

Tim Rohrmann

MEN AND GENDER BALANCE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

**International perspectives
in research and
policy development**



*International conference
Boys and girls in nomansland
Asker, Norway, 22.10.2015*



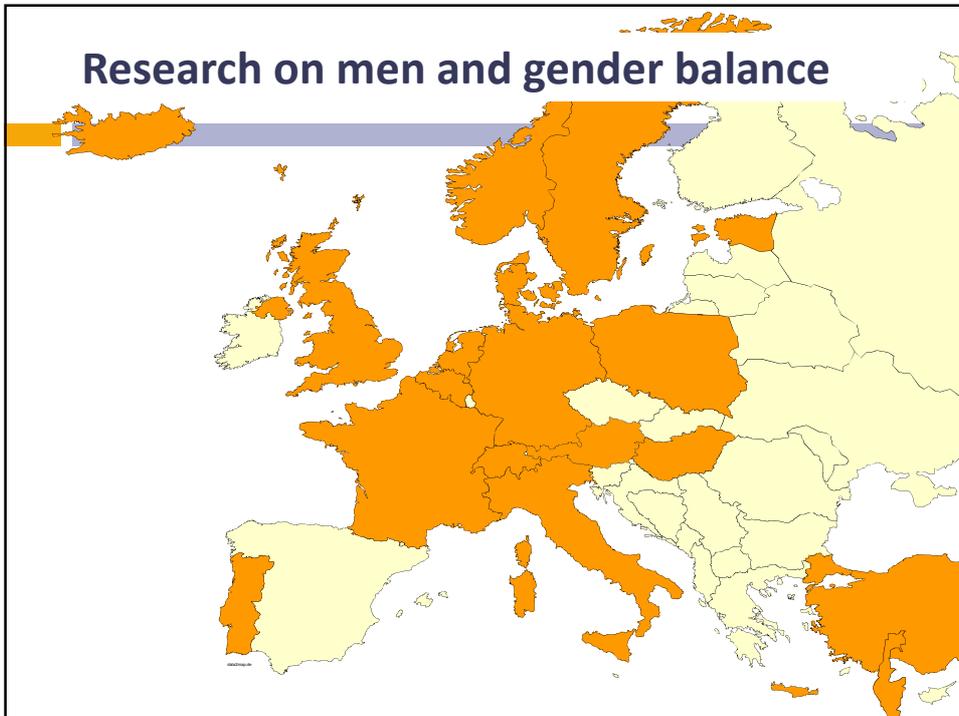
***What we have
achieved...***

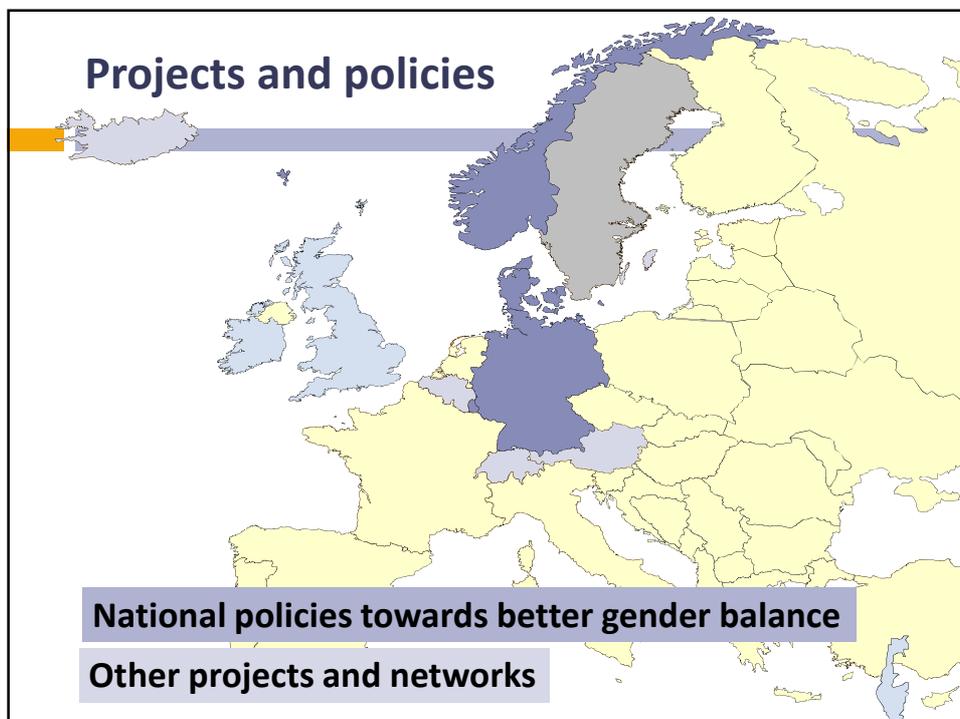
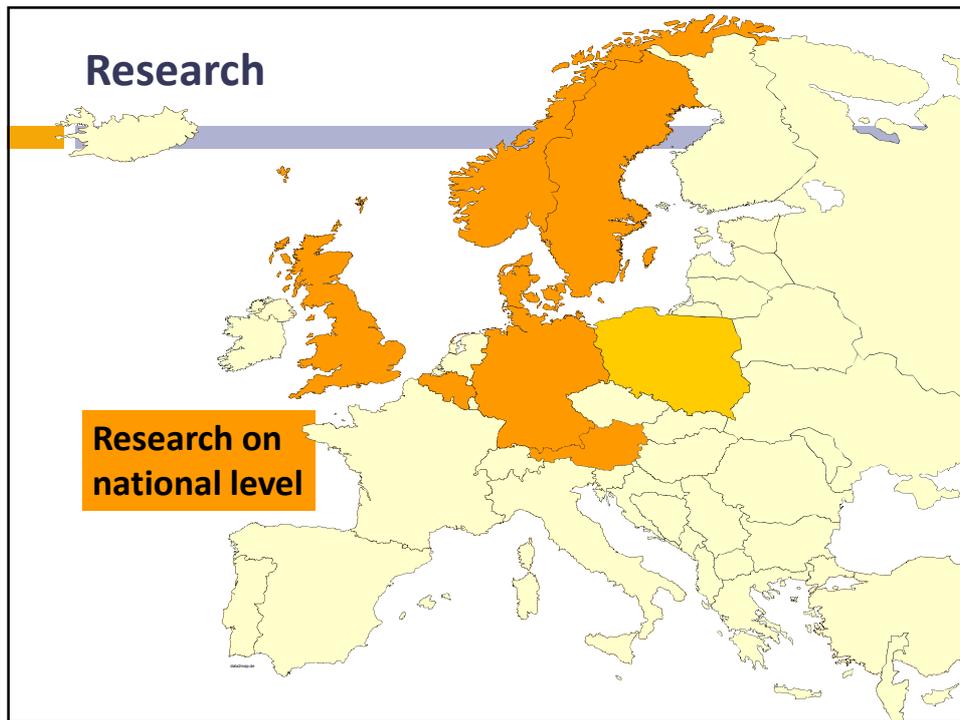


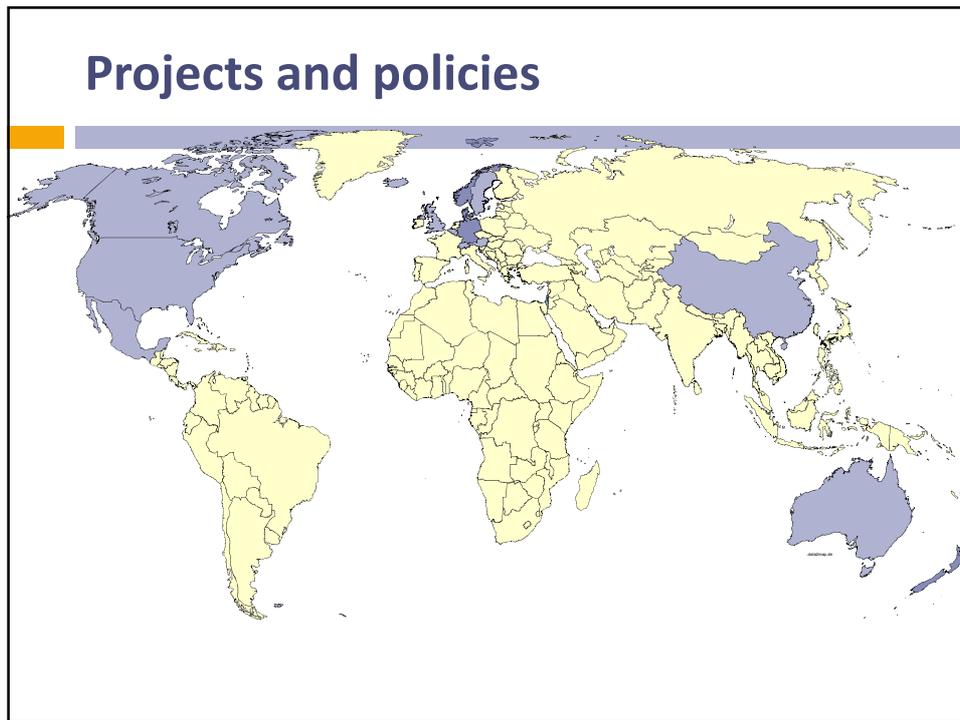
Overview

- An international overview: research and projects
- A short look back
- Issues of research
- Policies and projects for more male workers
- Why are they still so few – and what can we do about it?

Research on men and gender balance







A SHORT LOOK BACK

**Back to the seventies:
How it all began...**

**The nineties:
first European initiatives and networks**

**The last decade:
new programs, elaborated research**

Back to the seventies: how it all began...

- 1969 Gender equality (*Jämställdhet*) introduced to the Swedish school system.
- 1971 Affirmative actions for more men in pre-school in Sweden introduced
- 1975 number of men in pre-school education was nine times higher than in 1971 → 10% of teacher students were male.
- 1978 Affirmative actions were stopped after intervention of a teacher union.
(Wernersson 2015, p. 17)

The nineties: first European initiatives and networks

Childcare Network of the European Commission:
Working group on “Men as carers for children”

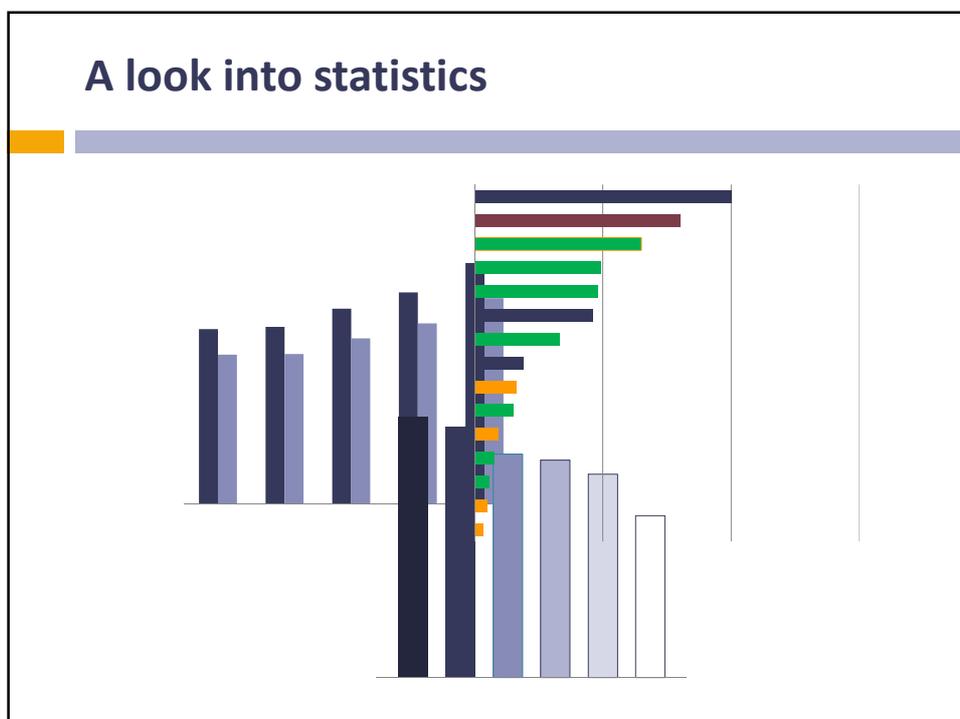
- 1993 First results of working group published
(EC Childcare Network 1993)
- 1996 Target: 20 % males in the ECEC workforce
within 10 years
(EC Childcare Network 1996)

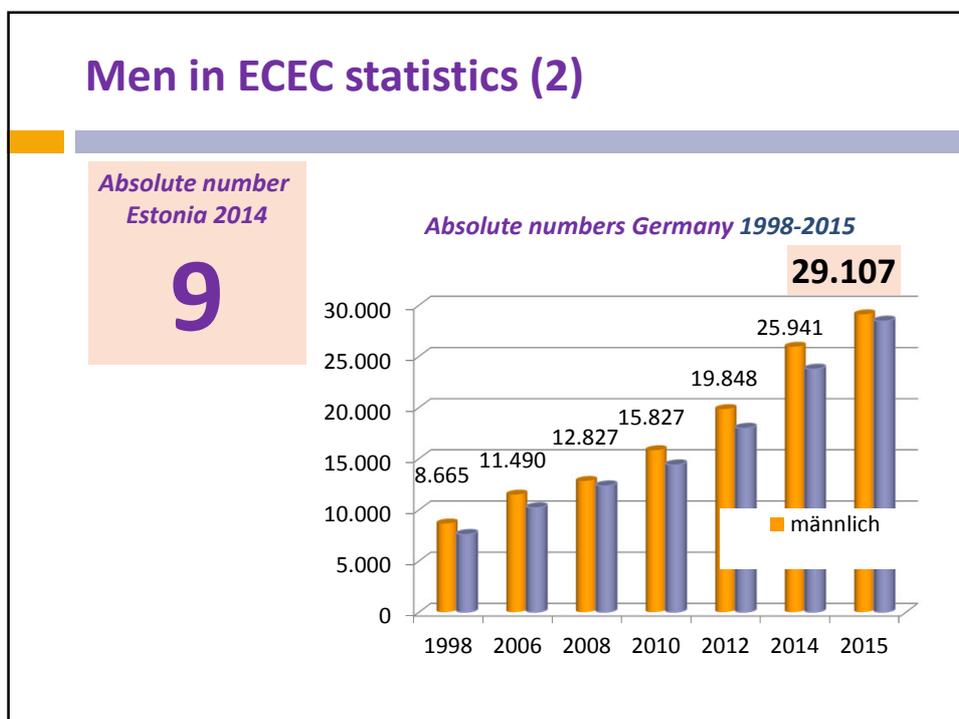
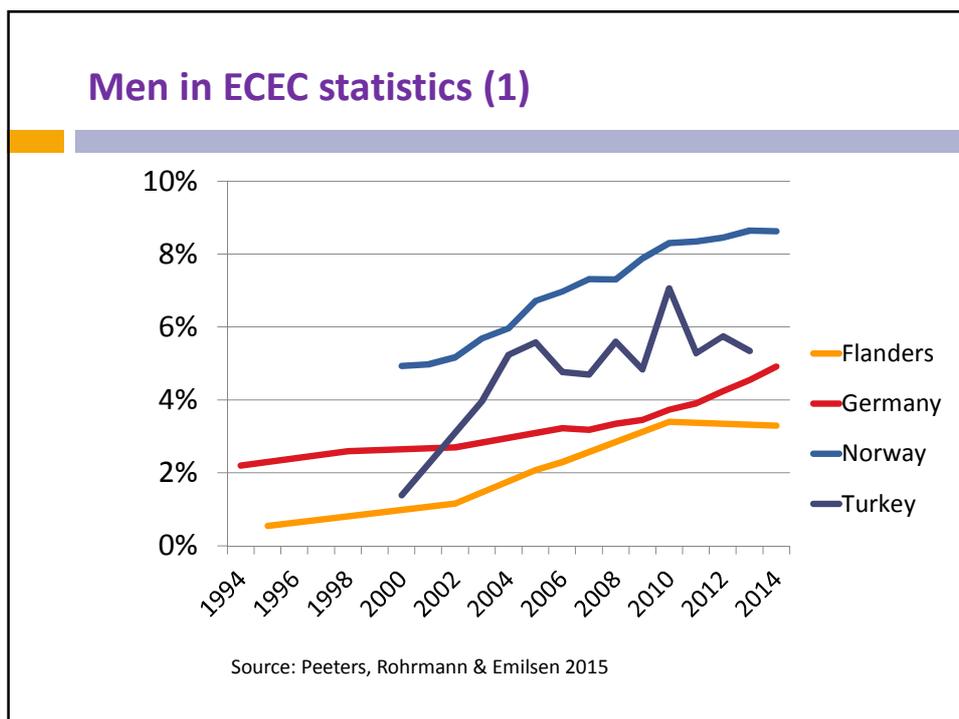
The new century: Broad political support on European level

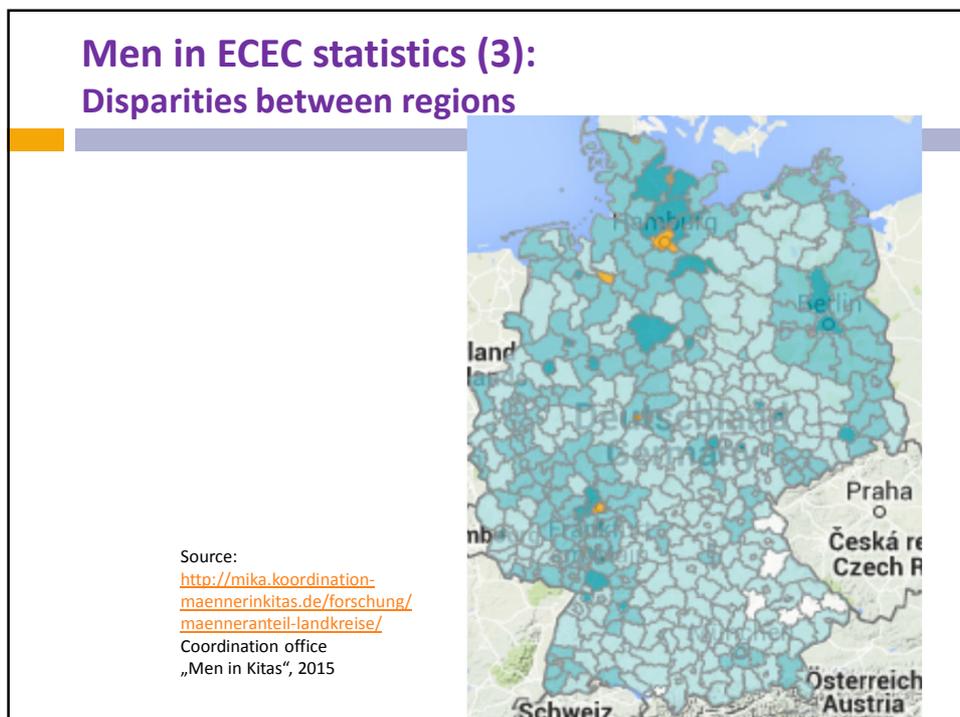
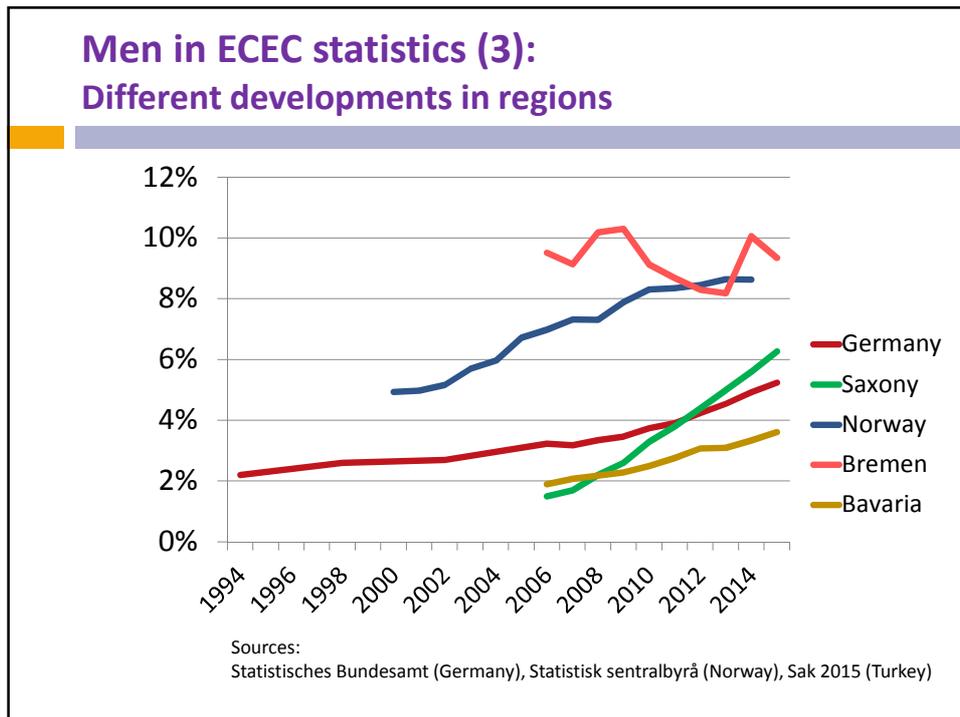
- 2001 OECD-report *Starting Strong I* stated a need for “strategies to recruit a mixed-gender, diverse work force”, but as *Starting Strong II*
- 2006 pointed out, only “few countries take the challenge seriously”, whereas “the issue is not even discussed in most countries” (OECD 2006, p. 170)
- 2011 “There is a pressing need to make a career in the ECEC sector more attractive to men in all EU countries” (EC, communication from the commission, 2011)

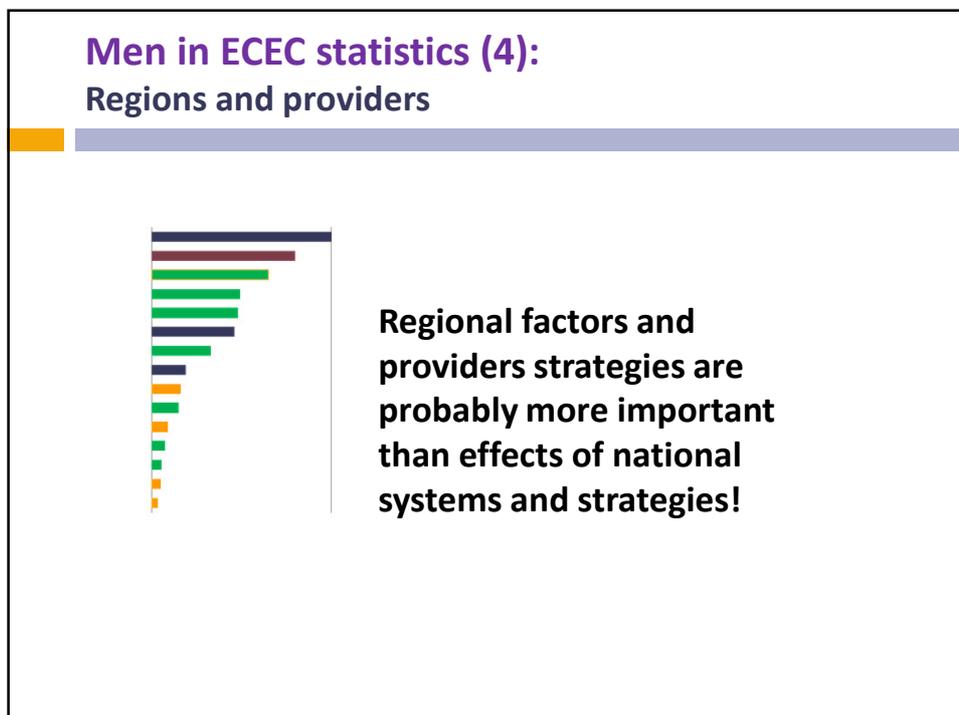
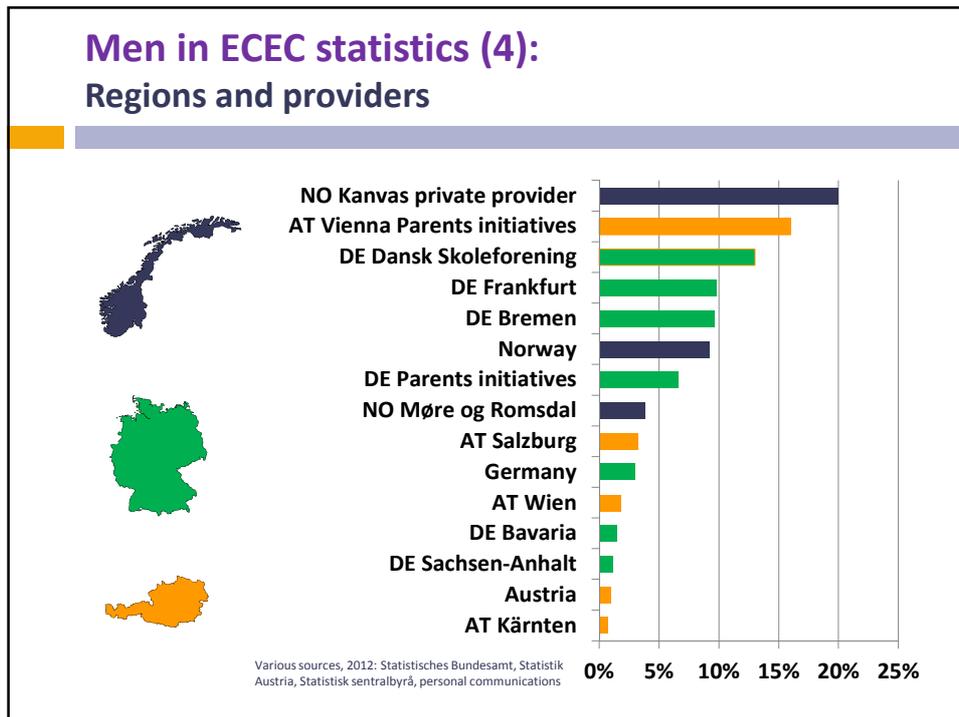
The last decade: new programs, elaborated research

- Major research studies and national reports in some countries (Germany, Austria, Norway, Sweden)
 - Research on different aspects of gender balance, and the situation of male workers, in many countries worldwide
 - National and regional strategies and programs for more men in ECEC in some countries
- but**
- still a low proportion of male workers (< 10%):
→ **huge expectations, dissapointing results?**









Why more men?

„Sex alone is not
an indicator of quality“

ECEC counselor (female)
(Rohrmann 2008)

Contradictory expectations: Why do we want more men?



Example 1: Norway

- Traditional gender roles are to be replaced by new patterns where men and women do the same and where women and men are not complementary categories. Gender categories are not to determine what men and women can, would and should do.
- A higher proportion of men increases the probability of a positive assessment of efforts put into gender equality work (assessment of the influence of the framework plan for the content and tasks of kindergartens, gender awareness when buying teaching aids, seminars about equality, actions to increase the number of men etc.).

*Evaluation of the 3rd Norwegian Action Plan,
Hoel & Johannesen 2010*

Example 2: Malaysia

- „ ...men are more stable emotionally, not as sensitive as women.
1. If any problem occurs, especially grievances or any matters concerning the centre or the children, they will try to solve them rationally.
 2. Men always are very strong to do all the necessary mobilizing corners. Arranging furniture and fittings. Carrying heavy stuff and other odd jobs that sometimes woman can't do.
 3. Technical matters concerning water, electricity, any bulb which are not functioning and other repairing elements. Men are smart and handy thus minimising the operation cost of the centre. Just imagine to call a plumber for a few minutes will cost us about 300 Malaysian Ringgit which is considered exorbitant.
 4. Men can perform interesting outdoor activities such as football, gardening (...) or any kind of sports.”

*Hajjah Mahanom Basri, President
Association of Childcare Centres Selangor, Kuala Lumpur*

http://www.menteach.org/news/men_we_need_you_most_in_early_childhood_as_a_father_figure_in_malaysia

Contradictious expectations: a theoretical model (Wernersson 2015)

Horizontal differentiation: feminity and masculinity as polarities

Vertical differentiation: gender/power/status hierarchy	Assumptions	Men and women have similar qualities/abilities	Men and women have different qualities/abilities
	Men and women have the same power/status/value	Men and women doing the same tasks are a model of gender equality for children	More men would add male complementary competencies and role models
	Men and women have more power/status/value	More men will make occupational conditions better (but may reduce career options for women)	Men are superior and bring important qualities to the profession, occupational conditions and the workplace

Why do men enter the field of ECEC?

“So then I moved to Norway and started working at a preschool as a substitute, then as a permanent substitute, and worked there for a year. And that was probably the most fun job I'd ever had ...”
 (Swedish ECEC worker, Heikkilä & Hellman 2015)

“In Turkey, a training as pre-school teachers ensures a good paid job. The status is not as high as a job as lawyer or a doctor, but it is a good alternative.”
 (Sak 2015, personal communication)

Why do men enter the field of ECEC?

- Many men find themselves in a kindergarten without really having planned to work in this field.
- (Most) men do not intend to be professional ECEC workers *because they are men*.
- Instead, motivations for choosing a profession in social and educational fields are varied:

“Their choice is made for multiple and comprehensive reasons. Regrettably, these reasons are seldom recognizable in recruitment initiatives, mainly guided by the perception of the male gender as a hegemonic man.”
(Wohlgemuth 2015)

Are men and women different?



Are men and women different?

Studies from several countries show:

- Men and women do not differ very much in dimensions of professional pedagogic behavior...
- ... but an implicit gendered subtext permanently ‘accompanies’ pedagogic behavior and daily routines (Tandem study, Brandes et al. 2015).
- “Male and female preschool teachers interpret children’s needs, interests and developmental levels of children differently from each other” (Sak et al. 2015)

BUT...

Do men really matter?

- It is not the differences between men and women, but the interactions between gender of children and gender of adults which are most relevant.
- Male workers can be of specific relevance for (some) boys (e.g. W-Inn study, Aigner et al. 2013).
- In situations with manifest gender connotations, ECEC workers seem to act in an especially authentic manner. (e.g. Tandem Study)



Constructing masculine identity

Several studies from different countries analysed how men construct their masculine identity in a feminized working environment.



Constructing masculine identity

Results show male workers struggling between

- societal norms and expectations of colleagues
- „protomascularity“ and „semifemininity“
- gendered and gender-neutral definitions of professionalism
- being idealized (feeling like a „king“, a „pop star“) and general distrust.



Fear of pedophilia

A „general distrust“ against male workers as potential sexual abusers is

- a problem reported from in many countries, but varying in extent and consequences;
- an important reason why men don't choose the profession or do not stay in the field ;
- a restriction in daily practice, especially in behalf of close body contact between professionals and children.

Men working with infants

What do we know about men working with infants?

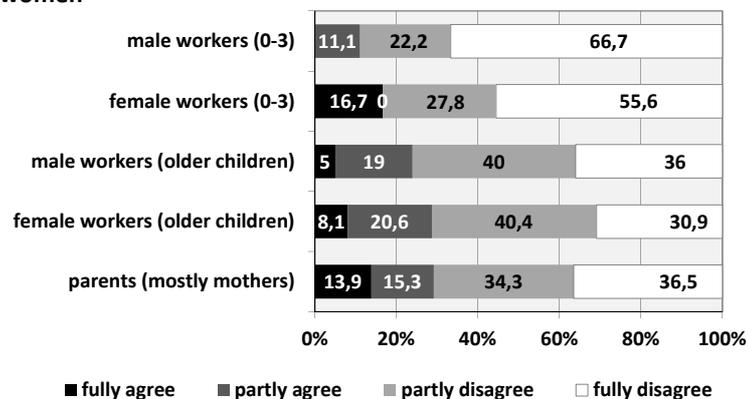
Men working with infants

What do we know about men and women working with infants?

- Father research shows few gender differences, but points out the importance of the „early triad“
- Secure attachment relations seem to be more likely between female childcare workers and girls
- Frequent face-to-face interactions and close and physical contact are specific challenges of work with infants – especially for men
- Those men who work with infants love their work

Who should care for infants?

„Children up to three years should be cared for by women“



Results from the study *elementar* – men in educational work with children
 Rohrmann (2012): Men in the work with children under three
 Presentation on 22st EECERA Annual Conference in Oporto, Portugal

31.8.2012

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Who should care for infants?

I just liked the work with infants (...) the children are very natural, it's good to work with them (...)

I had to fight a long time for this (...) the impression you have to double or triple your efforts to get what you want.

[It was argued] with care tasks, that parents might not accept it if a man changes nappies, although I was changing my own childrens nappies. (...)

[Now:] It is... also my colleague [female] says – it has'nt been better! Like in family – a man, a woman, many children, there is nothing what could be better.

experienced male worker from Austria,
with special qualification for work with infants

31.8.2012

Rohrmann (2012): Men in the work with children under three
Presentation on 22st EECERA Annual Conference in Oporto, Portugal

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POLICIES AND PROJECTS FOR MORE MALE WORKERS

Sweden in the seventies: Efforts stopped after first results

- Affirmative action led to a rise of proportion of male preschool teacher students up to 10%.
- Teacher union complained that men tended to occupy the few superior positions instead of working with the children.
- After evaluation, the programme was stopped.
- ***After this, nothing happened for decades.***



Norway: Long-term measures for more men

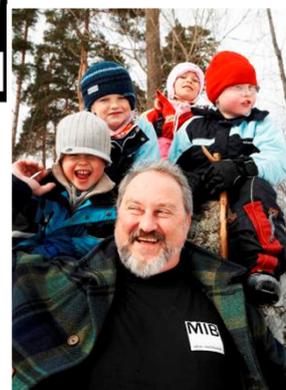


Image source: MIB Asker, Anders Farstad

Germany: A decade towards more men



(Do male ECEC workers always need a beard?!)

Image sources: PR Campaigns of model projects for *More men in ECEC*, Germany

Germany: 2005-2010: Men in ECEC become an issue

- 2005 First regional studies on men in ECEC
- 2005 Model project on new vocational orientations for boys – „Neue Wege für Jungs“
- 2007 1. nationwide conference „Men in Kitas“
- 2008 Ministry of Family affairs initiates study „Male workers in ECE...“
- 2010 Study published, more projects start



Germany: 2010-2014: Program „More men in Kitas“

- Educational policies towards a higher status and professionalization of ECEC
- Change of paradigms in gender equality policies

„We want to develop an independent policy for boys and men. Existing projects for boys and young men will be continued and intensified. Thus we will open new and diverse perspectives in educational and care professions to them.“

Source: 2009 Coalition contract of the German Government
„Wachstum, Bildung und Zusammenarbeit“, p. 47. (Translation: T.R.)

Germany: 2010-2014: Program „More men in Kitas“

State-funded program:

- 2010 Coordination office „Men in ECEC“
- 2011-2013 ESF model program „MORE men in Kitas“
- 2011-2014 Research: „Tandem study“ Dresden
- Promotion of job shifting into the field →
- 2015 new ESF model program for job shifters
- *
• Public and scientific discourse promotes more initiatives and projects – regional and beyond

Coordination office „Men in ECEC“

Main tasks

- Information
- Strategic counselling
- Workshops and conferences
- Networking
- Public relations



www.koordination-maennerinkitas.de

Germany: ESF model program „MORE men in Kitas“

- 16 model projects in 13 federal states
- 13 million € financial support
- Development of innovative strategies and best practice
- Wide spectrum of measures and issues



Germany: ESF model program „MORE men in Kitas“

Issues and fields of activities of model projects:

- Vocational orientation
- Vocational training and job shifters
- On-the-job-training on gender issues
- Teamcoaching and mentoring
- Working groups for male ECEC workers
- Concepts regarding „general distrust“ against male workers - prevention of abuse and violence
- Public relations:
campaigns, media, websites, social media

Training programme for men in ECEC in China

“It will soon rain men at kindergartens...”



Training programme for men in ECEC in China

A programme in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, China (2010):

- Governmental funded programme
- working against traditional stereotypes
- 5 years of university training
- course fees, accomodation and food fully paid by the state.

➔ **More than 10.000 applicants for 300 places!**

Sources:

- Wu, Yiyao (2010). More men becoming kindergarten teachers. China Daily, 1.6.2010. [Online] URL: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/usa/2010-06/01/content_11019298.htm [27.11.2010].
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Programme for job shifters in Denmark

SKIFT JOB – IKKE KØN

DU BEHØVER IKKE SKIFTE IDENTITET FOR AT SKIFTE BRANCHE **EFTER I JOB**

DU BEHØVER IKKE SKIFTE IDENTITET FOR AT SKIFTE BRANCHE **EFTER I JOB**

DU BEHØVER IKKE SKIFTE IDENTITET FOR AT SKIFTE BRANCHE **EFTER I JOB**

FØR ARBEJDSLØS

MINISTER FOR **Ligestilling**

Programme for job shifters in Denmark

MINISTER FOR
Ligestilling

www.skiftjob.dk serves as a „tool box“ for

- job counsellors
- project leaders
- institutions in the social field
- training institutions
- politicians and experts responsible for policy development

Programme for job shifters in Germany

- Many men are interested in a professional perspective in ECEC: more than 1000 requests to Ministry of Family Affairs and model projects
 - Web based information portal on vocational training institutions and possibilities for job shifters
 - Development of new concepts for vocational training („dual system“) and for qualifying job shifters
- **new ESF model programme 2014-2020**
funded with ~ 16 million € (!).

WHY ARE THEY STILL SO FEW...

... and what can we do about it?

Towards a better gender balance in ECEC

- The number and proportion of men will not increase without specific actions
- Different measures in several areas and in different stages of vocational biographies are necessary
- For parity between women and men, a positive policy is needed for at least 10 years (Moss 2003)



Towards a better gender balance in ECEC

- Vocational orientation for boys
- Networking - bringing men together
- Gender sensitive education and support of gender-mixed teams
- A new understanding of care, education and the body



Vocational orientation



Peers play an important role:

- Negative attitudes towards men in ECEC are most often reported from male adolescents.
- The „general distrust“ is most relevant in the time of vocational training and around first vocational experiences, whereas experienced workers report less problems.

Vocational orientation



Attitudes *before* and *after* a male child care worker presented his job for one hour in a group of male pupils:

„This is only a job for women“

Before the intervention: 50%

After the intervention: less than 10%

Scepticism against male child care workers

(men in kindergarten are „gay“, „no real men“ etc.)

Before the intervention: 25%

After the intervention: 10%

(„Who’s interested in it shall do it“: 90%)

(N=70, Austria, Koch 2013)

Networking: Bringing men together



Support for male ECEC workers

Working groups for men in ECEC

Working groups of/for male ECEC workers are an important part of strategies for more men in the field in Germany, New Zealand, Norway, and elsewhere:

- Exchange and dialogue of male workers
- Thematic work on various pedagogical issues
- Sometimes self organized, more often coordinated or lead by professionals.

Cross-country research (Emilsen & Rohrmann 2013, Dayan et al. 2013)

Network of male ECEC workers in New Zealand

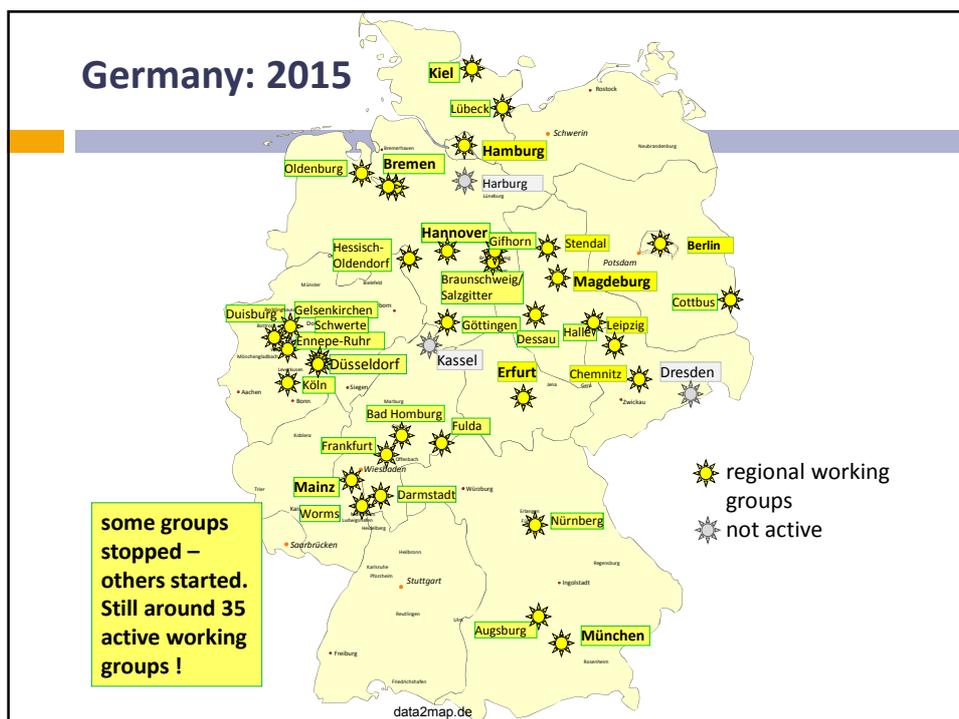


Fifth Annual meeting of the New Zealand network of male ECEC workers (ECE-MeNZ)



The Wilderness Adventure!





Working groups for men in ECEC: Issues

- Working as a man in a female team
- The „general distrust“ – fear of pedophilia

„These issues are very important for the men, and there is no other context in which they can be discussed.“

Group leader, Germany

Working groups for men in ECEC:

Issues (Germany, Rohrmann 2013)

- Working as a man in a female team (9)
- The „general distrust“ of men (8)
- Role as a man in the institution (7)
- Reflection of masculinity, male identity, autobiography (7)
- Exchanging every day practices, general and specific educational issues (10)
- Gender sensitive pedagogy & gender mainstreaming (7)
- Public Relations for more men, boys’ vocational orientations (7)
- *and many other issues ...*

A grass-roots support group for men in ECE: An experience from Israel

Togetherness:

„One of the most exciting things about it was meeting Israeli men, and see the range of characters: religious educators, Orthodox men, and settlers, and others who are secular from Tel-Aviv, leftist, and from all walks of life.

And we all came because of our passion for education, through action, wanting to share, perhaps to become more professional and feel part of a group. I think it is very very important.“ (Haim)

(Dayan, Brody & Perez 2013)

Men’s working groups as empowerment

Men in ECECs claim that they make a difference – they challenge the culture and traditions in ECECs.

Men’s working groups ensure this by

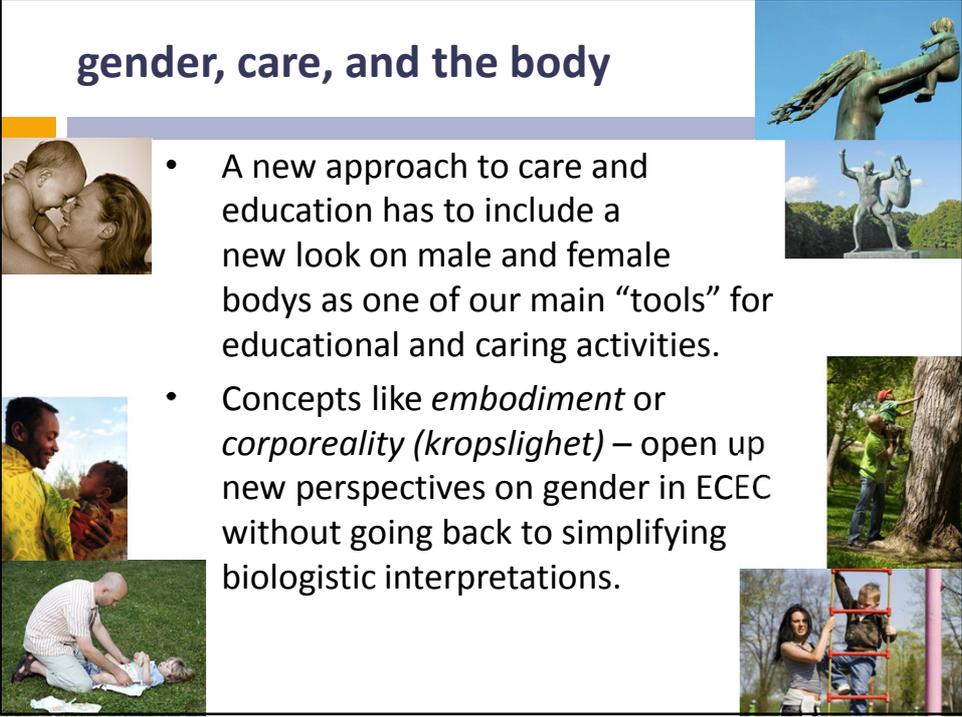
- supporting men and keeping them in the field;
- giving room for reflection of gender issues and the role of men and women in ECEC;
- working on many others issues which are relevant for the further development of ECEC;
- promoting an “empowerment process from the stage of loneliness to the experience of togetherness, to a sense of agency and power” (Dayan et al. 2013).

Supporting men is not enough: Men and gender equality

Do projects for more men in ECEC lead to more stereotyping and to devaluation of women’s work?

- *Maybe* – if there is no reflection of gender issues in teams and in providers’ structures.
- More men do not ensure more gender equality – but gender equality without men is only „half of the game“.
- Gender sensitive pedagogy is a challenge for all people in ECEC – men and women, boys and girls, mothers and fathers!
(Gender Loops 2008; Rohrmann et al. 2014; Emilsen 2015)

gender, care, and the body



- A new approach to care and education has to include a new look on male and female bodys as one of our main “tools” for educational and caring activities.
- Concepts like *embodiment* or *corporeality (kropslighet)* – open up new perspectives on gender in ECEC without going back to simplifying biologicistic interpretations.

gender, care, and the body

- Traditionally, care has been considered as “women’s work”.
- Since the turn of the century, “investment in the early years” is considered as very important. Academisation of ECEC has led to a higher esteem of workers – but at the same time to a denial of the body in ECEC work.
- “Education” is done by skilled and better-paid women. “Care” is separated from learning and executed by unskilled – but as well mostly female – staff (*“invisible work”*).

gender, care, and the body

- The denial of the body creates a “mute” body which is always female. This makes it difficult for men to find their place in ECEC.
- This is especially relevant in the context of dealing with the “fear of pedophilia”.
- Close body contact and caressing is necessarily part of ECEC work...
- ...but it has to be practiced in regard of the emotional expressions and needs of the child, not of the educator (Peeters 2012).



Conclusion

1. This is not just about men.
It is about **gender balance** in the work force.
2. This is not just about how to get men into ECEC.
It is about
 - **creating open spaces** where ECEC workers can position and develop themselves as men and women;
 - developing a new, gender conscious **understanding of professionalism** that goes beyond traditional gendered notions.

To close...



What kind of culture do we need to attract men and women to join in professional work with children in ECEC institutions?



References

Many references can be found in the following EECERJ special issue

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International research network

EECERA Special Interest Group

Gender Balance in the ECEC work force

www.siggender.eu

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www.koordination-maennerinkitas.de