

Men's issues in

GENDER EQUALITY POLICY

Final report of the working group

DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Published by	Date
Ministry of Social Affairs and Health	22/10/2014
Authors	Commissioned by
	Ministry of Social Affairs and Health
	Reference number and date of appointment
	STM082:00/2012

Title of memorandum

Men's issues in gender equality policy. Final report of the working group

Abstract

■ The working group on Men's Issues in Equality Policy appointed by Paavo Arhinmäki, the Minister for Gender Equality, began its task in January 2013. The working group consists of representatives of men's organisations, youth work with boys and young men, Seta LGBT rights in Finland, the Council for Gender Equality and four ministries. The working group's term of office ended on 15/10/2014.

When the working group was set up, its tasks were to identify new gender equality issues relating to men and specify issues already known, expedite measures concerning men under the Government Action Plan for Gender Equality, develop interaction between ministry officials and men's organisations, and organise a seminar on men and gender equality.

The working group's goals included that of enabling men and women to feel that equality is something that is common to both genders and that gender equality policy is a policy that is also common to both genders and policy measures to promote gender equality, but also to resolve men's problems and to make space for men's diversity.

In February 2014, the working group published an interim report containing background information and statistics on men's issues in greater depth than in the final report and a description of the historical development of men's issues in Finland. It was decided to keep the final report compact, containing just the working group's proposals and their arguments for them. The final report was compiled based on discussions among the working group, and an attempt was made to include the views of everyone, although compromises were made and certain framings were put in place.

Keywords

men, gender equality

Reports and memorandums
of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health
2014:35

Other information

www.stm.fi

ISSN-L 2242-0037

ISSN 2242-0037 (online publication)

ISBN 978-952-00-3529-7

URN:ISBN: 978-952-00-3529-7

<http://urn.fi/> URN:ISBN:978-952-00-3529-7

No. of pages

12

Language

English



SOSIAALI- JA
TERVEYSMINISTERIÖ

CONTENTS

1	Introduction	7
2	Support for fatherhood	8
3	Reconciliation of work and family life	8
4	Early childhood education and later education	9
5	MEN's exclusion.....	9
6	Social welfare and health care services	10
7	The male image and diversity	11
8	Prevention of violence.....	11
9	A common gender equality policy	12

1 INTRODUCTION

On 20 December 2012, Paavo Arhinmäki, the Minister for Gender Equality, appointed a working group on men's issues in gender equality policy (hereafter the working group). The working group began its task in January 2013 and will hand its report to Minister Susanna Huovinen, who is responsible for gender equality. The working group consists of representatives of men's organisations, boy action groups, Seta and the Council for Gender Equality.

Kari Välimäki (chair)
 Tomi Timperi, (Central Association for Men's Organizations in Finland)
 Juuso Erno, (Central Association for Men's Organizations in Finland)
 Bert Bjarland, Profeministmiehet
 Arto Jokinen, Suomen Miestutkimuksen Seura
 Sara Sundell, Seta
 Sami Seppälä, Boys' House project
 Tapio Bergholm, the Council for Gender Equality
 Hillevi Lönn, Ministry of Employment and the Economy
 Eeva Kaunismaa, Ministry of Education and Culture
 Georg Henrik Wrede, Ministry of Education and Culture
 Maini Kosonen, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health
 Taneli Puumalainen, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health
 Riitta Martikainen, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health
 Outi Kemppainen, Ministry of Justice
 Hanna Onwen-Huma, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (secretary)

In February 2014, the working group published an interim report containing background information and statistics on men's issues in greater depth than in the final report and a description of the historical development of men's issues in Finland. It was decided to keep the final report compact, containing just the working group's proposals and their arguments for them. The final report was compiled based on discussions among the working group, and an attempt was made to include the views of everyone, although compromises were made and certain limits framings were put in place.

In its final report, the working group mentions some problems that men encounter in Finnish society. For each topic there is a proposal with arguments and details of further measures. The idea is that it is essential to understand and boost men's diversity in resolving these problems, and focus attention on each topic raised. Improving the opportunities and wellbeing of men's belonging to sexual and gender minorities has a fundamental role to play in all the measures proposed. Gender equality must play a prominent part in measures relating to ethnic minorities.

Furthermore, employment relates to many of the topics dealt with, e.g. issues of family, education, upbringing and exclusion. It is hoped that the final report will prompt a general social debate on men's issues well after the working group's term of office ends and will result in genuine action being taken. The final report will be accessible when the next Government Programme is being drawn up.

2 SUPPORT FOR FATHERHOOD

Working group proposal *The authorities must emphasise the importance of fatherhood in the recognition of a child, in parenthood and in the event of divorce or separation.*

Arguments and measures Some comparisons suggest that Finland is one of the best countries in the world for mothers. The aim should be that we are one of the best for fathers too.

In many practical circumstances connected with a child's development and upbringing, the authorities are inclined to pay attention to the mother rather than the father. In all situations, the basic approach should be children's rights to their parents and, furthermore, the father's possibility to support his child. The recognition of fatherhood must be facilitated, parental benefits must be more evenly balanced between the genders (see section 3), and improvements need to be made in the area of compliance with agreements and court decisions on custody and right of access after divorce or separation, to prevent alienation.

Equality between parents needs to be improved in, for example, developing the area of the arrangements for children living in both parent's homes in turns and opportunities for supervised visits.

3 RECONCILIATION OF WORK AND FAMILY LIFE

Working group proposal *Equal opportunities for fathers and mothers in the reconciliation of work and family life.*

Arguments and measures It is very important that a father can have a presence in the life of his child. This should also be a starting point in the reconciliation of work and family life.

In the longer term, the reconciliation of work and family life is made easier by desegregation in working life. Men and boys should be encouraged to take an interest in what are traditionally held to be women's professions and occupations, and women and girls should likewise be encouraged to enter men's professions and occupations. This will require a gender impact assessment of the employment services. There must also be impartial treatment of the genders in educational guidance and provision.

The reconciliation of work and family life is all too readily assessed from the mother's viewpoint. The legislation on parental benefits and collective agreements on family leave are not in practice conducive to equality in parenthood.

4 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND LATER EDUCATION

Working group proposal *Traditional notions of girls and boys based on gender that now prevail must be broken down and the learning outcomes of boys need to be improved in early childhood and later education.*

Arguments and measures There are expectations and approaches based on gender in early childhood and later education. Girls and boys are treated somewhat differently. The obligation under the Act on Equality between Women and Men to draw up a functional equality plan should be extended to early childhood and basic education. The aim at all education levels must be the elimination of differences in learning outcomes and educational levels between the genders. In the context of developments in the early childhood and care strategy, core curricula, qualification criteria and pupil and student selection, attention needs to be paid to the choices that girls and boys make regarding educational courses and professions/occupations. The criteria should also extend to the content of gender equality and gender awareness.

There should be a more systematic approach to the assessment of basic skills, such as language and mathematical skills, in boys and girls. The aim must be that all pupils, boys and girls alike, should have the basic skills by the time they leave comprehensive school. Measures to ensure performance at upper secondary school, along with flexible learning methods and the Youth Guarantee, also help boys to make the transition to further education and working life.

Gender-based differentiation in early childhood and later education must be ended. There needs to be more gender awareness in education and upbringing in teacher education. In addition, the aim should be to recruit more men for jobs in the field. This would also be a way to break down prejudice and preconceived ideas relating to gender.

The accomplishment of gender equality goals and targets should be encouraged by controlling the way funding for education is used.

5 MEN'S EXCLUSION

Working group proposal *Emphasis on preventive work and early intervention in the prevention of men's exclusion.*

Arguments and measures The majority (two-thirds) of those who are excluded are men's. Exclusion takes the form of lack of education, joblessness, illness, lack of income, homelessness, mental health problems, the use of alcohol and drugs, violence and crime. Helping an excluded man is a lengthy process that calls for

commitment. The main agencies involved in helping excluded men are the local authorities and various organisations, such as those that represent men. It is important to support the work of these organisations, through the channels provided by, for example, Finland's Slot Machine Association and the Finnish National Lottery.

However, what is most important of all is to make it possible for families, early childhood education and the educational system generally to provide children and young people with support and security. Support for parenthood with the involvement of both parents and the early childhood and later education measures referred to in previous sections play an essential role in this support. A key role in preventive work is also played by organisations that can provide young people at risk of exclusion with the support of adults.

It is also important to link youth work far more to schools and make school a community where no one is left out. Multiprofessional cooperation at school would improve the chances for early intervention in exclusion and its causes. In practice this would take place through the development of a school culture by a diverse group of professionals, one that would be a safe and stimulating environment, and by making school a more enjoyable place to be, through the establishment of wide-ranging learning environments and support for the individuality of pupils and their chances of having a greater say. Schools should take account of the individual development of boys and girls.

Any measures that help improve the prospects of employment also prevent exclusion and promote inclusion.

6 SOCIAL WELFARE AND HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Working group proposal *The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health must assess the gender impact of all social welfare and health care services to improve the identification of the need for services by men and to develop the services required by men.*

Arguments and measures Men use health care services less than women and their life expectancy is shorter. At the same time, men comprise an ever smaller proportion of staff in companies and organisations. If the status of men is to be enhanced, there needs to be gender mainstreaming and more attention paid to the men viewpoint in social welfare and health care at all ages. Professionals in the social welfare and health care sector need to be given instruction in engaging with and supporting men, fathers and boys in basic education and additional and supplementary education and training, and in understanding men's diversity. Training for the social welfare and health care sector, and the profession itself, should be assessed and

developed to encourage men to enter the field. In addition, an evaluation needs to be made of measures to support targeted health checks and healthy lifestyles for men. Gender impact assessments must take account of gender diversity. There must be an evaluation as to whether there should be a legal age limit of 18 for non-medical circumcision, to protect children's rights to their body.

To prevent accidents in the workplace, there needs to be investment in occupational safety.

7 THE MALE IMAGE AND DIVERSITY

Working group proposal *The male image needs to be diversified.*

Arguments and measures The diversity perspective is something that has not been clearly raised in the debate on men. Men do not form one uniform group. Gender can be seen as a source of social enrichment, with its possibilities and potential, but it can also place restrictions on the individual. Particularly harmful are the male stereotypes where masculinity is associated mainly with problematic behaviour. Most men cope well and the male image has become more positive and diverse, both within the family and in working life.

There can not be a categorical definition of what passes for masculinity or femininity. Public institutions, such as social welfare and health care units, schools and colleges must be safe environments for those who work and have dealings there, regardless of gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation. And not only the authorities but also the media and the entertainment and games industry must be critically challenged to change and diversify the male image. One aim is to reduce the amount of image advertising for alcohol. Also the law drafting must recognise the diversity of sexual orientation and gender.

8 PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE

Working group proposal *There must be support for the use of non-violent solution models.*

Arguments and measures Any kind of violence must be condemned equally, regardless of the gender of the perpetrator or victim. Even in gender equality policy, the attitude to violence can be one that highlights stereotypical differences between the genders. While violence needs to be approached in a way that differentiates between gender, associating violence exclusively with men is something that should be avoided. Although the statistics show that the perpetrators and victims of violence are mainly men, most men behave non-violently. Associating violence with men categorically should cease.

Work on intimate partner violence with its perpetrators and victims must be based on professional competence and knowledge of what violence is, why individuals use violence, and how violence affects those it is used against.

The prevention of violence and support for non-violent solution models must start in the home, but also in early childhood education and at school. Because the main breeding ground for violence is violence that someone experiences personally, it is important to intervene immediately in school bullying, for example. There needs to be more training in non-violent conflict resolution models, and more support for, and development of, work on non-violent solution models and victim services for men.

Military service does not treat men and women equally. It needs to be assessed from the perspective of the position of the genders and the images it evokes.

The possible gender impacts on court judgements in criminal cases should be investigated.

9 A COMMON GENDER EQUALITY POLICY

Working group proposal *Gender equality policy as a common policy for men and women*

Arguments and measures Gender equality policy has been firmly and justifiably rooted in improving the position of women. Moreover, there is still much to improve in raising the status of women, especially in professional life and employment. However, gender equality policy should be felt to be a policy that is genuinely common to all genders.

Men would probably see gender equality policy as a common endeavour if the section on the purpose of the Act on Equality between Women and Men (section 1) emphasised in a more balanced way the Act's objective to prevent discrimination based on gender and to promote equality between women and men. There also needs to be greater endorsement of specialised male competence and men's involvement in equality bodies. The practical implementation of the gender equality policy should also take account of support for men's organisations.

Positive discrimination should be developed to the advantage of both men and women, and it must be ensured that all genders benefit from positive discrimination.

Finland must also be active in bringing up the men's viewpoint at international forums, such as the UN and the EU.