

Dr. Marc Gärtner, EAF Berlin:

Changing Androcentric Work-Life Patterns

Gender Equality and the Role of Men in 10 Minutes¹

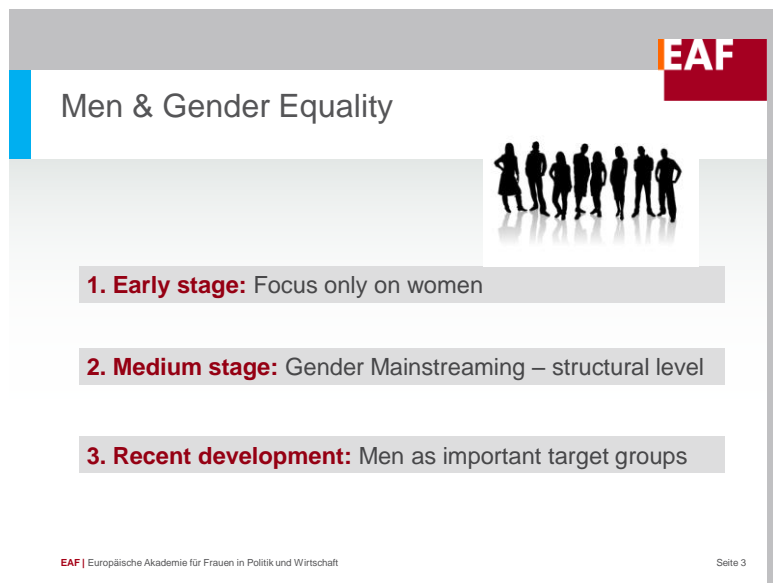


[EAF Berlin](#) is an institute promoting gender equality and diversity in politics, business, and research. We are working mainly on a national level, for ministries, public administration, universities, private corporations and SMEs.



¹This very brief introduction was given at the international conference “Structural Change Promoting Gender Equality in Research Organisations” in Vilnius, on November 21-22, 2013, under the auspices of the Lithuanian Presidency to the EU Council. It was part of the workshop session “Forming gender friendly working cultures, decreasing additional constraints and barriers for women in science”

Men & gender equality



Men & Gender Equality

1. Early stage: Focus only on women

2. Medium stage: Gender Mainstreaming – structural level

3. Recent development: Men as important target groups

EAFF Europäische Akademie für Frauen in Politik und Wirtschaft

Seite 3

I have been involved in research on men and gender relations on a European level for about 12 years:

- | *Work Changes Gender* – a study on labour market changes and how it affects both men and gender equality²
- | *FOCUS* – a study on how politics and businesses help or prevent men from taking an active role in families³
- | The first *Study on the Role of Men in Gender Equality* to the EC⁴

During that time, I noticed a certain development in gender policies in Europe:

1. When we began our research in 2001, gender equality was regarded – more or less completely – as “women’s business”:
Women had to get addressed, supported, advocated on each level („bring more women in”). Women were also the main actors, only very few men seemed to be prepared to work on that issue. This was not wrong, and a significant progress at that time! Yet, it turned out to be a limited concept, because structural and cultural conditions
2. Second, in the early 2000s, the concept of Gender Mainstreaming (GM) spread across Europe:
It followed the question, how both men and women are affected by political and administrative decisions on every level. GM helped us to see two new things: the structural level – how do institutions affect gender inequality, how can reforms help to bring more equality? And second, men suddenly became visible in that process, and in some countries they were also among the actors of these policies, either as part of the institutions or as researchers, consultants or trainers.

² *Work Changes Gender. Men and Equality in the Transition of Labour Forms* (Ed. Puchert, R./ Gärtner, M./ Höyng, S.). Opladen: Barbara Budrich Verlag, 2005.

³ <http://dissens.de/de/dokumente/focus-european-dimension-report.pdf>

⁴ *Study on the Role of Men in Gender Equality* (Ed. Nadja Bergmann, Elli Scambor, Katarzyna Wojnicka). Report to the European Commission, Brussels 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/gender_pay_gap/130424_final_report_role_of_men_en.pdf

A perspective on men

3. This brought us to the next level (or helped us to foster the research some of us were already undertaking): a perspective on men. In terms of gender politics, men matter in many ways! Many leaders in relevant social fields and institutions are men: in politics, businesses, military, public admin, research, education, culture or the media. Last but not least, as partners of women, as husbands, as fathers and friends.

Men's attitudes, practices and social roles can either help to promote or prevent gender equality. Considering these aspects might bring us to a new level of gender politics with a better involvement of men in the nearer future.

The slide features a grey header with the EAF logo (European Academy for Women in Politics and Economics) on the right. Below the header, the title 'A Perspective on Men' is displayed. A list of five points follows, each preceded by a vertical bar. At the bottom left, the full name of EAF is written, and at the bottom right, the page number 'Seite 4' is indicated.

- | Men matter – as leaders, colleagues, partners
- | Men are diverse
- | Men change
- | Men have their own stakes in gender policies: issues & interests
- | Men can help to promote or to prevent gender equality

EAFF Europäische Akademie für Frauen in Politik und Wirtschaft

Seite 4

Androcentrism at the workplace

The reason, why men had been invisible in that process for a long time, is twofold: In terms of political power and resources, men had been the more privileged gender (and they still have higher social positions and earn more, on average), and – even more important: They had been regarded as the standard human being – *the white, well-educated, heterosexual man without mental or physical disabilities – strong, rational, powerful, and always available!*

This is what we might call *androcentrism*: Placing the masculine as the norm or the centre of the social world.

Androcentrism at the Workplace

- | Institutions shaped by „hegemonic masculinity“ (R.W. Connell)
- | Leaders stereotyped as males
- | Sex typing of work
- | Conflict of care/reproduction
- | „Old boys networks“



Politics, science and many institutions and discourses have been developed from a male, androcentric perspective, and these institutions have been shaped by what Raewyn Connell calls “hegemonic masculinity“. The institutionalized world is formed by men as the main or leading actors, still in present times, but much more in their historical origins and development. Women had been excluded for a long time (and located in the private and family sphere), or situated at lower levels.

What we recognize as “rational” and “objective” had been, as feminist research pointed out, marked as a masculine quality. But androcentrism is not only visible at the level of *content* – the whole *form* of work is structured around the ideal of an employee who is always available and has no caring obligations. Some aspects, like

- | old boys’ networks in leading positions,
- | better wages in professions marked as masculine (like computer science and industries),
- | or obstacles against a balance of work and family care,

are only a couple of markers of an androcentric structure of the labour sphere.

All these aspects decide on the level of (in)equality at work, with consequences for both women and men.

Men & work family balance

However, there is good news: In many countries we researched, we see that men are positive towards gender equality.

- | In some countries, like Germany, changes on the action level are visible, too. While by 2006, only 3.5% of the fathers took paid parental leave, now it is almost 30%! This is due to a legal reform in 2007 that made it more attractive for men to go on leave. And it shows how gender equality can benefit from the changes in men’s attitudes – if the political conditions are improved.

Men & Work-Family-Balance

- | Men change: almost 30% fathers on parental leave in Germany
- | Lower workload is good for men and gender equality
- | Androcentrism is bad for men's health

- | Moreover, countries where men work less hours or more part time (like the Netherlands, Norway or Denmark), and where men are more involved in family lives, three things are visible: The countries do better economically, achieve a higher level of equality, and men are more satisfied with their jobs.
- | In many ways, the old androcentric model works against many of men's interests, too: The *European state of men's health report* (2011) showed that work constraints and lifestyle stress contribute to burn out and many health risks form men. This calls for more balanced lives of men, too!

So we seem to have a win-win-situation in which both men and women can benefit from gender equality, and the economy can do so as well.

I want to briefly summarise my **Perspectives**

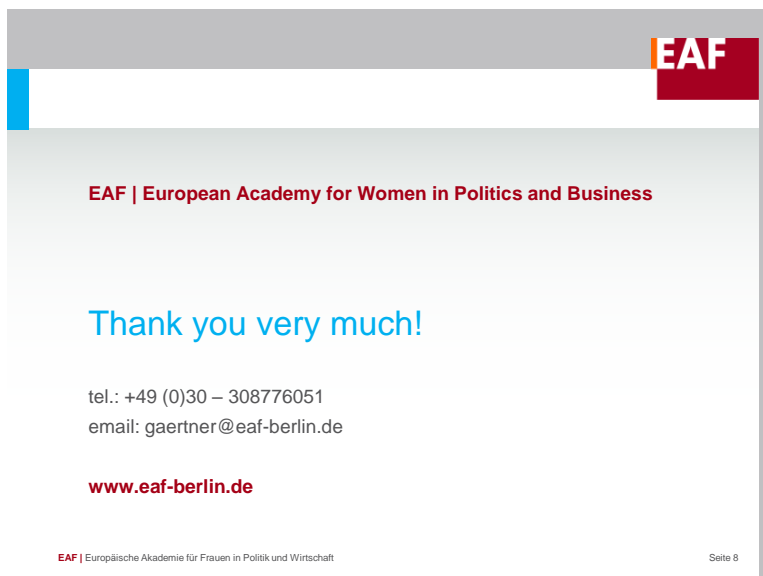
Perspectives

- | "Male breadwinner" model: unequal, outdated, dysfunctional
- | Men and women want better workplaces
- | Point out men's interests: Make them stakeholders of equality
- | "Caring masculinities": new social patterns
- | Gender equality as a tandem



- | Men matter – as leaders, partners, as the counterpart in a relational gender system

- | Men are diverse and they are in a change: Many of them are pro equality. The structure of labour markets change, so many traditional “male“ jobs in industries decline, and structural unemployment hits men severely. Where it was in place, the old breadwinner model on a decline, too.
- | Generation Y: Both men and women are seeking for better workplaces, new work arrangements of time and location – shorter hours, home offices, or more flexible time schedules that allow to also do caring work.
- | It is necessary to address men as actors of a change towards equality,
 - a. as actively involved fathers,
 - b. as men who do not like to follow too narrow, over-competitive career tracks, but rather search for cooperative, integrative models,
 - c. or as leaders who are convinced that gender equality is also a business case.
- | Gender equality as a business case: In a current project called “Careers with kids”, my institute EAF Berlin has made wonderful experiences with progressive business leaders that are convinced that gender equality and work-life balance is good for their companies!
- | Finally, I feel it is necessary to see gender equality as a “tandem”: Many men and women (sure not all of them) have a lot of interests in common, like a good and fair balanced division of work and family life. An involved role in families becomes more attractive to many men.



.....

Dr. Marc Gärtner is a sociologist specialized in gender studies and work-life conditions. He works as a Gender and Diversity Expert at the EAF Berlin, a non-profit organization for female leadership and diversity in business and politics, mentoring, and work-family balance. One of his current projects is “Careers with Kids – Innovative Models for Leaders with Family Commitment” in cooperation with two major enterprises, Deutsche Telekom and Deutsche Bahn. Marc Gärtner conducted various national and international studies on men, work, and gender (in-)equality, focusing on the workplace and work-family-balance.