

4 Fathers reconciling work and family life

4.1 Introduction – the goal of equal parenting

One of the major goals of Norwegian gender equality policy has been for women to be able to take part in the workplace and leadership on an equal footing with men, and for men to be able to take responsibility for care-giving tasks and other work in the home on an equal footing with women. The policies have been enacted through various changes in existing laws since the 1970's. There is a clear intention that fathers should take on part of the responsibility for the care of children. Actual parenting practice by men and women has also gone through essential changes in the last decades. In a typical family today, both parents work outside the home and they share care-giving tasks to a greater extent than before.

Care for one's own children stretches over many years. It is important to focus on the division of responsibility for this care already from the first years of life. The way in which parents organise childcare and work outside the home in the first year of a child's life lays the foundation for the division of family labour later. The Parental Benefit Scheme with the Paternal Quota (1993) has contributed to more active fathers and started a revolution in men's use of parental leave. The introduction of the father's (paternal) quota has led to a steep increase in the number of fathers who have taken leave to be with their children. Today the father's quota is a norm and most fathers take leave corresponding to the quota. An important characteristic of fathers today is that a large number of them would rather work less and spend more time with their children. However, fathers still use only about 11 percent of the total parental benefits each year.

It is equally important how parents divide the responsibilities of supporting and caring for the family after the time of parental leave is over. It is in this phase that parents confront the greatest challenges in balancing job and private life. "The Time Pinch" is a reality for many families with small children, especially families where both parents work full-time. The strategy that most parents choose is a shorter cumulative working day. It is rare to find both parents of small children in full-time work. Only one of four couples with under school-age children hold on to two full-time jobs. Usually it is the mother who reduces her working hours. Women tend to cut down on work outside the home and stay at home with young children. This means that they also tend to take a larger proportion of the housework. The gender roles become more striking in this phase. The father's breadwinner role becomes correspondingly enhanced.

In the Proposition No. 1 (2008-2009) the government has proposed to expand the paternal quota from six to ten weeks from 1 July 2009. In this chapter strategies for further development of the Parental Benefit Scheme will be presented, with a long-term goal of a paternal quota of 14 weeks. The government will also draft alternative proposals to ensure wages during the father's leave for two weeks in connection with birth.

The workplace has a key role to play when it comes to achieving more equal parenting practices. The workplace must accept that men need to make adjustments when they have children, and that they also have a duty to care for the children. Employers have a responsibility and can serve their own best interests by facilitating men in having a good balance between work and family life.

Last but not least, it is important that parents recognise each other as comparable caregivers. There is still much to be done in this area. Investigation shows that many do not view fathers as adequate caregivers. The evaluations in this section must therefore be viewed in close connection with measures taken to strengthen the role of fathers as caregivers, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

4.2 The rights of fathers of small children

4.2.1 A brief description of the rules today

Already in the 1970's, fathers received a separate right to paid leave if the child is ill (1978). Each of the parents was entitled to such an allowance for ten days per year. The regulation was explained thus: "Both parents should have the same rights. This will serve to foster a more equal sharing of the responsibility for children and a better understanding in the workplace of the duties of the father at home."

Since 1977, fathers have also had the right to take out parental leave with full benefits should the mother become sick or go back to work. Few (1-2%) made use of this privilege, and the paternal quota of four weeks was introduced in 1993 to ensure that parents began to share parental leave. The paternal quota has been a success, and today nine out of ten entitled fathers, make use of this right.

In 1995 the rules of the Working Environment Act were changed so that each parent could have the right to a one-year parental leave beyond the 12-month total leave already established. This is unpaid leave of absence to care for children between one and three years old. This system has not led to any significant decrease in the working hours of fathers. If one of the parents stays at home, it is usually the mother.

Various reforms have been implemented since 2000 that strengthen the rights of fathers with regard to parental benefits:

- Father`s independent entitlement to parental benefits (2000)
- Right to wage compensation during paternal quota according to one`s own position percent
- Extension of father`s quota to five (2005) and six weeks (2006). Budget proposal to expand the father`s quota to 10 weeks (2009)
- Simplification of the time account scheme (2007)
- 100% coverage (up to 6G) for self-employed persons (2008)

Today we have a comprehensive set of regulations to ensure that parents can combine work and family. Table 4.1 provides an overview of the most important rights that apply to fathers. The system has three components: the Working Environment Act regulates the right to leave of absence, working hours, etc. The rights to benefits is laid down in National Insurance Act. Contract / wage agreements often contain complementary rights.

Arrangements where the state provides good and subsidized childcare, such as ECEC, are also crucial factors in allowing fathers to be working outside the home.

Table 4.1 Rights for fathers regarding care of small children – overview (2008)

	Working	National	Rights granted by agreement with
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	Environment Act	Insurance Act	employer
at the birth of a child	Father has the right to two weeks leave of absence		Right to pay during the leave of absence
after the birth of a child	Parents together have the right to one year's parental leave	Parental benefits (up to 6G): The paternal quota is 6 weeks The father can take up to an additional 29/39 weeks	Right to pay over 6G
Children 1–3 years	Each parent has the right to one more year's leave		
Rights during child illness	The right to time off to take children to the doctor		Right to pay during the time of doctor visit
	The right to leave of absence to care for sick children	Care allowance (up to 6G)	Right to pay over 6G
	Right to leave of absence when children need nursing care	Nursing allowance (up to 6G)	Right to pay over 6G
School start			Welfare leave to take children to the first days of ECEC, school, etc.
Reduction of working hours caused by responsibility for care of children	The right to reduced working hours and release from overtime work		
Flexibility	Right to flexible working hours	Flexible withdrawal of parental benefits	Home office, among other things

In addition, cash benefits are awarded when children are between 1 and 3 years if the children do not make use of publicly subsidised ECEC. See table 4.6 for important rights according to the Working Environment Act.

4.2.2 The amount of time fathers use for work and care

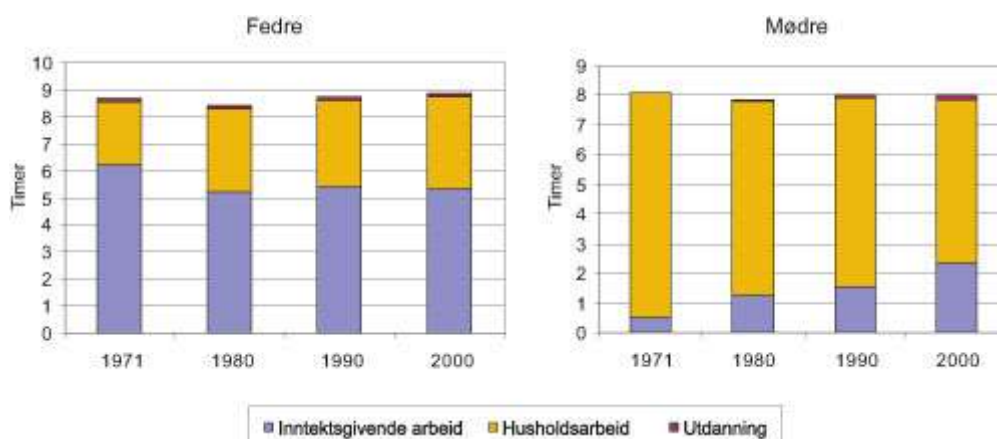
Gender differences in the use of time have been substantially reduced in recent decades. Fathers have taken on a greater proportion of household work and reduced time used for professional work. Mothers show an opposite trend; the average working hours per week have increased, while time dedicated to the household has been greatly reduced. Gender differences are still far from evened out and are still markedly traditional, especially among parents of small children.

Altogether, families spend more time in salaried work than before, largely because mothers now do a larger amount of paid work. The families who have small children (youngest child 0-6 years) work about 60 hours a week. If this time had been equally distributed among all families, and equally between mothers and fathers, it would correspond to a family where both mother and father work six hours a day. However, in reality working hours are not evenly distributed, neither among families nor between genders.

The difference in working hours between mothers and fathers varies with the age of youngest child. The largest difference is when the children are very young. We find the least differences among parents with older children. As it emerges from the figure below, fathers of small children spend on average twice as much time at work as mothers. These fathers do less housework as well. The figure shows that fathers of small children on average use 3.5 hours a day to do household tasks, or about 2.5 hours less than mothers of small children. If we divide these families with small children up into subcategories according to how old the children are, we see that the father does 58% of the household tasks of the mother when the children are between 0-2 years, and 69% of the mother's effort when the children are between 3-6 years.

If we look at work as a whole, including both work outside and inside the home, both mothers and fathers do about the same amount of work. Fathers however, come out having slightly more working hours.

Figure 4.1 Time used for income-producing work, household work and education among married/cohabitating mothers and fathers of children between the ages of 0-6 years. 1971, 1980, 1990, 2000. Average per day in hours.



Source: Time use survey, SSB

Fedre: fathers

Mødre: mothers

Timer: hours

Innteksgivende arbeid: income-producing work

Husholdsarbeid: household work

Utdanning: education

4.2.2.1 Details of the working hours of fathers

Contracted working hours

In 2005, fathers with children 0-15 years had on average 39.2 contracted working hours per week, while the corresponding number in 1990 was 40.4 hours. Contracted working hours for fathers have gone down somewhat. Yet fathers in 2005 had about 8 contracted work hours more per week than mothers. In 1990, the difference in working hours between fathers and mothers was about 12.5 hours per week. The difference in working hours between mothers and fathers has become less, but the difference is still quite large

Full-time work and long workdays are still the norm for men and fathers. Men do not tend to reduce their contracted working hours when they have children. Unlike mothers, fathers do not usually utilize part-time work as a way of adapting their work life to their family life

The typical part-time workingman usually takes a small part-time job for a limited period, often while completing his own education or at the end of a professional career. Men who work part-time, often work quite short hours (1-19 hours a week). The typical part-time workingwoman has more than one child under 16 and works more hours (29-36 hours a week).

Table 4.2 Employees by full and part time employment. Yearly average in 2006

	All employees	Full-time employees	Part-time employees
Men	1 251 000	87 %	13 %
Women	1 111 000	56 %	44 %

Source: SALDO 2007, Equality and Discrimination Ombud

Actual working hours

Both fathers and mothers have lower actual working hours than contracted working hours. The average actual working hours for fathers with children 0-15 years was 34.8 hours in 2005. This is more than 11 hours more than the average actual working hours for mothers.

It appears that fathers to a certain extent customise their actual working hours when they have young children, and especially if they only have one child. According to Kitterød, the men who use the least time for work are fathers with children 0-2 years (33 hours per week) and fathers with one child of 2-5 years. However, the difference between this and the mother's working hours is also greatest for parents with children 0-2 years, with 17 hours difference per week. This corresponds with the distribution of parental leave taken in connection with the birth of the child. Fathers have relatively little leave time compared with mothers. The men who spend the most time on the job, are fathers with school-aged children (36 hours per week).

Fathers have less actual working hours than before. The average father was on the job three hours less in 2005 than in 1991. Overtime work among fathers has shown the same declining trend. Yet there are still large differences between the customisations women and men do. The gender divided labour market and over-representation of men in the private sector suggests that fathers often work in businesses and sectors characterized by a culture that discredits reduced working hours. Twice as many men as women work overtime per day. In 2004, 28 percent of all employed fathers worked more than 41 hours per week, compared with 8 percent of the mothers.

4.3 The background for parenting practice

Even if the home today is characterised by equality, in practice there is still a fundamental imbalance between the sexes. The mother both does more and decides more when it comes to household tasks and childcare. Fathers work more outside of the home and contribute more to the household economy. The gender-related imbalance in the labour market which has been described in Chapter 3, helps to keep these traditional gender role patterns going, including through uneven distribution of income. The gender distribution in the workplace also influences how parents take advantage of parental leave. Some of these factors that have an impact on parenting practices are described below.

4.3.1 Attitudes towards men as providers and caregivers

Male identity and status are closely related to position in the workplace. To be the main provider for the family remains as one of the key characteristics of the male identity.

Today, the image is far more complex, as work comes more into conflict with the role of being a father. Fathers have shifted their focus from work to care giving. To be an accessible father has become a dominant ideal. However, in practice, the man is the main provider in the family; in only one of six families with children does the mother earn more than the father. Income-producing work and providing still constitute an important part of the father's identity. The financial responsibility for the family is not just about earning money, but also about managing the family income in a prudent manner. This responsibility is still tied to the men's masculinity and identity, even if the woman contributes substantially to the family income. In families where the mother is at home, or has unpaid leave, the man naturally enough becomes the greater provider. This factor influences what these men believe is the ideal of a good father. For them a good father ensures the economic security of the family.

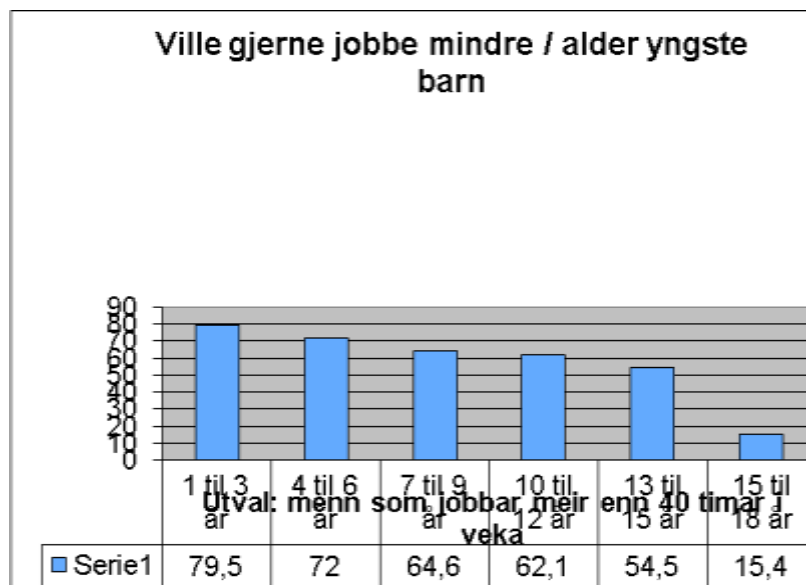
Chapter 9.2.4 presents gender research on men with immigrant background and their attitudes towards gender equality. The research indicates that the ethnic minority groups show a diverse number of ways of being a man. However, many male immigrants express traditional attitudes to female participation in the labour market and the division of housework. A project report on fatherhood among men with ethnic minority background in Norway points to a trend among the minority population to think of parenthood as complementary rather than shared responsibility. This means that mother and father complement each other and contribute qualitatively different things. The Ministry of Children and Equality has set in motion a project which has, among other aims, the goal of acquiring more knowledge about the degree of equality between the sexes, and ethnic minority men's view on masculinity and gender roles. The project will be completed in 2009.

According to the investigation, fathers who see themselves as the primary provider, also tend to express traditional values about division of labour. Almost 50 percent of the men see themselves as having the main bread-winning responsibility. In situations where women

actually earn more, 22 percent of the men still see themselves as the main provider. So even when men earn less than women, their view of themselves as provider remains unchanged, and they tend to prioritise work over other family duties.

The investigation illustrates the dilemma that many fathers experience. In figure 4.2 below we see that 80 percent of the men who work more than forty hours per week and have children under three years of age want to work less. The number declines as children get older.

Figure 4.2 Attitudes towards reduced working hours among fathers



Source: Gender Equality Survey

Ville gjerne jobbe mindre / alder yngste barn: Would rather work less/ age of youngest child

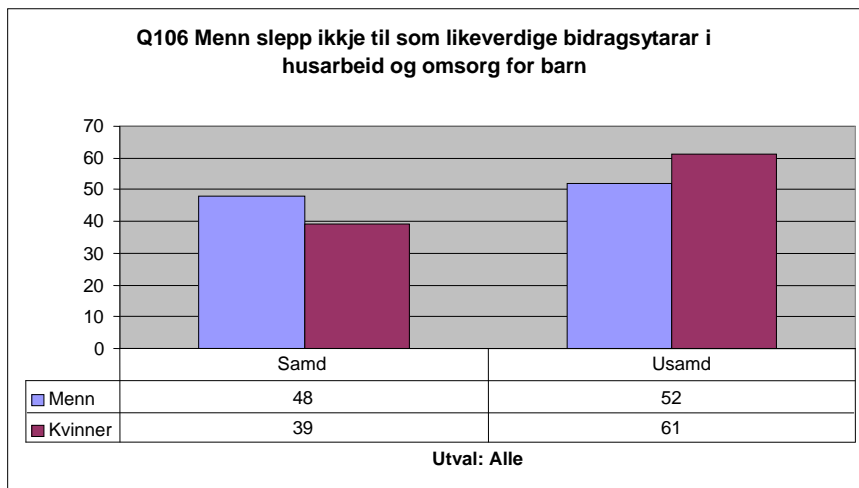
År: years

Utvall: menn som jobbar meir enn 40 timar i veka: Selection: men who work more than 40 hours per week

Among parents with normal working hours (35-40 hours) the percentage that want to work less out of consideration for the children rises, both among men and women, from 23 per cent of them with the oldest children to about 65 percent of those with the youngest.

The investigation also shows that the majority of both men and women agree that men are not allowed to be equal contributors in household tasks and the care of children.

Figur 4.3 Question about whether men are allowed to contribute to household tasks and child care



Source: Gender Equality Survey

Menn slepp ikkje til som likeverdige bidragsytarar i husarbeid og omsorg for barn: Men do not get a chance to be equal contributors to housework and childcare

Menn: Men

Kvinner: Women

Utval: alle : Selection: all

Percentagewise, there are still more women than men who agree on this point, and the trend is that the younger agree more than the older women. Although it is expected that the men should be accessible fathers, according to this investigation there is still far to go before fathers have the same status as caregivers as mothers.

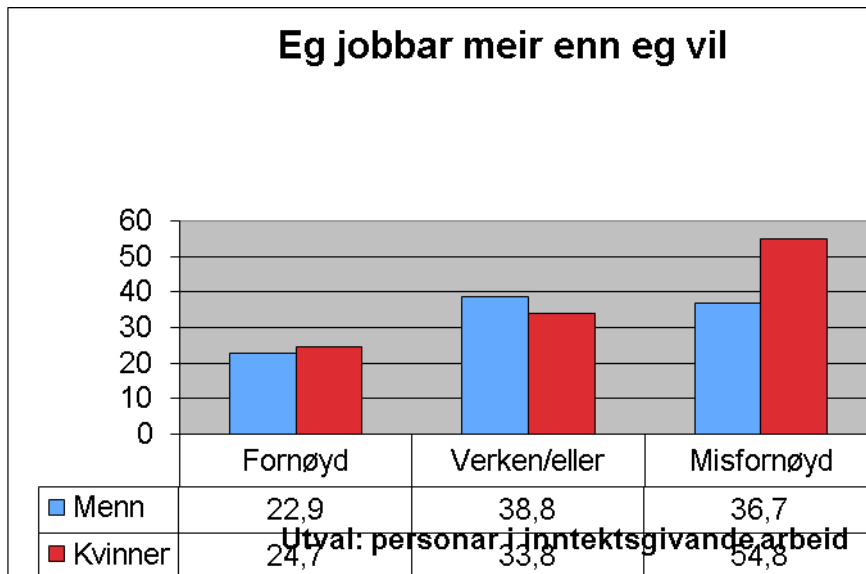
Attitudes in the work place have a strong influence on the parenting practices of fathers. Fathers in male-dominated businesses take leave less than fathers who work in female-dominated or gender-balanced organisations. Fathers in male-dominated enterprises are also more likely to report that they feel pressure from employers about leave practices. Ethnic minority men are over-represented among those who emphasise that there is such pressure. In which sector the parents work also affects how a father takes or does not take parental leave. If the father works in the health and social services sector, his use of leave is encouraged, while a mother working in the same field is discouraged. Working in small businesses or independent commercial enterprises also has a negative influence on a father's use of leave time.

4.3.2 The influence of women's working conditions and attitudes towards the workplace

As it emerges from Chapter 3, the workplaces that employ mostly women are often characterized by lower wages, less flexibility and poor development and advancement prospects.

One finds that in such jobs that do not support the well-being of the employees on those issues, more employees are likely to indicate that they *work more than they wish to*, as the diagram below shows. This tendency is the same for men and women, but stronger for women.

Figure 4.4 Questions about desired work load



Source: Gender Equality Survey

Eg jobbar meir enn eg vil: I work more than I want to

Menn: men

Kvinner: women

Fornøyd: satisfied

Verken/eller: neither/nor

Misfornøyd: dissatisfied

Utval: personar i inntekstgivande arbeid: Selection: persons in paid employment

From a gender equality perspective this is unfortunate because it is women who need to work more in order to create increased balance. Women who are not satisfied with their working conditions are less minded to prioritise work when they have children. Brandth and Kvande show that parents more often share parental leave when the mother has a job that is important to her.

An important discovery in the Gender Equality Survey is that an equitable distribution of resources between parents increases the chance of more equal parenting practice. It is especially income distribution that has this effect, though it is not simply concrete economic assessments that are the main factors. Social, cultural and social psychological factors also play important roles.

Concrete economic considerations as a consequence of the difference in income between two parents are easily overestimated when looking at the distribution of paid leave. As a basic premise it should not make any difference which parent takes paid leave. The parent who takes the leave of absence is compensated according to his or her own income. However, salary differences between the parents have a direct effect on the level of parental benefits in two cases. For one, parental benefits do not cover income exceeding 6 G (about 420 000 kroner in 2008). There are more fathers than mothers who have income that exceeds this threshold. If the father earns more and his income is over this limit, then the family loses economically if the father takes out the paid parental leave. This is only offset if the employer makes up the difference. One must also look at which option parents choose: The paid parental leave in 2008 can be either 54 weeks with 80 percent compensation of income, or 44 weeks with 100 percent compensation. Parents usually choose the option of 80 percent compensation during parental leave. This reduction “costs more” for the parent who has the highest wages, usually the father. It is possible to choose 100 percent compensation.

However, this shortens the time of the paid leave and requires a longer period of unpaid leave if one does not get other childcare when the child is around ten months old.

Fathers are more likely to take more parental leave when the parents choose the 100 percent compensation option, when the mother has completed higher education, when the mother's salary increases, and when the parents' incomes are more equal and the mother works full-time – something that generally would not happen if she works within the health and social services sector. Among the couples that share parental leave, the usual scenario is a mother who has a high position in her full-time job, higher education and a good salary. The father also has a relatively high position at his job, higher education, but a more modest salary. The parental leave is more likely to be shared when the mother has a job that is meaningful to her, but at the same time wants to spend time with the child. A new survey shows however, that generally speaking, even couples with higher education tend to take parental leave along traditional gender lines, that is that the mother takes a long leave and the father takes a short leave.

4.3.3 Do parents want a different type of division?

Although there are indications of change, parents of small children follow a very traditional gender division of responsibilities. There is a way to go before women and men are considered to be equal partners in both providing and care giving. Instead the parents tend to keep the traditional practices going. Because the mothers often work part-time, the fathers are expected to have the main responsibility for breadwinning. Because fathers have longer workweeks, mothers lose the possibility for flexibility and are prevented from working more.

Families are often happy with such a distribution, which is in conformity with traditional gender role patterns. Equal distribution of work is not necessarily viewed by all parents as a prerequisite for an equal parenting partnership. It is often just as important that everyone views the family as a joint project. If both parties provide what they can of work and income, then both can feel free to look at the partnership as equal despite gender related disparities with regard to work outside and in the home. The feeling of community and cooperation is perhaps the most fundamental precondition for the experience of gender equality, not necessarily the equal sharing of tasks. Most are probably more concerned that the overall work be equally divided between them, than that professional work and household work are each equally distributed. This way of thinking is also presented in a survey of attitudes among parents in high-status professions. It is generally seen as “natural” that women take longer leave and prioritise care-giving tasks. This is emphasized by parents themselves and is also expressed in the attitudes of the workplace.

At the same time, fathers express that they would like to work less. As we see in figure 4.2, 80 percent of fathers with children under three years and a working week of more than 40 hours would prefer to work less. Among parents of the youngest children, 70 percent of fathers would have liked a longer parental leave. This survey does not explain how much longer the fathers would like the leave to be. The majority do not want the mother to have fewer alternatives than she has today. Similar results emerged from a survey conducted by Statistics Norway (SSB) in 2002, which showed that almost half wanted a longer paternal leave, while half generally wanted the scheme to remain the same.

4.4 How can one increase the father's use of parental leave?

Increased use of parental leave among fathers will both strengthen the father's role and increase the overall scope of employment adjustments that men can do when they have children. Gender equality in the home and family contributes to more robust relationships. This will also benefit children. Fathers who take more early responsibility for their children work towards establishing good relationships within the family. They also work towards making the bonds between the parents and working life more equal between men and women. A more even distribution of parental leave between fathers and mothers can help reduce the loss of wages to women as a result of having children, and help employers to view parental leave as a normal occurrence.

In Proposition No. 1 (2008-2009) the government has proposed to expand the father's quota from six to ten weeks with effect for births as of 1 July 2009. The father's quota extension is accomplished by extending the total period of paid leave by two weeks. In addition, the father's quota is extended by two weeks within the current entitlement period. In this chapter, the government puts forward a long-term strategy to further develop the Parental Benefit Scheme.

Box 4.1 About the Parental Benefit Scheme (2008)

To be entitled to parental benefits, the parent has to be employed with a pension-earning income for at least six of the ten months immediately prior to the benefit period.

The parental benefit period is 44 weeks with 100 % pay or 54 weeks with 80% pay. No parental benefit is awarded for the amount of salary over 6 G per year.

The father can take a maximum leave of 35/45 weeks. This includes the six earmarked weeks of the fathers's (paternal) quota, plus 29/39 weeks of the remaining benefit period.

The father is entitled to the father's quota when both father and mother have earned the rights to parental benefits and the mother has been at least 50% employed in the earning period.

The father may also take a leave of 29/39 weeks if the mother is at the same time in paid employment, engaging in acknowledged education or some similar activity.

4.4.1 Fathers who are not covered by the Parental Benefit Scheme

Each year 35-40 percent of fathers do not use paid parental leave. Most of these fathers do not have the right to parental benefits. The father is not entitled to parental benefits when he has not been in paid employment for at least six of the ten months previous to the benefit period. This is true for about ten percent of all fathers every year. The father is also not entitled to

parental benefits if the mother has sole custody of the child and does not agree to the withdrawal. In 2006, about 11 percent of parents did not live together at the time of birth.

The father is not entitled to parental benefits if the mother is at home both before and after the birth. The mother needs to have been actively employed in at least a 50 % position for at least six of the ten months before the birth for the father to qualify for the paternal quota. If the mother does not go out to work after birth either, the father does not have the opportunity to use parental benefits. There are no statistics that show how many fathers this applies to, but an estimate is 15-20 percent of fathers every year.

There is little concrete knowledge about fathers in these families. About mothers we know that they receive a lump sum grant and do not qualify for the parental benefits. Mothers who receive this lump sum grant are generally younger than those who have earned the right to parental benefits. 50 percent have several children under five years of age. The families often have a low total income. Over a third are non-western immigrants (36 percent, SSB 2005) fall into this category. The high percentage of immigrants is related to the fact that work outside the home among women in minority populations is lower than among women in general. 68.4 percent of women in Norway are working. The corresponding percentage among first-generation immigrants is 57.3. Under a third of the women of some nationalities are paid employees.

One completed project points out that fathers in minority groups where the mothers have a low rate of paid employment are at a higher risk of losing parental benefits than fathers in the majority population where the rate of paid employment among mothers is greater. Paradoxically it is these families that should be the target group for the kind of measures that would increase gender equality in the family.

4.4.2 The paternal quota in families where both parents work outside the home

4.4.2.1 The paternal quota

A father is entitled to the paternal quota when both parents are in paid employment and the mother has worked at least 50% before the birth of the child. Nine of ten of the fathers in this category take the earmarked weeks (father`s quota).

Table 4.3 Use of the father`s quota. Percent of entitled fathers

1995	1997	1999	2001	2003	2005
62	75	80	85	89	91

Source: Ministry of Children and Equality

When the father`s quota is expanded, the time a father is at home with the child increases. The statistics for 2007, which show a partial effect of the paternal quota being extended to six weeks in 2006, shows that the number of fathers who made use of 30 days increased from 385 in 2006 to 13 663 in 2007. The full effect of these changes became more obvious in 2008.

The likely explanation for so many fathers actually making use of parental leave is that the father has been granted a separate earmarked quota. Brandt and Kvande show that the paternal quota acts as a fully negotiated right for fathers that employers feel compelled to honour. The paternal quota acts therefore as a labour right, and sets a standard for what is acceptable leave of absence from work. This might be particularly important, according to Brandt and Kvande

for men in so-called limitless or greedy professions. This view is supported in a new report, pointing out that fathers experience that their commitment to work may be questioned if they take out more leave than the paternal quota. This standardized, non-flexible solution seems to provide the most effective boundary setting mechanism for fathers.

The paternal quota also aimed to motivate more fathers to take more leave than the earmarked weeks. This has not happened as expected, even though the use of leave beyond the paternal quota has been increasing gradually; see below. Some argue that the designation of a certain number of weeks functions as an obstacle to parents who would very much like to share more. But conditions today greatly facilitate the sharing of the benefit period between parents.

4.4.2.2 Parents in paid employment who share more parental leave beyond the paternal quota

If both parents are working, they can share the benefit period between themselves as long as the mother begins to work, is in approved education, or is too sick to care for the child. From 1999 to 2005 the percentage fathers who took out more leave than the paternal quota increased from 10.1 to 17.5.

Table 4.4 Fathers who took out more leave than the paternal quota (four weeks). Percent of fathers entitled to parental benefits

1999	2001	2003	2005
10,1	12,7	14,4	17,5

Source: The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV)

Other numbers from NAV show that 17,3 percent of fathers took more than six weeks leave in 2007 compared to 8,2 percent in 2000. The increase for those who took more than 8 weeks was from 6,7 percent to 14,4 percent in the same period. This shows a moderate increasing tendency for parents to share the benefit period between them. This increase runs parallel to the increase in the paternal quota.

As mentioned in Section 4.3, the way parents share the benefit period may not be a result of actual negotiations. Important factors are both the culture of the workplace and what kind of “gender contract” the mother and father have agreed to between themselves. The latter is affected by respective incomes, preferences and the attitudes of each of the parents. The parents do not seem to compete to get the most leave time. Instead they stress that their practice is grounded in traditional, cultural practices that seem natural and convenient. A new project shows that there is a relationship between the way in which parents decide on how they will share the benefit period and the number of weeks that the father eventually takes. Of parents who did not discuss the issue of parental leave distribution, only 2 percent of fathers took out more than the paternal quota. In comparison, 21 percent took out more than the paternal quota when parents jointly worked out a resolution. When it was the mother who primarily decided, 25 percent of fathers took more leave than the paternal quota.

The most even sharing took place between couples who had higher education and where the women were in full-time employment. The more women work outside the home, earn money and prioritise this work, the more the men take on the responsibilities of home life, and the more parental leave they take. Mature parents tend to share parental leave the most.

If only the father is in paid employment, or if the mother has worked in a less than 50% position before giving birth, the father is not entitled to the paternal quota. He can still take

out parental leave benefits for up to 29/39 weeks if the mother goes out to work, begins an acknowledged education or some other approved activity. This right was introduced in 2000.

If the mother stays home after giving birth, the father may not take out parental benefits. He falls outside the scheme as described in Section 4.4.1.2. If the mother, however, begins work or the like after the birth, the father may utilise the remaining portion of the benefit period.

There are relatively few fathers who utilise parental benefits according to these criteria, but the number has increased from 1048 in 2001 to 1336 in 2006. 2007 shows a decrease again to 1204 fathers. As table 4.5 shows, these fathers make use of more weeks of parental benefits than father`s in families when both parents are entitled.

Table 4.5 Fathers' use of independent earning rights

	2002	2004	2006
up to and including 5 weeks	144 (14 %)	136 (12 %)	195 (15 %)
5–12 weeks	174 (16 %)	187 (17 %)	273 (20 %)
12 weeks or more	737 (70 %)	810 (71 %)	868 (65 %)
Sum persons	1055	1133	1336

Source: The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV)

4.4.4 Experiences from other Nordic countries

The use of parental benefits by fathers in Iceland and in Sweden follows a similar pattern as in Norway, namely that use of paternal leave follows the paternal quota. However, the arrangements in the individual countries are different from each other in some ways.

Both Sweden and Iceland have systems where

- mothers and fathers have completely independent rights
- parents who are not in paid employment are included so as to be assured a minimum allocation
- the coverage is 80%

The paternal quota is also longer – three months in Iceland and two months in Sweden. This is reflected in the statistics. Of the total days of paid parental benefits in 2007 fathers accounted for around 33 percent in Iceland, 21 percent in Sweden and 11 percent in Norway.

Iceland and Sweden have different profiles. The three-part Icelandic model is based on extensive earmarking during the benefit period. Sweden follows a different strategy and has put more emphasis on positive incentives to get parents to choose more equal distribution of the benefit period

Iceland introduced a three-part parental benefit scheme in 2001 in connection with the expansion of the benefit period by three months. The system is based on each parent having the right to three months of the benefit period; then they can decide on their own who takes out the remaining part of the paid parental leave. Statistics show that over 90 percent of fathers take out their three months, and that mothers in most cases take out the remaining six months. The goal of this division was to help fathers participate more in childcare and to strengthen the woman's position in the workplace. The reform has been well received. In 2005, about 17 percent of the fathers took out leave beyond the earmarked three months. It is Icelandic fathers that make most use of paid parental leave in the Nordic countries. It has been proposed that the benefit period be extended to twelve months with the same three-part division as is currently operating. If this proposal goes through, there will be given four months to each parent and four months reserved for the parents to distribute as they wish.

In **Sweden** the parents have the right to half of the benefit period of 13 months each, with a salary compensation of 80 percent. Parents also have the right to transfer any part of their benefit period to the other parent, except an earmarked period of two months. Sweden therefore uses a moderate quota system combined with mechanism to ensure active choices about the division of the benefit period. In SOU 2005:73 a three-part system was proposed, with five months given to each parent and five months the parents could divide as they wished. The proposal has not been pursued. An "equality bonus" (tax benefit) of up to SEK 3000 per month for the parent who takes the larger part of the benefit period in a given year, was introduced July 1, 2008. It was to stimulate fathers to take more parental leave and made it worthwhile to share the benefit period.

4.4.5 Main principles for further development of the Parental Benefit Scheme

In Proposition No. 1 (2008-2009) the government has proposed to expand the paternal quota from six to ten weeks, effective for children born or adopted as of July 1, 2009. The Soria Moria-declaration contains several goals for changes in parental benefits to increase fathers' use of the system and strengthen fathers' rights. It is still a challenge to get parents to share the benefit period more equally between them and to include more fathers in the scheme. Long-term goals for further development of the Parental Benefit Scheme are described below. The government will return with specific proposals for changes in the annual budget.

4.4.5.1 Independent rights of fathers – the right of all fathers to have a paternal quota

The Soria Moria-declaration states that the government will give the father right to earn independent leave rights. Each of the parents will receive benefits according to their own earnings.

The right to a paternal quota today is based on both the mother and father earning the entitlement and the mother working in at least a 50% position. If the mother has not been working before birth, the father is not entitled to the paternal quota. According to The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV), about 12 000 fathers every year do not have the right to paternal leave because of the mother's lack of paid employment. These fathers can still receive benefits if the mother goes out to work *after* the birth, takes a publically acknowledged full-time education, or in combination with work, or is too sick to care for the child. In 2007 1200 fathers – and mothers – took advantage of this.

The current regulations send out unfortunate gender equality signals, seen from the point of view of the goal of strengthening the care-giving role of the father. The regulations create an unfortunate distinction between different fathers with earned rights. Users of the system

themselves regularly point this out as unreasonable. Minority fathers of nationalities where women traditionally do not work much outside the home are particularly disadvantaged by the current regulations. The Men's Panel has looked at this situation. The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud (LDO) has sent a letter on September 17, 2008 to the Ministry of Children and Equality stating that the current rules are in violation of the prohibition against discrimination of women and men under gender equality law.

The government will work to provide fathers with more independent rights. The paternal quota should apply in all cases where the father has earned the entitlement. This will provide all fathers that have earned the right to parental benefits, the same opportunity to take out paternal leave.

4.4.5.2 Goals for the further expansion of the paternal quota

The Soria Moria-declaration states that the government will expand parental benefit period by five weeks, and all these new weeks will be earmarked for the father. This means that father's quota will be ten weeks, and that the total benefit period for the birth of a child will be up to 48/58 weeks. The budget for 2009 meets the Soria Moria-declaration when it comes to the length of the paternal quota, but not when it comes to how long the benefit period should be. According to the budget, the total benefit period will be 46/56 weeks.

Expanding the paternal quota has been shown to be the most effective measure to increase fathers' use of parental leave. As it emerges from 4.4.4, fathers' use of parental leave is steadily increasing. The statistics show that there is a clear effect of the extension of the paternal quota on fathers' use of parental leave. Research tells the same story, pointing that earmarked quotas are the best means to change the traditional gender preferences. The government still sees an obvious need to extend the period that is earmarked for the father.

The Men's Panel has advocated a solution in which the benefit period is expanded to 52 weeks after birth with full salary compensation. One fourth of this period would be earmarked for the father. Within the current benefit period of 44 weeks, the Men's Panel proposes that 11 weeks be earmarked for the father. The Equal Pay Commission has suggested in NOU 2008: "Gender and Pay" that a third of the benefit period should be earmarked for each of the parents as support for the principle of equal pay. The Commission emphasises that a more equal distribution of parental leave between fathers and mothers is a measure that can contribute to reducing salary loss among women as a consequence of having children.

The government will facilitate more equal use of leave by mothers and fathers. More equal use of leave will also contribute to making such leave of absence more accepted.

The government will work for a moderate sharing of the benefit period within the target in the Soria Moria-declaration of a benefit period (from birth) of up to 48/58 weeks. Within this framework the government supports working towards the eventual goal of the paternal quota being 14 weeks. That means four weeks added to the father's quota with two additional weeks as an extension of the total benefit period. Fathers who also receive salary during the two weeks of leave of absence to care for a child in connection with childbirth, will then have a right to paid leave for at least 16 weeks. Families that desire can choose a more even distribution of leave. In this manner, fathers will receive a significantly longer paid leave than they have today, at the same time as the family as a whole is ensured sufficient flexibility. This lays the foundation for a significant strengthening of the care-giving role of fathers and will improve gender equality in the workplace. The initiative is expected to lead to more equal

use of paid leave by mothers and fathers and is in compliance with the intent of the proposal from Equal Pay Commission.

4.4.5.3 Independent rights of fathers – drafting of a gender-equal Parental Benefit Scheme

The Parental Benefit Scheme is complex. It has serious flaws and weaknesses when it comes to the different ways it treats mothers and fathers. LDO's statement about the possible violation of the Gender Equality Act's prohibition against discrimination applies to more than the conditions for entitlement to the paternal quota. LDO also brings up the fact that any part of a father's use of parental benefits that does not come under the paternal quota, is dependent on the mother going out to work or the named approved activities after birth. Today's rules give the mother a strong negotiating position. If she cannot or does not want to return to work or education, then the father cannot take out any more paid leave. This requirement about the mother's actions before the birth and in relation to the paternal quota creates very complicated regulations. In accordance with the goal of the Soria Moria Declaration on independent rights for fathers the government will draft a simplified and more equal system, and propose alternative mechanisms for sharing the benefit period between parents. This draft should also answer the question of to what extent the lump sum grant should be replaced by a minimum monthly payment.

4.4.5.4 Informative measures

It is important that fathers make use of the potential that the rules give them today. The government will therefore, in cooperation with The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV), strengthen the information flow to ensure that different groups of users know what the rules entail. The information will particularly focus on how the father can take more leave than the paternal quota, and that fathers that are not entitled to the paternal quota can still receive benefits if the mother goes out to work or the like. In addition, it is important that parents who do not live together, are made aware that the father can take his paternal quota if both parents agree.

4.5 How to make the workplace more family friendly?

The workplace has a key role when it comes to giving fathers the opportunity to adapt work to the needs of family life. Work conditions influence the parenting practices of fathers both when it concerns taking out parental leave or care leave, how the parents divide short-term leaves (like staying at home with a sick child or helping a child start school or preschool) and working hours when the parental leave period is over. It is essential that work places have a culture and a leadership that not only accepts but also supports the father in taking parental leave and is willing to make other adjustments, like allowing the fathers the right to exemption from overtime. This will benefit the workplace in the long run, not least because the employees will be more satisfied. A personnel policy that makes it easy to combine work and family life can be important for recruiting labour. Taking social responsibility can also influence the reputation of the business in a positive manner.

To ensure a good balance between work and family it is not enough to focus on the first years of a child's life. As Anne Lise Ellingsæther writes:

It is when the parental leave time is *over*, that the real art of balancing work and children begins. The attempt to get fathers to take more parental leave is important. But it is only a part of a much greater challenge: to achieve a more even gender division *after* infancy. One must develop a broad *lifespan approach* to the relationship between time spent at work and with the family. And the parameters for what is perceived as relevant family policy must be expanded to include the conditions in the workplace.

4.5.1 Rights according to the Working Environment Act

With its rules on the right to take leave of absence from work and the provisions on working hours and overtime the Working Environment Act is very important as a help for parents to be able to combine work and family.

Table 4.6 Important rights according to the Working Environment Act that serve to help combine work and family life

Parental leave during the first year of the child's life	Two weeks leave of absence to care for a child at birth One year's total parental leave for the parents (paid) Then one year's parental leave for each parent (unpaid)
Regulation of working hours	Right to reduced working hours Right to exemption from overtime General regulations on working hours
Short temporary leave of absence and flexible working hours	Right to flexible working hours Right to leave when children are sick.

One main purpose of regulations regarding working hours is to ensure that employees have a schedule that does not cause them or their families unnecessary health or social problems. Rules about overtime ensure that consideration is taken of the employee's health, well-being and safety in the workplace, as well as other, broader societal considerations.

The right to flexible or reduced working hours is applicable under the precondition that it does not cause essential disadvantage to the enterprise. An employee has the right to exemption from performing work beyond contracted working hours when that employee requests exemption because of health problems or weighty social reasons. Such social reasons may include care of children. Flexibility may be the most important means fathers have when it comes to tackle the challenges of combining work and family. Flexibility at work has been held forth as a benefit many men have in their work, and which makes adaptations to the needs of family life possible. One purpose of using this right may be to follow and retrieve children who are in ECEC, or transport them to recreational activities. According to the Gender Equality Survey 52 percent of the men said that they fetch their children as often as their partners.

There is no overview of how parents share leave in connection with children's illness. Upon reviewing the 2006 annual report from the counties, the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud found that female employees had significant higher absence from work for this reason than male employees. Numbers from SSB show that both men and women have absence from their jobs because of sick children. Both among mothers and fathers, about 60 percent have taken a few hours or days off last year. According to the investigation, men stay at home with

sick children less than women, but half of the couples divide this responsibility almost equally.

As shown in chapter 4.2.2 working fathers of young children work longer days and have relatively little leave compared with mothers. The gender-divided labour market and over-representation of men in the private sector suggests that fathers work more often in businesses and sectors characterised by a culture that discredits reduced working hours. The Gender Equality Survey has found that fathers with long working days would like to work less. Provisions for working hours should ensure this balance. In 2005 16 percent of fathers had contracted work hours that exceeded 40 hours per week.

Disputes about the right to exemption from overtime are handled by the Dispute Resolution Board. The same is true of disputes about reduced working hours, flexible working hours and leave of absence in connection with the care of children. The Dispute Resolution Board handled 15 cases in 2006, and six of the cases concerned men. Five of these cases concerned the right to reduced working hours. In 2007 decisions were made in 14 cases, of which two cases concerned male employees.

The Gender Equality Act prohibits discrimination of pregnant women and those who take leave of absence. This discrimination prohibition includes fathers who take leave for the two weeks in connection with birth and fathers who take the paternal quota, in other words, leave reserved for that gender. It is the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud (LDO), which administers these regulations. Complaints tend to be filed mainly by women.

4.5.1.1 Control of gender-equality based activity and reporting of the state of the business in terms of gender equality

It is a consequence of the Gender Equality Act, Section 1a third paragraph, that all employers that by law are required to prepare an annual report, must outline the actual state of the workplace as it regards gender equality. Employers should also explain any measures that are put into effect, and report on any measures planned to promote gender equality.

The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud's enforcement of the Gender Equality Act includes control of the activity and assessment obligation that is imposed all employers. LDO has created a guide to improve gender equality assessment in the various counties. The board recommends that statistics regarding the leave taken by men and women should also specify how much leave taken by men and women is in relation to parental leave. This will reveal any need to initiate measures to motivate men and women to share parental leave more equally. It will also be useful to look at gender distribution when it comes to the other leave types taken that may say something about how women and men share care tasks between them. There are no statistics about fathers' use of other leave time and other provisions of the Working Environment Act beyond the statistics for fathers' use of parental benefits; see part 4.4. The exact extent of leaves of absence and what types of leave are being taken are not yet known.

The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud will implement and further develop competency and innovation initiatives geared towards workplaces, and will supervise and advise enterprises where men are clearly the majority of employees in 2009.

4.5.1.2 Better information about workers' rights to be able to adapt work life to balance family life

The National Insurance Act, the Working Environment Act and the Gender Equality Act contain provisions that in different ways ensure the employee's right to find a balance between work and family. It is important that the rights are actually known to employees and are used in various sectors. The low number of cases concerning working hours and leave taken to the Dispute Resolution Board may further suggest that the Committee is of little use in these areas. The government will prepare information in cooperation with the parties in the labour market.

4.5.2 The right to full wage compensation during father's two-weeks leave of absence in connection with the birth of a child

Statutory rights are supplemented by negotiated agreements. The most important one is the right to wage compensation during the two-week long leave of absence fathers may take in connection with the birth of a child or in the event of overtaking care of a child, and the right to full salary (over 6 G) during the time of parental leave. Leave of absence around the time of the birth of a child is granted to make it possible for the father - or another close caregiver - to take care of the family in the time around the birth of a child. This provides security for the mother and gives the father the opportunity to take care of care-giving tasks in the family. This is very important because mother and child often stay only a few days at the hospital after birth.

The National Insurance Act provides no financial compensation for loss of wages during this leave of absence. The employer must be responsible for salary payments. The right to full salary compensation during the leave of absence at birth and parental leave has been negotiated in the public sector. Such agreements also exist in the private sector, but there is no full overview about the scope of such agreements. A group of fathers stands without the negotiated right to wages during care leave.

The lack of income compensation makes it difficult for the father to make use of his right to leave of absence and to be together with the family during these weeks. To give the father time off at the time of the birth of a child is essential for two reasons: It establishes the father in a caregiver role *and* allows him to be of essential help to the mother during this time. It is unfortunate if loss of pay during this period indicates that there is still little acceptance for fathers to take time off work when they have children. Research shows that such leaves of absence are not always accepted in the workplace. Rather, it shows that in such cases doubts are raised about the father's commitment to his work. Although the paternal quota is not a universal system, it is clear that this type of negotiated right should be accepted both at home and at work.

It is important to consider measures to ensure that more fathers entitled to salary during this leave of absence. The government will draft how the arrangement of leave of absence in connection with childbirth can be done better. An important part of the assessment will be to get a broad overview of the industries and the sectors that currently have no agreement about the right to wage compensation for fathers, and how many fathers that every year are without the right to pay during leave connected with the birth of a child.

4.5.3 How the workplace can make adaptation simpler for fathers – experiences and examples

Attitudes in the workplace have much to say for how much fathers make use of the right to leave of absence for care purposes. For fathers it is important to use these rights knowing there will be no loss of prestige. The question is to what extent there is acceptance of the practice of taking more leave than the paternal quota, of adjusting working hours for more flexibility, reducing working hours, or refusing to do overtime. In 2008, The Work Research Institute completed a research project on discrimination of pregnant women and those who take leave in the workplace. The project has also looked at the consequences of leave-taking among men. The project shows how such discrimination is expressed and the causes of discrimination. Negative consequences for taking leave were found to be more about negative processes and lack of facilitation than any deliberate desire to discriminate. It is emphasised that it is important that the employer has a personnel policy of deliberate strategies for taking leave of absence and for employees with children.

4.5.3.1 Experiences from Denmark –the significance of the culture of the workplace

A Danish survey points out the need to make willingness to find family-friendly solutions part of modern leadership, for instance by allowing colleagues more say in their own work conditions. Parents of small children are dependent on flexibility. Other organisational factors are also mentioned, such as teamwork and other solutions that make each employee less irreplaceable. The value of role models is also emphasised. The most effective means is for the leadership of the company to make use of the same rights as the employees. Where the workplace has many young employees of whom a number have taken leave or done something similar it is easier to see how adjustments in the balance between work and home can be made.

4.5.3.2 The project "Fostering Caring Masculinities"

The Ministry of Children and Equality partly funded a European project in 2005-2006 under the leadership of the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud on how companies can help male employees to find a good balance between work and family. The project was called "Fostering Caring Masculinities" and had participants from five countries (Germany, Iceland, Norway, Slovenia and Spain). In each of the countries studies were conducted in two companies to see what measures they had taken to create a balance between professional and private spheres and what initiatives they set in place to get men to participate more in care-giving tasks at home. The study showed that differences in the rights of employees to flexible work conditions and parental leave among the countries, contributed substantially to how men adapted to taking on more responsibility at home. For families with small children this had to do with both rights to parental leave and access to early childhood education and care with opening times that corresponded to normal work hours. In addition to what society as a whole has done to facilitate the balance between work and home, differences in what individual companies do also play an important role in creating more balance. There may be differences both in the culture of the organisation and in the attitudes of the leadership that explain differences in outcomes.

Through this project and interviews with employers and employees the fact also emerged that it might be in an employer's best interest to have particular initiatives for men with the goal of achieving a better balance between work life and family life.

In a competitive labour market, employers seek to offer salaries and working conditions that give them a chance to get the most highly competent work force. A personnel policy that considers men's desire and need for effectively combining work and family life may be decisive in recruitment. Recruitment of the best labour may increase profit. Initiatives to offer attractive working conditions are means to this end. The organisation of a workplace to preserve a good balance between private and professional life contributes to increased well-being of the staff. Satisfied personnel stay in their jobs and are usually more productive.

It need not only be underlying economic motives that support a conscious attitude towards the balance between work life and private life. Some companies see the need as a part of their societal duty. By enacting measures to better the balance between professional and private spheres, a company takes a kind of responsibility that has consequences that stretch far beyond measured work hours. In most cases that were looked at in the FOCUS project, men were not meant to be a primary beneficiary of the measures initiated. However, taking social responsibility almost always has a gender dimension and an effect on gender politics.

4.5.3.3 Experiences from various enterprises

A Norwegian company that participated in the survey encouraged male employees to share the parental leave equally with the mother. The company felt that too long a leave would weaken the expertise of employees. Through a like sharing of leave between men and women the average leave time for the individual would be shorter, and the employees would easily be able to get back to business after the leave. There would be few cases where both parents worked in the same business, and this way the attitude toward men taking parental leave would also affect the world outside the company. This appeal to the male employees to take out a larger part of the parental leave would also be a signal to the female employees that they should encourage *their* men, who were mostly employed outside the company, to set up a similar system. Another example is a company that pays full salary during parental leave whether fathers are entitled to the paternal quota or not. They also encourage male employees to take a longer leave than the paternal quota.

4.5.3.4 Measures to stimulate employers in developing a gender-conscious staff policy

Increased awareness of employers about the value of making their enterprise family-friendly is essential if parents are to be able to make use of their existing rights. It is important that the employers have a personnel policy that has explicit strategies for those taking leave and for employees with children. The employer must recognise the value of facilitating family related adaptations of the workplace. The Men's panel has pointed out that businesses should have a working environment where it is acceptable and normal for parents to be able to take care of sick children when necessary. Examples and experiences from businesses that actually have such policies in place and that can demonstrate "best practice" are useful to bring forth as catalysts for change. Employers also need to register how employees use the different types of leaves and how they make use of flexibility in the workplace. In 2004, France introduced a "certification system" for gender equality practices in the workplace. The Norwegian Women's Health Association has also established a prize: "Gullriset" that is awarded to businesses every year that exhibit a family-friendly personnel policy. The government will look more carefully at establishing such measures in cooperation with parties in the labour market.

4.6 Summary of initiatives

To achieve more equality between mothers and fathers in the balance between work and family life, the government wants to

- provide all fathers who have earned the right independently of the mother, access to the father`s quota (Parental Benefit Scheme)
- expand the father`s quota to 14 weeks of a total benefit period of 48/58 weeks if there is a birth or 45/55 weeks if there is an adoption (Parental Benefit Scheme)
- draft a simplified and more equal Parental Benefit Scheme.
- in cooperation with The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV), strengthen the information flow about parental benefits for fathers.
- increase the focus on the activity about and adherence to the gender equality law, with emphasis on the male perspective and on enterprises where men are clearly in the majority.
- in cooperation with parties in the labour market, strengthen information that is given about the rights and possibilities concerning balancing work and family life.
- outline how the arrangement of the two week-long leave of absence at birth can be utilised better.
- in cooperation with the parties in the labour market initiate measures to stimulate employers to have a personnel policy of deliberate strategies for persons on parental and/or leave of absence in connection with care purposes and for all employees with children.

The government will return with specific proposals for changes in the Parental Benefit Scheme in the annual budget.