (Italy)** emphasised how the debate on Parental Leave follows two approaches: leave as a family right or leave as an individual right. Strategies must take account of individual feelings and emotions by allowing flexibility in how leave can be taken, emphasising negotiation between parents. **Klaus Burian (Germany)** suggested three main barriers to more men taking leave: material (the difference in earnings between men and women); functional (company

resistance to absence of employees); and cultural. Support to overcome these could come from policies or collective bargaining, but trade unions were not concentrating on wages and government wanted to minimise demands on companies. Support for change therefore was more likely to come from individuals' negotiation power, though this was less likely to be effective for less qualified men and women; and demographic and labour force developments.



Maurizio Quilici

**Søren Carlsen (Denmark)** reported that in Denmark, Parental Leave had been discussed from an equal opportunities perspective, which treated men and women in a similar way. This led to a full-time leave period - which very few men used. When interviewed, Danish men said they wanted more flexibility (for example, the opportunity to take leave part-time) because they wanted to keep some contact with employment; it had also been suggested that, to increase male take-up, a short-term positive action measure should be introduced making higher payments to

men taking leave than women. **Inge Maerkedah (Denmark)** suggested that more flexible, part-time leave would not encourage men to take responsibility, given the

Swedish evidence (see above) that it was very important for men on leave to have at least 3 months at home full-time, because only then did men get fully involved in all aspects of domestic work and find their own way to do the work. Søren Carlsen argued that it was more important first of all to get men to take leave; taking equal responsibility could follow.

The Danish Government had proposed to extend the existing Parental Leave which consists of 10 weeks per family and which parents could divide up as they chose. The extension would give 6 months leave per parent, which could not be transferred from one parent to the other, with a further 6 months subject to employer consent. It would be paid at a flat-rate, equivalent to 45-55% of average earnings for a skilled manual worker. However, there was no flexibility in how the leave could be taken; it would have to be full-time.<sup>6</sup>

Concluding the session, **Peter Moss (UK)** noted that leave arrangements could have a variety of objectives: to promote equal opportunities and more equal sharing between men and women; to enable men to spend more time with their children; to benefit children; to increase parental choice; to reduce unemployment and so on. It was important to be clear about objectives, and to ensure that appropriate conditions and supporting measures were applied to the subsequent leave arrangements, which should also be carefully monitored and evaluated. Attention also needed to be paid to the link between leave arrangements and the workplace, to see whether the workplace supported and encouraged leave-taking or acted as an obstacle. The session had raised a number of important issues, for example about whether leave should be similar for men and women; whether leave should be an individual or family right, and if individual, whether it should be transferable or not; and about the possible strategies to adopt to increase fathers' take-up, including the role of incentives, pressure and education/information interventions. But perhaps the biggest issue concerned two contrasting models: leave arrangements tied to specific events, at present mostly concerning the care of young children; or career breaks, over a life course, which could be taken for any reason, with financial compensation perhaps available or more generous if a break was taken for certain care-related reasons.

The third session was **Passing the Message: the media, education and other social actions to increase awareness and support about the need for increased participation by men in caring for children**. **Maurizio Quilici (Italy)** introduced the work of the National Institute for Fathers' Studies (ISP) in Rome. The ISP was founded in 1988, "born from an awareness of a cultural vacuum" concerning fatherhood. It is an association open to anyone interested in paternity - fathers, researchers, men and women (20% of the ISP's members are women). The aim is to promote the study of paternity - historically, legally, socially, psychologically - and to enhance the role of fathers by supporting the development of a new social awareness. The ISP has a specialised book and film library, a press cuttings collection, a regular bulletin and contributes regularly to debates,

6. This proposal has subsequently been adopted and will be implemented in 1994.



meetings and the media. The ISP is convinced that mothers are not primary parents, nor are they inherently better at parenting than fathers, or vice versa; the roles of mother and father are socially conditioned and not biologically defined. Children need both mothers and fathers, who should share the demands of caring for children. A necessary step in progressing towards a culture of reciprocity will be to change the custom of Italian judges in legal separation cases giving sole custody to the mother (93% of cases) and disregarding the joint custody option (only 1%).

**Eric Sundberg (Sweden)** explored images of fathers in Sweden, including those used in public campaigns to encourage men to make more use of leave arrangements (which go back to the late 1970s). A report in 1983 had presented the 'In principle' Man: *"The Swedish man is very fond of sports; he is rather fond of his work; he thinks that men ought to devote more time to domestic work to caring for children - in principle; but he doesn't do this himself"*. This report began public efforts to engage men in working for equality, starting with the Government establishing a Working Party for the Role of Men. Their 1986 report - *The Changing Role of the Male* - proposed certain 'golden opportunities' in life when men were responsive to information on equality, for example when becoming a father, a grandfather or in a crisis situation.

Progress has been made in the representation of fathers in the media: *"the togetherness of men and children has become more visible...it is no longer considered funny or strange if men pose together with children or while occupied with domestic work"*. However despite some progress, the message in the media is that you still have to conform to the old stereotypes of male (you should look strong, wealthy, rich, active) and female (you should look pretty, slim, inviting and caring). Eric Sundberg argued that successful campaigns for Parental Leave must abandon such traditional thinking; they should try to connect men's family life to their life outside home.

Trade unions can also play an important educational role, and this has happened in the last few years - *"earlier trade unions said this was a private matter and had nothing to do with union work"*. Trade union campaigns are often very informative: *"they emphasise that there is a privilege to be used, a claim to make (and) tells you how to approach your employer and what help you can get from the union. In some places the union has arranged special studying classes for men as parents. In Sweden today trade unions no longer only consider their members as merely employees"*.

**Donna Edman (Australia)** reviewed the Federal Government's community education campaign - *Working Families: Sharing the Load* - conducted by the Office on the Status of Women within the Department of the Prime Minister, and initiated after Australia ratified ILO Convention 156 (see above). The aim of the programme was to *"raise community*

*awareness and stimulate community discussion of the issues associated with combining paid work and family responsibilities in order to achieve, in the long term, a reduction of women's inequitable load of paid and unpaid work"*. Short-term objectives were to stimulate community discussion and interest, support planning in families and community institutions and encourage families to support changes in services and the workplace.

Development involved widespread consultation, and testing concepts with focus groups. This produced a number of conclusions including:

- women's widespread frustration about combining employment and family responsibilities are rarely fully discussed and resolved within relationships;
- men are more receptive to work/family issues than in the past, but role models for men on more equitable sharing are rare;
- families are most likely to be receptive to ideas and information about equitable sharing when forming relationships and having their first child;
- the issues are sensitive and can raise frustration, guilt, anger and resistance; the needs of special groups must be considered.

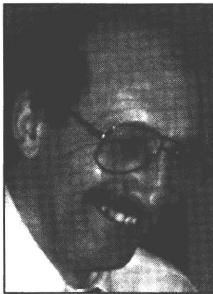
The community education programme consisted of four main areas of work:

- core resources, including: research material (for example, findings from research on time use in Australian families presented in a short, visual and very accessible publication); a pack of material on work/family issues (including speakers' notes, discussion starters, case examples and media briefings) for the media and attitude leaders; resource and curriculum material for parent educators and families; two videos, together with facilitator's notebooks; a set of six posters;
- working with advocates for change, including: identifying advocates and providing them with briefings; establishing a data-base of key organisations and individuals; and newsletters for advocates and involved agencies;
- media work, including: hiring a journalist to develop features; working to incorporate issues into TV soap opera plots; and briefing material and spokespeople available to the media;
- policy work: networking with government and non-government agencies, which led to a national review of the school curriculum and parent education.

Donna Edman concluded that the work was only a beginning, but the community education programme had

**The roles of  
mother and father  
are socially  
conditioned and  
not biologically  
defined.**

made the issues of sharing family responsibilities visible and legitimate and had helped to make working families a major theme in Australia.



*Freddy Deven*

In the closing session, two of the seminar organisers presented some reflections on the seminar. **Freddy Deven (Belgium)** proposed the need for clarifying concepts (for example, 'equality', 'equity', 'involvement', 'to take care') and making assumptions, values, rationales and models of change more explicit (for example, do we assume a direct relationship between changes in attitude and changes in behaviour? do we argue for more equal sharing on the grounds of equal opportunities, health and well-being, men's or children's rights?). There also needed to be more clarity about the level of analysis and the relationship between levels; the level of analysis in the seminar had shifted to and fro between micro to macro.

We faced a systemic crisis, shifting from an industrial to a service society. Gender roles also need redefinition. Old gender roles were at the heart of the old industrial society; it is an economic necessity to develop gender roles that are appropriate to the new service society.

Role modelling had been a prominent theme - "action speaks louder than words". But as well as individual role models, it is possible to look elsewhere for inspiration, to other areas which have faced the same need for changes in male behaviour, for example in family planning where there has been great emphasis on men assuming greater responsibility.

The seminar produced much valuable information at an educational level, with very explicit information based on personal experience. But this had also been within an ideological discourse, which raises questions about definitions and constructions. We need to be aware that we are teachers and preachers - and also believers and dreamers. When we think about the 'Promised Land', do we take sufficient account of the huge diversity within our societies or focus on affluent, white, middle class families? For whom is our Promised Land? Who will get there?



*Patrizia Ghedini*

**Patrizia Ghedini (Italy)** concluded that the seminar had enabled, in a clear way and from a broad perspective, the re-appraisal of the issues and problems arising from an increased presence of men in the care and upbringing of children. Different aspects were emphasised, sometimes with differences in language and terminology between Italian and other participants. These differences helped us to understand the constraints and difficulties that could be met both at a strategic level, when implementing policies and programmes, and at a more individual level, involving psychological implications, personal experiences and identity issues for both men and women involved in this process of change.

The process by which the traditional division of labour based on gender is overcome and the practice of mixed roles by women and men is promoted should be perceived from the viewpoint of women's rights and equal opportunities. But it also has profound implications for identity (social and individual), values, life experiences, relationships with children and power.

For many women, entering the labour market has meant not only the acquisition of rights, freedom and a recognised social role, but also compliance with a male model which often they do not share. Moreover, work for the market, in our society, often has an important value, whilst caring is judged in a completely different way. For many men, apart from discovering gratifying aspects in the relationship with their children, caring for children represents not a goal but a sacrifice, which could also jeopardise their social image as men if they carry out a job (such as working in a childcare service) that is usually associated with women. The process of change should also be considered from the perspective of power. As men do not easily relinquish the power they hold, so women tend to defend their role in the area where, more than any other, they are able to exercise skills and power - that is, the nurturing and caring role. Women are paying a heavy price for this and have reached a breaking point, due to the difficulties of reconciling employment and family. Therefore, conflicts which emerge in negotiation between the genders mirror wider problems and difficulties.

The issue of social value also affects childcare services. The more they receive social and educational recognition, the more men's presence will increase, as fathers and workers. However, attention should be paid to the ways in which the increased presence of men as childcare workers will be encouraged, in order not to antagonise women.

Sharing responsibilities between men and women ought to be promoted at many levels, by fostering new experiences and supporting innovative projects. The seminar showed clearly that this is very important - for women, men, children and, therefore, for society at large. Several strategies were identified at macro- and micro-levels and involving a variety of approaches - structural, cultural, relational and communication.

Emilia-Romagna Region is very satisfied with the results of this seminar, as well as the development of its project on the theme of fatherhood. Childcare services have been shown to be valuable centres for raising awareness among fathers. This experience will continue and grow in the next few years, together with actions involving the workplace, involving links to be developed with employers and trade unions, and the establishment of promotional campaigns.



## APPENDIX 1

### THE SEMINAR PROGRAMME

#### INTRODUCTION (Chaired by: Peter Moss)

**Speakers:** Elsa Signorino; Tina Anselmi; Irene Kingston

#### MEN AND CHANGE:

**Men and caring for children - analyses and strategies for change**

(Chaired by: Peter Moss)

**Speakers:** Carmine Ventimiglia; Donna Edman; Eric Sundberg

**Concluding remarks:** Søren Carlsen

#### FATHERS AND CHILDCARE SERVICES:

**Involvement of fathers in childcare services as strategic centres for raising awareness**

(Chaired by: Inge Maerkedahl)

**Speakers:** Davide Minguzzi; Margy Whalley

**Other participants:** Trevor Chandler; Jim Levine; Angela Malcolm; Andrea Papi; Carlina Rinaldi; Sergio Spaggiari

**Concluding remarks:** Dino Giovannini

#### MEN AS CARERS IN CHILDCARE SERVICES:

**Measures to increase the number of men working in services** (Chaired by: Freddy Deven)

**Speakers:** Jytte Juul Jensen; Fidel Garcia Berlanga

**Other participants:** Trevor Chandler; Marco Fibrosi; Inge Maerkedahl; Eric Sundberg

**Concluding remarks:** Bjorn Flising

#### THE WORKPLACE:

**Changing the organisation and culture of the workplace to support increased participation by men in caring for children** (Chaired by: Federico Genitoni)

**Speakers:** Jim Levine; Inge Maerkedahl; Klaus Burian; Carla Passalacqua

**Other participants:** Mia Wyns; Irene Kingston; Marco Bossi; Giuseppe Casadio

**Concluding remarks:** Ivan Thaulow

#### LEAVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR PARENTS:

**The contribution of Parental and other types of leave to promoting more equal sharing between mothers and fathers in caring for children** (Chaired by: Michèle Tierlinck)

**Speakers:** Mia Wyns; Paola Bottoni; Eric Sundberg

**Other participants:** Klaus Burian; Søren Carlsen; Carmine Ventimiglia

**Concluding remarks:** Peter Moss

#### PASSING THE MESSAGE:

**The media, education and other social actions to increase awareness and support increased participation by men in caring for children** (Chair by: Jytte Juul Jensen)

**Speakers:** Donna Edman; Maurizio Quilici; Eric Sundberg

#### CLOSING SESSION

(Chaired by: Jytte Juul Jensen)

**Speakers:** Freddy Deven; Patrizia Orsola Ghedini



### SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS

- Tina Anselmi (Italy):** President, National Commission for Equal Opportunities  
**Fidel Garcia Berlanga (Spain):**  
**Marco Bossi (Italy):** Personnel Director, Zanussi Domestic Appliances  
**Paola Bottoni (Italy):** President, Equal Opportunities Commission, Emilia-Romagna Region  
**Klaus Burian (Germany):** University of Cologne  
**Søren Carlsen (Denmark):** Danish Equal Status Council  
**Giuseppe Casadio (Italy):** Regional Secretary, CGIL Trade Union, Emilia-Romagna  
**Trevor Chandler (UK):** Pen Green Centre for Under 5s and their Families, Corby  
**Freddy Deven (Belgium):** EC Childcare Network; Population and Family Research Centre, Brussels  
**Donna Edman (Australia):** Office of the Status of Women, Department of the Prime Minister  
**Marco Fibrosi (Italy):** Asilo nido 'Olivieri', Parma  
**Bjorn Flising (Sweden):** Institute for Pedagogy, University of Goteborg  
**Patrizia Ghedini (Italy):** EC Childcare Network; Office for Early Childhood Services, Emilia-Romagna Region  
**Dino Giovannini (Italy):** University of Bologna  
**Irene Kingston (European Commission):** Equal Opportunities Unit, European Commission  
**Jytte Juul Jensen (Denmark):** EC Childcare Network; Jydsk Paedagog-Seminarium, Arhus  
**Jim Levine (USA):** Families and Work Institute, New York  
**Inge Maerkedahl (Denmark):** Danish National Institute for Social Research, Copenhagen  
**Angela Malcolm (UK):** Pen Green Centre for Under 5s and their Families, Corby  
**Davide Minguzzi (Italy):** Pedagogical Coordinator, Bologna  
**Peter Moss (UK):** EC Childcare Network; Thomas Coram Research Unit, London University  
**Andrea Papi (Italy):** Asilo nido 'Piccolo Blu', Forli  
**Carla Passalacqua (Italy):** Vice-President, National Committee on Equality for Men and Women  
**Maurizio Quilici (Italy):** Institute on Fathers' Studies, Rome  
**Carlina Rinaldi (Italy):** Pedagogical Coordinator, Reggio Emilia  
**Roser Ros (Spain):** Teacher's Association 'Rosa Sensat', Barcelona  
**Elsa Signorino (Italy):** Councillor for Vocational Training, Labour, Schools and Universities, Emilia-Romagna Region  
**Sergio Spaggiari (Italy):** Director of Early Childhood Services, Reggio Emilia  
**Eric Sundberg (Sweden):** Confederation of Professional Employees, Stockholm  
**Ivan Thaulow (Denmark):** Danish National Institute for Social Research, Copenhagen  
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**Carmine Ventimiglia (Italy):** Institute of Sociology, University of Parma  
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