



Federal Ministry for
Family Affairs, Senior Citizens,
Women and Youth



Gender equality policy for boys and men in Germany

Implementing a cooperative gender equality policy
Short version

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1

Introduction

Germany wants to achieve gender equality.

In Germany, gender equality counts as a cultural value. Creating and implementing policies aimed at identifying gender stereotypes within culture and societal structures – as well as stimulating change – is therefore a rightful cause. Moreover, the Basic Law mandates it.

This document maps out the implementation strategy for gender equality policy targeting boys and men (which is designed to be both cooperative and equitable). It discusses the circumstances boys and men face in life and examines their concerns, challenges, vulnerabilities, and needs. Additionally, the contributions, duties, and responsibilities of this target group are also clarified. Gender equality policy aimed at boys and men is an indispensable component of policy efforts that promote women's rights, but it requires its own independent approach. The goal is the same, however: to make diversity normal, desirable, and liveable.

The 2017 study *Männer-Perspektiven* commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women, and Youth showed¹ that 80 percent of men no longer wonder whether gender equality policy is necessary. Their only question is: what should be on the agenda? The majority of men want comprehensive social and

economic equality between men and women. They view it as a personal win-win scenario: because gender equality is economically rational (86 percent), advantageous for couples (82 percent), fair (83 percent), and beneficial to everyone (81 percent).

Couples also want gender equality, with 91 percent of people between the ages of 20 and 39 believing that both parents should take responsibility for childcare. Furthermore, 81 percent want both parents to contribute to the household income. The ideal of parenthood in contemporary Germany is one where couples meaningfully support each other and split care work and paid work equally.

However, reality is changing more slowly than people would like. More men than women continue to perform paid work (82 percent versus 74 percent), and their positions are rarely part-time (7 percent versus 35 percent). The gender pay gap is currently at 21 percent, which is higher than the EU average (16 percent). What is more, only four in ten men make use of the parental leave available to them.

It is clear that gender equality is developing within a very dynamic field of tension where forces of inertia still exert a significant influence. This is also true for expectations placed on men: while traditional masculinity is increasingly seen as problematic, “masculine” behaviour is still being

1 Note: References have been left out of this document; they can be found in the long version.

demanded (at least as pertains to being oriented toward performance and financial achievement).

The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth believes that the best way forward involves taking a cooperative approach to gender equality policy. This means that, just like girls and women, boys and men must be called upon to become changemakers, and should simultaneously be offered support to help them escape the constraints imposed by gender stereotypes. To this end, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth addresses boys and men as:

- Active contributors and agents of change: so that boys and men can realise their potential and personal interests free from the limitations imposed by gender stereotypes, as well as being able to engage in relationships on an equal footing.
- Allies in the struggle for gender equality and women's emancipation: so that boys and men can come to terms with their privilege and actively contribute to the goal of equal treatment for women.
- Partners in an alliance fighting for diversity and social justice: so that the struggle for gender equality becomes a developmental process aimed at realising social justice and equality for all genders.

Based on the evidence available today, this document outlines strategies for implementing policies that ensure holistic engagement of boys and men.

There are two potential misunderstandings that must be cleared up right away:

- Gender equality policy aimed at boys and men is by no means part of the “men's rights agenda”. On the contrary, it should be viewed as an indispensable component of policy efforts that promote women's rights. While the actual measures may differ, the goal is the same: ensuring that diversity and justice for everyone is seen as normal.
- Policy efforts alone cannot make gender equality happen. However, gender equality policy must be geared towards enabling people in Germany to choose freely how they want to live. To ensure that this freedom of choice comes to pass, the frameworks that guide society, economy, and politics must no longer be based on traditional models for allocating roles within the family. It is necessary to acknowledge that promoting further care contributions from men – a resource that has thus far being undervalued and underused – can solve many pressing challenges in society and the labour market. Both the Basic Law (article 3, paragraph 2) and the Treaty of Lisbon (article 3 paragraph 3) mandate that all resources and burdens, and all paid and unpaid work, be distributed fairly (meaning split fifty-fifty) between genders.

2

Working with boys and men: guiding principles

Gender equality policy aimed at boys and men in Germany is founded on a solid evidence base rooted in findings from science and practical applications:

- “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman”. This famous quote from Simone de Beauvoir also applies to boys and men: they too learn how to be a “real” man while growing up. “Male socialisation” is the technical term for this process.
- The way boys and men come to view themselves, and how they behave, is fundamentally tied to social relations. Drawing a connection between supposedly self-evident gender norms and nature/biology is therefore problematic.
- Expectations placed on men to conform to masculine ideals are potent. It does not matter whether we believe in them or not – they still affect us. Men and women alike know what being “masculine” or “feminine” implies. This knowledge is transmitted within society to provide orientation in daily life, but it is also inherently connected to power structures.
- The expectations placed on boys and men usher in norms and promote competition, rivalry, and hierarchies. Being a “real” man requires the reconciling of conflicting expectations and is ultimately a futile endeavour.

Therefore, every single boy and man has to find a way to deal with the fear of never being enough.

- Male socialisation involves learning various justifications for the existence of social inequality and gender hierarchies. Men are taught – erroneously – that they are the centre of the world, are entitled to privileges, and have the right to order others around. This creates much suffering and anger and perpetuates untenable injustices.
- Male socialisation imposes uniformity and thereby limits personal development and diversity. After all, most men do not want to risk being perceived as “unmanly”. They would rather live their lives on autopilot and do what is expected of them. As a result, many lose their connection to themselves. This is also why many men struggle to name their feelings or accept help from others.

There are many differences and disparities among boys and men as a group, so generalisations have their limits. However, the need to somehow respond to norms of masculinity is a shared experience for them all.

3

A review of current challenges boys and men face

Based on a summary of the most up-to-date evidence for six areas of interest, this document frames key questions that gender equality policy needs to take into account.

Education and vocational choice

Educational attainment in Germany is rising continuously: one in two people between the ages of 25 and 35 have a university entrance diploma. Girls have caught up with boys and are on average more successful. Nevertheless, the claim that boys are the “losers in education” is short-sighted. Rather, certain groups of boys are at risk of leaving school without a diploma or clear perspectives for the future. This is particularly true for boys from social classes characterised by socio-economic and educational disadvantages (with or without migrant background), where traditional norms of masculinity continue to stubbornly persist. The connection between these disadvantages and gender norms can have a strong negative effect on educational attainment – for example, when academic commitment and interest are written off as “unmanly” pursuits.

Early childhood education is crucial for levelling the playing field. That is why, in Germany, day-care centres are subsidised, resulting in continuously rising attendance. These institutions provide benefits in particular for children from families

with low educational attainment. Unfortunately, these children less frequently get the chance to reap them. Of all children without migrant background, 100 percent of three- to six-year-olds and 42 percent of those younger than three attend day-care centres. The numbers for children with migrant background are much lower: 81 percent of three- to six-year-olds, and 21 percent of those younger than three. Boys from this group are somewhat more likely than girls to reap the benefits of daycare.

The likelihood that children have male teachers in early childhood education is still extremely low: only some five percent of teachers in daycare centres and kindergartens are men (there is an upward trend, though). In general, the proportion of men who are teachers increases in parallel to the level of education. Six out of ten teachers in tertiary education are men, and the overall ratio of men to women across educational levels is one to two.

Stratification along gender lines is not only an issue in the educational sector. For instance, 99 out of 100 plumbers are men, and 98 out of 100 medical assistants are women. Because traditional “jobs for men” tend to be better paid, boys make up for educational disadvantages with higher pay once they start working. The difference in value placed on “jobs for women” and “jobs for men” is highly problematic, both from an economic and a gender equality perspective. Ethically, it is completely untenable.

Labour market and employment

There is a similar pattern in employment as in education: while women are catching up quickly in terms of raw numbers, the qualitative differences remain stubbornly in place. Overall participation in the labour market is approaching an even split: 80 percent for men and 72 percent for women between the ages of 15 and 65. However, many more women than men work part-time. And, while the share of men engaged in part-time work (currently 11 percent) has grown fivefold between 1992 and 2017, men's involvement in family life has not increased to the same extent.

Starting a family continues to affect mothers more than fathers. Thankfully, this is changing: almost two-thirds of all mothers today resume paid work once their youngest child turns two. Even mothers with small children increasingly hold part-time jobs with more allotted hours. Nevertheless, men continue to contribute much more to household income than women (in the case of couples who have children: 78 percent compared to just 22 percent). These numbers point to a pattern underlying the struggle for gender equality in general: there is a discrepancy between desire and reality. What couples want is to meaningfully support each other and equally split paid work and care work within the family. In reality, what they (currently) end up with is a modernised male breadwinner model.

The labour market is still characterised by gender stereotypes as well:

- The term “horizontal gender segregation” refers to the fact that men and women have different preferences when it comes to their desired fields of occupation. Men are particularly underrepresented in education, health professions, social work, and household services. The ongoing structural transformation of the labour market therefore affects them particularly strongly, because a large number of “men’s

jobs” in industry and agriculture are disappearing for good. Gender-atypical vocational choices can offer men more employment security going forward.

- The term “vertical gender segregation” refers to the way in which gender differences characterise professional hierarchies within the same occupational field. These remain stubbornly in place as well: for instance, men still account for 91.5 percent of all board members at publicly traded companies in Germany.

Unemployment hits men in Germany somewhat harder than women (3.9 percent vs. 3.0 percent). Men with lower qualifications are affected the most (one in ten). At the same time, government-driven labour market initiatives are geared more toward men than women – to a bigger extent than is justifiable based on the proportion of men versus women dealing with unemployment.

Division of labour and family models

In Germany, there are 82 million people and 41 million households. The number of people living alone is continuously growing. Fifty-six percent of men between the ages of 25 and 45 are unmarried (compared to 42 percent of women from the same age bracket).

Around 20 million people in Germany share a household with minors (9 million fathers and 11 million mothers). A third of them (35 percent) are not married – and this is a growing trend. The number of single parents and divorced people is fluctuating but not really increasing. In 2018, a total of 121,000 minors were affected by their parents getting divorced. More and more parents plan to continue sharing caregiving responsibilities for children following separation. Affected fathers complain about hurdles along the way.

The expectations placed on fathers are undergoing massive change; the same is true for the way fathers see themselves. More than two-thirds of the population expect fathers to take care of their small children (even) in everyday life. Seventy-two percent believe that, when a child gets sick, fathers should (also) stay at home or accompany the child to the doctor (in 2015, only 66 percent held this view). Fathers themselves no longer want to be confined to the breadwinner role either. They want to spend more time with their children (while, on the other hand, two-thirds of children want to spend more time with their fathers). One in two fathers would like to take on a full 50 percent of the caregiving responsibilities; however, only one in six actually does so. The reasons for this discrepancy are complex. Regardless, 69 percent of fathers today say they are more involved in childrearing and caregiving than their own fathers were – and they view this as a personal gain. Seventy-two percent of the population share the impression that fathers are more present today than they used to be ten to 15 years ago.

Despite these developments, there is no doubt that men and fathers still perform far too little (unpaid) work within the family and the household. This is true even though the overall workload (paid and unpaid work combined) is fairly distributed between genders.

It is evident that being an involved father is part of what is expected of men nowadays. However, masculinity as a concept has not (yet) changed fundamentally – nor has it been expanded or reached a new equilibrium. Instead, men's resolve to be involved fathers is simply added on top of all existing responsibilities. This creates significant challenges for men in terms of reconciling family life, work life, social life, and personal interests. These fields of tension are not yet being adequately discussed and dealt with.

Health and satisfaction

Traditional ideas of masculinity pose health risks. Performance-driven behaviour, willingness to take on risk, and unhealthy lifestyles (particularly when it comes to exercise, nutrition, smoking, and alcohol) contribute to the fact that men have a significantly higher incidence of heart attack, coronary vasoconstriction, and lung cancer than women. At the same time, men put less strain on the healthcare system. The fact that they wait longer before visiting a doctor is one of the reasons for this.

Gender-specific risks must be addressed using gender-specific strategies. Taking a thorough look at other factors (including education, vocation, opportunities in life, and cultural participation) is key here. Case in point: men with lower levels of educational attainment face disproportionately higher health risks.

A life course approach is useful for illuminating the specific challenges and trends that affect men:

- Boys and young men are increasingly concerned with their body image, for instance. Four out of five boys between the ages of 13 and 17 believe they are not strong enough, and one in two work out to gain more muscle mass. Eating disorders are on the rise among boys. Four percent consume anabolic steroids. In early adulthood, accidents in the workplace and road traffic constitute a men-specific health risk.
- Adult men face significant work-related stresses and strains. Since the labour market is divided along stereotypical gender lines, so too are health risks for workers. Men are exposed much more to dirt and grime, cold and heat, smoke and noise than women. Men with lower educational attainment are particularly affected. The stress associated with jobs in the service sector must not be underestimated either: middle-aged men face an above-average risk of alcohol dependency, for example.

- The transition into retirement represents a special challenge for performance-driven men. Many master it and end up discovering that there is meaning to be found beyond work, money, and social status – for instance, in volunteering or taking care of grandkids. Still, a lot of men struggle when it comes to dealing with the limitations of ageing. Their suicide risk increases much more as they progress to older (and very old) age brackets than it does for women.

Although men make less use of professional support offers (and take longer to do so when faced with a life crisis) than women, there is no evidence of gender differences when it comes to health literacy. Overall, more than 50 percent of German men and women possess only limited health literacy. This disproportionately affects people with a migrant background (71 percent), lower levels of educational attainment (62 percent), low social position (78 percent), chronic disease (73 percent), and older age (66 percent).

Community engagement and volunteering

Men take on volunteer commitments somewhat more frequently than women over the course of their lives (except between the ages of 35 and 50). The gratification associated with volunteering, and the social contacts that grow out of it, constitute the strongest motivating factors. When men can use existing competencies as part of their respective volunteer roles, they are more likely to commit themselves. This of course also applies to volunteer roles that involve caregiving: men who have prior experience caring for others find it easier to take on such tasks.

Because existing competencies play such an important part in volunteering, traditional gender roles often determine the division of labour. Men are more likely to take on formal volunteer roles associated with high visibility and prestige. The fields they are most active in are sports, politics, and public safety (firefighting, for example). In contrast, women tend to take on less visible and less prestigious roles that involve caregiving responsibilities such as in education or church communities. However, these clichés do not always apply. It is noteworthy that men older than 75 are more likely than women of the same age to care for family members. Doing so expands the horizon of possibilities for many men, in particular the elderly. They get to make entirely new experiences and learn how to react in situations they never dealt with in their work lives. Feeling needed gives meaning to many retired men's lives.

Criminality and violence

Men commit acts of violence more frequently than women. This includes violence directed at people as well as things (vandalism, property damage, and so on), both within households and in the public realm.

Because of this fact, men's vulnerabilities – and their experiences as victims of violence – are frequently overlooked. Men make up around two-thirds of all victims of violence in the public realm as well as 20 percent of those in households. In the age bracket 60 and above, one in three victims of intimate partner violence are men.

Prevailing norms of masculinity often prevent boys and men affected by violence from adequately dealing with their vulnerabilities and victimisation experiences. They do not want to feel (or be perceived as) weak, so they tend to ignore the remnants of past pain. Six in ten men say they were hit, slapped, kicked, beaten up, bullied, called offensive names, intimidated, or humiliated during their childhood and youth.

These numbers demonstrate the need for extensive studies (including investigating unreported crimes) and specialised support programmes for boys and men. The vulnerabilities and victimisation experiences of these target groups must be brought to light. However, this needs to be done very carefully, not least because efforts to support male victims should not be perceived as an attempt to relativise the victimisation experiences of women.

Interim conclusion

Based on the available evidence, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth believes it to be of strategic necessity to use the following insights as guideposts for its gender equality policy for boys and men:

Like girls and women, boys and men face challenges that gender equality policy has to address. They have wishes and desires of their own and benefit from policies that grant equal opportuni-

ties to everyone. However, it is necessary for boys and men to behave in (more) equitable ways, and as such their responsibility to do so needs to be called out more.

Different groups of boys and men are affected by gender inequality in different ways. Disadvantaged boys and men require access to more (equal) opportunities, whereas the issues of sustainability and the equitable sharing of resources should be directed more at privileged boys and men.

Two demanding questions have to be put to boys and men from all walks of life as well as to those creating gender equality policy. (1) How can men's lives become more sustainable and diverse? (2) What is required to make this possible? Of course, the task at hand requires defending the idea of promoting gender equality against attacks and attempts to distort its intentions. It is not a broad maxim with many potential meanings, but rather a clear mandate to distribute opportunities and resources equitably.

Boys and men have to be called upon to do more than just voice their commitment to gender equality in an abstract and passive way. Fair sharing can and should be promoted as a clear goal, and people should be asked in a very direct manner to help make it a reality. However, simply asking people to comply with something is not enough: the request must be accompanied by an offer of support. This requires changing incentive structures and support frameworks to better account for the needs and concerns of boys and men as pertains to gender equality.

4

The new gender equality policy for boys and men

As in other places, ideas of masculinity and gender relations are rapidly changing in Germany. Labour market participation rates for men and women are approaching equilibrium. Structural changes in the labour market are creating new opportunities for men. The previously underestimated care contributions of men are gaining visibility; and in light of the broadening definition of what it means to be a man, this is true for men's vulnerabilities as well. The public at large now also acknowledges that uniform norms of masculinity pose health risks.

At the same time, some inequalities – such as stereotypical vocational choices and the gender pay gap – possess enormous staying power. As such, men remain focused on paid work and contribute less time to childcare and household chores than women. While many men actually try to share the workload more fairly, they continue to face obstacles – and not only in the workplace. There are still too many cases where men's vulnerabilities and their victimisation experiences remain undetected. Healthcare delivery and prevention strategies are rarely sensitive to men's and masculinity issues. The same is true for counselling and support offers helping men address key questions in their lives and deal with crises.

Some aspects of life in German society are becoming increasingly gender-equal, whereas inequalities remain steadfast in others. To advance gender equality in this paradoxical situation, it is neces-

sary to expand the scope of policy efforts aimed at boys and men. Relevant measures should therefore be differentiated along two axes:

Axis 1: equal opportunities

The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth will continue implementing established approaches as part of the first axis, equal opportunities. The goal of ensuring that everyone has the same opportunities in life – regardless of origin and gender – is mostly qualitative in nature. Targeted assistance is an essential part of this: those who start out with fewer resources should profit more from policy measures.

Ensuring equal opportunities for everyone requires the dismantling of gender stereotypes and creation of an incentive structure that promotes diversity and equal opportunities regardless of gender, social class, migrant background, and level of educational attainment. Successful projects belonging to axis 1 include Boys' Day, Initiative Klischeefrei, and the meinTestgelände gender portal. Work with boys and men to encourage critical examination of gender stereotypes should also continue to be supported in order to promote the ongoing professionalisation of this field.

Axis 2: fair distribution

The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth wants to speed up the redistribution of burdens and resources among genders. Therefore, initiatives pertaining to the second axis, fair distribution, need increased attention going forward.

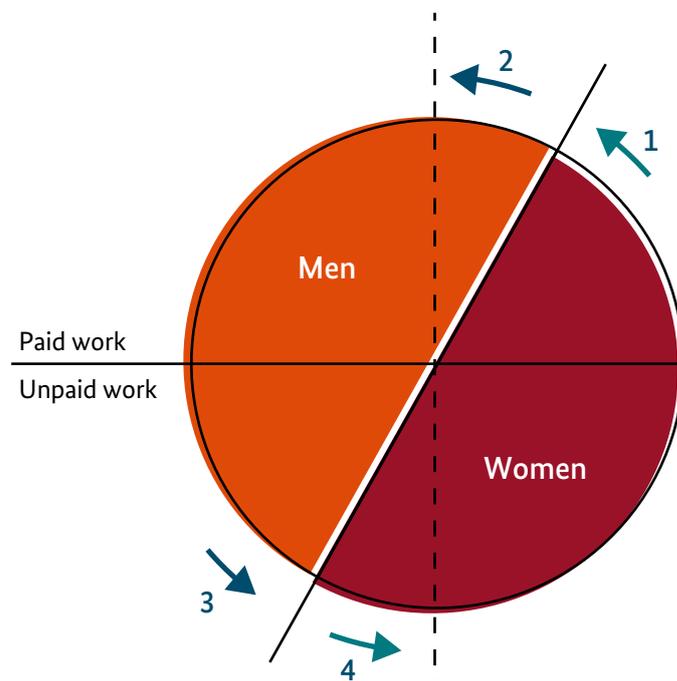
Fair distribution is mostly a quantitative goal: regardless of origin and gender, everyone should have access to the same resources and shoulder the same burdens. Of course, policy measures must not dictate to people how they should live their lives. However, they should – in fact, they have to – specify fair distribution of resources, freedoms, and burdens between men and women as a goal for society as a whole. Since fair distribution involves some giving up resources and others taking on new burdens, people must be encouraged to take the negotiation processes involved in this very seriously. This requires a more focused implementation strategy than is currently in place.

The diagram below serves to illustrate the basic assumptions that feed into the new strategy. The circle represents all labour performed in an economic system. The upper half delineates paid work, and the lower one unpaid work. The sloping line indicates the status quo, which is characterised by very unequal distribution. Collectively, both genders perform roughly equal amounts of work. However, men perform much more paid work than women, while the latter perform much more unpaid work.

From a gender equality policy perspective, the goal has to be an even split. This is the only option. Otherwise, it is either implied that one gender has a natural predisposition for performing unpaid work, or the uneven distribution is simply shrugged off.

The diagram shows four levers that can be engaged to prompt a movement from the current state of affairs toward the goal of an even split. Lever one – promoting the integration of women into the workforce on equal terms – has been part of the political agenda for many years. However, the significance of the remaining levers was discovered only recently.

Figure 1: Circular model of distributive justice between men and women (paid and unpaid work)



Levers two and three pertain to boys and men directly: which policy measures can help men break away from a unilateral performance orientation and leave their breadwinner responsibility behind? Which measures are best suited for supporting men in realising their wish for reducing working hours and gaining more flexibility timewise (lever two)? Which measures could lead to men taking on more care responsibilities within families as well as society in general (lever three) – in particular childcare and household chores? Lever four is indirectly relevant too: what can be done to encourage women to hold their partners more accountable for household chores and childcare – so that they do not simply take care of leftover tasks themselves or assign them to third parties (in most cases, other women)?

These questions move the new cooperative gender equality policy of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth further into the spotlight.

Cross-cutting issue: social justice

Measures pertaining to both axes have to take into account the needs of vulnerable groups in particular. Gender inequalities are often – partially or even entirely – due to social inequalities. Those with fewer resources at their disposal (for instance, in terms of education, income, or housing) generally face a higher risk of suffering from poverty, ill health, and disadvantages produced by gender inequality.

The guiding principle is this: without social justice, there can be no gender equality. That is why a gender equality policy targeting boys and men has to address the needs of the most vulnerable (groups of) men first and foremost.

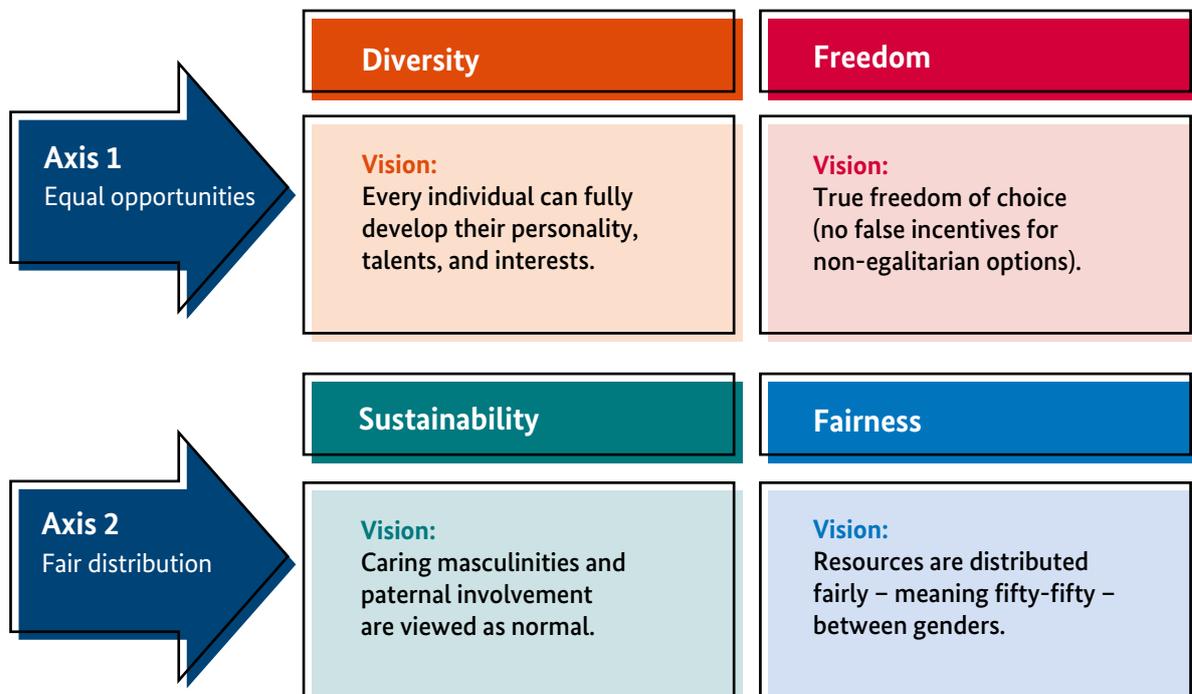
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Moving from concept to implementation

For both axes described above, there are two visions and goals. Implementing gender equality policy for boys and men involves dealing with tensions and even contradictions. Success necessitates working toward different goals simultaneously.

The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth gender equality policy for boys and men therefore promotes freedom, diversity, sustainability, and fairness – all at the same time and with equal effort.

Figure 2: the four gender equality policy goals divided along two axes (to guide intervention and monitor effectiveness)



These goals reinforce each other. For example, fair distribution of resources and burdens is reflected in the availability of equal opportunities for everyone. Similarly, optimal labour market allocation demonstrates fair access to educational supports and investments.

5.1 Diversity

“Every individual can fully develop their personality, talents, and interests.” This is the vision for the goal of diversity. In terms of implementation, the following strategic directions are key:

- Acceptance of many different ideas of masculinity is to be promoted. All levels of government should use the tools at their disposal to (1) create space for reflecting on norms of masculinity, as well as to (2) take concrete steps to help broaden them. This also means taking a stance when masculinities that do not fit the norm (possibly because of their fluid character) are devalued. Similarly, the formation of new norms has to be viewed through a critical lens.
- Traditionally, boys and men are discouraged from showing weakness. Vulnerabilities are buried deep down as a result, and bringing up men’s victimisation experiences is mostly taboo. This dynamic has to be disrupted. To do so, we need to amass more knowledge about the extent and different forms of men’s victimisation experiences. At the same time, support systems for boys and men affected by violence need to be expanded.
- There are massive differences among men as a social group. Men from social classes with low educational attainment – with limited socio-economic resources and/or with particular vulnerabilities – suffer the most due to inequality of opportunity and difficult life circumstances. Gender equality policy for boys and men needs to take into account the needs of these groups and create specific support systems to address them. Special attention has to be given to promoting the integration of male refugees into society at large.

- Due to growing awareness of women-specific topics and concerns in the last few decades, women now have sophisticated support systems available to them. However, what has been mostly glossed over is that men have concrete needs of their own as well – and meeting them requires reaching out to men using specific tools. With this in mind, professionals and institutions delivering psychosocial care need to be educated and must take appropriate action to reach out to men, counsel them, and guide them. Evidence-based resources to support this are to be created and widely disseminated.

Based on the above, four outcomes will be used to measure progress toward the goal of diversity:

- **Outcome 1.1:** The population of Germany becomes more accepting of a growing diversity of masculinities.
- **Outcome 1.2:** The vulnerabilities of boys and men are taken (more) seriously.
- **Outcome 1.3:** Stronger support systems help boys and men better come to terms with experiences of discrimination and ostracism.
- **Outcome goal 1.4:** Institutions delivering psychosocial care become more adept at appropriately reaching out to, counselling, and supporting boys and men in accordance with their specific needs.

5.2 Freedom

“There is true freedom of choice. False incentives for non-egalitarian options are eliminated.” This is the vision for the goal of freedom. In terms of implementation, the following strategic directions are key:

- The power of gender and masculinity stereotypes leads many boys and men to follow a path in their private and work lives that require them to subordinate their talents, interests, and abilities to social norms. Neither these men, nor society and the labour market, benefit from this arrangement. Therefore, policy measures that promote lifestyles and vocational choices free of gender stereotypes have to be continued and introduced on both an individual and structural level.

- The majority of couples and families would prefer egalitarian work arrangements but frequently end up living the traditional model. This is problematic both for those affected and the economy as a whole. One of the reasons for the problem is that the legal framework (at least on a subliminal level) is still based on the traditional work-life model. Given that this undermines true freedom of choice, false incentives established by law have to be eliminated. In particular, tax laws as well as regulations aimed at supporting young parents are to be scrutinised. Similarly, new incentives that would accelerate progress toward gender equality have to be considered. One example is the introduction of a gender quota to help increase the number of men working in the social, health, and education sectors.
- Schools are key to socialisation, which creates risks and opportunities at the same time. They have to be prevented from reproducing and reinforcing gender stereotypes. How can they foster freedom of choice and educational opportunities independent of students' gender? To achieve this, gender competencies within the teaching profession have to be improved.
- For many men, gender equality and the resulting dissolution of gender norms feel more threatening than liberating. They rarely see how these changes can increase personal freedom and open up possibilities for reshaping their life trajectories. Instead, they experience disorientation and mourn the loss of traditional privileges. This promotes feelings of insecurity. A lot of men see themselves as disadvantaged in terms of gender equality, so they cultivate (sometimes very powerful) negative sentiments. However, there is insufficient scientific data on who is affected and how, as well as on how social changes resulting from gender equality policies are related to political radicalisation. Creating a stronger evidence base and identifying potential avenues for intervention are imperative. The question of how work with boys and men to encourage critical examination of gender stereotypes can and should contribute to preventing radicalisation needs to be answered as well.

Based on the above, four outcomes will be used to measure progress toward the goal of freedom:

- **Outcome 2.1:** Boys and men do not let gender stereotypes interfere with their vocational choices (anymore).
- **Outcome 2.2:** (Legal) frameworks allow for true freedom of choice; contradictory incentives that keep the traditional breadwinner model alive are eliminated.
- **Outcome 2.3:** Gender competencies in the educational sector are improved.
- **Outcome 2.4:** Evidence about the needs and concerns of men feeling disadvantaged is available.

5.3 Sustainability

“Caring masculinities models and paternal involvement are viewed as normal.” This is the vision for the goal of sustainability. In terms of implementation, the following strategic directions are key:

- Gender-sensitive and gender-transformative work with boys and men (an umbrella term for work with men that encourages critical examination of gender stereotypes) is undergoing a dynamic professionalisation process. This development must be supported by (1) institutionalising training opportunities for professionals, (2) developing quality standards and ensuring their widespread adoption, and (3) promoting close-knit collaboration among agencies at the local, state, and federal level to support the development of adequate counselling services for boys and men.
- Couples that aim for an egalitarian distribution of paid and unpaid work still end up adopting the traditional gender-stereotypical model once they start a family. The phase around pregnancy and birth is decisive. Norms and structures tend to reinforce stereotypical roles. This vicious cycle can be disrupted by educating professionals who support young parents during pregnancy and birth about gender stereotypes. In general, all healthcare professionals should learn – as part of their training – how they can

meaningfully promote the health and self-care of fathers-to-be.

- Men contribute substantially to family care. Their contributions increase as they grow older, and retirement marks the high point. While working, men prefer formal volunteer roles within associations and clubs over providing care for others. Their service has to be recognised. At the same time, it is necessary to push for a change in the expectations placed on men in society. It should become normal for men to make care contributions over the course of their lives that are comparable in quantity and quality to those provided by women.
- The labour market and the vocational choices available to people are changing. Digitalisation allows for more flexible arrangements as to where and when to work. A successful career now requires a willingness to keep learning new skills and acquire more and more information throughout one's lifetime. This places significant demands on people but also allows them to reconcile work, family, and personal interests better than ever before. What new options and freedoms exist for boys and men, and how can they make use of them? These questions are to be addressed going forward.

Based on the above, four outcomes will be used to measure progress toward the goal of sustainability:

- **Outcome 3.1:** The professionalisation process pertaining to gender-sensitive and gender-transformative work with boys and men continues. Support offers for boys and men are widely available.
- **Outcome 3.2:** Healthcare professionals and organisations assign greater importance to promoting men's health and self-care; and they modify their approach to research, training, and healthcare delivery accordingly.
- **Outcome 3.3:** Men's contributions to family care become more visible and numerous.
- **Outcome 3.4:** Digitalisation and changes in the labour market make it easier for men to reconcile their personal and working lives.

5.4 Fairness

“All resources and burdens (including all paid and unpaid work) are distributed fairly – meaning fifty-fifty – between genders.” This is the vision for the goal of justice. In terms of implementation, the following strategic directions are key:

- Many parents are unable to achieve their dream of equitably sharing paid and unpaid work. Starting a family encourages the adoption of traditional roles. Therefore, young parents – and fathers-to-be in particular – need to be made aware of this risk before the birth of their first child. They have to be encouraged to reflect on questions such as: which role do I want to occupy within my family? What kind of relationship do I want to have with my child? How do I want to divide up my time between parenting and paid work? In what ways can I support the child's mother in her vocational aspirations? Parents-to-be should be encouraged to engage with these questions on their own as well as to discuss them together. This process can be supported (1) at the micro level, through direct work with parents-to-be in order to foster awareness of the trappings of traditional work-life arrangements; as well as (2) via publicity campaigns at the macro level. Successful design and implementation of gender equality policy measures hinges on identifying the optimal channels for reaching out to parents-to-be. Encouraging exchange and peer support among young fathers represents one promising path.
- The time around childbirth constitutes a key phase for intervention. During the first few

weeks following birth, couples establish caregiving routines that quickly become permanent. New fathers need to be given the opportunity to grow into parenting duties. Their care competencies should ideally develop in parallel to those of mothers, so that fathers learn how to responsibly care for children on their own and can build dependable father-child relationships. Hormonal changes triggered by direct contact with newborns must also not be neglected. Incentives are needed to help fathers attain these crucial experiences. Implementing the EU Directive that calls for the introduction of ten days of paternity leave immediately following childbirth represents a major opportunity for gender equality policy.

- Parenthood continues to affect men and women differently in terms of labour market participation. When it comes to expectant mothers, employers (have to) actively concern themselves with the questions of how to deal with an employee's absence during maternity leave and how to assist them in reconciling family and work life going forward. All this is often neglected when it comes to fathers-to-be. The cliché that men bear less responsibility for childcare than women is outdated but nevertheless retains its power. The result is that women alone bear the "career risk" of parenthood. This is both unjust and ill-fitting in today's world. As such, employers have to be motivated to treat fathers-to-be as a relevant target group in the context of future-oriented human resource management. Businesses should be encouraged to support men on their payroll in taking seriously the dual responsibilities they will have as employees and fathers. Part-time work opportunities for men also need to be encouraged.
- Traditional work-life arrangements have serious consequences for fathers following separation and divorce: the financial obliga-

tions remain, but they often lose their position within the family. The task of reorganising family roles and responsibilities after separation and divorce involves many highly sensitive questions and has to be approached very carefully. Nevertheless, action is needed: if men are held responsible for taking on half of the unpaid work in their households and family lives, more effort must go into ensuring that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (article 9, paragraph 3) is upheld: "States Parties shall respect the right of the child who is separated from one or both parents to maintain personal relations and direct contact with both parents on a regular basis, except if it is contrary to the child's best interests."

Based on the above, four outcomes will be used to measure progress toward the goal of fairness:

- **Outcome 4.1:** Men reflect (more) actively (and earlier than they do at present) on fatherhood and reconciling paid work and family life.
- **Outcome 4.2:** Men assume more and more responsibility for unpaid work in their households and family lives.
- **Outcome 4.3:** Employers are encouraged to develop policies that make it normal for men and fathers to actively reconcile paid work and family life. The number of men working part-time increases.
- **Outcome 4.4:** Framework conditions safeguard the right of children to maintain direct contact with both parents in everyday life, even in the event of separation or divorce.

Implementation

The long version of this document lays out two to four concrete measures for each of the outcomes specified above. Please consult the long version for details.

6

Outlook

Figuring out how to “be a man” is as exciting as it is fraught with tension. Traditional ideas and norms of masculinity remain very much alive, despite the fact that everyday experiences as well as studies overwhelmingly demonstrate how limiting they are (and how destructive they can be at times). Younger men and women in particular are vehemently bringing our attention to the drawbacks of our current culture of masculinity. They point out that it promotes the overstepping of boundaries and facilitates violent behaviour. They highlight the role of existing norms in normalising exploitation of oneself and others. And, they make us aware of the fact that men tend to devalue and ostracise others whenever they are asked to critically examine their behaviour.

A growing number of men recognise the trappings of traditional masculinities and view the opportunities and responsibilities they have in their lives through a different lens. Can men take care of themselves? Sure, they can! Should men cook, clean, sew, and shop for groceries? Why not? And, what about changing diapers? No problem!

Many men do their best and try to do everything that is expected of them. They want to be good men and fruitfully combine old and new ideals. Many are happy to take on this challenge and view it as an adventure – or even a historic opportunity to reinvent themselves as men. Others find themselves paralysed, some resist passively, and a few even choose to fight to preserve gender and masculinity stereotypes.

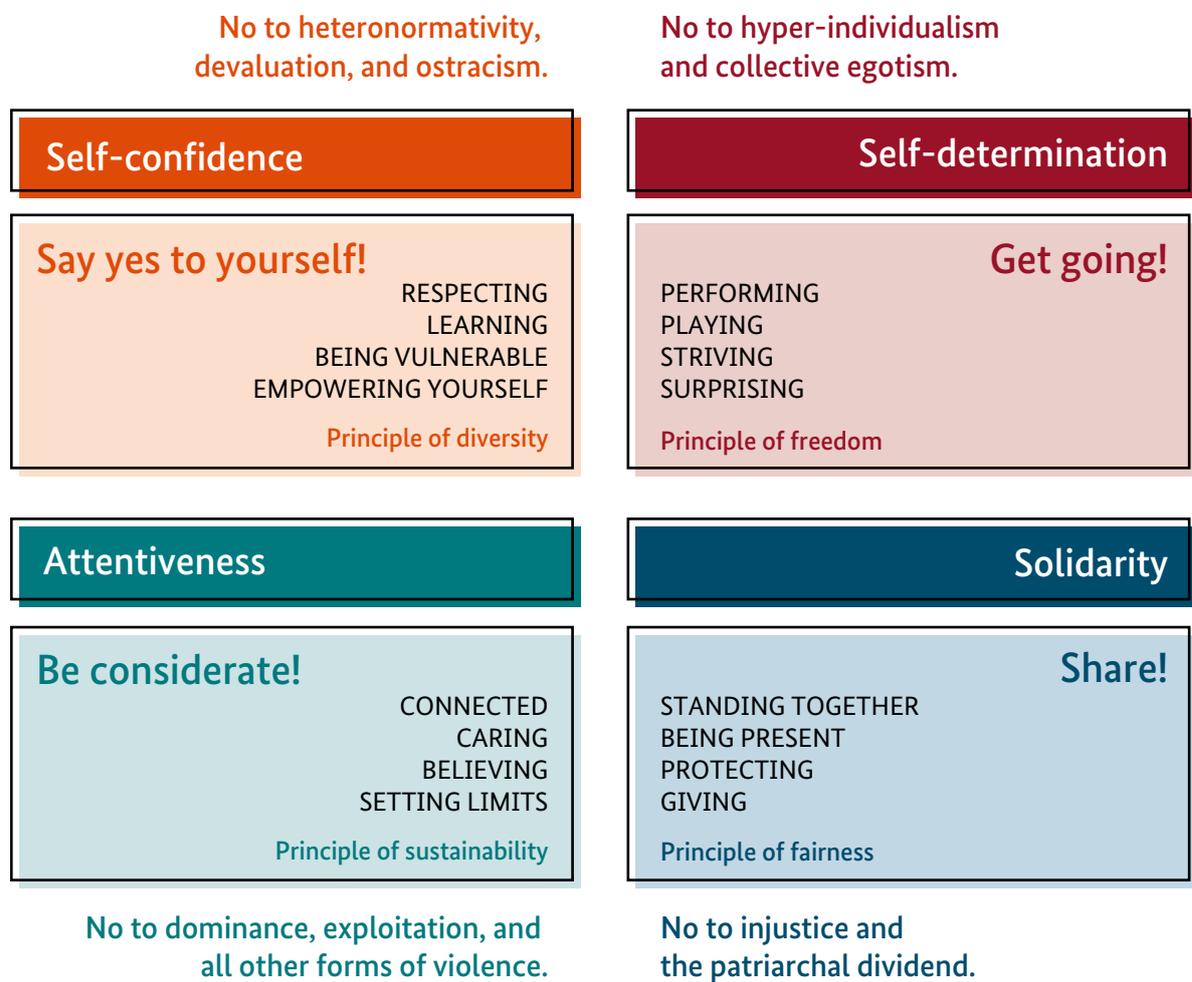
The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth neither can nor wants to dictate to anyone what “being a man” looks like or how men should live their lives. However, it can and does want to provide all men with a sense of direction, helping them understand what being a man in today’s world could mean. The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth also wants to dismiss certain outmoded and harmful interpretations of masculinity more clearly than it has in the past.

The following model shows how the four gender equality policy goals for boys and men can also serve as a horizon of development for each and every boy and man.

What exactly does this entail for me as a man? You are called upon to develop and bring to life all your abilities equally. This way, you gain manoeuvrability, promote your personal development, and find the confidence you need in order to cultivate a sense of self that is fitting in today's day and age and exemplifies fairness and non-violence.

This model is intended to show how behaviours that appear incompatible can be reconciled in a holistic manner. It makes clear that men have a lot to gain when they emancipate themselves. Gender equality has much more to offer to boys and men than the loss of historic privileges (privileges which, upon closer inspection, also severely limit human potential). Thus, equitable gender equality can be achieved and give rise to sustainable lifestyles for everyone.

Figure 3: The four objectives of gender equality policy transferred to the individual level



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