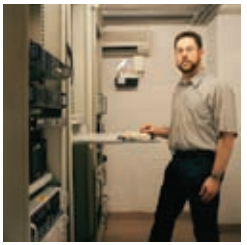
Federal Ministry for
Family Affairs, Senior Citizens,
Women and Youth

Exploring New Avenues

Portraits of Men in Transition

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Introduction

While the role of women has long been a subject of acute public interest and often sparks heated debate, the opportunities available to men receive considerably less attention. This is despite the fact that society is being reshaped by changing values, individualisation and the growing numbers of women who work. So how do men perceive such change? How do they respond to it? And how do they cope with it in everyday life?

This series of personal portraits looks at the lives of men in modern Germany. It focuses on how they cope with change and on the challenges they face in reconciling the needs of their families, jobs and partnerships. What motivates men to step out of their stereotypical gender roles and take on new roles and responsibilities? What attitudes have they come up against in their personal and professional environments?

Although knowledge gleaned from the social sciences and the findings of psychology research is used throughout, this publication does not constitute a scientific study. Rather, these seven personal portraits represent simple snapshots of everyday life in Germany. Though simple, they certainly make a difference, for they send out a clear signal that, bubbling below the surface and not readily visible for all to see, the process of change is firmly underway.

This is how 'silent revolutions' begin. There are few signs to begin with and trying to trace their origins is difficult. Little shows on the surface and hardly anything filters through in the news. Everything appears unchanged – existing structures and relationships seem stable and rigid. Yet slowly but surely, small cracks appear and these give way to big eruptions over time.

Tracing the origins of change is what this publication is all about. The search took place in large cities and in small towns and villages all around the country. Finding the men portrayed here took quite some time. While some were ready and willing to participate from the outset, persuading others to go public and have their stories told was rather hard work. In the end, they all agreed because they felt it was im-

portant to share their experience and play their part in changing men's roles in society.

The change involved is not about defining a new role model, but about providing new opportunities for women and for men – about finding a new balance in gender relationships and about balancing the sides of the work, family, partnership triangle. This involves exploiting existing potential and expanding people's personal scope and choice, which in Germany is often hindered by institutional structures such as social policy and taxation law. The working world can play an important role here: while flexible, family-friendly working conditions are starting to emerge, prevailing career patterns are still based on the model of the male breadwinner. Where they do exist, family-friendly schemes primarily target women (mothers) but not men (fathers). So it was particularly important to portray men from different professions, different working arrangements and lifestyles, and who have differing personal and cultural backgrounds. The task at hand is not to produce the ideal modern man, but to portray men in different situations, men who in one way or another have chosen to live unusual or non-traditional lifestyles and who can serve as role models for other men who want to embrace change. It would seem a good way to go as the men portrayed in this publication radiate self-assurance and satisfaction. They believe they have achieved a better quality of life than they could have done if they had simply bowed to the pressure of the more general 'either or' decision regarding work and family life. Their jobs and careers are important, but their relationships with their partners and children are their main focus – they form the foundation on which they build their lives. The really fascinating thing about these men is that they have convincing arguments as to why and how adopting a new role and caring for the family pays off. Although by today's social standards, they are highly successful men, they do not define themselves in terms of (material) success.

This publication contains portraits of:

- A **young IT specialist** who has taken parental leave to give him more time for his two-year-old daughter and to allow his wife to pursue her career with a large multinational company.

- A **retired bishop who is highly committed**, both politically and socially. Although he had other plans for retirement, he has taken on the task of caring for his sick wife full-time and has had to abandon a number of personally important commitments to do so.

- **A top manager** and lone parent who, following the death of his wife, was left to bring up his three young sons and has risen to the challenge with great dedication.

- A **father** of two small daughters **who works part-time** as a machinist in a traditional male occupation.

- A **modern career man** and hands-on father whose wife works as a manager in the same company as he does: they are a dual career couple par excellence and live out the 'double income, two kids' dream to the full.

- An **artist and highly dedicated father** who looks back with a critical eye on his time as a house-husband.

- A **committed househusband of Turkish origin** who keeps the pressure off his wife and puts his heart and soul into bringing up their two sons and looking after the house and garden.

What makes these men different? Can any pattern be identified beyond their individual differences? Firstly, they are men who radiate great calm and self-assurance. The way they have chosen to live has attracted incomprehension and rejection within their personal and working environments. But they have not let it get them down. In some cases, they have gone through very rough times and it has not always been easy to stay on course. Still they remain undeterred and firmly believe they have made the right choice.

These are all men who value an independent and confident partner. They support their wife or partner in their own career choices and have made a rational decision that the family income is more secure in the longer term and can even be increased if the mother of their children stays in her job and they, the father, opt to work part-time. In no way does their self-esteem suffer as a consequence.

These findings uphold the results of a study, **Karrierek(n)ick Kinder** (Kids: A Career Killer), conducted in 2007 by the European Academy for Women in Politics and Business (EAF). Commissioned by the Bertelsmann Stiftung, the study looked at mothers in management positions. One of the key findings – and a source of motivation for this publication – was that mothers who are successful in their careers have partners who give them not just moral support but back them in hugely practical ways when it comes to managing the home and looking after the children.

Some of them, when all is said and done, are men who have been assertive enough to ensure that their needs are recognised at work and are able to work shorter hours and/or from a home office. And it would seem that it is easier to agree on new working arrangements in small, owner-managed businesses than it is in larger companies. Relationships are more personal, people value one another more and competition among colleagues is perhaps less prevalent so there is less chance of male employees being labelled as hen-pecked if they opt to take parenting leave.

In larger companies, men must have made it quite a way up the career ladder before they can influence the corporate culture and create the conditions to allow better work-life balance, not just for themselves but for their colleagues and staff. And those in managerial positions rarely have the option to reduce their working hours. The two managers featured in this series of portraits are able to meet the demands placed on them through their ability to buy in and pay for professional housekeeping and childcare services. While one is rather sceptical about the willingness of larger companies not only to promote but to actually introduce family-friendly work arrangements for women and men, the other, younger one is more optimistic.

The portraits invite the reader into the personal worlds of the men involved. Photographs taken in their working and home environments make them more visible and reveal different facets of their personalities. Some will be more likeable than others. While one particular lifestyle might be unthinkable to some, others might find it particularly attractive. It all depends on what the individual reader is able to identify with.

Additional information and tips are provided in an effort to explain the various issues taken up throughout the publication – for example, the 'father months' and home-based care arrangements mentioned in the different portraits. Relevant findings from recent studies and surveys are presented in an easy-to-understand manner, giving an insight into the overall situation beyond the personal ones outlined here and to take account of prevailing social conditions.

Finally, I and my fellow authors – Nina Bessing, who also coordinated the project, and Kathrin Walther – would like to take this opportunity to express our thanks to everyone involved in this publication.

Our thanks go to the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth for funding the project and for the expertise and untiring support made available to us. Thanks also go to photographer Bernd Hartung for his sensitive portraits, to Amelie Thierfelder for the design and layout, and to Sybille Klotz for her creative input and advice.

Most of all, we should like to thank our interviewees – our 'new men' – for their trust, openness and cooperation. Working with you all has been an enjoyable and extremely enlightening experience.

Helga Lukoschat


BIG

Nina Bessing

Organisation is Key

→ IT specialist **Sebastian Maus** takes full advantage of the benefits to be had from parental leave

My journey to Frankfurt is impressive. At the airport, I am met by brilliant blue skies. The route to the Maus-Mainberger household takes me past the stylish skyscrapers that make up the Frankfurt skyline. The prestigious buildings are swathed in a halo of mist backlighted by rays of sun trying to break through the canopy.

Frankfurt, Europe's banking and finance centre, is presented in its best light: sophisticated bankers in dark suits excitedly tap the keypads of their Blackberries and speak animatedly into their mobile phones in an attempt to keep up with the latest on the stock exchange. This is the heart of the German economy. If you work here, you've made it. Even the taxi drivers speak a different language: "is that an office address?" I am asked. "No", I reply, "it's a private address, most likely a block of flats".

→ Meet the family

Arriving at the Maus-Mainberger's address, I find that I am ten minutes early. No-one answers the door when I ring the bell. At exactly half-past three, a man drives around the corner. He's wearing jeans and a black T-shirt bearing a slightly altered quotation from Friedrich Schiller: Der Mensch ist nur da Mensch, wo er spielt (Man is only human when at play). He's carrying a little blonde-haired girl with two rather untidy pigtails. He routinely checks the letter box near the front door and – holding his daughter with his right arm – fishes the post out with his free hand. He then walks towards me and gives me a warm welcome. This is Sebastian Maus. The bonny little blonde in his arms is Annika. He asks his daughter repeatedly if she would rather get down and walk by herself. His tone is calm, no tense undertones, no indication that he expects her to do so. No, she'd rather not. Her big blue eyes take in

their strange visitor as she snuggles close to her father for protection. He carries her patiently up the stairs, opening and closing several doors with one hand – the doors have to be kept closed because there is also a goldsmith's premises in the building. Upstairs in their flat, Sebastian sets his daughter down: "It's time I put you down". And Annika runs off with a squeal of delight.

While Sebastian Maus changes his daughter's clothes, I'm allowed to look around the flat. The living room is furnished with a large leather three-piece suite and the obligatory wall units. There's also a play area, a child's tent and a toy box filled with puzzles, picture books and fluffy animals. Sebastian explains: "We've combined the living and play rooms so Annika doesn't have to go into a different room to play. She can stay with us". The wall opposite the dining table, which is situated in the spacious hallway, is hung with photographs of family, friends and various children. A bit further along, carefully marked on the wall, are two 'Annikameters'. This is obviously the place where the little one's height is measured at regular intervals. Children like that kind of thing. They learn from an early stage that growing is fun.

→ Division of labour in the household

Sebastian Maus and his family live what he calls a "fulfilled life". "I can readily recommend this lifestyle. I have the best of both worlds: a career that satisfies me and enough time to look after my daughter". A qualified meteorologist, he works part-time as a systems administrator for BlueMars, a small but well-known internet agency. His wife, Gisela Mainberger, works as a manager at Siemens. She returned to work immediately following her period of statutory maternity leave, but as she had saved up her annual leave during her pregnancy, she was able to work a four-day week for the first six months back at work.

Later, in the car, she would tell me that this was her way of dealing with the situation. She would always work ahead, get in her boss's good books and volunteer to do overtime. This means that if Annika becomes ill, she can count on her company's support whenever the need arises. Her strategy works. But there's one thing that still bothers her: The guilty conscience that follows her almost wherever she goes. She feels guilty because she has too little time for her daughter. But Gisela Mainberger loves her job and the

responsibility it brings. She sometimes asks herself if the constant feeling of guilt is a purely women's thing: her daughter is well looked after and is coming on in leaps and bounds. Her male colleagues who have children rarely feel such pangs of guilt.

All in all, the Maus-Mainbergers are happy with the way they have divided things between them. Annika has been going to the crèche since she was a baby and their typical day looks something like this: her mother takes her there in the mornings because her father has to leave early for work. He collects his daughter from the crèche in the afternoons, somewhere between half-past four and four o'clock, and then spends the rest of the day with her. Her mother mostly gets home between eight and nine o'clock in the evening and puts Annika to bed. On one day a week, Gisela Mainberger works from her home office. She had to work hard for the privilege. She is a dedicated and competent manager and specifically looked for work with a company like Siemens because of the unusual working arrangements they offer. This is why she had no problem in stating her case after her daughter was born: she would continue to be there full-time for her team, but would work from home one day a week. It's a win-win situation all round.

→ Father, child, crèche

Once Sebastian Maus has helped Annika out of her jacket and shoes, we all sit down in the 'grown-up' section of the divided living room. Annika has decided it's time for a cuddle with daddy. She has no need for a dummy. She likes to use her father's strong fingers instead. She sucks on his knuckles and rolls herself up on his lap. It's time for a little rest.

"A guilty conscience because she's in the crèche? No, not since the day I saw my daughter there for the first time, saw how she squealed with delight when playing with the other kids. I've not felt a pang of guilt since."

While Annika rests, her father answers my questions about the challenges involved in their particular way of life. In the first year of his daughter's life, the fact that both parents worked full-time proved stressful and nerve-wracking. The couple had not expected life to be so complicated. They were prepared to employ a childminder – an extremely expensive option in Germany – and assumed that it would allow them more flexibility. But the taxation and labour regulations they were forced to comply with drove them to distraction. And no-one in Frankfurt's local administration could tell them how best to go about employing a childminder as private individuals. The amount of red tape involved was unbelievable.

They had to buy a special software package to do their accounts and then, when their childminder went off sick for a prolonged period, it involved a constant exchange of correspondence between the local authorities and the Maus-Mainbergers about how much tax they each had to pay and so on. The couple "cannot recommend this option at all".

Things changed when they came across a good crèche and were told that Annika could have a place within ten days of them applying. So does Sebastian have a guilty conscience about sending his daughter to a crèche? "No, not since the day I saw my daughter there for the first time, saw how she squealed with delight when playing with the other kids and the staff. I've not felt a pang of guilt since." There were many times when Annika refused to go home when he went to pick her up in the afternoon. She wanted to carry on playing with the other kids. At six months old, she had been craving for contact with other children. That was now a thing of the past and she was learning such a lot at the crèche.

Annika has finished resting and she is allowed to do a puzzle. Doing puzzles is her greatest source of delight. Not only does she try to match

the cows, mice and other objects with the right shapes, she names them all by name. Sebastian patiently repeats each of the names: "Yes, that's a cow. Good! It was a while before the cow stopped going woof, woof!" He laughs. At the moment, he's the only person who understands what his daughter wants to say. But that will change soon, because Annika talks incessantly – when she's not singing or squealing, that is. During the interview, Sebastian Maus keeps turning to his daughter, he talks to her, pulls the straps of her dungarees back up onto her shoulders. But they refuse to stay put and so father and daughter eventually decide that you can do puzzles just as well without your dungarees on.

As a father, Sebastian Maus has found his true vocation. You can see that right away. His round, bearded face with its twinkling eyes framed by small spectacles radiates great warmth and contentment. He's the kind of father every small girl dreams of: someone to cuddle up to and to play rough and tumble with, someone who can explain algebra a hundred times over but still keep his sense of humour and share a joke. He has a natural air of authority that is not strict but based on trust in himself and in his child's own abilities. That this fosters self-confidence in children is evident. Anyone who has ever questioned what a primal sense of trust looks like should take a look at two-year-old Annika.

She is scared of very little, is open, communicative and already has a healthy need to have her say. While her father and I talk, she babbles on and flips the pieces of her puzzle up in the air – the louder they fall to the ground the better, the puzzle is made of wood after all. If we fail to react, she comes over to us and squeals into the microphone. I'll show this woman what a great girl I am! She really comes into her own as we stand in the long and spacious hallway. Annika

has a tricycle and a few other toys she can ride on and she uses them to command a large portion of my attention. With great speed, she rides around the hall and over anything that fails to jump aside. “Yeah!” But when daddy speaks a quiet yet warning word, she calms down – for the moment, anyway. Here eyes give her away, they’re full of that mischievous ‘just wait until I grow up’ look.

→ Part-time and loving it

When Sebastian Maus describes how he and his wife have divided the responsibilities between them, it is clear that their day is carefully planned down to the last minute. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, Sebastian radiates patience and calm. A qualified meteorologist, he says he has made his hobby his profession. He has always been interested in computers and networks and enjoys programming in his spare time. After finishing his studies, he decided he had nothing to lose and applied for job as a systems administrator at BlueMars. Despite being a newcomer and having the wrong academic background, he beat all the other candidates and was chosen for the job.

Sebastian has many other interests that are equally important. He’s a music lover and listens to everything from pop songs to classical music. In his job, his responsibilities go beyond those of a systems administrator. Of himself, he says he is someone who likes to glean knowledge from many different areas. This is why he’s the first port of call when colleagues get stuck. Switching to part-time hours wasn’t easy. A systems administrator has to be there when things go wrong. But his boss had no objections and laid no stones in his path – something Sebastian is keen to emphasise. BlueMars is a child-friendly company and rather unusual in the internet sector, or so people say. Employees receive a €250 bonus on the birth of a child. The man Sebastian works closest with is also a dedicated family man. BlueMars is an owner-manager run business and everyone knows everyone else.

When he first started working part-time, Sebastian tried to do the same amount of work he had done in his former 60-hour week. But he soon realised that he would have to give in and delegate work to others. It was a learning process, both for him and for those around him. The type of work he does has changed over time. He

now performs less straight systems administration work and is more involved in planning. He can do this from home. Word soon got round that he is unable to make appointments after three o'clock in the afternoon. His online diary sends a message out saying that he is not available at that time. I ask if important meetings ever go ahead without him. "No. If I'm needed at a meeting, it's because my expertise and advice are needed. They can't go ahead without me."

The young father says he has never been particularly ambitious, but whatever he does, he wants to do it well and have the knowledge he needs to do so. He could never have concentrated on just one thing. He doesn't have the "tunnel vision" that some neuropsychologists will have us believe is inborn in all men. Sebastian thrives on diversity.

We live in a society where we all want to be the best. Performance and productivity are all that count. The media tell us we must strive for perfection. That puts us under a great deal of stress. Stress that affects more and more people's health. This is why the World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared stress to be one

of the greatest health risks in the 21st century. Sebastian refuses to play the game. He loves his work but he is willing to go against the flow. "Of course, since I've been working part-time, a younger colleague has taken over some of my responsibilities. It doesn't bother me, though, that some young underling is more or less running the department. My daughter will only be young once. We often forget to enjoy life and to spend time with those we love. That's what quality of life is about, something a career just doesn't give you."

His own happy childhood in a small town in the state of Hesse has no doubt shaped his outlook on life. He had lots of other children to play with. His father was a construction engineer and worked away from home for much of the time. When he was at home and had time with

“Going to work is important. It keeps you in touch with other people and feeds your self-confidence. How could I ask my wife to give that up?”

his sons, it was special. The little spare time he had, he spent building a large multi-family dwelling in which he and his wife now live alone. Sebastian’s mother had given up her job to look after the family. Attempts to go back to work years later were unsuccessful. Luckily, she made no bones about telling her son of her frustration. He never forgot it and decided that in his marriage, neither partner should give up their job. “Going to work is important. It keeps you in touch with other people and feeds your self-confidence. How could I ask my wife to give that up?” He then turns to his two-year-old daughter and says: “Isn’t that right? It’s important that we, you, mummy and I, have a nice life: that we can all be together.” Annika takes another daring jump off the arm of the sofa and, giving her father a fearless look, she giggles excitedly and gets ready to jump again – daddy is there to catch her fall.

As Mrs. Mainberger drives me back to the airport, the Frankfurt skyline comes into view. In contrast to earlier in the day, it all seems rather grey and sterile – despite the fact that the sun is still shining and the sky is still the same clear blue as before. The stylish buildings and the air of power and success still fascinate me, but I feel uneasy. There’s something missing. As we drive past a big, open square full of business types talking to one another with serious expressions on their faces, I think to myself, this would be a great place for Annika to race around on her tricycle.

[i] Fathers and Parental Leave in Germany

The shifting role model for fathers – from "father and breadwinner" to "father and child-rearer" –has long been observed in Germany. According to a study, **Facetten der Vaterschaft** (Facets of Fatherhood), some 70 percent of men have adopted this new father role (BMFSFJ 2006). And in a survey on fathers' attitudes to parental leave carried out by the Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach (IDA) in 2005, a good 69 percent of the men questioned said that fathers should be as actively involved as mothers in bringing up their children.

The IDA survey also showed that when looked at from a father's perspective, there are still many arguments against them taking parental leave: most men said the key reason for them not opting to take parental leave was that their loss of earnings was far larger than that of mothers who take time off to look after their children. This mirrors social reality in that women still earn less than men. The second most important reason for fathers not taking parental leave was their fear of it having a detrimental effect on their careers. Some 45 percent of respondents in the IDA survey also said they were "afraid of being seen as out-of-the-ordinary". When asked about what they saw as the biggest incentive for taking parental leave, they all had the same answer: more flexible working hours.

That statutory regulations can serve in boosting the number of fathers who take parental leave became evident with the introduction of Germany's new parental benefit scheme in 2007. The new law has achieved what the old childrearing allowance and childrearing leave schemes introduced in 1986 did not: it has increased the number of fathers who are actively involved in caring for the home and family. The new scheme resulted in a two-fold increase in parental benefit applications in the first quarter of 2007. The number of fathers on parental leave rose to 7 percent, with almost a third of them applying for 12 months' parental benefit rather than just the two 'father months'. The scheme allows for a maximum 14 months' parental benefit to be paid out if both partners share the parental leave entitlement, where at least two of the fourteen months must be reserved for the

partner not taking the longer period – usually the father.

In Germany, the number of fathers taking parental leave is on the increase. But in German industry, these fathers are still the exception rather than the rule. A European comparison shows that in other countries, the number of companies with male employees on parental leave is significantly higher than in Germany. At 14 percent, Germany ranks in the bottom third. The average for the EU-21 is 30 percent (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2006).

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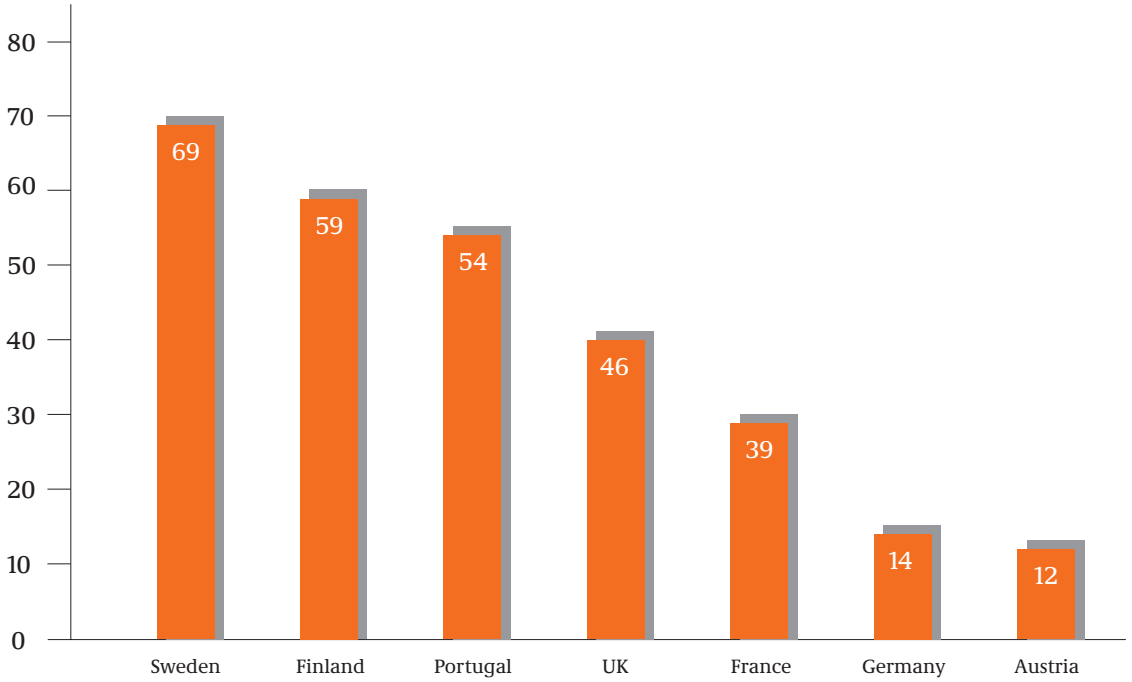
Businesses with male employees on parental leave, by selceted countries (%)



Source: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2006): Working Time and Work-Life Balance in European Companies

Further Information

Literature:

- The booklet **Elterngeld und Elternzeit – Das Bundeselterngeld- und Zeitgesetz (Parental Benefit and Parental Leave: German Federal Parental Benefit and Parental Leave Policy)**. The booklet, available in German only, can be ordered or downloaded as a PDF file from the Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth website.

- The study **Facetten der Vaterschaft – Perspektiven einer innovativen Väterpolitik (Facets of Fatherhood: Opportunities for Innovative Fathers' Policy)** published by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Women and Youth (2006) is available for download from the research section (Forschungsnetz) of the ministry's website. In German only.

- Published in 2006 by Budrich Verlag, Peter Döge's **Männer – Paschas und Nestflüchter? (Men: Spoilt and Selfish or Fleeing the Nest?)** looks at how men in Germany spend their time. The book has not been translated into English.

Links:

- **www.bmfsfj.de/Elterngeldrechner/**
  The Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth website (in German only) provides a tool which allows expectant fathers and mothers to calculate their individual entitlements to parental benefit.

- **www.familien-wegweiser.de**
  A dedicated web portal maintained by the Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth provides families with a wide range of information, facts and figures on family-related issues, parental leave and parental benefit, and advisory and other services. (Available in German only).

Nina Bessing

God Give Me Patience. Now!

→ Retired bishop **Klaus Wollenweber** became his wife's official carer after a routine operation went badly wrong

When Klaus Wollenweber retired as a Protestant bishop in Germany's Oberlausitz region and settled with his wife in Bonn, he already knew how he wanted to use his time. He wanted to promote exchange between Christians in Germany and Poland, and between those in Ukraine and Belarus. He continued his work as a pastor and took on the chairmanship of two Evangelist Church exchange committees whose work focused on exactly what he was looking for. Klaus and his wife assumed their tried and tested division of responsibilities, the way they had lived for the past 40 years, would carry on more or less unchanged. He would concentrate on serving the Church and she would look after the home and family.

But then something happened that no-one could ever have foreseen or would wish on their worst enemy. After a routine operation, Klaus' wife failed to come round. Her circulation had stopped. An infection had caused all her internal organs to close down. The doctors acted fast and put her into an induced coma. Tests done at the hospital revealed the cause: coli bacteria, usually found only in the bowel, had infiltrated her abdominal cavity.

→ The initial shock

For Klaus Wollenweber, his wife and their five children, life had suddenly become a nightmare. Still Klaus tried to keep a clear head. He consulted family friends who also happen to be doctors and talked to his children, who immediately set off from their homes in Berlin and Cologne. His oldest son still lives in Bonn and is at his father's side from the outset. Klaus soon realises that the hospital looking after his wife

has reached its limits as regards how to treat her condition. When one of the doctors asks him if he would agree to her being transferred to the university hospital, he doesn't hesitate as they have an intensive anaesthesia and intensive care ward, especially for coma patients. The doctors keep Frauke Wollenweber in a coma for four long weeks and try to flush the infection out of her system. They operate again and again in an attempt to prevent further infection in the bowel and pelvic region. She is then slowly brought out of the coma. For another three weeks, she is strongly sedated and placed on a respirator. Throughout, the doctors give little more than a fifty-fifty chance of Frauke Wollenweber surviving her ordeal.

"It came as a great shock to us all", says Klaus Wollenweber some eighteen months later as I join him and his wife in the conservatory of their home in Bonn. "Neither of us had ever been seriously ill in all the years before. The only visits to hospital were for the births of our children."

"Sometimes, when my wife was in her coma, I'd go into her room and find her bed empty. I wouldn't know what had happened. I'd hope and then fear that she was back in the operating theatre." Klaus Wollenweber has tears in his eyes. The fear and the helplessness he felt at the time have stayed with him.

But with his wife lying in the intensive care unit, Klaus Wollenweber has no intention of giving up. He starts to fight for her – after more than 40 years of marriage, her life is very much a part of his. Frauke Wollenweber pulls through: slowly but surely, she recovers. Once out of intensive care, she spends another two and a half months in hospital and undergoes numerous operations. During this time, the Wollenwebers receive mail from friends and relatives and from churchgoers from all over Germany. One postcard they received bore the inscription: "God give me patience. Now!" Frauke Wollenweber asks for the card to be pinned up on the wall of her hospital room. After a tough fight lasting almost four months, not to mention the emotional rollercoaster they had all been on, she is discharged from the university hospital and transferred to a conva-

lescent home. The experience has taken a lot out of Klaus and he is also prescribed a period of convalescence in the same clinic to allow him time to rest and regain his strength.

"The decision that I should become my wife's carer wasn't easy, especially for my wife. It's a completely different situation, one minute you're the other half of a couple and the next minute you're in need of constant care."

→ What to do?

"In the clinic, we soon realised that this chapter of our lives was far from over. It had only just begun. My wife had to learn many things all over again, even how to walk and talk. We realised that she would need constant care for quite some time to come." Together with his wife, Klaus Wollenweber makes a far-reaching decision: he will become her full-time carer. They will see things through together. Klaus emphasises that "the decision that I should become my wife's carer wasn't easy, especially for my wife. It's a completely different situation – one minute you're the other half of a couple and the next minute you're in need of constant care". Frauke Wollenweber, who up to now had let her husband do all the talking, takes over: "I had always been fiercely independent. Losing that independence was the hardest thing for me, the feeling of not functioning properly, of not fulfilling my role as an equal partner. I'm so grateful that I can do some things for myself again. But I want to do more, because I want to be able to take the train to Berlin and Munich and visit my grandchildren." Her face lights up.

The Wollenwebers have got to know several couples who made rather different decisions when faced with the same situation. The emotional burden is extreme and some men are unable to cope. They know a couple in similar circumstances, but in their case, the wife – having recovered from a serious illness – had to help her husband cope with it all. Frauke Weber has an explanation for this: "We women are used to doing the caring and to looking after people. We get lots of practice bringing up our children and it's taken far more for granted that we will

"I always thought that my line of work would prepare me for this kind of situation. I've spent a lot of time in hospitals and have helped many people in their hour of need. But that's very different to our own situation. Before, I was an official visitor, could keep my distance and leave when I felt the time was right. With my wife, I was back at the hospital every morning, day in and day out. The hospital ruled my life."

do it. It's not really expected of men and they're not really equipped for it."

Frauke Wollenweber's explanation is held up by empirical research: in Germany, care in the home is a women's issue. Only few men become their wife's full-time carer.

→ The challenge of home-based care

To take over as his wife's full-time carer, Klaus Wollenweber has to turn his life upside down. He decides to go back into training and accompanies nurses and orderlies as they go about their work. He pays careful attention and wins their trust. He asks them to show him everything he needs to know and do to be able to look after his wife later on. At first, the hospital staff are cautious, but then they open up and take Klaus under their wing. They show him all the really important stuff, plus a few things that are not shown in the text books. This is one of the decisions that probably saved his wife's life in the end, because once he has her back home, he is sometimes called upon to show agency nurses how to give her the infusions she needs without risking new infection. The complications arising from Mrs. Wollenweber's blood poisoning are rare and require rather unusual treatment. "I stood over them like a watchdog. I did all the night-time infusions myself. And because Frauke needed them regularly, I hardly got any sleep for weeks. Everyone told me I should set the alarm, but I was too afraid that I wouldn't wake up in time."

This reveals something that has been part of Klaus Wollenweber's character since he was a boy, something that helped him and his wife cope with the situation. He trusts in people, asks for their advice and fosters relationships. But even so, he does not pass on the responsibility to the doctors and nursing staff. He feels he can approach those he is dependent on and speak to them as an equal: "It's important not to focus purely on your own problems, but to remain sensitive to those of others you come into contact with and let them tell you their own stories." This is something he learned as a pastor. But it is certainly part of his nature, one of his strengths. Klaus Wollenweber also says that

"I always thought that my line of work would prepare me for this kind of situation. I've spent a lot of time in hospitals and have helped many people in their hour of need. But that's very different to our own situation. Before, I was an official visitor, could keep my distance and leave when I felt the time was right. With my wife, I was back at the hospital every morning, day in and day out. The hospital ruled my life."

→ Family history

Until tragedy struck, the Wollenwebers had led an eventful and enriched life. They were full of enthusiasm and committed to their work and family. Klaus began work as a pastor in Bonn. He'd worked there for 20 years before deciding he wanted a change, a new challenge. An opportunity opened up for him to take on a leading position in the **Union Evangelischer Kirchen** (a union of united and reformed protestant churches) in Berlin. When Klaus took up his position in 1988, it was certainly a challenge because it required him to move back and forth across the border between East and West Berlin. It was his job to establish and foster contact with churches in East Germany.

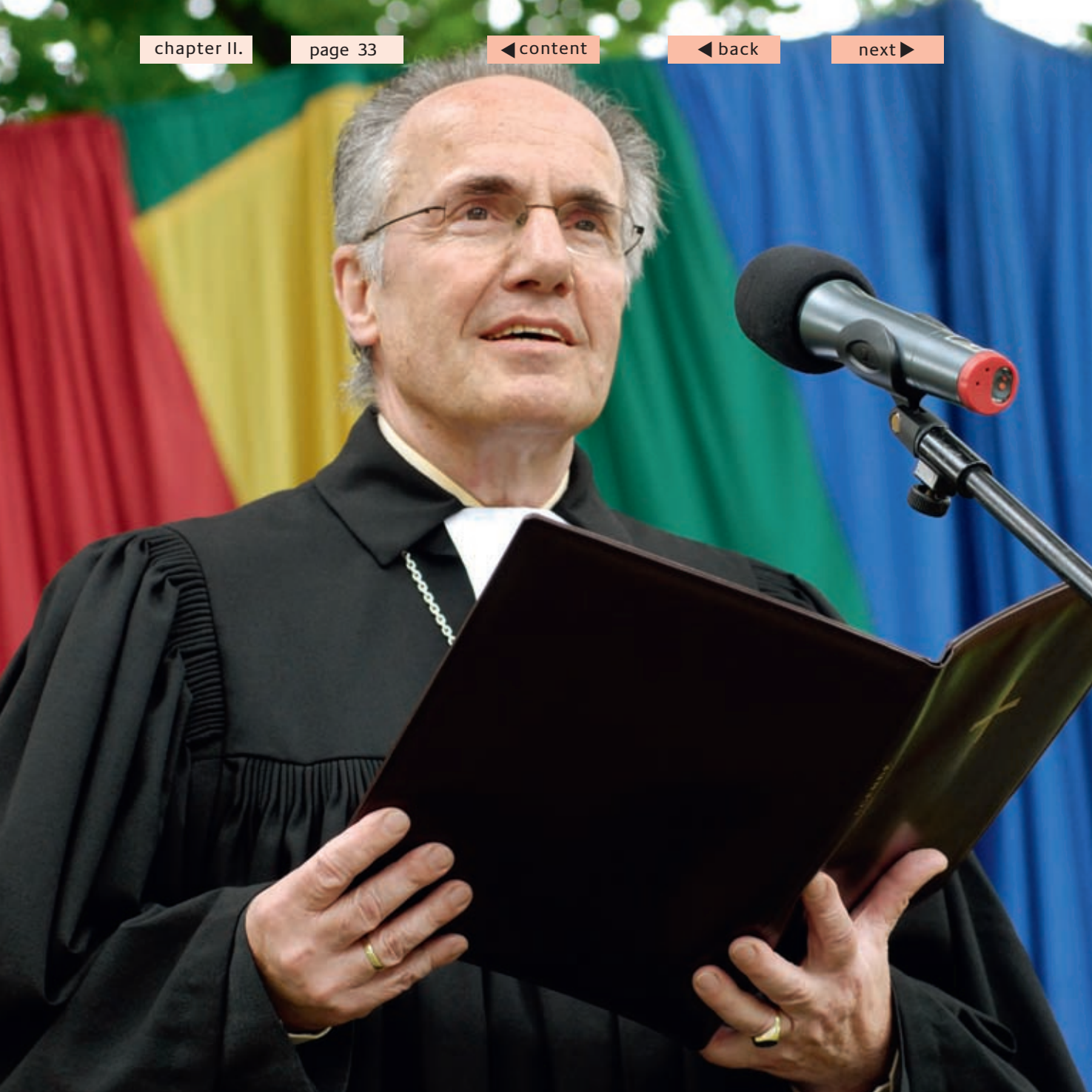
The family found the move to Berlin very difficult. Bonn was and is their home, especially for his wife and the older children. They were forced to leave a huge network of friends behind. But Mrs. Wollenweber was especially determined to rise to the challenge and make a new start. She had worked as a teacher before her children were born and had left the civil service (all teachers in Germany are members of the civil service) when they were small. "We thought one civil servant in the family was enough", she says and explains further: "I took a pay-off. That gave us money for furniture. But sometimes I think if I hadn't, we'd now have two pensions to live on." Once the children had all left home, she picked up her career and worked as a part-time, freelance Montessori specialist and religion teacher.

For Klaus Wollenweber, the move to Berlin proved successful. He became known throughout East Germany and in 1994, following German reunification, was nominated as a candidate to replace the outgoing bishop in Görlitz. He was elected Bishop of Görlitz in autumn 1994, where he set about promoting relations in the divided German-Polish town of Görlitz/Zgorzelec. The main focus of his work was German-Polish reconciliation. Frauke Wollenweber pursued her freelance work in Görlitz, although she retained the family home in Berlin until their youngest daughter had finished school and gone on to university. "We were a bit different. The parents moved out and the children stayed at home", and Klaus and Frauke Wollenweber laugh at the thought.

→ Back to Bonn and a new life

After Klaus Wollenweber retired, he and his wife left Görlitz and moved back to Bonn. They rented a flat in a yellow-fronted house surrounded by a lusciously green, rather idyllic garden. After the strain of the past year and a half, this is where they intend to spend the rest of their days together. Frauke Wollenweber still needs regular treatment and is dependent on her husband's help for many everyday things. But she's alive. She can walk unaided and she can talk again. She and her husband holidayed on the Dutch coast last April, and only yesterday she cooked for the first time since she became ill.

Klaus Wollenweber is slowly getting back to his Church activities and says "it's important for us



both to have space and regain our independence". Frauke Wollenweber wants "to be able to spend a few days alone". Where possible, they'd like everything to be as it was before. But Klaus Wollenweber has experienced things that have changed him. Good things, like the support and love shown by his children and friends. The crisis certainly changed his relationship with his oldest son: he is no longer just his son, but his fully-fledged partner and adviser – something that fills Klaus with pride and gives him an added feeling of confidence. He also took charge of the home and, although he did it because he had no choice, would hate to give it up. He learned to cook all over again, to clean and do the washing, and has a totally different outlook on life. "My wife is teaching me how to add little touches to a meal to make it that bit more special. She has some great ideas. A little parsley and butter on the carrots, for example." "And honey", adds Frauke.

Klaus Wollenweber has reached the end of his story. He has told me about his life, the tragedy that struck and how things developed from then on. There's just one question left: How did you cope with it all, all the fear and frustration?

It all comes down to being a Christian, the belief that you are not alone. You have the support of your family and friends and can talk to others about what you're going through. But most of all, you should never give up hope or lose sight of the good things in life. "Look around you. We're sitting here in the conservatory. We're surrounded by trees and plants, by beautiful flowers. See the amaryllis and the azalea over there, I received them both as presents during the worst period of Frauke's illness. They kept me going. I came out here regularly to water and tend them. I tried to put the hospital and my concerns out of my mind and concentrate on the finer things in life." At this point, I have

to ask myself whether that attitude can be learned, if you have to be of a certain nature to have it or if it might be hereditary. As though he had read my thoughts, Klaus continues: “But you have to work at it. It’s not easy.” Despite all his fears, his experience has had a positive effect: “I don’t take things for granted so much any more. I’m just so pleased to have her back home and that we’re together. I used to think lunch was just another meal. Now, I take delight in anything she cooks for me”. He pauses for a while and then continues: “And something else has happened. I’m able to tell her simply that I’m glad to have her around.”

Klaus and Frauke Wollenweber are planning to hold a bible week in Berlin in the not too distant future. Frauke confides one particular concern in this regard: “I do have a bit of a handicap, though, because my colostomy bag sometimes makes a sort of farting sound. It’s especially embarrassing when everything’s quiet. It often happened in the physiotherapy classes in the clinic. Everyone’s concentrating on what they’re doing and then suddenly my bag blows a raspberry!” Frauke Wollenweber laughs and we all laugh with her.

On a more serious note, Frauke’s medical records state: “Suspected injury to the bowel during the operation.” What went wrong? That is something that the courts will have to decide because the surgeon who carried out the operation still refuses to comment.

[i] Care in the Home: Who does the caring in Germany?

In Germany, most people who need full-time care are still cared for at home. Some 71 percent are cared for by relatives or by mobile nursing agencies in the local area. In a survey carried out by Forsa, a Berlin-based research and analysis institute, 65 percent of male respondents said they would be unable to look after a relative at home and still go to work. This compares with 48 percent of women questioned in the survey and explains the high number of women (73 percent) who perform home-based care.

Care in the home thus mirrors the division of roles in society: men go out to work full-time, while women tend to work part-time in order to reconcile family commitments with work. Another reason for the large number of women who take on home-based care involves demographic change: on average, men have a shorter life expectancy than women. Compared with older men, only a small number of older women in need of full-time care live with a spouse or partner who can look after them (Cornelißen 2005).

This is why it is mostly men who are cared for at home. Women are more likely to go into a residential care home. Looking at the three official care categories that apply in Germany, it is evident that at 80 percent, the number of women in Care Category 3 (full-time care) who are cared for in nursing homes is particularly high, whereas men who need full-time care are usually cared for at home (Cornelißen 2005).

Not only are men and women involved in home-based care to different degrees, they also have different perceptions of what it entails: even though men assume certain responsibilities when it comes to providing care in the home, they are far better at delegating them. Men are also better able to assess how much they can reasonably take on – something women have great problems with (Hammer/Bartjes 2005).

Although providing care in the home seems to be a women's issue, there are men who care for their dependent relatives. Around 27 percent of those who provide home-based care are men.

Further Information

Literature:

- An advisory booklet, **Pflegen zuhause (Home-Based Care)**, provides comprehensive advice and information to help people decide whether home-based care is the right choice for them. It describes what providing full-time care in the home entails and outlines the services available under Germany's statutory long-term care insurance scheme. The booklet (in German only) can be ordered or downloaded on the Federal Ministry for Health website at **www.bmg.bund.de.**

Link:

- **www.bmg.bund.de**
  The Federal Ministry for Health website contains a wealth of information, legislation and publications on the subject of home-based care.

Helga Lukoschat

The Essence of Life and the Lessons of Life

→ Top manager **Carlo Philippi** is a single parent of three boys

A young woman rides past on a bike. She's in her late twenties and is wearing a blue overall. Her dark-blonde pony tail swings in the sunshine. The scene is somewhat surreal because the woman on the bike is riding across the site of Ruhr Oel GmbH in Gelsenkirchen, one of the biggest oil refineries in Germany. It's lunch time and scores of men clad in blue overalls have already passed by on their way to the canteen. There's a lot going on around this huge site with its thousands of pipes, vents, boilers and chimneys. Some of the plant is due for maintenance and has to be completely taken apart in compliance with the five-year safety checks prescribed by law.

"Did you see her?" asks Karl-Heinz Philippi, wanting to make absolutely sure that I have seen the woman on the bike. "Women work here, too, you know. She's a chemicals worker." Well, I think, there can't be that many women employees if the big boss knows them all – he is responsible for a 2,350-strong combined workforce at the three refineries in Gelsenkirchen, Scholven and Horst.

But this is typical of Karl-Heinz Philippi: in everything he does, his highest priority – and he really emphasises this – is people, their safety and their personal development. He has long believed that more women are needed in technical professions.

He is CEO at BP Gelsenkirchen GmbH, a wholly owned subsidiary of BP Petroleum and Refineries. The tradition-steeped refineries in Scholven and Horst, where coal was liquefied to produce petrol and kerosene as early as 1936, belong to Ruhr Oel GmbH, are a joint venture between Deutsche BP AG and the state-owned energy company Petroléos de Venezuela, in which Deutsche BP acquired shares from VEBA Oel AG in 2002.

"At some point, your career comes to an end and the boss no longer needs you. But what no-one can take away from you are your roots, your family."

Karl-Heinz Philippi is known to the world as Carlo – a far more suitable name for this big, broad-shouldered man with a shock of blonde hair, who calls a spade a spade and is not afraid of conflict. The name also suits him because he has entertainer qualities and that certain something that is often attributed to pop stars: he has a physical presence that can fill a room or stage.

The English have a special term for men like Carlo, a term which like so many others is extremely difficult to translate into German. He's a he-man, confident, bursting with energy and anything but modest. He might be a top manager at Deutsche BP AG, but he's a far cry from the stereotypical smart manager in a dark-grey designer-label suit, and not just because he wears jeans, an open-necked shirt and no tie. This particular he-man – someone you could easily imagine living it up in Ibiza surrounded by a harem of adoring young women or living a similar jet-set lifestyle to those pictured in glossy magazines – is a highly dedicated family man. He's the lone parent of three boys aged 15, 17 and 19, and his weekends are spent doing the shopping, having deep and meaningful conversations with his sons, and generally putting the world to rights.

Carlo simply cannot understand how men and women can choose not to have children for the sake of a luxury lifestyle – something he often sees amongst his colleagues and acquaintances. "At some point, your career comes to an end and the boss no longer needs you. But

what no-one can take away from you are your roots, your family." Carlo remarks that the other managers he works with all drive big cars – cars far too big for just one person, so they end up getting themselves a dog to fill up the space. "I drive a big car as well, but", he says with a boyish grin on his face, "the difference is that I actually need the space for my three sons."

Since his wife Annette died of breast cancer four years ago, he has brought up his boys alone. The youngest, Leon, was nine when his mother died. Carlo Philippi knew from the start that he would be a hands-on father, he would not try to pass on the responsibility for his sons' upbringing to others. He made a conscious decision: "I could have made it easier for myself. I could have quickly looked for a suitable partner and left it up to her. But I decided not to. I wanted us to work it out amongst ourselves – just the four of us."

But he didn't want to give up his job either. He had worked so hard for so many years to get where he was. This was the turning point at which he started to understand how difficult it is for women to balance careers with family life. The self-discipline and effort it requires. Not to mention the great satisfaction it gives. For Carlo, having a family is the essence of life.

→ The Philippi heritage

His ideas on family life have their roots in his own family history. His 80 year-old father was born in Rumania and fled to Austria after the Second World War, where he lived in exile and met his wife, a native of Banat in what is now Serbia. The family finally settled in Germany's Ruhr region and took German citizenship. To begin with, they lived a rather simple life. Carlo grew up near the coal mine in Reck-

linghausen and spent his days exploring the site and playing in the shadows of the colliery towers. They lived in a small flat. Little Carlo shared a bedroom with his parents, while his brother slept with their grandmother who had always lived with the family and played a key role in their lives. She was extremely loving and told the most fantastic stories. Carlo used to love sitting on the kitchen table after school, watching his mother and grandmother cook and listening to the stories they told. Even today, he cooks without the aid of a recipe book, preferring to do things the way the female members of the family had demonstrated: with great enthusiasm and skilled improvisation. When his grandmother eventually lost her sight, their relationship became even closer: "On Sunday evenings, we would sit in front of the TV watching our favourite detective series and I'd try to describe what was going on. We were always joined by whichever girl I was going out with at the time."

And what about his father? At first, he pursued his career. He studied chemistry, obtained a doctorate, took a job with VEBA (the very refinery in Gelsenkirchen that employs his son

today) and worked his way up the ladder. The family became quite wealthy and they built their own house. Mother and grandmother, both of whom had no qualifications and did not go out to work, stayed at home and looked after the family. In many ways, the Philippi family history mirrors the economic and integrational successes of post-war West Germany. It also mirrors the gender roles that were prevalent in the 1950s and 1960s.

How often did he see his father? "Only on Sundays, really. He lived for his work." Still, Carlo doesn't feel he missed out because their Sundays were special. His father was an excel-

lent artist, he could draw and explain technical things in an easy-to-understand way, took his time with it. During the week he had the company of his mother and grandmother in the kitchen. It is with great respect that Carlo Philippi speaks of his father, his achievements and his social commitment. His father funds three orphanages in Romania. On his 80th birthday, the whole family visited the orphanages and Carlo promised that he would continue when his father leaves off. He describes his father as a man of integrity, discipline and wisdom.

Carlo studied mechanical engineering in Gelsenkirchen. He had originally wanted to study architecture but couldn't get a place. Still, he enjoyed engineering and, with his usual pragmatism, he decided to finish what he had started and stick with it. His first job was as an assistant to the manager of a medium-sized business. As Carlo learned a year later, his father had prevented him from taking his first job at the Gelsenkirchen refinery because he wanted to avoid people thinking he had only got in because of his contacts. His father had extremely strong values. Carlo was brought up to observe the rules: his god-fearing grandmother and mother had seen to it that he received a disciplined and rather strict upbringing. It has certainly shaped him. One particular story has stayed with him since boyhood. He and his brother had got into a fight while cutting out paper shapes and he "got so angry that I rammed the scissors right into the sofa." When their mother asked them to explain themselves, they stuck together and refused to say who the culprit was.

Their mother responded by telling them that she refused to live with such disobedient children. She put them on their scooters, tied up their small rucksacks and told them to go. The two boys did as they were told and set off. They headed for the nursery school because they thought they had a realistic chance of being allowed to stay there for the night. Later, their mother arrived to collect them, tears streaming down her face. The experience taught him an important lesson: when the going gets tough, "you have to pick the right path".

→ **His life's work**

Philippi has worked hard for his success. His engineering degree wasn't enough. While working in his second job as an assistant to the works manager at VEBA Oel AG, he trained as a safety engineer and studied industrial engineering by attending night school at Bochum University. He used his degree in industrial engineering as a stepping stone, took on a range of project manager jobs and eventually ended up in purchasing. After a strategically important move to VEBA AG (now E.ON AG), he returned to VEBA Oel AG in 1994 as chief buyer. In 2000, he was offered the position of CEO at BP Gelsenkirchen GmbH.

In recent years, Carlo's greatest challenge has been to integrate VEBA structures, including the principle of worker participation, into BP's Anglo-Saxon business culture. The two worlds clashed as regards language and culture, and his main task was to persuade the employee representative committee that it could trust the new management.

He still has problems with the working language because he is unable to express himself as well in English as he can in German. All three of his sons speak very good English – the middle one has just returned from boarding school in England – and they cringe when they hear him talking to his English-speaking colleagues on the phone. They all refused to give him English lessons at the kitchen table, saying he should find himself a qualified teacher.

Carlo is immensely proud of 'his' refinery. They are currently in the process of installing a brand new furnace to replace an outdated one. The entire operation involves costs of about €60 million and has been planned with military precision: to ensure as little downtime as possible it will be conducted on a 'live patient', i.e. while production continues. His pride and rather boyish pleasure in describing this technical feat is plain to see. Once the new installation is fully operational, there'll be a big celebration on site and scores of high-profile politicians will be invited to attend.

Carlo Philippi speaks animatedly about the newly designed office building. In contrast to the former interior design with its very dreary browns and greys, the building now sports bright, light-filled offices of almost puritan simplicity. Philippi is particularly proud of what he calls the 'dialogue room', a semi-circular room that was once a disused terrace on which small shrubs and birch trees had begun to sprout. In the middle of the expensive parquet flooring stand four symmetrically placed red leather chairs, each flanked by free-standing vases filled with dried grasses. A set of three steps leads up to a glass conference table between two white sideboards. It all looks a bit 'Feng Shui', grins Carlo, but he thinks the room is a really good idea: "You know, when negotiations get tough and things have got bogged down, it helps to move into another room." And perhaps the room, intentionally or otherwise, provides a pleasant contrast to the endless labyrinth of pipes and boilers outside, where the black crude oil bubbles and flows all day and all night.

Carlo is a good negotiator. When asked what lies behind his success, he says he is a good listener and has a good sense of character. Then there is his ability to deal with conflict. "I love getting in there feet first. I never shy away from conflict, ever. I go in willingly because it furthers the cause." But most important of all, he likes dealing with people. "What I really enjoy is meeting other people, thrashing things out with them and learning from them."

This is the attitude he takes with his boys. The members of the Philippi household talk to one another, have heated discussions and often argue their points with 'brutal honesty'. It all

has a positive effect, though. Family disputes usually take place over a lazy brunch on Saturdays, at the kitchen or dining table, or more recently in their new sauna. In what he calls a 'huge project', Carlo has also had the garden redesigned. The original idea was just to add a sauna, but then he caved in to the boys' demands and put in a whirlpool as well. He's glad he did, though, because the sauna and pool have become a great place for them all to meet up and talk. Philippi needs the exchange with his family and thrives on his sons' company, especially that of his youngest. In the past, when his wife was still alive, he often climbed into bed with the boys to tell them stories he had made up himself. More often than not, after a long day at the refinery, he would fall asleep. His family is his source of energy, a vital resource that sees him through the day and motivates him to carry on. "For me, having a family is the essence of life, what life is all about."

Whatever he does, he does not for himself – though his boys refuse to believe him – but for others. "My children always laugh when I say, hey, I'm not doing this for my own benefit. I'm doing it for you and I hope you appreciate it." Carlo explains that he sees this as his job. Although he has achieved success, wealth and a certain status, that's not what life is about.

It is perhaps this attitude that sets Carlo Philippi apart: he can hold his own with the 'my car, my house, my yacht' set and, as anyone who has ever seen him at a business meeting will know, is a born leader of the pack – an alpha dog. Even so, he can readily distance himself from the power and the status symbols, they are not his sole purpose in life. "If you find your vocation, it means you have responded to your calling and have something to give. That's what life is all about, responding to needs and getting things done. Whether you work with your hands or your mind, what you do must be satisfying, you should take pleasure in doing it."

→ The Philippi boys

Philippi speaks in a kind of loving yet direct way about his sons. Daniel, the eldest, has just finished his **Abitur** (university entrance qualifications) and has left school. He had no problems at school. He learned things easily and

"Finding your vocation means responding to your calling. That's what life is all about, responding to needs and getting things done."

quickly – like his second brother, he is highly intelligent. In family disputes, Daniel always disagrees with his father and has developed a rather oppositional, dominant attitude. He's very like his father in that they are both forceful types. At 19, Daniel is trying to decide whether to travel around the world and then set up a diving school in the Caribbean or go to university.

The middle boy, Julian, went to boarding school in England when he was 15. While there, he toyed with the idea of staying on to go to one of the elite universities. Although his father didn't like the idea, he kept it to himself and asked the boys to thrash it out between themselves. His brothers eventually persuaded Julian to return to Germany for the time being. Julian is very independent, extremely talented language-wise and often takes himself off to explore some city or another. He's the family negotiator, always trying to achieve balance and harmony. He can imagine having a family one day and would like six, four or at least two children – he thinks the middle child (which he is) has a tough time.

Leon, the youngest, is having a few problems at school and there have already been a few letters sent home to his father. "But the boy has incredible social skills." When Leon's grandfather was taken into hospital with cancer of the colon, the 15 year-old went to his grandmother's home every evening and stayed with her so she wouldn't be alone. He did it on his own initiative because he felt he should. He was nine when his mother died and had great difficulties in dealing with the situation. His father thinks it was the most difficult thing he has ever had to deal with. Leon had just started grammar school, everything was strange and he hardly knew anyone. Carlo was particularly attentive to Leon's needs and tried to "give him a hand up". He is constantly amazed by the boy's intelligence and logic. A little while ago, they were tending his wife's grave and Leon told him that he had "broken off all di-

rect communication" with God. He couldn't identify with a God that was so almighty, that had the power to decide everything and take his mother away from him. So he had stopped communicating with God and now spoke directly to his mother – "she can pass things on to God for me."

→ Phases in a partnership

Life hasn't always been plain sailing for Carlo Philippi. His wife Annette left him before she died. She had told no-one of her illness: "She wanted to deal with it alone." Philippi thinks the separation was part of the process and was her way of taking responsibility for dealing with it.

Annette Philippi had studied pharmacy, but she badly wanted to start a family and gave her studies up. She retained her financial independence, was extremely self-confident and oversaw her parents' properties. This gave her "the freedom to find her own role". The couple had never adopted the traditional roles of husband and wife. At the weekends, Carlo had always done the shopping and cooked while his wife was at her desk. They had been married for 22 years and, with the help of a therapist, had managed to overcome a crisis in their relationship about half-way through. As the children got older, Annette began to take an interest in natural medicine and homeopathy. She became disenchanted with Carlo's world, the world of "tough and pushy managers". Other things were more important. She was tired of playing "leading lady" and didn't want to attend social events.

Nevertheless, in 2000 she advised Carlo to take the position of CEO. She was wise enough to realise that having worked so hard and so long to get there it was an offer he could not refuse. "Somewhere along the way, we grew apart", says Carlo, but even so, the separation still came as a shock to him.

He is determined to teach his sons that valuing your partner and seeing them as an absolute equal is all important. He himself had learned that being a couple constitutes two individuals who need the right balance between having their own space and sharing common interests. "They should both lead their own lives, but they must overlap in the right places."

Now, when he talks to his boys about the value of a partnership, he tries to explain that there are different phases in life. “It’s not the end of the world if a partnership ends on a fair and amicable basis.” When he and his wife tried to tell their children about their pending separation, the boys were very matter of fact about it all – although they expressed things differently on account of their very different temperaments. This is what makes Carlo Philippi confident that his boys will find their way in life, develop their “own ways of coping”. And he looks forward to being there to help them on their way.

→ The challenges ahead

How does Carlo think things will develop as regards the division of roles between women and men? He’s in two minds, he says. He wonders whether women are taking the right path in adopting their modern roles and acting the way they do, or whether they are straying too far down the ‘career comes first’ road. But then again, the same applies to men in that they give too little thought to the value attached to having a family and to the stability it provides. “If society doesn’t change and if the state fails to introduce new taxation schemes, provide grants, set up nursery schools and day-care facilities, then the future will be very grim indeed.” He believes flexibility is the key, for both sides, for men and women, because it is the only way to achieve a better balance. But looking at the realities of the people he comes across in his immediate world, top manager Carlo Philippi has no pat answer as to what constitutes a better work-life balance, one that takes in the differing needs of women and men. When it comes to employers and their role in creating the conditions to allow better reconciliation between work and family life, he takes a hard line: they should “allow

employees a time-out period to look after their small children and give parents the option to work reduced hours – most companies only pay lip service to these issues." He continues, "Do you really believe I would have had the career I've had if I had announced back then that I was going to take time off to look after my children?"

He thinks employers have grown wise to the fact that acknowledging the need for work-life balance makes a good impression. "That may sound cynical, but some businesses only do so in the belief that it encourages more women to buy shares in their company." His own company, BP, has implemented a range of measures. But, he says, it won't do any good for four or five companies to take the matter seriously and introduce new schemes if the conditions in the rest of society go unchanged.

Carlo thinks it is vital for business to employ more women in different positions. They add a different perspective and reshape the corporate culture. "There's something missing in a completely male working environment." He especially wants to encourage young women to embrace apprenticeships and careers in technical professions. He is so committed to the cause that he volunteered as a mentor in BP's mentoring programme for its young women recruits.

→ Visions for the future

The foyer of the company headquarters boasts a sculpture done by an artist friend of Carlo Philippi. What seem like dozens of tubular silver rods hang from the ceiling. Above and below, circular mirrors set into the ceiling and floor reflect the glistening structure. If you stand inside the circle, the reflections in the mirror create the impression of countless sil-

ver elements and your movement sets the rods in motion, causing them to sparkle as they sway in the beams of light projected from the spiral of spotlights embedded in the floor. This triggers a **Schöpfungsstrom** (Creative Flow), the name the artist gave his sculpture. Carlo's friend sketched out the idea for the sculpture in the sand one summer evening as they sat on a beach on the island of Sylt. It befits Philippi's pragmatic nature that he used heat exchanger pipes from the refinery for the tubular elements of the sculpture. His apprentices sanded and polished them to perfection.

While Philippi loves his job, he can imagine doing something very different at a later date. When the time is right, "I'll press the reset button". It would have to be something that allows him to use his creative streak, design or perhaps interior design, he says. The amount of money wasted by people with poor taste really annoys him.

He has also thought of setting up as a counsellor. "No, as a life consultant", he corrects himself, tongue in cheek. It sounds so much better.

"When I think of all the things I've experienced in my job and in my life, I'd like to pass it on to others. The time spent looking after my children has taught me an awful lot. It's kept me young in mind and in spirit."

For some time now, Carlo has had a new woman in his life. They met on holiday. She lives in Munich and has two adolescent sons. She's having problems with the older boy and while Carlo refuses to step into the father role, he gives the boy a good talking to when he feels it necessary. His new partner is always amazed by the Philippi family, their intensive relationships, how they talk things through, argue

"The time spent looking after my children has taught me a lot. It's kept me young in mind and in spirit."

with one another and have such great fun together. "Slowly but surely, there's a relationship developing between my boys and hers. We visit each others' homes and on occasion, I can be found at the baker's buying about twenty bread rolls. Add a few friends and girlfriends, and we've got at least ten kids at the table. I love it!", says Philippi with a grin that shows he wouldn't miss it for all the world.

[i] Single Fathers in Germany

According to a micro-census conducted in 2005, single mothers and fathers belong to one of the fastest growing groups in society. Between 1991 and 2004, the number of single fathers rose to 375,000 (almost a 70 percent increase).

The growing number of lone parents is largely due to the high divorce rates. The largest group among single parents are divorcees – 40 percent of single mothers, 43 percent of single fathers. (Federal Statistical Office, 2006).

Given their situation, single parents find it particularly difficult to reconcile family and work commitments. Some 75 percent of single fathers and 55.8 percent of single mothers have jobs.

Single fathers tend to look after older children who have already reached school age. Only four percent of single fathers have children under six living with them, while 17 percent live with children in the 10 to 18 age group (ibid. 2006).

In Germany, lone parents are particularly dependent on welfare benefits: 18.2 percent of single fathers and 24.9 percent of single mothers receive unemployment benefit (ibid. 2006).

Further Information

Literature:

- Germany's **Seventh Families Report** takes an in-depth look at the role of fathers, perceptions of fatherhood and the consequences of divorce (p. 110 ff in the full-length German version). The report is available for download on the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth website. An English-language summary is available at: http://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/generator/RedaktionBMFSFJ/Abteilung2/Pdf-Anlagen/familienbericht-englisch.

- The publication section of the Ministry's website contains a brochure **Allein erziehend – Tipps und Informationen (Tips and Information for Single Parents)** published by the **Bundesverband allein erziehender Mütter und Väter e.V. (German Association of Single Parents)**. The brochure contains information on issues ranging from the birth of a child, balancing work with family life and statutory entitlements such as parental benefit and parental leave.

- In **Vaterschaft im Wandel (The Changing Roles of Fatherhood)** the authors Mechthild Bereswill, Kirsten Scheiwe and Anja Wolde look at the role of fathers in transition, including after separation and divorce. Published in 2006 by Juventa Verlag, the book is not available in English.

Links:

- **www.vamv.de**
  The German Association of Single Parents (VaMV) was founded in 1967. It was originally a network for single mothers but has since evolved into a national lobby group representing all single parents. The website provides comprehensive information, advice and tips on a wide range of issues such as sole parenting, orphans and widows.

- **www.aktiv-fuer-kinder.de**
  Fathers increasingly obtain the advice, help and information they need from the growing number of fathers' networks. **The Väterzentrum** (fathers' centre) set up by the **Berliner Verein Mannege e.V.** is one of the most recent to emerge.


KLAVIERSPIELEN

Kathrin Walther

Award-Winning Dad

→ **Winfried Growe** won an award in recognition of his unusual lifestyle

The new grass that signals spring sprouts in the meadows and a partridge struts across a freshly ploughed field. There's an air of calm about the place. Tucked away in the Westphalian countryside, somewhere between Bielefeld and Münster, lies a village with a population of about 6,000. The village is home to none other than Germany's Father of the Year 2006. Just to the left of the tractor dealer's showrooms, a narrow lane winds past brick-faced houses set in a sea of colourful flower beds. Right at the end, almost hidden by thick green shrubbery, stands the home of Winfried Growe, his wife Mechthild Freitag-Growe and their two daughters, Jessica and Isabel.

The 41-year-old machinist has worked for the past 20 years on the assembly line at a factory about 10 kilometres from where he lives. The company has a 500-strong workforce and produces mobile homes and caravans. Rather than being assigned to a specific point on the assembly line and doing the same job day in day out, Winfried Growe acts as a stand-in for colleagues who are on holiday or sick leave. He works wherever he is needed and "does something different every day". There's never a dull moment: "Work at the factory is quite varied. We work with wood, gas, electricity – there's a bit of everything." He enjoys what he does and wants to stay in his job. "I get on with everyone here, it's close to home and the work is enjoyable."

→ Shared responsibilities

Life appears to be treating Winfried Growe well. As he sits on the sofa in the spacious living room with its panorama window overlooking the garden, the strong and able machinist seems happy with his lot. The children will go out into the garden to play when they get

"It's not that I had always seen myself staying home to look after the kids. But I don't have a problem with it. It came up while we were talking and we agreed to go for it."

home from school. The youngest, Isabel, started school last year. Her older sister Jessica is now in the third grade.

It's Wednesday and Winfried Growe is at home. He tidies the house, cooks lunch for his daughters and oversees their afternoon programme of riding, piano lessons and homework. He's at home with the kids three days a week and his wife takes over on the other two. "We didn't want them to grow up as latch-key kids. We wanted someone to be there for them when they get home from school", Growe explains. That's how he grew up – he was the youngest of six children and the family lived on a farm. There was always someone there and there was a warm meal on the table every lunchtime. Although life on the farm is now a thing of the past, Winfried wants his children to have what he had.

When their first child was on the way, Winfried and his wife started to think about childcare arrangements. His wife had just qualified as a chartered accountant, so it was an awkward time for her to take time out. "So", Winfried Growe recalls, "we came to the conclusion that it would be better if I took parental leave because it was easier for me to take a break from my job".

→ How people reacted

It was an unusual decision, even more so nine years ago. But as Growe explains in his calm and confident manner, it was "something that just came about". "It's not that I had always seen myself staying home to look after the kids. But still, I don't have a problem with it. It came up while we were talking and we agreed to try it out." This is the relaxed attitude he took when he went to talk to his boss and apply for parental leave. And he was just as matter-of-fact about

telling his friends and colleagues in the voluntary fire brigade, the football team and at their regular games nights down at the pub that he was planning to stay at home to look after the new baby.

So how did they react? It depended: his boss had no objections and approved it there and then. His friends and colleagues were rather more sceptical. “Some said ‘lucky you, getting to stay and home and not going to work’. Others asked me if I was crazy. Told me not to do it, it would only cause trouble.” Older people seemed especially irritated at the news, including Winfried’s mother, who remarked: “Is that really the right thing to do? It’s usually the man who goes to work. You should think again.” But Winfried kept his cool, stood by his decision and got on with it. “Trying to talk things through and convince people wouldn’t have got me anywhere. Everyone’s entitled to their opinion.”

→ The challenges of parenthood

Daughter Jessica was born in April 1998. Isabel came along two years later. Mechthild Freitag-Growe returned to work immediately following her statutory period of maternity leave. Her husband took over the household. He got up every night to see to the baby, changed nappies, did the housework, took the baby to swimming classes and to playgroup. He read lots of parenting books and grew into his new role just as mothers do. The children never thought

anything of it, the only ones who seemed to have a problem were other grown-ups – other mothers, for example. They'd be sitting eating breakfast with the kids at the local playgroup and they'd suddenly have a man in their midst. It took some getting used to. They all needed time to adjust. "For me, it was the first time I had ever been in that kind of situation", Winfried recalls. He didn't have to sit down with them all and he could have chosen to stay at home altogether. "But you do things for your kids to make sure they have contact with others their own age. After a while, everything became routine and it was really quite enjoyable."

So with a certain amount of persistence, his excellent fathering skills and his friendly composure, Winfried Growe rose to the many challenges he faced. Still, it wasn't always easy.

As his daughters got bigger and brought friends home, the first thing their friends asked was: "Where's your mum?" But the more matter-of-fact they were about it, the easier it was for people to accept the situation. After all, Winfried's own mother had long come to see the benefits of her youngest son's lifestyle. She now thinks that by both going to work and both having time with the children, he and his wife have found a good solution.

→ Tried and tested

Jessica and Isabel rely as much on their dad as they do on their mum. Both parents are equally able to put the girls to bed and comfort them when they're upset. Other parents often say things like: "I think what you're doing is great!" But hardly anyone has followed Winfried Growe's example. Even friends and acquaintances who think he made the right decision live out the more traditional role model: they go to work full-time while their wives stay at home or work part-time. Winfried says that people often complain that they don't have enough time with their children, but when it comes up in conversation they usually counter with the argument that their employers would never agree to such an arrangement. He knows of only two other fathers in the entire village who have taken over a large share of the responsibility for looking after their families. One is his immediate neighbour, who shares the job of caring for their son with his wife.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Life in the village is predictable. The Growes know a lot of people. About 70 percent of Winfried's school friends still live there. He has played football with many of them down at the local club for years. He has been a member of the voluntary fire brigade for 25 years and has met with former school mates for regular games evenings for about the past 20 years. Soon, he and five other men will be flying to Majorca for the weekend, all paid for from the proceeds of the winnings they collect on their games nights.

Winfried Growe has not regretted his decision to stay at home with the kids, quite the contrary. "You're really involved in their development. You don't have to keep asking stupid questions when you go to parents' evenings." But while he would recommend that all young parents stay in touch with their jobs and with their families, he is not a missionary. He wouldn't want to talk anyone into it. Each family must decide for themselves. "People should be given the opportunity to have it all. Public childcare should be available for babies from three months of age. And, at the other end of the extreme, full-time mothers must be accepted and respected.

"You have to remain flexible when approaching your employer. If you're willing to be flexible, then they will be too."

Industry and business must provide jobs that allow people to organise things the way they see fit."

Winfried and his employer came up with a solution that suited everyone. After three years of being at home on childrearing leave, the walls began to cave in on him. He and his wife set about looking for a new arrangement. Winfried first thought about working part-time for four hours a day, but his boss couldn't accommodate him that way. It took six months to reach agreement on the arrangement they have now: Winfried works Mondays and Tuesdays, and his wife works Wednesdays to Fridays. It has proven to be the best solution, because the clear division as to who works which days allows them both to "concentrate on their jobs when they're at work". Everyone is happy with the new ar-

rangement and it didn't take much to reach an agreement: "You have to remain flexible when approaching your employer. If you're willing to be flexible, then they will be too." For example, if needs arise at the factory, Winfried will work Thursday and his wife Monday. Flexibility pays off in more ways than one.

→ The unusual is now the norm

Today, everything is running according to plan. Well nearly everything. Although it's Wednesday and dad was at home as usual, there was no meal on the table when the girls got home from school. He hadn't had time to cook anything. Isabel says it doesn't matter, gives her father a hug, tells him about her day and then listens to the conversation for a while. Jessica, the older daughter, arrives home a little later. She had a maths test today and yes, the sums were exactly the same as those she'd practised with her dad yesterday. The girls are getting hungry and set about making their own lunch. They're making pancakes. "Dad, one egg or two?" comes a voice from the kitchen. "One egg will do." "But that's no good," comes the reply: how can they share beating one egg? "One beats the egg, the other adds the flour. OK?" says dad, brokering a compromise. What at first appears to be pure improvisation soon turns into a demonstration of well-practised cooking skills. The pancakes are soon sizzling in the frying pan. This is exactly how Winfried Growe wants to see his children grow up: in the security of a caring family, yet able to fend for themselves. He recalls, "On the farm, it was perfectly normal for the kids to help out. There was always something that needed doing and you just sort of grew up as you got on with it all".

Of course, his father was always around. He wasn't involved in looking after the children or the household, those roles were clearly divided, but if his children had a problem they could go

to him at any time. “We’d help dad out and be able to talk to him at the same time. He would drive the tractor and we’d ride along with him.” Sometimes they’d be out in the fields with their father all afternoon. Winfried’s life on the farm has shaped his own ideas about family life and also his ambitions for the future. “My father always said that he would like to see us own our own homes.” So for Winfried Growe, it was clear from very early on that some day he would own a house nearby.

Large cities are not for him, they are “too crowded”, he says. From an early age, he planned to build his own house, saved money, worked overtime and went without holidays. It took him a year to build the house: he completed their spacious home in 1997, shortly before the birth of his first daughter. And then some time later, when browsing through the regional newspaper after breakfast one morning, Winfried Growe looked up, grinned at his wife and said, “Hey, they’re looking for me!” A Gütersloh-based business, Mestemacher GmbH, was looking for nominations for its new Father of the Year award, complete with a cash prize of €5,000. Without hesitation, Winfried sent in his application – and won. The jury selected the machinist who had taken three years off work to look after his two daughters full-time. The whole family attended the award ceremony in Berlin. It was a special moment as they walked past the queue of people waiting to visit the Reichstag, Germany’s houses of parliament. Later, up on the Reichstag’s glass-domed roof, the two girls brimmed with pride at the fact that their dad had been declared Father of the Year 2006. But despite the occasion, they don’t really see their father being there for them as anything special: he’s there when they come home, he cooks their meals and helps them with their homework. It’s all part of everyday life. A life they, the girls and their parents, enjoy very much.

[i] German Business and Father-Focused Employment Policy

Many businesses in Germany have introduced family-friendly working arrangements, but in the majority of cases they fail to focus on fathers' needs. One of the few businesses that does, is Commerzbank with its unique scheme to support men who want to play an active role in caring for their families.

Employee Rainer Posselt (37) has taken advantage of the scheme. Six years ago, when he took what was then called childrearing leave, he certainly stood out from the crowd. Rainer, a team leader in the bank's central administration department, opted to work a 19-hour week for a fixed period of 18 months. He shared responsibility for looking after their son with his wife. "It was unusual for a man at the time. But my supervisor supported me and we came to a mutually acceptable arrangement", says Rainer, looking back. He carried on in his supervisory role while working part-time and has since switched to a 30-hour working week. Just recently, he took up a specialist position and now works on Commerzbank's environmental programme.

He has become something of a role model for other fathers at the bank who also want to be there for their children. And for the past two years, Rainer Posselt has been an active member of an employees network, Fokus Väter (Focus on Fathers), in which dedicated fathers have joined forces to exchange views and experience with others in the same position and to promote openness and acceptance within the company.

The initiative had management backing from the outset. "We started to talk about fathers' needs over ten years ago", explains Barbara David, a personnel officer responsible for diversity in the workforce. One of the first things they did was to conduct a survey of all fathers who worked at the bank. The fathers' network was sparked by the survey.

So far, the Commerzbank scheme is unique in Germany. So why does the bank do so much for fathers? "We think that family-friendly working arrangements benefit the company. We can only achieve success if we spark employees' enthusiasm."

Barbara Davis is convinced that the bank can only stand to profit from the diverse lifestyles and experience of its large workforce. “Our experience has shown that heterogeneous teams are far more successful than homogeneous ones.”

The Commerzbank fathers’ survey highlighted the fact that many men want to be hands-on fathers. But although the bank offers a broad-based package of family-friendly arrangements, there are still some fathers who come up against criticism from colleagues. Greater acceptance is needed for fathers who reduce their working hours to look after their families. The bank is particularly interested in winning over supervisors and managers to the cause. Barbara David is a firm believer in the ‘phased’ approach and has already planned the next step in the procedure: a brochure will be published in autumn 2007, portraying a number of hands-on fathers who work at Commerzbank.

Further Information

Literature:

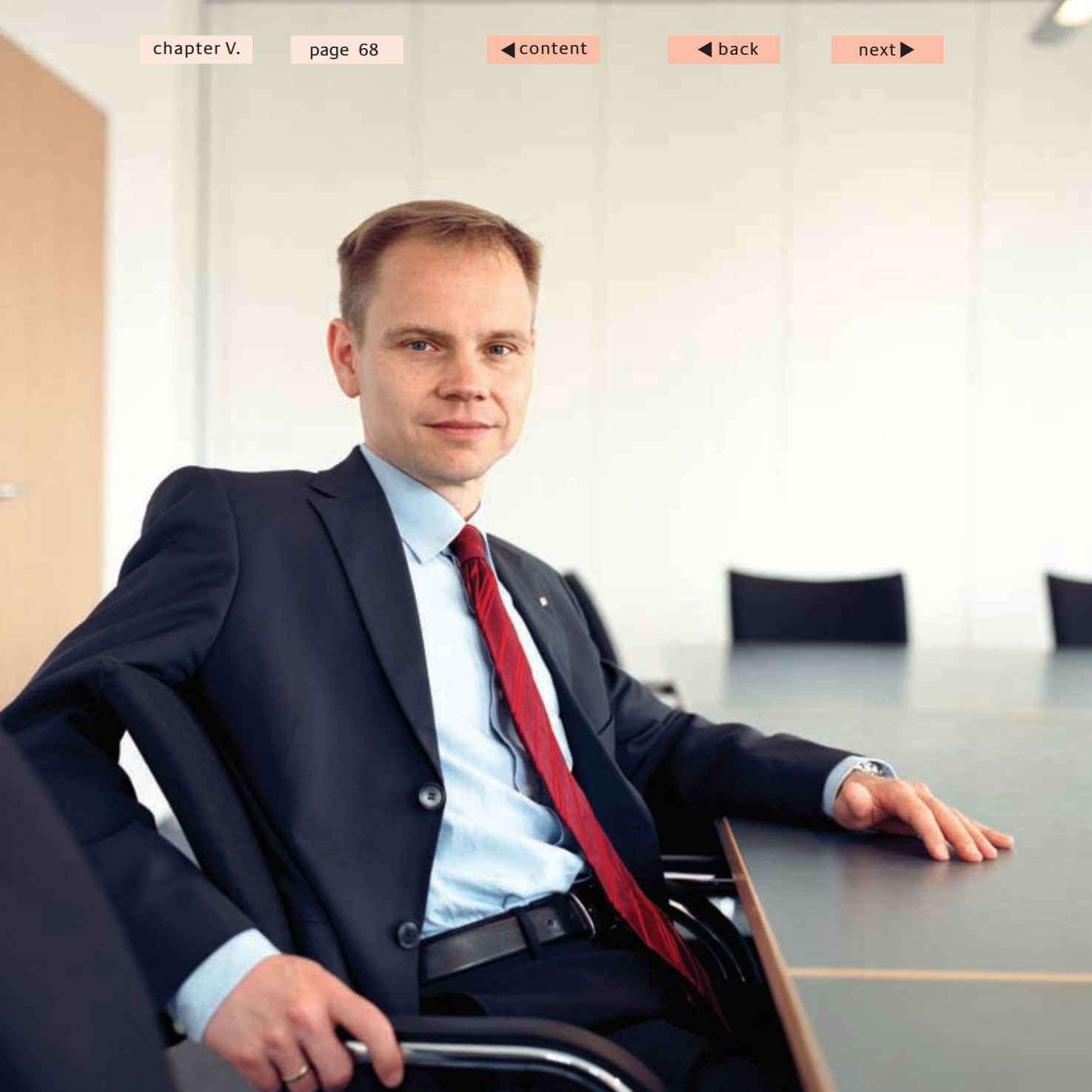
- Thomas Gesterkamp's book, **Die neuen Väter zwischen Kind und Karriere (New Fathers between Kids and Career)**, provides answers as to how men can balance careers with family life. The book was published in 2007 by the Herder Verlag and is not available in English.

- **Väterfreundliche Maßnahmen im Unternehmen (Father-Friendly Work Arrangements in German Business)**, a leaflet issued by Prognos AG – a Berlin-based think tank – contains numerous best practice models from companies that have introduced father-friendly work arrangements. The report (in German only) is available for download at **www.vaeter-und-karriere.de**.

Links:

- **www.commerzbank.de/karriere/diversity**
  Follow this link to the German-language section of the website to find out more about the Commerzbank fathers' network. Click on the English link for an English-language summary of the bank's diversity policy.

- **www.vaeter-und-karriere.de**
  This website (German-language only) offers a wide range of information and support for fathers and businesses looking to promote father-friendly human resources policy. This EU-funded project targets men in North Rhine-Westphalia and provides practical instruments to promote and support fathers in their demand for family-friendly working arrangements.



Nina Bessing

Double Income – Two Kids

→ **Jürgen Niemann** is the male half of a dual career couple

Jürgen Niemann gives me a hearty welcome and shows me to a seat in his posh corner office on Berlin's Potsdamer Platz. The room features a panorama view of the city and is furnished in a practical yet representational style. Only the photos of children detract from the serious, business-like atmosphere: there are the typical family portraits of loved ones all dressed up and smiling for the photographer, and there are holiday snaps – one showing two children clad only in their 'birthday suits' having a wonderful time and grinning broadly at the camera.

Jürgen Niemann is the head of human resources at DB Station&Service AG, a subsidiary of Deutsche Bahn AG (the German railway) with 5,000 employees and an annual turnover of €850 million. The company is responsible for all stations and stopping points in the Deutsche Bahn railway network and for select areas of land in the vicinity of railways stations. DB Station&Service oversees the operation and maintenance of railways stations and stopping points, and is also responsible for the management of local staff.

Top manager Niemann is one half of a couple whose lifestyle is still rather unusual in Germany and which often sparks heated debate. The Niemanns are a dual career couple. Jürgen and his wife both work in upper management at Deutsche Bahn. This means huge responsibility, irregular working hours and business trips that take them both away from home. Studies have shown that compared with, say, those in France, couples in Germany in which both the wife and the husband have management positions are more likely to decide not to have children. The Niemanns are different. Both had always wanted both: they wanted children and responsible jobs.

"I'm quite conservative in this regard: children need both their parents, their father and their mother. Even if their parents aren't always around, they still need them."

Julius (7) and Clara (8) are looked after during the day by two childminders who are very flexible and have become an integral part of the family. "But this doesn't mean that we have delegated responsibility for the children and their development", says the experienced father. "I'm quite conservative in this regard: children need both their parents, their father and their mother. Even if their parents aren't always around, they still need them."

→ Work-life balance: All a question of management

His attitude towards children shines through in Jürgen Niemann's management style. He believes work-life balance is important, not least in terms of efficiency. He needs motivated, enthusiastic workers. Deutsche Bahn cannot afford to lose experienced service staff just because they start a family. This has given rise to the growing company culture of offering employees a wide range of flexible working arrangements and a period of parental leave to suit their situations and lifestyles.

And there is something else he finds important: "Even when a male employee, manager or otherwise, applies for parental leave, his application is met with approval".

I ask him if he also believes that reduced working hours are possible in management echelons. “Yes”, comes the answer without hesitation. “I think it’s possible, although it is probably difficult to organise because managers are always expected to be readily available and physically present. Still, it is possible.” And Deutsche Bahn has quite a few managers who clearly demonstrate that it can be done.

Jürgen Niemann is a railway man through and through. It’s evident when he says, “I thrive on dealing with like-minded colleagues. We pull together. I also tackle problems head on and know why I’m doing it. I can shape things”, he explains. “But one shouldn’t over-estimate one’s own abilities. What I do depends on the performance of many colleagues working out there, dealing directly with customers. I’ll still have played my part, though.” After completing his studies, a period in work placement and various jobs with different employers, Niemann joined Deutsche Bahn in 1995. He has held several different positions with his current employer, all to do with human resources development and strategy. This includes managing the Deutsche Bahn academy.

→ Dual career couples and the challenges they face

In meeting the challenges of a top management position while bringing up two small children, Jürgen Niemann has set his priorities. He has little time for hobbies and other activities beyond that spent at work and with the family. He tries to fit in a regular morning run and wants to keep fit so he can continue to run marathons, his greatest passion. His eldest child, Clara, sometimes puts on her rollerblades and accompanies her father on his early-morning run.

The times when he and his wife have any spare time, either together or on their own, are rare. If duty isn't calling, then the children certainly are. Work and hobbies, says Jürgen, are closely interwoven. He sees everything else as a set of obligations that have to be fulfilled. Yet he doesn't complain. "I think it's probably a good thing that I'm the type of person who just gets on with things. My wife and I understand each other without the need for many words. There are many overlaps – we complement one another in many ways."

I've relaxed and made myself comfortable on the big black leather sofa in Jürgen's office. Even though I'm so fascinated by the resoluteness and energy he radiates, I have to ask again about the challenges that his chosen lifestyle presents. Where's the catch?

For Jürgen Niemann, the challenges lie largely in everyday organisation. It can happen that both parents have to leave the house at 5.30 am to catch a train. Their appointments sometimes clash. Issues such as how the kids will get to school and who can get home on time tonight are just part of everyday life. So it's become the norm for father and mother to coordinate their diaries once a week. This includes work appointments. "I have a free hand in arranging some of my business appointments and I take care to ensure that they don't coincide with family commitments".

Then he mentions the words tolerance and frustration, something I've been waiting to hear him say, something that sooner or later is said by most fathers who are trying to balance their careers with their family commitments. Jürgen Niemann knows this feeling all too well. Sometimes the timing goes astray: "You just have to try and work with colleagues, staff and business partners to avoid it happening. Although you make sure it remains the exception rather than making it the rule, you have to put the children first in some ways."

I can only say that Deutsche Bahn has obviously adopted the right corporate culture. As Jürgen explains, if you say, "Sorry, I had to take the kids to school, it's usually accepted without another word." Anyone asking him how people have reacted to his working arrangements will receive a very direct answer: "It's not about whether

"When I'm seeing to the kids in the evenings, I sometimes find it hard to switch off. But it's important to give them your full attention when you're with them. They notice straight away if your mind wanders."

other people accept it, but whether my children accept it. You have to stay on the ball, keep an eye on them. Are they missing out on anything? Are they developing the way you want them to? Are they happy? If I had ever had the feeling that something wasn't right, then we would have had to think again. But the situation has never arisen. Quite the contrary, they're coming on in leaps and bounds."

The committed railway employee suddenly looks pensive: "When I'm seeing to the kids in the evenings, I sometimes find it hard to switch off. But it's important to give them your full attention when you're with them. They notice straight away if your mind wanders."

→ The right to choose

When asked whether he sometimes compares himself with men whose wives stay at home to look after the children, he laughs: "The 'back office' at home can sometimes feel like a prison. Being at home all day and being told how to behave within your own four walls because your wife or husband, whoever rules the roost and lays down the law, insists that you fill the dishwasher a certain way. I always have the option of saying, hey, it's just as much my dishwasher and my washing line, and I deal with the socks my way. I find it liberating."

But while Jürgen Niemann has no firm ideas as to role assignments, either for himself or for others, he still thinks it important to give people the right to choose. He sees great benefits in the way he has chosen to live: "The most important thing is that everyone is happy with the arrangement, especially my wife. I think having a job gives you more opportunity to be among other people. If you sit at home, well, yes you have the children and of course you come into contact with other parents and teachers, but you sort of lose touch with the outside world. Life wouldn't be as stimulating, either for me

or my wife, if I suddenly said I wanted to stay at home full-time."

But regardless of how the couple divide the responsibilities between them, Jürgen Niemann lives by one particular principle: "Children must have the feeling that their parents are happy. I think that is the key to a happy and secure childhood."

[i] A Career and a Family? Women and men want both

For the longest time, work-life balance was largely a women's issue. Now men also want to play an active role in bringing up their children. Many women and men want to take a partnership approach that allows both to commit time to their careers and their families. Particularly in modern milieus, and this is something shown by surveys conducted by Sinus Sociovision on behalf of the German Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, men and women want a lifestyle that strays from traditional role models and allows them to live as equal partners (BMFSFJ 2007).

Men playing an active role in the family, helps improve women's chances for upward mobility. This is evident in the findings of a study, **Karrierek(n)ick Kinder** (Kids: A Career Killer), conducted in 2007 by the European Academy for Women in Politics and Business (EAF). Commissioned by the Bertelsmann Stiftung, the study looked at mothers working as managers. Although the couples questioned in the survey had all managed to balance their careers with family life, the men had come up against greater obstacles than the women – both at work and in their private lives.

Policymakers and industry are thus called upon to introduce measures to signal that a change in roles is desirable. Happy parents are a business asset, something underpinned by a statement made by a head of department during the survey: "I'm certainly a lot calmer now that I'm a family man. I'm far more able to set priorities and that makes me far more effective in my job. These aspects are often underestimated. People in the same situation develop new skills. They produce far more new – and different – ideas than a monoculture workforce of 25-year-old single men ever could."

Further Information

Literature:

- In **Wenn zwei das Gleiche tun... (Dual Career Couples)**, Heike Solga and Christine Wimbauer look at the realm of the ideal and the reality of social (in)equality in the lives of dual career couples. Available in German only.

- In **Vereinbarkeitsmanagement. Zuständigkeiten und Karrierechancen bei Doppelkarrierepaaren (Work-Life Balance and Dual Career Couples: Division of Responsibilities and Career Opportunities)**, Cornelia Behnke and Michael Meuser investigate the arrangements available to dual career couples. The book is published by Barbara Budrich Verlag.

- In **Karriek(n)ick Kinder. Mütter in Führungspositionen – ein Gewinn für Unternehmen (Career Killer Kids. Mothers in Management: A Business Asset)**, published by the Bertelsmann Stiftung in 2006, authors Helga Lukoschat and Kathrin Walther (both of EAF) conducted a survey on behalf of the foundation in which they questioned mothers in management about their strategies for success. The survey is not available in English.

- The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth published its Seventh Families Report: **Familie zwischen Flexibilität und Verlässlichkeit (Families Between Reliability and Dependability)** in 2006. The report calls for sustainable family policy and looks at ways of providing flexible yet reliable arrangements that allow families to strike the work-life balance that suits their particular needs. An English-language summary is available at: http://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/generator/RedaktionBMFSFJ/Abteilung2/Pdf-Anlagen/familienbericht-englisch.

- A qualitative study, **20-jährige Frauen und Männer heute. Lebensentwürfe, Rollenbilder, Einstellungen zur Gleichstellung (Twenty-Somethings Today: Lifestyles, Role Models and Attitudes to Gender Equality)**, conducted by SINUS Sociovision on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth and published in 2007. Available in German only.

Nina Bessing

All Painters Are Liars

→ **Andreas Bischoff** is an artist and experienced father

When Andreas Bischoff first read Hugo von Hofmannsthal's Ein Brief (The Lord Chandos Letter), he was deeply inspired. The story line sees the author Lord Chandos writing a fictional letter to the English philosopher Sir Francis Bacon. In the letter, Lord Chandos explains why, despite his many successes, he has stopped writing. He expresses doubts that language can communicate the truth and describes an affliction that has left him bereft of words: all truth, regardless of its initial logic, appears to disintegrate when viewed from a different perspective – a situation that cannot be described in words.

Coupled with a great passion for exploring new angles, this inability to trust what appear to be unshakeable truths has haunted the artist all his life. Andreas Bischoff grew up in Bassum, a small town near Bremen in northern Germany. On qualifying from technical college, he moved to Oldenburg and began an apprenticeship as a photographer. This is where his fascination with creative, artistic processes began. "It was a marvellously liberating time and I learned at lot", recalls the artist as we speak in his studio in Dusseldorf. His apprenticeship finished, Andreas worked for a while as a photographer's assistant and later as a freelance photographer in Dusseldorf. He specialised in advertising photography.

→ **Division of work within the family**

This is when he met Anke, his wife. Their meeting opened the second chapter of his life: the family. At the time, Anke Bischoff, a lawyer who specialises in family disputes, was nearing the end of her judicial service training. Anke and Andreas knew almost from the outset that they wanted children. They moved in

together, got married and then along came their daughters, Anna and Sophie.

At first, they shared the household responsibilities. Anke worked part-time in a legal chambers, while Andreas worked as a self-employed photographer, also on a part-time basis. It proved to be the wrong approach, though, as no-one was really happy with the arrangement.

“During that time, a tight bond grew between me and my daughters – a bond I would hate to see broken.”

Andreas explains: “Things were a bit disorganised. Anke’s sisters and her mother took over in emergencies, when we couldn’t arrange time off. This was our only option, because as an upcoming lawyer and a self-employed photographer, neither of us had fixed working hours. Then pragmatism took over and we said: ‘OK. Let’s get it right from now on or we’ll never get anywhere as a family.’ We decided that Anke would bring in the money and I would play househusband for a while”.

He looked after the home and the children full-time for some four years. It was a challenging but rewarding time. And because Anna and Sophie were only a year apart, it meant almost three-and-a-half years of disturbed nights. There was always something: getting them used to sleeping through the night, teething troubles, childhood illnesses. During that time, a tight bond grew between Andreas and his daughters – a bond he would hate to see broken.

It was about this time that Andreas Bischoff discovered painting. He had realised that advertising photography left him little scope for self-expression and so he began to search for new ways to express the things that had always interested him. He converted one of the rooms in their large, turn-of-the-century apartment into a studio. "It was a form of liberation. Advertising photography just didn't interest me any more. I wanted more!" The former photographer began to use what little spare time he had to experiment with painting styles and techniques. Still, the family came first. Although eleven years have passed since then, Andreas remembers the time vividly – especially the challenges of trying to look after his family. He became a househusband during a time when, unlike today, the issue received little attention in the media. He infiltrated a women's domain and, perhaps in contrast to other men in the same situation, had no intention of going with the flow. Nevertheless, he doubted things that had long been taken for granted: "We joined a parents' child-care initiative and I was the only man who regularly participated in the everyday activities. I was firmly put in my place at parents' evenings." – and in exactly the same tone that he used when chastising his daughters. Andreas Bischoff's ideas on childrearing were rather different to those prevalent at the time: "I was the only one who thought it was pretty stupid to be greeted with "Morning arsehole". Especially seeing as it came from a cheeky little three-year-old – I certainly made my voice heard."

He says his parenting approach is "direct". He communicates on a one-to-one level. He takes his daughters' arguments seriously and talks things through with them. If something doesn't suit him, his daughters soon know

about it. This is usually followed by a stress-filled day, with lots of door-banging. Then things settle down. He sees conflict through and stands his ground. He expects his children to show him the respect he shows them.

Worst of all were the lectures he received from nursery school teachers and other mothers in the early years. “Once, I’d just arrived at the nursery school with my daughters and both girls immediately started to scream. One didn’t like this, the other didn’t like that. One child sat on a bench screaming, the other screamed in my arms. The nursery school teacher started telling me how to deal with them, but I wasn’t having any of it. I left the kids there and walked off without a word.”

But the experienced father and househusband refuses to idealise the task of looking after the family. “Housework and childrearing can be very repetitive. There’s a mountain of washing every morning regardless of whether you filled the machine yesterday. Keeping the place clean and tidy is a never-ending battle. And you have to say things a hundred times before the kids listen and do what they’re supposed to.”

Andreas Bischoff stayed at home to look after his daughters until the youngest one was three years old. Because everything that influences later development happens in the first three years, he and his wife thought it important that one of them be at home. When both girls were finally at nursery school, Andreas found himself a studio and started to work there instead, mostly in the mornings.

→ Artist at work

One of his first big exhibitions boasts the title Alle Maler lügen! (All Painters are Liars). He chose it in deference to the paradoxical statement, “All Cretans are liars”, spouted by the Cretan philosopher Epimenides. The exhibition reflects changing painting styles. For example, in his **Verfall des Lügens (The Decay of Lying)** collection, Andreas presents photorealism with a twist: he makes ink drawings of skulls, rib cages and other parts of the body and then photographs them. At first glance, the pictures look like x-rays. A closer look and the viewer is taken aback. They contain not just bones but organs that cannot be depicted with such precision in an x-ray. The pictures turn your stomach and yet they make

you want to laugh. The artist tricks the viewer's eye. "I want to shake viewers in their naïve belief in progress. We shouldn't always believe the findings of modern science and research, shouldn't allow ourselves to be told what is right or wrong. My pictures are designed to give viewers a new insight."

Andreas Bischoff's work has been exhibited in Dusseldorf many times in the past few years. His fascination for showing things in a different light and questioning things that are taken for granted, threads its way through all of his paintings. This is certainly so in his latest exhibition, **Gottesfurcht** (The Fear of God), in which he questions the Bible's claim to be the one and only truth. He experiments with various techniques and their suitability in depicting reality. "I don't just want to produce nice wall decorations like many of the artists today. My work always has an underlying concept."

In the Bischoff's living room, there are two large paintings in various shades of dark red: "Genesis 1.27" and "Genesis 2.21–23". The pictures portray the story of creation and were part of the **Gottesfurcht** exhibition. Andreas takes about a month for a painting like this, using a time-consuming process of building up layers. Some parts of the painting are worked on in more detail, while others are painted over. Numerous layers of paint result, making the paintings extremely expressive. At first glance, the sections of the Bible used as titles for the paintings are hardly visible and are hidden under layer upon layer of paint. But if the viewer looks long enough, faces, figures and landscapes emerge and change the perspective anew.

→ An afternoon with the Bischoffs

In an effort to accommodate work and family commitments, the Bischoffs have constantly reorganised who does what. Once both daughters were at school, the couple split the responsibilities between them. Anke Bischoff became self-employed and opened an office close to home. This gave her more flexibility in terms of how she planned her time and so more opportunity to concentrate on family needs.

Andreas Bischoff takes his family responsibilities as seriously as his painting. He sets high standards in all he does – something that is immediately evident in the midday meal he has prepared for Anna and Sophie, now fifteen and fourteen respectively. He's made a potato and sausage soup. But it's no ordinary soup. What Andreas describes as "something simple", has a hint of chilli and sends a tempting waft of oriental spices into the air. The soup is his own creation. He started cooking in his teens and does so with great inspiration and skill. His cooking is highly appreciated by family and friends alike.

When Anna and Sophie get home, their father asks them: "How was your day? How was school?" He thinks it important for his daughters to have someone they can bounce off as it helps them get rid of any pent-up frustration. Puberty is a difficult phase and school isn't always an easy ride. Anke Bischoff usually tries to get home to eat lunch with the family, but today she has an appointment. Once father and daughters have set the table, the two girls tell him in detail about their day. They laugh a lot, share a joke or two. Andreas is not an authoritarian type, not a father who instills fear in his children. But nor is he a push-over who lets them get away with everything. Depending on the situation, he's their friend or their father.

Today, he's their friend. The girls tell him about a teacher who has treated them unfairly. Andreas knows the teacher and can understand their anger. They then switch to discussing their plans for the afternoon. What are the girls allowed to do and what not? What needs to be done? Their pet rabbit, who lives in a hutch out in the garden, doesn't seem very well. It's not eating. The girls wonder if they

“In the past, there were certain rules to be followed, rules laid down by society. If a child overstepped the mark, then everyone was affronted. Now, we have a choice: some parents are strict, others are less so. Parenting styles can even differ between parents within the same family. This is what makes it difficult for kids to acknowledge the limits they are set.”

should take it to the vet. “What rabbit?” I ask, having seen that the hutch is empty. The rabbit is allowed to roam free, I’m told. “Of course, that’s not exactly good news for anything green within its reach”, says Andreas, tongue in cheek.

Andreas Bischoff finds childrearing fascinating. Bringing up his daughters has taught him a lot. In each phase of their development, the balance between allowing freedoms and setting limits has to be readjusted. Mistakes are sometimes made and each phase brings a new set of challenges. With two children, you can apply what you learned with the first when dealing with the second, but even so, each child is different.

He believes that bringing up children is a lot more difficult today than it was in the past. “In the past, there were certain rules to be followed, rules laid down by society. If a child overstepped the mark, then everyone was affronted. Now, we have a choice: some parents are strict, others are less so. Parenting styles can even differ between parents within the same family. This is what makes it so difficult for kids to acknowledge the limits they are set. One parent sets a limit about something and the other is more lenient on the same thing. The kids today have problems in separating right from wrong. This can lead to insecurity, overblown self-righteousness and a lack of respect for their elders.”

Lunch is over and the Bischoffs each go their own way. After checking once more that his daughters are alright, Andreas sets off for his studio. He sometimes finds it difficult to put family matters out of his mind when working on a painting – there are so many things going round in his head. But that doesn't stop him saying that he would happily have another two children. "The deep intimacy that evolves is simply unique. But you have to be willing to let the love flow. It's not something you can produce in any other way. There's no adventure park where you can go to experience the feeling, the rush of love." People today would rather jump off a bridge and dangle from an elastic rope than burden themselves with a family. The experience they get, the 'kick' it produces, is far more short-lived. With children, you have that kick day in, day out – if you're lucky, every day for the next 25 years.

[i] Working Arrangements and Division of Labour

There are more and more households with children in which both parents have a job. The sole breadwinner model is on the decline. According a micro-census carried out in 2005, in 51 percent of married couples with at least one child under 15, both spouses go to work. The figure for unmarried couples is slightly higher, at 54 percent (Federal Statistical Office 2006).

Nonetheless, a study conducted by the Bertelsmann Stiftung shows that compared with the rest of Europe, Germany demonstrates the highest level of acceptance for the sole breadwinner model: the arrangement is favoured by some 44 percent of couples with children. This compares with only 34 percent in Spain and 26 percent in France.

While only 10 percent of couples in Germany actually live by this arrangement, 21 percent would like to. In France, by way of contrast, a good 45 percent of couples with children would like both the wife and the husband to work full-time, but only 32 percent of such couples are dual income couples. In Spain, the gap between reality and desire is much narrower: 37 percent of couples with children would both like to work full-time and 30 percent do so (ibid. 2007).

The fact that both the man and the woman have a job results in a fairer division of responsibilities between them, but there are still clear differences. In Germany, in households with children where both parents have a job, the women do an average two hours' more unpaid work than their partners – despite them both working the same number of hours per week. And in households with children where only one parent has an income, women do around seven hours' unpaid work per day, while the men tend to have a longer working day (Federal Statistical Office/BMFSFJ 2003).

Further Information

Literature:

- Arlie Russel Hochschild's **The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work** looks at why work-life balance is so difficult to achieve. (1997/2001, Henry Holt and Company PLC, New York).

- The EAF's guide, **Führungskräfte und Familie – Wie Unternehmen die Work-Life-Balance fördern können (Managers and Families: Promoting Work-Life Balance in Business)**, outlines models for work organisation that allows people in management positions to balance their careers with family life. The guide is available for download (in German only) in the publications section of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth website.

- The EU Commission report **Reconciliation of Professional and Private Life: Exchange of Good Practices**, published in 2006.

- The EU Roadmap for Equality Between Women and Men (2006-2010) published in March 2006.

Links:

- **www.bmfsfj.de**
  The Families Ministry website contains a broad range of information (in German) on the German EU Presidency initiative for better work-life balance.

- **www.bmas.bund.de**
  The labour law section of the Labour Ministry's website contains a wealth of information (mainly in German) on flexible working arrangements, parental leave and part-time work models for older workers. It also has a calculator tool which users can use to calculate how much they would earn working part-time.

- **www.womenlobby.org**
  The European Women's Lobby Who Cares? Campaign highlights the fact that child-care and child-rearing are largely left to women.


DER KLEINE
EISBÄR 2

Nina Bessing

Happy Househusband: A Break with Tradition

→ **Ali Dericioglu** is a househusband through and through

In Germany, the media communicate two main images of Turkish men: the Turkish patriarch and the muscle-bound macho youth. Ali Dericioglu is neither. "I'm not your typical Turk", he says when we first speak on the telephone. Later, sitting in the taxi on the way to Bremen-Findorff, I think I know what he means. Findorff is home to Bremen's middle class: an idyllic setting of terraced and semi-detached houses, all with small, well-tended gardens. "The immigrants who live here are well integrated", explains Ali in a later interview. "But even here in Bremen, most Turks live in the social hotspots."

Ali Dericioglu has invited me to his home for afternoon coffee and cake. The family comprises Petra Dericioglu, a 36-year-old teacher, Ali, also 36 and a househusband, and their two sons Yunus (5) and Linus (3). I ring the bell. Ali Dericioglu answers the door and shows me upstairs to their spacious maisonette. The Dericioglus own a semi-detached house with a beautiful garden and have rented out a self-contained flat on the ground-floor to a tenant.

Once upstairs, three-year-old Linus proudly shows me the boys' playroom. But rather than being greeted with the usual playroom chaos, I find the floor is completely free of toys and clutter. As a mother of a six-year-old boy, I find this hard to believe. "You did the tidying up yourself!?" I vow to tell my son about three-year-old Linus that very evening. The family sets about the joint task of preparing the coffee and

serving the cake. Linus, the youngest, goes to wash his hands and then climbs up into his seat. Yunus, the older boy, helps to set the table and then sits down in his usual place. Everything happens with few words and there is no banging about with cups and saucers – something I often experience when visiting friends with large families.

This is the scene that greets Petra Dericioglu every afternoon when she gets home from work. Both Ali and Petra think it's important for them both to have time with their children during the week. That was one of the main reasons why Ali decided to become a househusband immediately after completing his degree in business administration. Petra hadn't been working as a teacher for very long when their first child was born and the pair had decided from the outset that one of them would be there for the children full-time. Petra's teaching job seemed the best way of accommodating such an arrangement: she would be home in the afternoons and have time for the family. Later, when the children were in bed, she would sit at her desk and do her marking or whatever. Ali Dericioglu thinks that people nowadays have

less and less time for their families. "Their quality of life suffers as a result. Everything has to be done in a rush."

Ali grew up with his five brothers and one sister, the daughter their father had always longed for. His parents took a tolerant approach. "There were few things we were forced to do. My parents were religious, but we were never forced to pray regularly and the women didn't have to wear headscarves." His parents are Alevis. Originating in Syria, the Alevis are known to be far more tolerant and open than other Muslims and see women and men as equals.

While Yunus tucks into one piece of cake after another and Linus picks out the chocolate from his pastry, I ask their father whether he has any contact with other Turks in the area. “Oh yes. I met quite a few when I was studying and we became friends. I got on better with the other Turks who had come to Germany as adults. The Turks who have grown up here are often sticklers for tradition and keep to themselves”. But this is not something unique to Turks, as can be seen by the **Bratwürstelfeste and Trachtenparaden** (sausage festivals and traditional costume parades) held in German enclaves all over the world. It’s a common phenomenon: immigrants lose touch with things in their home countries and tend to stick to the traditions and rituals they know.

But there’s one thing in particular that really bothers Ali: “There are no such thing as ‘the Turks’ – neither in Turkey nor in Germany. Turkish men in Germany do not fit any particular mould.” This is illustrated by the findings of recent studies: in Germany, immigrant families are largely subject to the same societal changes as German families, including changes in gender roles. In fact, demographic studies show that immigrants are catching up with the rest of society. For example, the general rise in the age people get married, the dwindling birth rates and the growing number of divorces. Looking at the lives of women and men of Turkish descent who live in the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia, Andreas Goldberg and Martina Sauer from the Duisburg-based **Zentrum für Türkeistudien (Centre for Turkish Studies)**, found that a suprisingly large number of men support notions of gender democracy. Putting it into practice is a different issue, however. But then again, this is not an exclusively Turkish problem.

The young generation of male Turks who live in Germany are adopting what are in some respects very different lifestyles that set them apart from their peers in the rest of German society and from their parents' generation. Ali Dericioglu is a prime example. "I doubt I would have become a househusband if I had married a Turkish woman back in Turkey. It's almost unheard of there. Plus, by talking to friends here in Germany, I've come to the conclusion that I am not a religious person." He wants to live his life the way he sees fit.

→ Right place, right time

Another stereotype Ali Dericioglu fails to embody is that of the boring househusband who sits around in a hand-knitted Fair Isle-patterned cardigan spouting anthroposophical notions on child rearing. Ali is very much in charge of his own destiny. He grew up in Adana, a provincial Turkish town, and moved to Germany at the age of 20. His father hadn't had much of an education having only attended the first three years of primary school. His mother had not gone to school at all and has never done anything but care for the home and family. Ali moved to Germany to study. Two of his brothers already lived in the country when he arrived. But he is the only member of the family who went to university.

Another thing that has shaped Ali Dericioglu's life is his knack of being in the right place at the right time. And each time it happens, he seizes the opportunity with both hands. He was the first child in the family to attend the one and only nursery school in their area. While at primary school, he got to know an old man in his father's furniture shop. That man became his mentor and encouraged him to continue his school education. In Bremen, he attended university, where he spent the first two years learning German. His teacher, a young German woman, had a great interest in other cultures and was acquainted with one of Ali's Turkish friends. The woman was Petra. They had known each other quite some time before Ali invited her to visit Adana and meet his family. He had long decided that "this is the woman I want to marry". Petra and Ali married not long afterwards. The next thing they knew, Ali had his degree in business administration. Things happened fast after that: Petra completed her post-graduate teacher training and took up a

"Relationships at the nursery school are often fraught with tension. Turkish parents feel discriminated against and have stopped getting involved because of the negative attitudes they come up against. German nursery school teachers often lack the necessary understanding for the other culture. They also lack the time and resources needed to tackle the particular problems faced by immigrant children."

teaching post. Ali took on German citizenship. Their first child was born and they bought a house in which Ali did most of the refurbishing work. The house was hardly finished when their second child was born. For the first time in ten years, they could take time out to relax and enjoy what they had accomplished.

→ Differing roles

Ali values his family, his brothers, his sister and his parents. This is, as he puts it, "very Turkish". This is why he strives for harmony within the family. For instance, before he married Petra, he asked his parents if they approved of him marring a German woman. They gave their approval and they would like to spend more time with their son and his family in Germany. Only recently, Ali and Petra invited his parents to spend three months with them in Bremen. It was difficult to arrange because of the need for travel visas and it was also very expensive.

When Ali was growing up, a number of things happened that shaped his attitude towards family life and housework. When he was small, his mother became extremely ill and their father and the children had to keep things going until she was well again. But even before that, the younger brothers and their father had helped out with the housework. Petra Dericioglu describes her first meeting with her parents-in-law: "When I arrived in Adana, Ali's father was in the kitchen preparing a salad – something highly unusual for a Turkish man to be doing. Ali also helped around the house and looked after his nieces and nephews with great love and tenderness."

But as Ali repeatedly observes, the role of househusband is not only unusual in Turkish society. He is now well integrated into local "nursery school culture" in Germany. He's even got to know a few of the mothers and meets up with them on a regular basis. Still, he doesn't try to be everybody's darling. "If we get on, then it's worth getting to know each other better. I don't need to be friends with everyone." While most mothers find his househusband and full-time father status rather intriguing, they seem unable to view it as a normal state of affairs. This is why Ali would like to see more fathers in the area adopting a similar lifestyle.

At the nursery school, Ali often finds himself acting as a mediator between Turkish parents and German teachers and staff. "Relationships at the nursery school are often fraught with tension. Turkish parents feel discriminated against and have lost interest because of the negative attitudes they come up against. German nursery school teachers often lack the necessary understanding for the other person's culture. They also lack the time and resources needed to tackle the particular problems faced by immigrant children. Things have to change in the German education system. And there is little support for children from socially disadvantaged families."

→ Team work

While Yunus and Linus sit at our feet playing with their Lego set, I ask a rather pointed question: has Ali ever thought about what will happen once his children have grown up? And how did his parents react to the fact that he doesn't have a job despite having a degree? At first, his parents were a bit baffled – not so much because of his househusband role, but more because they thought that two incomes are better than one and their son wasn't using what he had learned at university. They have, however, come to accept his lifestyle.

"Plus, I can imagine going to work once my sons are grown up. I'd love to be self-employed. I'd like to work with my hands. My degree in business administration certainly gives me the knowledge I need to run my own business." Ali has never regretted not having a job. "We're a team. I've never had the feeling that my wife earns the money all by herself. We both do our bit to ensure that the family has a decent life." That they work so well as a team is the outcome of their very close relationship. During the interview, there are often long periods when the

"We're a team. I've never had the feeling that my wife earns the money all by herself. We both do our bit to ensure that the family has a decent life."

couple discuss things between themselves. And they laugh together a lot. "Many couples say that they need their own space, their hobbies. We've never needed that. We like spending time together and we never get bored with one another", says Petra. The Dericioglus would really like to see the government make it easier for both fathers and mothers to take parental leave.

→ A real pearl

Ali Dericioglu is a sociable and communicative individual and is well integrated into the local community. He knows all his neighbours. People often greet him when he walks down the street with his children. Ali is always ready to help out where he can. He's very good with his hands and takes every opportunity to show it. When Petra's father died, he slipped into the role as head of the family. Petra's sister, mother and grandmother are all delighted that she has found herself a "real pearl" – this is how Ali's mother-in-law likes to describe him. So does Ali have any plans for the future? Oh yes, our staircase needs painting, the outside walls need replastering and there are a thousand other things that need doing. Ali dreams of having a workshop down in the basement, somewhere to stash all his tools. It would give him somewhere to teach the boys how to sand down wood, use a saw and draw up plans for things they want to build. He'd build a treehouse with them, up

in the apple tree. The boys could play pirates, pretend to be up at the helm and sail their ship around the world. And with apples directly on hand, there'd be no chance of them developing scurvy, jokes Ali.

Ali Dericioglu has seen a lot and achieved even more. This is perhaps why he radiates happiness and contentment. But that's not the only reason. I have rarely met a man who is so down to earth about taking time out for his family and who is so confident about his own image as a man.

[i] Immigration and Role Models

Germany is home to some 15.3 million people with immigrant backgrounds. They make up almost 20 percent of the population and are more or less equally split between women and men. According to the 2005 micro census, 3.5 million have taken on German citizenship. Of these, the largest group stems from the Russian Federation. Another 14.5 percent are of Turkish origin and 14 percent have Polish roots (Federal Statistical Office 2006).

About 12 percent of couples in Germany are binational couples. Around half of these are German-foreigner couples and the other half are foreigner-foreigner couples (ibid. 2006).

The term 'immigration' covers a wide range of very different realities. There is a difference between whether people come to Germany voluntarily or involuntarily (forced or unforced immigration), are ethnic Germans or foreign nationals, come from similar or very different societies and cultures, and whether they come alone or accompanied by their families. The process of immigration is as varied as the people it involves. While women, and especially those who are second or third generation immigrants, tend to follow the role models presented by German women, in that they are ambitious, want to qualify for a particular profession and achieve a good balance between family and working life, men with immigrant backgrounds are more inclined to follow tradition and adopt the roles assigned by society in their countries of origin.

This observation was confirmed by a study conducted by Sinus Sociovision and published by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth in October 2007. The study, entitled **Lebenswelten von Migrantinnen und Migranten in Deutschland** (Immigrant Lives in Germany), highlights the various milieus that have evolved in the country and describes in some detail the gender roles adopted by men and women with immigrant backgrounds. In nearly every case, it was evident that the role models for men of foreign descent were that of head of the family, breadwinner and caring yet strict father who sees to it that his children are disciplined and live by the book.

Further Information

Literature:

- In **Viele Welten leben (Living Many Worlds)**, Ursula Boos-Nünning and Yasemin Karakasoglu ask girls and young women with immigrant backgrounds about their lifestyles and role models. The book was published in 2005 by Waxmann Verlag. It has not been translated into English.

- In **Das schwache Geschlecht (The Weaker Sex)**, Ahmet Toprak asks 15-year-old Turkish youths about their attitudes to family, tradition and freedom. The book was published in German by Lambertus Verlag in 2007.

- The Sixth Families Report, **Familien ausländischer Herkunft (Families with Immigrant Backgrounds)** published by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth looks at the lives of immigrant families in Germany. The report is available in German only.

- Germany's National Integration Plan was announced at the Integration Summit in July 2007.

Links:

- **www.verband-binationaler.de**
  The **Verband binationaler Familien und Partnerschaften (Association of Binational Families and Partnerships)** provides information and advice for binational families throughout Germany. The website has no foreign language sections.

- **www.migration-info.de**
  This German-language website offers a broad range of information on migration, integration and immigration policy in Europe.

- **www.sinus-sociovision.de**
  The Sinus Sociovision website publishes the key results of the Sinus Sociovision study on **Lebenswelten von Migrantinnen und Migranten in Deutschland (Immigrant Lives Germany)** (2007). All information in German only.

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