Will Men Ever Become Fathers?

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Why should men be engaged?
Why the law should be involved?
Simply put, gender equality is a fundamental right which can benefit everybody. There are many ways in which men can be engaged with gender equality. A great starting point is to fully involve men in their share of childcare. Studies show that there is an enthusiastic (and loud!) growing minority of “brave new fathers” who are willing to do their share (Caracciolo di Torella, 2013, Fredman 2015).

What is the law doing to encourage them?
Across the world, there is a growing number of relevant laws that enable men to take:
- Paternity leave and benefits
- Parental leave and benefits
- Flexible working practices

A recent report of the European Commission has highlighted that the law is there! [link to report]

How is the law applied?
The position of the law has evolved considerably: from de facto endorsement of specific gender roles (Case 184/83 Hoffman, Court of Justice EU) recently it has been held that:

"the position of a (...) father and a mother are comparable with regard to their possible needs (...) to look after a child" (Case 104/09, Roca Alvarez, [2011] Court of Justice EU).

... And does it work? ... not really!
- Women continue to do most of the “unpaid work” in the house and, as a result, they are less involved in paid work and continue to suffer discrimination in the workplace.
- There is a gap between the letter of the law and its practical application.

Why?
The reasons are complex and range from traditional assumptions on gender roles to economic considerations within the family (who is the breadwinner?), outside the family (recession) and lack of services and support in society. These issues cannot be addressed merely via legislative instruments but the law should challenge them.

Next steps?
- Raising awareness
- Systematic monitor of the application of the law
- Effective access to rights

Both men and women have a human right to participate in family life: more men than ever before would like to be involved.

It makes business sense: full employment can only be achieved if everybody has the opportunity to participate in paid employment.

Across Europe, the Gender Pay Gap, due to the fact that women work fewer hours to look after children, remains intolerably high (16.2% per hour on average – Eurostat 2011)

Gender equality cannot be promoted effectively without men.
Men can take parental leave, sharing the double shift of childcare and housework, calling out sexist behavior at home and in the workplace ...

... and the law should encourage them to do so!

Also, importantly, what happens in the family is a pre-condition of what happens in the workplace.

Figure refers to EU-27 (without DK and SE) women 15-64 not working or working part-time for reasons linked with childcare. Source: EU-LFS 2010 AHM

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