



PARENT

Context Information and Needs Assessment

Austria

Institute for Masculinity Research and Gender Studies (VMG),
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PARENT: Promotion, Awareness Raising and Engagement of Men in Nurture Transformations

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The PARENT report Austria is divided into two main chapters. The first part of the report provides context information relevant for the topic of active fatherhood, while the second part of the report presents the results of the Austrian needs assessment for the PARENT project.

I. PARENT - CONTEXT INFORMATION AUSTRIA

The Austrian context information is divided into two subchapters. It starts with a general part (chapter two) in which gender based violence and appropriate protection laws and regulation, the health care system as well as the Austrian leave system are described with a special focus on caring masculinities. Afterwards a specific part provides insights into the socio-economic context of the area in which the PARENT project will take place and provide insights into parental leave arrangements in Styria.

1. General part

1.1. Gender-based violence prevention laws, plans and/or regulations at national/local level

The following historical developments are important in Austria in order to understand the relationship between violence, gender, and families: The penalty right for physical punishment of wives was abolished at the end of the 19th century. Parents were prohibited from abusing "their" children in 1989. Until 1975 it was the partners "conjugal duty" to carry out sexual intercourse. Until 1978 the man was regarded as the "head of the family". The United Nations drew up a convention against all discrimination against women in 1979, Austria ratified in 1982. Since 1989 "rape in marriage" has been prosecuted under criminal law. Since May 1997, the protection of victims of violence has been significantly improved (Protection against Violence Act).¹

Austria was the first country in Europe to enact a law against violence: Federal Act on Protection against Violence in the Family, 1997. It aims to protect persons affected by violence in the family sphere, regardless of sex, marital status, age, and relationship to the endangered person. Main measures connected to this Act:

- Prohibition of entry and expulsion for protection against violence (§ 38a SPG).
- Immediate proactive assistance for victims through intervention agencies (centres for the prevention of violence in each province)
- Civil protection injunction (temporary injunction) for three months or longer. Victims of domestic violence can apply to the family court for a temporary injunction to extend protection within ten days. This extends police removal to 20 days. During this period, the family court decides on the duration of protection.

The Criminal Law Amendment Act 2006 integrated the "persistent persecution" into the Austrian legal system ("stalking"). Four acts are prohibited under criminal law: the laying in wait or the searching for the spatial proximity of the victim, the tracking the victim through letters, phone calls, e-mails or SMS, ordering goods or services for the victim using their data and arranging contacts with other persons, using the personal data of the victim. Under the new law stalking charges have risen rapidly and massively which underlines the importance of the law.²

¹ Gewaltschutzgesetz und Interventionssysteme in Österreich, in: KAVEMANN, BARBARA, KREYSSIG, ULRIKE (Hrsg.): Handbuch Kinder und häusliche Gewalt, Springer VS, 2013.

² BUNDESMINISTERIUM FÜR WIRTSCHAFT, FAMILIE UND JUGEND (2009). 5. Österreichischer Familienbericht – auf einen Blick. <https://www.eltern-bildung.at/download/familienbericht-1999-2009>



The 2004 Amendment to Criminal Law Act especially improved the law on sexual offences. In addition, a redefinition of the criminal law on trafficking in human beings and the legal equality of rape in and outside the marriage were regulated. Already since 1989 rape and sexual coercion in a marriage or cohabitation was regulated with penalty, but criminal prosecution of the offender presupposed the victim's request.³

The Second Violence Protection Act (since June 2009) brought both an improved protection as well as more comprehensive support for victims of violence. A major innovation is the introduction of a criminal offence which records acts of violence committed against a person over a longer period of time as "continued use of violence" and threatens them with increased penalties. This new law reacts on the fact that violence in relationships is often not a singular assault, but lasts for longer periods of time. A further innovation concerns the extension of the duration of a prohibition of entry to two weeks, or four weeks in the case of an interlocutory injunction.⁴

1.2. Data on gender-based violence in the country

One of the most significant arenas of gender inequality is men's violence against women in the private sphere. According to various national data in the *EU Study on the Role of Men in Gender Equality*, between 69 percent and 96 percent of acts of Intimate Relationship Violence (IRV) are committed by men against women.⁵ While some prevalence studies of violence in relationships show a gender symmetry of the proportions of female and male victims of IRV at first sight,⁶ many studies have led to a different picture: Women are more often exposed to severe and systematic violence in intimate relationships than men⁷ – which holds for physical, sexualised and psychological violence. In fact, there is no society where symmetry between female and male victims of IRV can be found by in-depth-analyses. On the level of quantitative data, gender symmetry of IRV in heterosexual relationships can only be constituted when all acts of violence are considered in an unweighted manner, i.e. not taking severity, frequency or consequences into account. In prevalence studies, social phenomena are reduced to quantitative data to a certain degree. As concerns violence, a quite high degree of reduction would mean to reduce data about experiences of violence by the partner to a dichotomous yes/no-level, irrespective of severity, frequency, consequences or context; e.g. resistance of women in cases of physical violence perpetrated by men is measured as violence acts, which increases the rate of

³ BUNDESMINISTERIUM FÜR WIRTSCHAFT, FAMILIE UND JUGEND (2009). 5. Österreichischer Familienbericht – auf einen Blick. <https://www.eltern-bildung.at/download/familienbericht-1999-2009>

⁴ BUNDESMINISTERIUM FÜR WIRTSCHAFT, FAMILIE UND JUGEND (2009). 5. Österreichischer Familienbericht – auf einen Blick. <https://www.eltern-bildung.at/download/familienbericht-1999-2009>

⁵ SCAMBOR, E., WOJNICKA, K. BERGMANN, N. (Hg.) (2013). *The Role of Men in Gender Equality – European strategies & insights*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, <https://vimg-steiermark.at/de/forschung/publikation/study-role-men-gender-equality>

⁶ HEISKANEN, MARKKU AND ELINA RUUSKANEN (2011): *Men's Experiences of Violence in Finland 2009* (Publication Series No. 71 of the European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, affiliated with the United Nations, HEUNI). Helsinki: HEUNI.

KAPPELLA, OLAF, ANDREAS BAIERL, CHRISTIANE RILLE-PFEIFFER, CHRISTINE GESERICK AND EVA-MARIA SCHMIDT (2011): *Gewalt in der Familie und im nahen sozialen Umfeld. Österreichische Prävalenzstudie zur Gewalt an Frauen und Männern* (with M. Schröttle). Wien: Österreichisches Institut für Familienforschung an der Universität Wien (ÖIF).

WATSON, DOROTHY AND SARA PARSONS (2005): *Domestic Abuse of Women and Men in Ireland. Report on the National Study on Domestic Abuse*. Dublin, Ireland: National Crime Council in association with the Economic and Social Research Institute.

⁷ FORSCHUNGSNETZ GEWALT IM GESCHLECHTERVERHÄLTNIS [GiG-net] (2008): *Gewalt im Geschlechterverhältnis. Erkenntnisse und Konsequenzen für Politik, Wissenschaft und soziale Praxis*. Opladen: Verlag Barbara Budrich.

KIMMEL, MICHAEL (2002): *Gender Symmetry in Domestic Violence. A Substantive and Methodological Research Review*. *Violence Against Women* (11): 1332–1363.

SCAMBOR ET AL., 2013.



female perpetrators. Consequently, qualitative studies are needed in addition to quantitative studies on the prevalence of IRV, to help understand the phenomena behind the data.⁸

Austrian Statistics list reports on police interventions to centres for the prevention of violence, 1997-2017: 208.521 cases, thereof 124.461 bans on entry. While in the longer perspective, a significant increase took place from the late 1990s to the early 2000s. However, a slower and less pronounced increase also took place between 2012 and 2017.

The Austrian statistics report does not directly identify the gender of the perpetrators. However, it states that 88 % of the endangerers have been men.⁹

Table (1) Police interventions 1997 to 2017, Austria

Year	Reports to centres for the prevention of violence on police interventions	... of which: prohibitions to enter	Further interventions in the case of violence in the family (e.g. dispute resolution, stalking complaints)	Violation of prohibitions to enter	Violation of prohibitions to enter (percentage)
1997	1.449	1.449	k. D.	138	k. D.
1998	2.673	2.673	k. D.	252	k. D.
1999	8.309	3.076	5.233	301	9,8 %
2000	10.992	3.354	7.638	430	12,8 %
2001	10.800	3.283	7.517	508	15,5 %
2002	11.335	3.944	7.391	475	12,0 %
2003	10.738	4.180	6.558	633	15,1 %
2004	10.959	4.764	6.195	641	13,5 %
2005	11.789	5.618	6.171	668	11,9 %
2006	13.702	7.235	6.467	629	8,7 %
2007	11.314	6.347	4.967	586	9,2 %
2008	11.684	6.566	5.118	615	9,4 %
2009	12.038	6.731	5.307	655	9,7 %
2010	12.403	6.759	5.644	770	11,0 %
2011	9.434	7.993	1.441	k. D.	k. D.
2012	9.322	8.063	1.259	k. D.	k. D.
2013	9.538	8.307	1.231	k. D.	k. D.
2014	9.607	8.466	1.141	k. D.	k. D.
2015	9.398	8.261	1.137	k. D.	k. D.
2016	10.340	8.637	1.703	k. D.	k. D.
2017	10.697	8.755	1.046	k. D.	k. D.
Gesamt	208.521	124.461	83.164	-	-

Source: Wiener Interventionsstelle gegen Gewalt in der Familie: Österreichweite Statistik 2017,

<https://www.interventionsstelle-wien.at/download/?id=595>

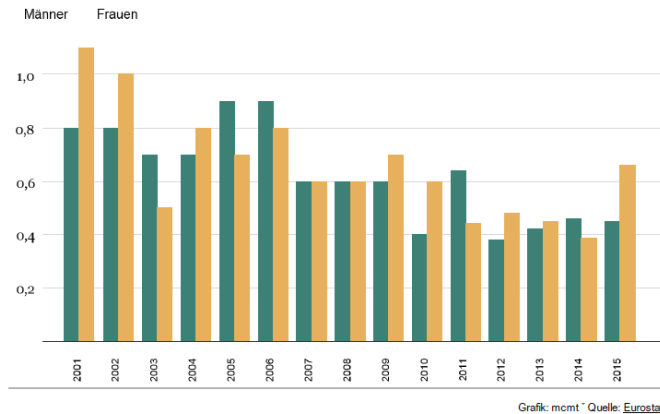
Based on the figures of the Federal Ministry of the Interior for the years 1997 to 2010. For 2011 to 2017 the figures of the centres for the prevention of violence/intervention centres were used. (28.5.2019)

While the average number of female victims of homicide for 2002-2015 are about EU average, the number of male victims is half of the EU average (Matzenberger 2019, referring to Eurostat).

Figure (1) Death rate due to homicide by sex in Austria, 2001-2015, values per 100.000 inhabitants

⁸ HESTER, MARIANNE (2009): Who Does What to Whom? Gender and Domestic Violence Perpetrators. Bristol: University of Bristol in association with the Northern Rock Foundation.

⁹ WIENER INTERVENTIONSSTELLE GEGEN GEWALT IN DER FAMILIE: Österreichweite Statistik 2017, <https://www.interventionsstelle-wien.at/download/?id=595> p.58



Source: Michael Matzenberger, *Der Standard*, 19.1.2019

In 2015, there were 0.57 victims per 100,000 inhabitants. In the EU, this number is only lower in Germany, France, Ireland and the UK (ibid.). About 90 % of the sentenced perpetrators/killers are men (ibid.) According to Matzenberger, murders in Austria primarily take place in the closest vicinity. Two-thirds to three-quarters of perpetrators and victims were acquaintances or relatives. However, as Matzenberger distinguishes: *“Women are more likely to be killed by men known to them, men to a greater extent even by men unknown to them.”*

Data show that both boys and older men are more likely to become victims of physical violence than ‘men in their prime’. For example, in Austria boys are more affected than girls concerning physical abuse by their parents. Boys (33%) are more often heavily slapped in the face than girls (23%), and 10% of girls but 14% of boys reported being heavily beaten by their parents.¹⁰

1.3. Health care system in the country

Austria has extremely high health insurance coverage: Almost 100% of the citizens are integrated into the public insurance system. A regional health insurance fund is responsible for each federal state. One of the most important health indicators is life expectancy: 80.6 years average in the EU, in Austria it was 81.3 years on average in 2015, which is 0.7 years higher than in the EU (see figure 2).

¹⁰ BUNDESMINISTERIUM FÜR WIRTSCHAFT, FAMILIE UND JUGEND (2009). 5. Österreichischer Familienbericht – auf einen Blick. <https://www.eltern-bildung.at/download/familienbericht-1999-2009> p. 164

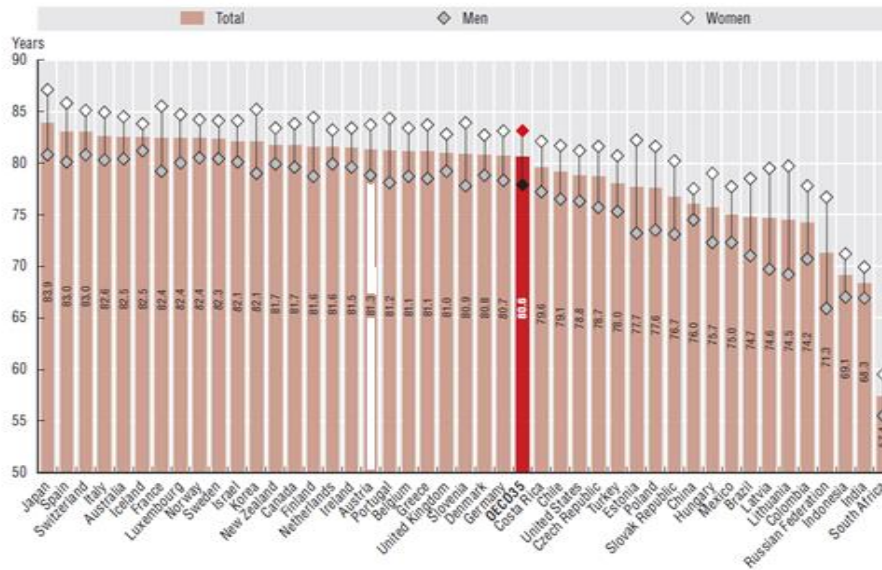
KASSIS, W., ARTZ, S., SCAMBOR, C., SCAMBOR, E. & MOLDENHAUER, S. (2012). Finding the way out: A non-dichotomous understanding of violence and depression resilience of adolescents who are exposed to family violence. *Child Abuse & Neglect*.

KASSIS, W., BOHNE, S., SCAMBOR, E., SCAMBOR, C., MITTISCHEK, L., BUSCHE, M., PUCHERT, R., ROMERO, A., ABRIEL, P., HRŽENJAK, M. & HUMER, Ž (2011). STAMINA. Formation of non-violent behaviour in school and during leisure time among young adults from violent families. <https://vmg-steiermark.at/de/forschung/publikation/stamina-formation-non-violent-behaviour-school-and-during-leisure-time-among>

SCAMBOR, E., WOJNICKA, K. BERGMANN, N. (Hg.) (2013). The Role of Men in Gender Equality – European strategies & insights. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, <https://vmg-steiermark.at/de/forschung/publikation/study-role-men-gender-equality> p. 114



Figure (2): Life expectancy at birth by sex, 2015 (or nearest year)

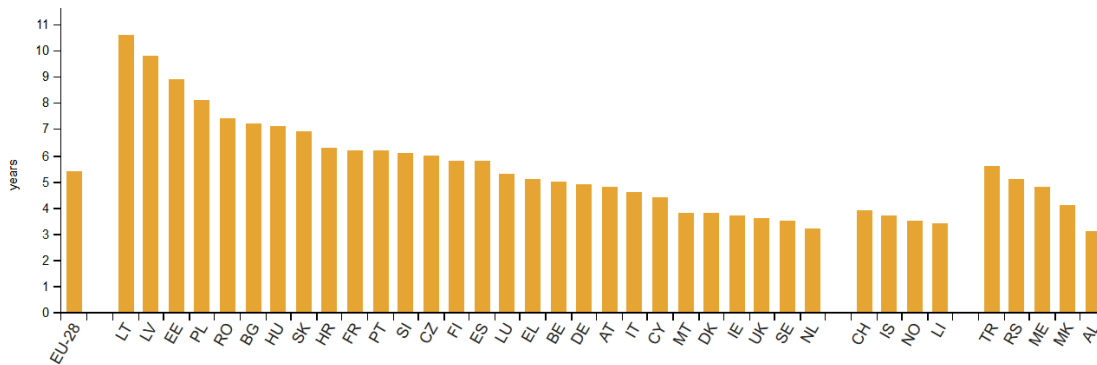


Note: Countries are ranked in descending order of life expectancy for the whole population.
 Source: OECD Health Statistics 2017.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933602291>

The gender gap in life expectancy is lower than in most other European countries: In 2016, men died 5.4 years earlier than women in the EU, but 4.8 years earlier in Austria. As a comparison within the EU, the gap is highest in Lithuania (10.6) and lowest in the Netherlands.

Figure (3): Life expectancy at birth, gender gap, 2016 (years, female life expectancy - male life expectancy)



Source: Eurostat, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Mortality_and_life_expectancy_statistics (28.5.2019)

Patients themselves must pay for a few services (e.g. treatment by private doctors, in private hospitals, orthodontic treatments, dental bridges, etc.). However, part of the costs will be reimbursed by their health insurance fund (Krankenkasse). In the event of hospitalisation, a certain sum is payable by the patient for each day spent in hospital.

One measure of preventative care is the yearly health-check-up (Vorsorgeuntersuchung), available at the general practitioner and at day clinics operated by health insurance institutions. Once a year, all people aged 18 and above are entitled to this free medical check-up if they are resident in Austria, even if they are not insured. The national immunisation programme offers most vaccines free of charge to children and young adults up to the age of 15 years.



On a policy level, diversity and gender are recognized as important. In 2012 the Bundesgesundheitskommission (Federal Health Commission) and the Austrian Council of Ministers approved health targets at federal level. They were mentioned in two government programmes and are an important basis for the health reform process. Number 2 among the 10 targets states: *“To promote fair and equal opportunities in health, irrespective of gender, socio-economic group, ethnic origin and age”*.¹¹ The focus of actions lies on education and early-life intervention, less on gender-specific care.

Around Europe, regarding positive examples of where male focussed services are emerging, one of the earliest examples was in Vienna in 1999, where a Men’s Health Day was seen to be a huge success. In 2002, the M.E.N. health centre was founded in Vienna, providing comprehensive health services for men in an urban area and closely cooperating with the women’s health centre F.E.M. Also in Austria, a network of organisations (AMÖ) has developed in 2001 that provide psychosocial counselling for men in difficult situations, such as divorce, custody conflicts, problems at work or social isolation, thus contributing to the mental health of men. Most of these organisations provide gender-reflective work with boys and male juveniles at schools or youth centres, with workshops and other activities in the fields of relationship, sexuality, male roles, working life and other topics that address men’s health in a broad sense.¹² Similar work is done in other countries as well, for example Germany or Switzerland.¹³ Moreover, in 2004 and 2011, two Men’s Health Reports have been issued and in the year 2016 an Umbrella organisation for men’s work in Austria (DMÖ) has been established, focussing a.o. on men’s health issues and caring masculinity issues

1.4. Parental leave laws, plans and/or regulations at national/local level

Austrian fathers became involved step by step in measures of parental leave in the last decades, which in the context of this topic also changed their status:

- 1990: optionally parental leave women/men (derived claim)
- 2000: independent claim for fathers (but first claim for mothers)
- 2005: equal claim rights for both

According to Posch (2017), the following relevant steps and measures have been implemented in Austria in the last decades:

- Childcare Benefit Act (KBGG) since 1 January 2002
- Since 2010, a large number of variants have been implemented in which exemptions and transfer payments (KBG=Kinderbetreuungsgeld) have been made possible (about 30+6, 20+4, 12+2 etc.)
- “Papa month” (bonus/lump sum for fathers staying at home; however, this payment will be subtracted from the KBG later).

According to the Austrian workers council (Arbeiterkammer), for births after 1 March 2017, parents can choose between the income-dependent childcare allowance and the new childcare allowance account. The Family Time Bonus Act (Familienzeitbonusgesetz) provides fathers with statutory paternity leave and benefits for the first time. The act applies to children of natural or adoptive fathers, on or after March 1, 2017. With the new childcare allowance account, parents can decide for

¹¹ BUNDESMINISTERIUM FÜR ARBEIT, SOZIALES, GESUNDHEIT UND KONSUMENTENSCHUTZ (2019). Austrian Health Targets English Summary, <https://gesundheitsziele-oesterreich.at/english-summary/> (6.5.2019)

¹² SCAMBOR, C. (2010). Running a counselling service for men. In D. Conrad & A. White (Eds.), Promoting men’s mental health (pp. 230-240). Oxford: Radcliffe.

¹³ SCAMBOR, E., WOJNICKA, K. BERGMANN, N. (Hg.) (2013). The Role of Men in Gender Equality – European strategies & insights. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, <https://vmg-steiermark.at/de/forschung/publikation/study-role-men-gender-equality> p. 130



themselves how long they would like to receive the childcare allowance within a time frame. As the Austrian government states (at www.help.gv.at), parents can choose from these variants:

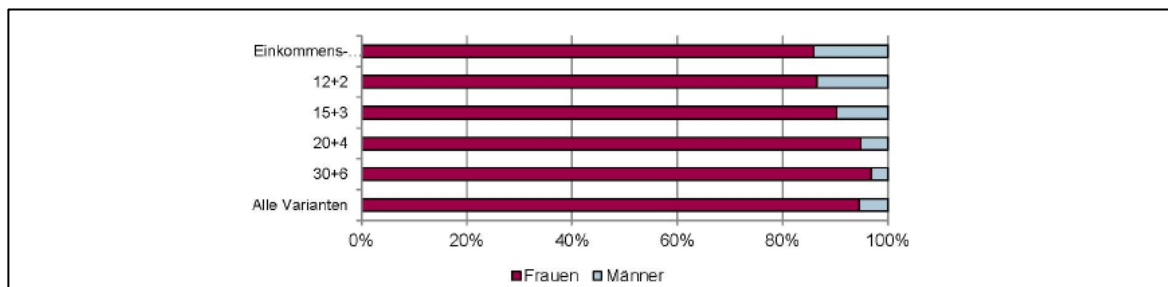
- **Childcare account:** A lump sum with higher flexibility (single: 365-851 days; shared: 456-1,063 days), amount 14.53 Euro to 33.88 Euro per day (depending on selected variant), 20 percent reserved for second parent.
- **Income dependent child care allowance:** up to 365 days from birth (single), up to the end of the 14th month of life (shared), 80% of final income, maximum 66 euros per day (around 2,000 euros per month), 61 days non-transferable reserved for each parent.

Eligibility for paternity leave is based on 26 weeks of covered employment. Fathers will continue to receive the same level of employment and social security protection while on such leave. Parents that share parental leave 50/50 (or at least 40/60) will receive a partnership bonus (Partnerschaftsbonus). This bonus is €500 per parent (€1,000 in total) and has to be requested from social insurance. There is also the possibility for a family time bonus for fathers, directly after birth (special leave, 'Papamonth' in public service), optionally 28, 29, 30 or 31 days ("family month"). The bonus is based on a daily rate of 22.60 Euro (total max. 700 Euro). It is important to notice that childcare allowance will be reduced if a father decides to take the family time bonus.

The role of fathers is highlighted in the public description of the federal family policy: *“We aim to create a child and family friendly work environment and to provide families with developmental possibilities. Today men perceive their roles differently than fathers of previous generations. Austria supports an active fatherhood and encourage a modern role perception between fathers and mothers.”*¹⁴ Before the introduction of the Family Time Bonus Act, employees were entitled to unpaid parental leave, shared between parents, until the child reached age two (but not taken simultaneously — with the exception of a one-month period the first time leave is shared). The introduction of paternity leave was designed to encourage fathers to share more of the child-care duties between both parents. The implementation of measures aiming to involve fathers in parental activities, can be characterized as a paradigm shift halfway through. *“On the one hand, the state legitimises a childcare period of up to 30 months (see below); on the other hand, it restricts the period in labour law to a maximum of 24 months. (This) makes it clear that the legal system has not necessarily harmonised individual laws that form the basis for paternity leave.”* (Posch 2017: 4)

Although the legal environment improved, as it is characterized by a variety of options also for fathers, their take-up rate is still quite low.

Figure (4): 85.380 women and 4.976 men have childcare allowance in October 2017 (childbirth until 28th of February 2017) (BMFJ)



Source: Gender Index 2017. <https://www.frauen-familien-jugend.bka.gv.at/frauen/gender-mainstreaming-budgeting/gender-daten.html>

¹⁴ <https://www.women-families-youth.bka.gv.at/families/family-policy/family-policy.html>



In December 2018, 101.208 parents received childcare allowance: 74.901 women and 1.581 men received the lump-sum childcare allowance. Income dependent child care allowance received 23.223 women and 1.503 men.¹⁵ This means that 97% women and 3% men took the opportunity to receive childcare allowance in December 2018.¹⁶

Studies on Re-entry after parental leave and on fathers involvement in parental leave periods outline the following results:

- The re-entry in paid work after a parental leave period means for almost all men with higher education a re-entry at a similar qualification level than before while for women the re-entry means a significantly lower-level entry
- Men show significantly shorter parental leave periods than women which results in less income losses for men than for women
- 77% of men go back to paid work during the first year of parental leave while 16% of women have their re-entry in the first year, 16% in the second year and 30% in the third year of parental leave.¹⁷

In 2018, an EU and federal governmental project (Väterbeteiligung) on men's involvement in parental leave points out:¹⁸

- Father-friendly and reconciliation-friendly working atmosphere necessary
- The issue of reconciliation for men is very much discussed in companies with a focus on combination of full-time work and care work
- 'Work compression' is an issue; it means that men taking care responsibilities often try to press a full-time workload into part-time work
- 'Papamonth' is usually organized as 'individual holidays' and therefore as a hidden issue in many companies
- Short durations of fathers leave (lower than 2 month) are very common as they are easy to organize for companies but also for fathers, as there is no need to be afraid about an 'irreplaceability' issue after a short period of leave.

1.5. Good practices of healthcare, caregiving and early childhood/childhood

Family midwives are available to support and counsel pregnant women. In Vienna for example, the family midwives work at midwife contact points, in outpatient treatment of pregnant women in municipal hospitals and in a few parent-child centres.¹⁹ There are also free workshops offered by many

¹⁵ GENDER INDEX 2018. <https://www.frauen-familien-jugend.bka.gv.at/frauen/gender-mainstreaming-budgeting/gender-daten.html>

¹⁶ GENDER INDEX 2018. <https://www.frauen-familien-jugend.bka.gv.at/frauen/gender-mainstreaming-budgeting/gender-daten.html>

¹⁷ RIESENFELDER, A. (2013). Wiedereinstiegsmonitoring. Ein Überblick über die Ergebnisse der Kohorten 2006 bis 2010 in Österreich und in der Bundeshauptstadt Wien. <http://www.lrsocialresearch.at/sozialforschung/archiv-de/552>

¹⁸ POINTECKER, M., FUGGER, H., GUMHOLD, O., STILLING, I., GERSTMANN, K., BERGMANN, N., SORGER, C., MAIRHUBER, I., SARDADVAR, K. (2018). Väterbeteiligung. EU-Projekt: Männer und Vereinbarkeit von Beruf und Familie: Wege zur gerechten Verteilung von Karenz-, Betreuungs- und Arbeitszeiten. Endbericht. <https://www.forba.at/bericht/vaeterbeteiligung-eu-projekt-maenner-und-vereinbarkeit-von-beruf-und-familie-wege-zur-gerechten-verteilung-von-karenz-betreuungs-und-arbeitszeiten-endbericht>

¹⁹ see <https://geburtsinfo.wien/en/nach-der-geburt/angebote-nach-der-geburt/angebote-der-familienhebammen/>



regional insurance bodies on the topic of eating and drinking while breastfeeding and on supplementary feeding.

There are local programmes and projects for Early Help: Early help includes manifold, needs-oriented and coordinated support services for families. They support pregnant women and parents-to-be from the earliest possible moment and range from support in dealing with authorities to help with care, maintenance and education for the child. In Vienna, the project is implemented in the model regions 12th to 19th district and 23rd district by specially trained family support staff (psychologists, social workers, midwives, etc.). This project is aimed at pregnant women and parents with children aged 0 to 3 in exceptional situation, such as insecurity and inability to cope with a child, psycho-social problems such as a lack of social networks, existential fears, mental illnesses such as anxiety, addiction or depression, children with development risks, very early or late parenthood, relationship conflicts and violence.²⁰

Parental education is organized by various bodies, particularly non-profit organizations. The Federal Chancellery Division Families and Youth subsidizes parental education projects to increase the amount of affordable parental education on offer. Educational institutions, parent-child centers, family organizations, public providers and a multitude of private initiatives in the whole of the country offer series of events or individual events.²¹

In order to make paternity leave more attractive for men and companies, the Federal Ministry for Women and the Civil Service and the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection along with the social partners launched a campaign for father friendly workplaces in 2011. The information campaign on paternity leave was directed to company leaders and Human Resources managers and included workshops and events. The core element of this campaign developed and conducted by abz*austria was to provide a support structure for encouraging and implementing 'proactive paternity leave management' in companies. Practical experiences and tools for leave management were introduced, discussed and evaluated at countrywide workshops. In 2011, 182 company representatives and HR managers and company representatives participated in these workshops. The combination of exchange of good practice, information on legal framework and discussion of requirements and benefits of paternity leave allowed participating managers to change attitudes and overcome barriers when recognizing the win-win situation achieved by father friendly measures. Positive effects like an improved image and attractiveness as an employer as well as enhancing the loyalty and retention of employees are seen as a major motivation for companies to implement father friendly measures.²²

1.6. Birth and early childhood protection at national/local level

The Austrian Maternity Protection Act 1979 (Mutterschutzgesetz, BGBl. 1979/221, Text No. 37) sets out general provisions to protect pregnant women against health hazards that arise in the workplace. During the period of eight weeks before and after the birth women must not work (longer if it is a high-risk birth). The Mutterschutzgesetz also stipulates that pregnant women must not perform physical heavy work. Furthermore there are prohibitions with respect to several circumstances: pregnant women must not work at night, and they must not work on Sundays, statutory holidays and overtime. Dismissal during the pregnancy and until four months after the birth is void. Women on their part must immediately indicate their pregnancy to the employer, which is obligated to announce the pregnancy

²⁰ See <https://www.wgkk.at/cdscontent/?contentid=10007.766221&portal=wgkkportal&viewmode=content>

²¹ see <https://www.women-families-youth.bka.gv.at/families/parental-education.html>

²² SCAMBOR, E., WOJNICKA, K. BERGMANN, N. (Hg.) (2013). The Role of Men in Gender Equality – European strategies & insights. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, <https://vmg-steiermark.at/de/forschung/publikation/study-role-men-gender-equality>



to the labour inspectorate, which is the body that ensures that all legal standards on maternity protection are respected. This Act is applicable to all employees, including those working in the home industry sector.²³ Maternity leave is the statutory time off work for maternity reasons. If a woman becomes pregnant, she is required to make an appointment with the doctor and obtain a maternity card (Mutter-Kind-Pass), which contains information on examinations that need to be performed before and after the birth.

The mother-child pass is the basis for medical care for pregnant women and children in the first 62 months of their lives. It confirms the examinations performed by the doctor concerning the pregnancy and the well-being of the child. In order to be entitled to child-raising allowance at its full rate, the examinations specified in the maternity card must be carried out.

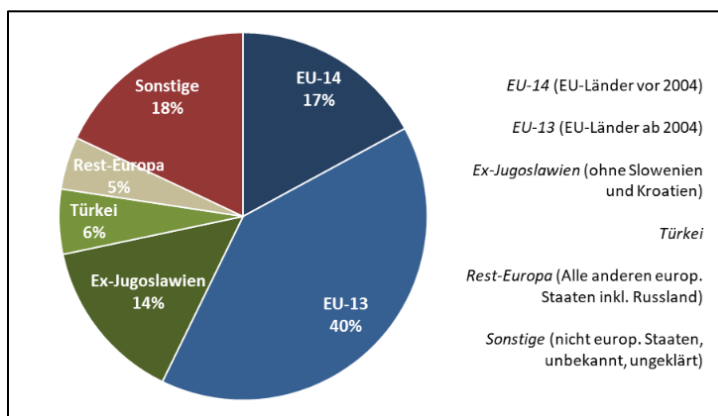
2. Specific part

2.1. Description of the socio-economic context of the chosen area

The socio-economic context of the chosen area

In January 2018 1.240.214 inhabitants (50,6% women) were living in the federal province of Styria. The increasing rate of inhabitants in the federal province of Styria is the sole result of a clearly positive migration balance, which was mainly caused by international immigration - here mainly to Graz (countries of origin: predominantly Eastern and South-Eastern European countries and Germany, but also Syria).²⁴ 10,6% inhabitants of Styria have a migrant background. 20% of the inhabitants of Graz, the capital of the province of Styria, have a migrant background.

Figure (5): Styria: Distribution of people with migrant background, 1. January 2018, differentiated along country of origin



Source: Statistik Austria; processing at Landesstatistik Styria

- The employment rate (according to the Microcensus Labour Force Survey) of women aged 15 to 64 was 68.7% in 2017 (2008: 64.8%), while that of men was 75.7% (2008: 77.0%). This results in a total value of 72.2%.
- The unemployment rate: According to Statistik Austria, the regional unemployment rate in Styria in 2017 is 7.5% (2016: 8.3%) and was thus below the federal value of 8.5%. The regional unemployment rate for men was 7.9%, for women 6.9%.
- In 2017, 78.9% of the total number of unemployed had no training beyond compulsory schooling or apprenticeship. This means that by far the largest proportion of people affected

²³ <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=10008464>

²⁴ STEIRISCHE STATISTIKEN, Heft 7/2018 – Wohnbevölkerung am 1.1.2018, Wanderungen 2017

by unemployment only have a compulsory school leaving certificate or have completed an apprenticeship.

- In 2011, 41.9% of actively employed women were employed part-time. For men, however, the share of part-time employees was only 7.9%.

Data on gender-based violence cases and violent crimes in the area

In 2017, 2723 people received support by the Violence Protection Centre Styria, 1037 of whom in cases after a prohibition of entry.²⁵ According to the same report, 1039 women were endangered by violence, and 192 men (ibid.: 22). 38.26 % of these persons endangered live in the province capital Graz, 8.53 % in the surrounding of Graz (Graz Umgebung). The highest proportion of these are in the age group 31-40 years (22.83 %) followed by the age group 41-50 (22.66 %) (ibid.).

Figure (6): Endangered People, Violence Protection Centre Styria, Annual Report 2018

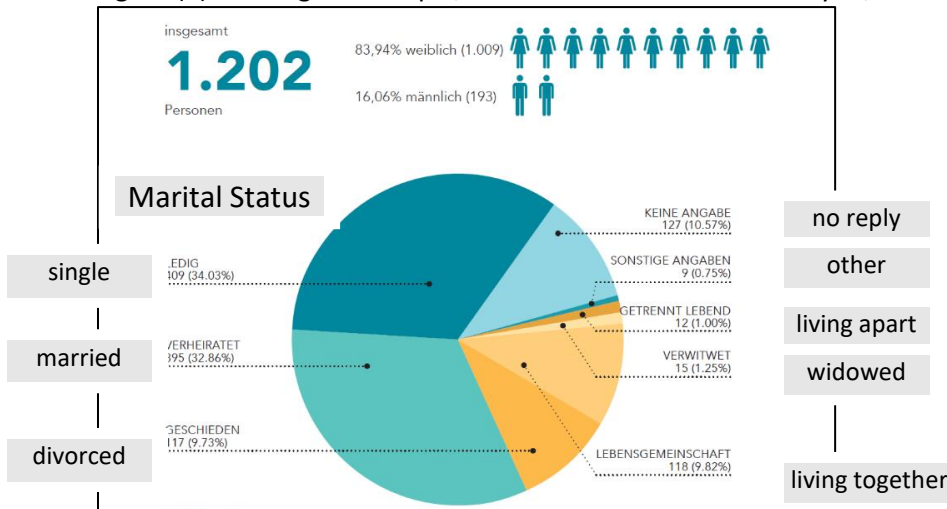


Figure (7): Perpetrator, men/women, Violence Protection Centre Styria, Annual Report 2018

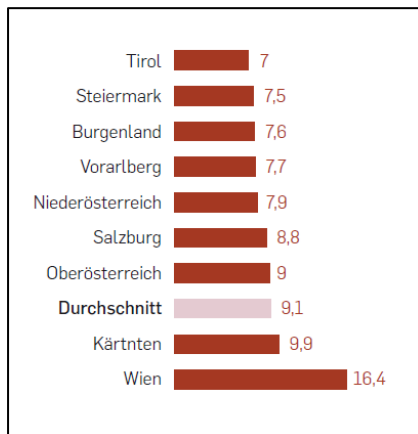


Of the 1008 endangerers, 62 were women and 945 were men.

The same statistics shows that in 2018, Styrian police offices imposed 857 prohibitions of entry, most of them in Graz 35.12 % or wider Graz region (10.27%).

²⁵ GEWALTSCUTZZENTRUM STEIERMARK. Tätigkeitsbericht 2018. <http://www.gewaltschutzzentrum-steiermark.at/aktuelles/taetigkeitsberichte-reformvorschlaege> p.21

Figure (8): Number of prohibition of entry, differentiated along Austria Provinces



Source: Austrian Statistik 2017, p.62

The 2017 number of prohibitions of entry per 100,000 inhabitants was 7.5 in Styria, only the province of Tyrol ranges lower. While the Austrian median is at 9.1, Vienna ranges at 16.4. However, this does not necessarily reflect the prevalence of domestic violence. In fact, the report states: “The numbers indicate that victims do not receive the same level of protection in all provinces.”²⁶

Life expectancy (at birth) in the chosen project region Styria is 79,4 years for men (Austria: 79,1 years) and 84,3 years for women (Austria 84,0) (2016).²⁷

Education is one of the most important factors influencing the state of health in Styria. The proportion of people with a low level of education is declining, the percentage of persons with a higher level of education is increasing.²⁸ About one quarter of the Styrian population is doing sport/ exercises at least 150 minutes per week at medium intensity or at least 75 minutes at higher intensity. It correlates with education: people with higher education do more minutes of exercise per week than people with lower education. People with higher education consume vegetables more frequently than people with lower education.²⁹ Here and in the percentage of obesity³⁰ the educational influence is evident. It has a stronger effect than the gender influence.

The suicide rate of men is significantly higher than that of women (suicide rate in Styria per 100,000 inhabitants on average 2012-2016: male 28.8 female 8.7). For men, it rises dramatically from the age of 50 (suicide rate in 2016 in Styria: men 25-29 years 16.3; women 0; men 50-54 years 35.1; women 16.0).³¹

²⁶ Österreichweite Statistik 2017. <https://www.interventionsstelle-wien.at/download/?id=595> p.62

²⁷ Land Steiermark, Abt. 17, Landes- und Regionalentwicklung, Heft 9/2017, http://www.landesentwicklung.steiermark.at/cms/dokumente/12651292_145230171/fe3a1746/Lebenserwartung.pdf, p. 37 ff.

²⁸ Peinhaupt et al. (2016), Gesundheitsbericht 2015 für die Steiermark 2015 (eds. Gesundheitsfonds Steiermark), p. 8

²⁹ Peinhaupt et al. (2016), Gesundheitsbericht 2015 für die Steiermark 2015 (eds. Gesundheitsfonds Steiermark), p. 16

³⁰ Peinhaupt et al. (2016), Gesundheitsbericht 2015 für die Steiermark 2015 (eds. Gesundheitsfonds Steiermark), p. 10

³¹ Land Steiermark, Abt. 17, Landes- und Regionalentwicklung, Heft 9/2017, http://www.landesentwicklung.steiermark.at/cms/dokumente/12651292_145230171/fe3a1746/Lebenserwartung.pdf, p. 45 ff.



2.2. Description of the site(s) in which the Program P will be implemented

The programme will be implemented through the Verein für Männer- und Geschlechterthemen Steiermark. Half of the activities will be carried out in the city of Graz, while the other half will be implemented in different Styrian regions. Migrant populations show lower rates in the rural areas, but at the same time there is limited access to special services for this population to be noticed. The final ratio of participants of the fathers groups will be decided according to the specific local needs after the interview with local experts and network representatives.

The city of Graz runs a parents education program called ‚Klein hat’s fein‘. "Klein hat's fein" is a family passport programme with stamps that can be collected through the participation in different education sessions around birth (counselling, groups, lectures, workshops, etc.). A brochure displays all the different education offers around parenthood of children from 0 to 3 years and provides a stamp card. After each education sessions, participants get one stamp if they fulfil certain conditions (child from 0-3 years, living in Graz). If a father or a mother has collected 15 stamps, he/she can claim €40 at the City of Graz/Department for Youth and Family.

The educational offers for fathers (+ mothers) in the EU project Parent will be integrated in the ‚Klein hat’s fein‘ family passport programm and therefore PARENT will make use of the respective incentive system. Taking part in all the fathers group modules means that a father can receive at least 6 stamps in the family passport (and even more if the mother takes part as well).

It is planned that VMG prepares a PARENT invitation text for the brochure. The city of Graz will help to advertise the fathers group program as well as the training program for multipliers in the health sector.

In the Province of Styria, regional stakeholder coordinate parent education programmes in which the CBP (capacity building program) for multiplier but also fathers groups can be integrated. It is planned to analyse regional needs via experts interviews on which the CBP and fathers groups will be based. It is also planned to dedicate one of the ‚Zwei und Mehr‘ Styrian Family-Journal issues to the topic of active fatherhood (PARENT campaign).

2.3. Data on parental leave in the chosen site (if available)

In 2017, 11.385 children were born in Styria (at this time an Austrian province with 1.237.298 inhabitants, of which 283.869 lived in Graz). 49,2% of these children were born to unmarried parents. 23,7% of immigrant parents were unmarried, while the percentage is 56,7% for parents born in Austria. Statistically the fertility rates is 1,46 children per woman. In Styria 10,6% on the inhabitants do not have Austrian citizenship. 16% of the births in 2017 were to parents who both did not have citizenship. With looking only at the mother and not at citizenship, but place of birth, the data for 2017 shows 2.939 children born to mothers who themselves were born outside of Austria - almost half of these births took place in Graz.

While in Graz there were more births than deaths in 2017, for many of the Styrian regions the opposite is true, with the industrial regions Bruck-Mürzzuschlag, Leoben and Murtal, as well as Voitsberg in the lead with birth deficits.³²

In December of 2017, there were 119.476 women on parental leave, but only 4.773 men – there was a decline compared with 2016 from 4,2 to 3,8 percent. The so-called "Papamonat" (Familienzeitbonus), introduced in March of 2017, was 2017 used by 642 parents, among them 639 men and three women.³³

³² Steirische Statistiken, Heft 9/2018 – Natürliche Bevölkerungsbewegung 2017

³³ Statistik Austria 2018: Kinderbetreuungsgeldbezieherinnen und -bezieher nach Geschlecht 2008 bis 2017, https://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/menschen_und_gesellschaft/soziales/sozialleistungen_auf_bundesebene/familienleistungen/index.html



In Styria, 21 men were on parental leave in December 2017, 57 men in October 2017 and 33 in June 2017. These share rates reflect the average share rates in whole Austria.³⁴

2.4. Why did you choose this site?

The facilitators have extensive experience from previous projects (see below) as well as existing networks and working relationships with stakeholder to gain access to target groups.

The Verein für Männer- und Geschlechterthemen Steiermark offers counselling for boys and men and also training for men and boys but also for multipliers (e.g. teacher, universities of applied sciences, employees of youth welfare institutions and others). Main topics are work with perpetrators, victim protection and critical reflections of gender roles. Since January 2017 the Boys Work Department carries out Heroes © gegen Unterdrückung im Namen der Ehre (Heroes © against oppression in the name of honour) in cooperation with the Caritas counselling centre DIVAN in the Province of Styria. HEROES © focusses on violence prevention work with young men of so-called Ehrkulturen (Cultures of Honour). HEROES © supports these young men in taking their first steps towards gender equality between men and women. It aims at a partnership-based and violence-free living on the basis of human rights.³⁵

Representatives of the Association for Men and Gender Issues Styria, together with member organisations of the Dachverband Männerarbeit Österreich (DMÖ), in particular Männerberatung Wien, Männerbüro Salzburg and Männerberatung Niederösterreich/Caritas St. Pölten, have developed the modular dialogue series MEN TALK based on a concept of Alternative to Violence (ATV Norway). It is aimed at entering into a dialogue with male asylum seekers on topics such as dealing with violence and emotions, protection against violence, women's and children's rights, gender equality but also sexuality and relationships.

In 12 modules (introduction, 10 content modules, evaluation) the participants discuss topics such as dealing with violence and emotions, protection against violence, honour and respect, women's and children's rights, gender equality as well as sexuality and relationships.³⁶

II. PARENT – NEEDS ASSESSMENT RESULTS AUSTRIA

3. Introduction

This part of the report presents the results of the Austrian needs assessment for the PARENT project. Each country team carried out an inquiry into local needs by working together with professionals providing prenatal care, antepartum, labour and delivery care and those providing care for small children (0 to 4 years). The results are the basis on which the CBP and fathers groups will be developed.

The report begins with describing the methods and sample for the analysis (chapter four). The fifth chapter will describe the existing measures which are known to the interview partners. In the sixth chapter, an analysis is provided: Characteristics of successful approaches are outlined, it is described which groups are well reached by existing measures and which groups are not involved and suggestions

³⁴ Bundesministerin für Frauen, Familien und Jugend 2018: Kinderbetreuungsgeld - Statistik, June, October and December 2017, <https://www.frauen-familien-jugend.bka.gv.at/familie/finanzielle-unterstuetzungen/kinderbetreuungsgeld-ab-1.3.2017/monatsstatistik.html>

³⁵ <https://vmg-steiermark.at/de/heroes>

³⁶ https://vmg-steiermark.at/de/men_talk



to reach the target groups are presented. Chapter seven will focus on current needs for realizing active fatherhood, in a structural sense, on the level of fathers and the level of multipliers. The final chapter eight contains a summary of the most important results and recommendations to be taken into account in the subsequent phases of the project, namely the preparation of the capacity building program for professionals and the implementation of the fathers' groups.

4. Context, methods and sample of the needs assessment

The Austrian team carried out a qualitative inquiry consisting of three focus group interviews with local experts and network representatives as well as three experts' interviews.

The three focus group discussions, carried out in rural and urban localities throughout Styria, represent three different settings through which professionals come into contact and engage with fathers:

- 1) Focus group at Hartberg Provincial Hospital, 5 participants, 2 researchers
This focus group allows an insight into health related services.
Participants: 1 head of the "Gesundheitszentrum" (health centre) who is a nurse and is also head of nursing care mediation, 1 head of the parent counselling centre of the district administration, 1 head midwife of the hospital, 1 social worker who is responsible for streetwork in the area, as well as 1 local father; 3 male, 2 female
- 2) Focus group with representatives of the municipal 'social areas' in the city of Graz, 7 participants, 1 researcher
This focus group was carried out to get the perspective of family services in the municipality of Graz.
Participants: 1 social worker, 1 clinical psychologist, 4 parental consultants (one is also a doula), 1 psychotherapist; 2 male, 5 female
- 3) Focus group with Coordinators for the Provincial Communes of Styria, 6 participants, 1 researcher
This focus group was carried out to get the perspective of regional work with fathers, organised around the provincial communes in Styria. It was held during the "Praxisforum" of the project "Gemeinsam stark für Kinder" (in English: Together strong for children).
Participants: 2 coaches responsible for regional development; 4 municipal coordinators of "Gemeinsam stark für Kinder", 3 male, 3 female

The three groups started with a short presentation on the PARENT project. In an introductory round, participants were asked to which extent they reach fathers through their work currently. The next point of discussion were current services and offers for fathers/fatherhood in the area and success criteria for these, leading to discussions on missing topics, formats and target groups. The groups closed with the question of the strongest needs at the moment, also with a view towards experiences of multipliers.

The expert interviews used a structured interview guideline which ensured that each separate interviewee was presented with the same questions, adapted to the respective professional backgrounds. This makes the results comparable. However, the interviewer responded flexibly to topics which came up during the interviews and adapted questions accordingly.

The interviewees for the Austrian needs analysis were:

- 1) Head of medical services of the municipal department for youth and families, Stadt Graz
- 2) Parent education coordinator for the provincial government of Styria



3) Organizer of fathers' groups with the parent-child-center of a region in easterly part of Styria, Eltern-Kind-Zentrum Gleisdorf, Vätergruppen

Like in the focus groups, the individually interviewed experts were asked to describe the way in which they currently engage fathers in their work, measures in their professional networks and environment which target fathers, success criteria and challenges, as well as needs regarding formats, topics and target groups.

The research allowed insights into the practice of a variety of organizations and institutions, among them:

- Regional parent counselling center provided by provincial government (Elternberatungszentrum Hartberg-Fürstenfeld)
- Provincial hospital nursing release support and conflict mediation
- Eltern-Kind-Zentren (parent-child-centers), urban and regional
- So-called "Frühe Hilfen" (in English: early support) provided via GKK (state-wide insurance)
- Midwife Services (private and associated with hospital)
- Streetwork/youth work (with young fathers) in regional context
- Municipally organized child & youth work in urban contexts
- Municipally organized family education & counselling in urban contexts
- Educational umbrella programs provided by municipalities and regional governments (namely "Klein hat's fein", Stadt Graz, "Gemeinsam stark für Kinder", province of Styria)
- Private child-care facilities
- Self-organized father-networking, volunteering
- Regional platform of local clubs, guilds, associations, provided by coordinator of one district
- Regional development services, coaching for communes, regional networking
- Communal working groups consisting of insurance, general practitioners, hospital and midwife
- Medical director of youth service of the City of Graz

The information gathered in the province of Styria makes visible the multi-faceted landscape of efforts in supporting parents in Austria and the variety of institutions involved in these efforts.

5. Description of existing measures supporting active fatherhood

This section describes, on the basis of information provided in our interviews and focus groups, which publicly provided measures already exist around the topic of fatherhood and to what extent fathers are reached with these measures. Included are offerings the interviewees are personally involved in as well as those which happen in their networks and those they have heard about and which were described to the researchers in some detail.

The offerings available in Styria are generally organized via either the municipality of Graz or, in the regions, under the direction of the provincial government of Styria through local agencies such as parent-child-centers or communes. The municipality of Graz and the province of Styria both make offerings visible and accessible through a pass-system/umbrella program:

- ZWEI UND MEHR-Steirischer Familienpass: eligible are families (*'already from one adult and one child'*³⁷, and up to three adults) with main residence in Styria and at least one child under the age of 18 who are entitled to family allowance. The pass serves as a general way to get

³⁷ <http://www.zweiundmehr.steiermark.at/cms/ziel/130876031/DE/> (last accessed 5.9.2019).



family discounts but is also connected to a voucher for parent education, to participate more cheaply in courses of recognized parental education providers.

- Klein hat's fein Familienpass: eligible are families who reside in Graz with children under three years of age. With the pass you can collect "points": One point is awarded for each event or consultation attended - or two if both parents take part. If there are 15 stamps in the passport, you will receive a Graz voucher worth 40 euros.

Both of these “umbrellas” come with magazines (for example, the „Zwei und Mehr“-Magazin), information materials, newsletters, and search engines/online calendars. There is for example, the online platform family@graz:

“Parents can take a look and find out about all the offers we know about. We currently have 303 offers inside. From the midwifery center to the parent-child center, sanatoriums or private individuals who offer baby yoga or something like that. All those who want to advertise their offers, can place their offers free of charge on this platform.” (Expert, City of Graz)

Young parents are also provided with information material given out at birth, e.g. a “family box”, available at gynecologists (which includes a journal about different weeks of development and men’s roles during this), and also one book provided by the state insurance agency which is divided into weeks and can be used as a diary.

The measures, projects, offerings, and activities are grouped into four sections:

- those promoting father-child-interactions,
- those promoting exchange between fathers,
- those which are education-centred and
- those which focus on individual consultations.

The educational offers for skills and knowledge development are by far the largest group – they are mostly directed at both women and men, though there are some which provide specialized information for fathers only. In the planning stage are some fathers-only events. For example, early fatherhood fathers’ meetings, hosted by the municipality of Graz which can be credited towards the pass system of the city of Graz. Also in Graz, simultaneous interpreting for multiple languages during “Klein hat’s fein” offerings is in the planning stages, to increase fathers’ participation:

“In autumn will be offered the “Klein hat's fein” courses with interpreting. I believe that this will automatically bring more fathers on board. In autumn there should be one or two afternoons or evenings with 3 topics from the lectures with 3-4 interpreters. This is then a session with three more condensed bundled topics. [...] I believe that this is a good way to reach them. Then 3 or 4 languages are to be interpreted and the people sit together in groups and simultaneous translation takes place. There should then be many possibilities to ask questions.” (Expert, City of Graz)

5.1 Activities providing space for father-child-interactions

The offerings described here are fathers-only events. They have the benefit of providing the opportunity for fathers to spend time with their children, and at the same time offering children the opportunity to play with each other and fathers to interact with each other, therefore gaining sometimes valuable insights into parenting issues and concepts of fatherhood. On an organizational level, a criterion for success seems to be that the participants have to provide very little effort in preparation to attending.



Regular Saturday Papa breakfast hosted at a regional Eltern-Kind-Zentrum (parent-child-center)

This was described as a very popular event with up to 60 attendants, mostly repeat visitors, with one to three new fathers each time. Some regular participants sometimes also ask to drop their children off without coming themselves, which is possible in certain cases. There are some, but not many migrant men. The event includes the free use of space and materials provided, a simple buffet style breakfast for self-serving, a small financial contribution, no pre-registration and overall a space to talk amongst fathers and the freedom to play for children.

Men-only crafting afternoon for children, city of Graz

This was established as an offspring of a fathers' group hosted by the municipal parents' consulting service in a district of Graz and was described as very popular.

Father-child excursions organized by a regional Eltern-Kind-Zentrum (parent-child-center)

These are father-child excursions to points of interest in the region, such as factories, police station, power plants, hospital special centres and so forth. They are very well received, and there is individual travel by the participants, as well as pre-registration if there are limited spaces.

Father-child camping father organized by a commune

This is an example from the personal knowledge of one of the experts. The expert emphasizes that it works well when a body like the commune provides father-child activities, since this is a trusted organization:

"My cousin lives in Upper Styria and the commune organized camping for fathers and their children. This is something very low-threshold and yet profound topics can also be discussed. If this is organized by the commune, it suddenly is something completely different." (Expert, city of Graz)

Yearly father-child-camps organized by a regional Eltern-Kind-Zentrum (parent-child-center)

It takes the shape of two nights spent for example in huts on a lakeshore, with communal cooking & distributing catering tasks, as well as many activities and puzzles, workshops for skills, visiting animal farms. The organizers describes it:

"It's pretty strictly organized. Everybody has to take care of themselves because there are no mamas. In the end, the mamas helped with the washing up, but everything else was done by themselves." (Expert, city of Graz)

5.2 Activities promoting exchange between fathers

The offerings described here are men-only events/groups without children present, focused largely on talking, giving the opportunity to learn from others and reflect on ones' own concepts of fatherhood, described here by an expert:

"These were the personal insights, the conversations with others. One would have liked to have changed something if one had known it beforehand, that it worked, consciously made the decision and used the opportunities that offered themselves." (Expert, volunteer organizer/EKIZ)

They have in common – and this is therefore a criterion for success – that there is some hosting (time & space, refreshments, moderation, short impulses by professional staff) provided, but not a lot of structure or pre-planned agenda to the events. A problem which arises with these types of events is



that the groups sometimes end because the central organizer moves jobs/areas even though there would be interest from participants. This could be solved by cultivating relationships with local fathers who take over responsibility for the events. Although they are described as of great benefit to fathers, there needs to be attention paid to how they can be sustained in the long-term.

„The men in the group didn't dare to do it and we didn't have the resources. That's consuming a lot of resources. Making the space available is the easiest thing to do.“ (Expert, regional networks)

Väterstammtisch: Moderated discussion evenings for fathers

The experts mentioned a number of regular fathers' evenings, usually with an impulse-giver, some which have run for years and some which are not in existence anymore.

“As a result, a special men's evening was introduced for the fathers. This is only open to men. There is always a male impulse speaker who is responsible for leading the discussion. The men then discuss the respective topic and this is quite well received. I know this because of feedbacks, because after the greeting I need to leave, because it is supposed to be a pure men's evening. Most of the time they are quite stunned, but they appreciate it very much. The feedback tells me that this is very well received by fathers, grandfathers and young men. The opportunity to talk about topics that concern men, fresh from life, is well received. The topics are very different. Topic: addiction. Can a man still play today? How much man can you tolerate today? I always ask for feedback. The last topic, for example, was men as arsonists.“ (Expert, regional networks)

These are offered in the regions as well as in Graz, but it is not clear how many there are at the moment, if any.

Papa-Sauna-evening with a fixed group, hosted by a volunteer

This is a regular, current event centered around one individual organizer who is very active in one region.

“Sauna is nothing for children anyway. It started right away. I like to go to the sauna and asked around if anyone wanted to come with me and then we asked some friends. Meanwhile it's about the same group.“ (Expert, regional networks/volunteer)

5.3 Skills and information offers available to fathers

The skills and information offers are mostly open to all the family, with some sessions being carried out as single-gender, and some topics especially for fathers. They take the shape of a series of courses with additional offers branching off, which can be frequented individually.

The offerings especially popular with fathers include baby-massage courses for fathers, mixed-gender communication workshops and parent trainings, training sessions on issues such as sleep, handling babies gently, First Aid for children/child safety courses (offered by Red Cross professionals, popular topics: SIDS). Here are some examples:

“Fathers massage their baby”³⁸, Elternberatungszentrum in a district of Styria

³⁸ http://www.bh-hartberg-fuerstenfeld.steiermark.at/cms/dokumente/11405491_61879992/e5ce782e/Ohne%20Titelseite_August-Dezember%202019.pdf (last accessed 5.9.2019)



This is an example for skills and information-based parent education directed especially to fathers. It is one session in the late afternoon, free of charge and offered around every three months, the days are arranged directly with the interested fathers. It is the only fathers-only offering by the provider. The rest of the program is either for mothers only or for parents, but happens mostly during the usual work hours.

A regional service provider under the umbrella of the regional government of Styria (division “family, adult education and women”), the Elternberatungszentrum (parent counselling center) for the district of Hartberg-Fürstenfeld offers group-based education (open parent-child-meetings with professionals giving impulses and answering questions), individual consultations (with medical staff as well as social workers), massage courses and a mothers’ group. All of it is free of charge. Many offers are made available also locally, in communes throughout the district.

Birth preparation course and follow-up course for ages 0-3: Stadt Graz, Department for Youth and Family: „Ein guter Start in die Elternschaft“/ “Ein guter Weg durch die Elternschaft”

The pre-natal class and the continuation course are a series of lectures in the late Monday afternoons, provided by medical and other professionals, about various topics relevant between the ages of 0 and 3 (nutrition, sleep, behavior, safety, speech development). Up to now there are no special offers for fathers. The father quota is lower in the follow-up course. One central aim of the municipality is to inform parents what the department offers for young parents and families, the speakers also serve as representatives of the different municipal departments.

The prenatal courses are also offered in the regions, associated with hospitals or parent-child centers. Men who become fathers usually attend these courses.

Parent meetings in Graz and the regions, provided through ‘Zwei und mehr’, regional government of Styria

The Family, Adult Education and Women Division of the Department of Education and Society regularly organizes and coordinates ‘TWO AND MORE’ meetings for parents, multipliers and caregivers at 13 different locations in Styria. They offer the participants the opportunity to discuss important and current topics for families, to get advice for everyday family life, to exchange experiences and to strengthen their self-competence.³⁹ The events are free of charge and will be translated into sign language as required. They take place from 18:30-20:00:

“These are classic parent education events with a lecture and a subsequent discussion. Our approach is to try to reach as many parents as possible. [...] This has been the case in Graz since 2011 and in Liezen and Leoben for a few years now. This extension and regionalization to the parent-child-centers will take place in autumn and is already being implemented and organized.” (Expert, provincial government of Styria)

The expert also describes how well fathers are reached with these meetings, mentioning that about a quarter of attendants are men, more when the topics concern digital issues and career/school orientation for children.

Eltern-Kind-Module, Stadt Feldbach⁴⁰

³⁹ <http://www.zweiundmehr.steiermark.at/cms/ziel/135591548/DE/> (last accessed 5.9.2019).

⁴⁰ <https://www.feldbach.gv.at/leben-in-feldbach/kinder-jugend-familie-bildung/eltern-kind/eltern-kind-bildung-im-detail/> (last accessed 5.9.2019).



The municipality of Feldbach in Styria offers so-called parent-child modules. The participation as well as the child care for the time of the education modules is free for the Styrian education pass-holders and rewards of up to 400 Euros are promised. The modules encourage a lively exchange, and include the joint preparation of lunch. The sessions are for whole days, always Saturdays. An expert from the region described that this course changes attitudes towards fathers' involvement, on the example of the local swimming pool. One expert describes negative attitudes towards fathers at the pool, while the expert from Feldbach explains that the opposite is true in her region:

"I get a funny look when I'm at the outdoor pool with my kid. There is a lying area where the mothers lie with their children. We are three fathers and we really lie extra because otherwise it's funny. One is not integrated with the mothers and so we found each other men." (Expert, regional networks)

"It's different with us, because the parent-child modules make a difference. Three years ago it was the same with us at the swimming pool. Last year I was really happy because it was a mixed crowd on the sunbathing lawn. It was no longer blanket, mother, child and toys and nobody is allowed in or out of this field. The families mixed at the baby pool. They were fathers, mothers, children and toys. Everyone talked because they had already spent a day together and had common themes. In our first module, the fathers go out and cook together."

Gemeinsam stark für Kinder: Parental education groups in Graz & the regions

The regional government of Styria, with its Department of Education and Society, has, according to the presentation on the website, set itself the goal for the period 2018-2020 of establishing and expanding municipal prevention efforts along the educational biographies of children and young people in five Styrian communes. Despite different starting conditions and social environments, children and young people in Styria should thus be able to grow up well and according to their abilities (equal opportunities). The Family, Adult Education and Women Division of the Society Department is responsible for the concept, project management and overall coordination.⁴¹

The coordinator of these groups in Graz describes how they work:

„First the parents come to three modules and then they meet every 14 days accompanied [by a coordinator]. When fathers are there, they are the driving force. They want to know more and can exchange ideas through group identification. Of course, men do not have the upper hand, but a good third of them are men, who then really stick to it. This offer pleases them, because there they can come and get tips and be strengthened. The groups are open to everything that fits in with the topic of raising children. Parents from adolescents to small children meet here.“ (Expert, City of Graz)

Courses/sessions for baby carrying and breastfeeding, in city and regions

Popular with fathers are also trainings related to baby carrying and breastfeeding, according to experts. With the breastfeeding course, at some providers, the first session is general info for fathers and mothers, while second session is single-gender, fathers and mothers are educated separately from each other. The medical director of the municipality of Graz's department for youth and family explains:

"So more and more fathers are taking part in the baby carrying and breastfeeding courses. This is not a special offer for fathers, but they are interested and come. [...] These are additional offers in the

⁴¹ Translated from <https://www.verwaltung.steiermark.at/cms/ziel/149438490/DE/> (last accessed 5.9.2019).



context of parent counselling. [...] At the nursing and carrying group they told me that suddenly there were so many fathers coming with them.” (Expert, City of Graz)

Oma-Opa-Universität

In the region South-East Styria the *Oma-Opa-Universität* (grandma's and grandpa's university), experience knowledge is passed on in all areas (handicrafts, culinary arts, life culture, customs...). By doing things together, the children learn playfully what used to be passed on from generation to generation. At the same time, doing things together strengthens the bond within the family and the understanding for one another between the generations.⁴²

5.4 Consultation-based services available to fathers

Many offerings in this category are a mix of consultation and exchange spaces: The organizations offer a free space to visit with small children where there are refreshments provided and at the same time, professionals are present to be consulted on a voluntary basis. The fathers are in the minority among the visitors (possibly due to the time when they are offered).

These ‘cafe’-style offerings are offered in the regions as well as in the city, by different providers. As an example we mention here the **Baby Lounge, city of Graz**, which is popular with migrant lower-income families:

“They come to us in the baby lounge on Thursday morning. There we always have about 30 to 40 people. After the introduction of the family passes there were even more. Once we were even 80 people. This is a good low-threshold offer because it is voluntary. Of course some people are obliged to come to the parent counselling, but most of them come voluntarily. This reduces the inhibition threshold to the youth welfare office. We have two locations in the Youth Welfare Office. The children can play together, a doctor is on site and there is a healthy snack. They simply feel well. Many really come every week to simply exchange ideas. At home they often have small apartments and of course they also go to the park, but especially in winter this is a good offer. This is offered in two. There is interest in even more locations and offers where the little ones can learn German early. Simply group meetings.”
(Expert, city of Graz)

Consultation hours are also provided by different organizations for baby **carrying & baby napping changing**. There are **midwife home visits and consultation hours**, home visits from so-called “Frühe Hilfen” (**early support, team of psychologist, midwife and pedagogue**), and **psychosocial consultation** in the event of medical crises. There are also the general **men’s counselling services**, city-based and regional. Generally, the first points of contact will be the Elternberatung (parents’ counselling center) or the municipal department of youth and family, which will refer clients to specialized agencies for specific needs.

6. Analysis of existing measures

This chapter analyses who is successfully reached by the existing measures, and outlines criteria which make them work well, according to the experts who provided information through focus groups and expert interviews.

⁴² <https://www.feldbach.gv.at/leben-in-feldbach/kinder-jugend-familie-bildung/eltern-kind/das-programm-im-ueberblick/>



6.1 Who is reached through existing measures and who is not

This section summarizes which target groups are successfully reached with the existing services introduced above and which are not. Migrant fathers are one group which are described by experts as a lot less likely to attend education-based offerings together with their partners, or seek consultations. There is, in general, a language barrier for participants whose first language is not German. Some offerings would provide interpreters on request, but this is not strongly sought after. If migrant fathers are present, experts tend to attribute this to cultural norms or language issues – they are thought to accompany the mothers because she shouldn't be on her own or has not enough German proficiency. These reasons are also mentioned by experts when describing that sometimes migrant fathers come on their own to seek education or consultation, if they have a pressing problem which needs a solution:

"The men are more likely to look for help and then just take a look. If there is a migration background, the women often don't come along and then the men sit there and want to do something. The topics where they get help are very different. That can be from a two-year-old child, where you have to set limits for the first time, to young people who have already gone missing." (Expert, City of Graz)

The opposite was also mentioned by experts, namely that among migrant parents, shame and fear of "trouble" plays an important role in their habit of keeping the distance from parent consultations and education offers provided by social services.

"Assisting the mother" and seeking consultations for themselves is also something experts mentioned regarding fathers without migrant background:

"I have the feeling that the first appointment is very important for Austrian fathers. They go along with it. They help the woman to find her way there. Now she needs help. That's also a bit weird. There are also fathers who later go on parental leave and then come to the parent counselling session themselves with the child because they like it so much. They play there with the children, talk for hours with us and other fathers and mothers. Then, as I said, he is the superstar. There are a few of them, but I don't perceive it as a larger trend." (Expert, City of Graz)

One central offer to prospective parents is the Geburtsvorbereitungskurs (pre-birth preparation course), and a follow-up course for the early months and years, widely available to residents in the city as well as in the countryside, provided by the municipality or the provincial government through the parent-child (education) centers. In Graz, of those who continuously attend, about a third are mother-father-couples. Here, the responsible medical professional describes the participation of fathers during the current series of sessions of the follow-up course to the birth preparation course:

"The following sessions are all grouped under 'A Good Way Through Parenthood': In my course 'Babyfood&Co', which is about nutrition, there was exactly one dad. At 'A moving start to life', that is with a physiotherapist, there was a man. The men are more interested in child safety. There were six men. There was only one man in the 'language development'. There were a lot of participants in the children's sleep [session], but there were only three men. So safety is about the technical, the men are there. With 'Pamper and set limits' we had also three men." (Expert, City of Graz)

Experts explained the characteristics of couples where fathers attend regularly with the mothers:

- Very young couples
- Couples with a high level of education
- Couples where fathers are local while the mothers are not proficient in German

One expert describes a type of father who is present at the courses:



„I can't tell you a percentage because we're not statistically collecting that. The fathers who come to us are often the ones who do everything. The diapers, the carrying the child, they are super proud and show their paternity. The woman is just standing by. Or they have a list of questions and work them off. The fathers who come along are rarely to never in a passive role. They are fully involved. They want to stand at the diaper changing table, and not the woman. When there are two of them, the man almost always carries the child in. They are proud and want to know a lot.“ (Expert, City of Graz)

Speaking from experiences in the region, one expert described how these courses can be very beneficial to intercultural learning:

"We have many parents with a migration background and during the course a kind of inclusion arises through everyday actions and because it is low-threshold. The mentality is different depending on the origin. The father role looks different in Turkey than in Austria and this is discussed. In Finland it is different again. I just had a very dear Finnish dad, who has had a child in [town] with his Polish wife." (Expert, regional networks)

While in this expert's estimation, there were "many parents with migrant background", the general consensus seemed to be that most offerings still have a high threshold for participation by people whose first language is not German. The same holds for participants with a lower level of education.

Here, it should be added that there are twofold offerings for parents provided through municipal social services: those which are voluntary and those which are compulsory, because the family was assessed to be in need of intervention regarding child-welfare. These compulsory interventions, according to the interviewees, often also use the mother as first point of contact, since she is in most cases the legally registered guardian.

Interviewees listed a number of general reasons for fathers who are not participating educational, interaction and exchange-based, and consultation offerings:

- They stay at home to look after the child to make it possible for the mother to attend (although, as experts say, oftentimes child-care is provided and fathers still stay away)
- The "relationship contract" or understanding in the couples' relationship is that the father is the financial provider – often due to necessity, but this also holds for a special type of highly qualified high income families, so-called expatriates:

"In [our area of responsibility] there is also the university and we have a lot of families who came to Austria because the man got a job at the university, or at one of these big companies. The father is not there. They came here especially for this and it is not realistic for him to change anything in his job. You can't activate them. How can you? That often makes the system tip over." (Expert, City of Graz)

Couples in which both parents contribute roughly the same amount to the family income are more likely to be equally involved in parenting activities, the experts say. Generally speaking, fathers are described to be interested in taking part in the birth preparation courses. In postnatal education and consultation, mothers are more interested in fathers coming with them, but they do not.

There are special topics mentioned by experts (such as accident prevention, first aid, digital safety, more 'technical' topics, or school and apprenticeship information, but also "happy and relaxed pregnancy") where the proportion of men is very high.

Some fathers who are taking care of children on their own also take the opportunity to visit exchange spaces where the children can play to get some relief and be part of the conversations. A special type



of this activity are father-child-events. Father-child-interaction activities, if offered, seem to be well attended, although they are often attended by fathers who already have a strong relationship with their child.

There also is one setting not in the experts' area of responsibility which currently attracts a significant amount of fathers: family celebrations. If, for example, an early childhood education facility or a migrant civil society organization hosts a family party, usually about half the adults there are men, according to the experts.

"There's always a lot of fathers at kindergarten parties. Many fathers also bring their children to the kindergarten. Especially when the mothers are in employment. Many fathers are also members of parents' associations. There it is about 50/50. Also with various celebrations many fathers are represented. Otherwise there are hardly occasions which are strongly attended by fathers, more by mothers." (Expert, regional networks)

While there are many areas which still belong exclusively to women (and which are organized with no thought about the fathers), the experts stressed that they generally, looking at the passing of time, see a rising interest among fathers – in attendance numbers or in the involvement when they are participating (e.g. asking lots of questions):

"I notice there's more and more effort to activate fathers to come along. But social developments, such as the papa month, or the fact that parental leave is always shared, also play a role. In most cases, however, the classical distribution of roles prevails. More mothers come to us than fathers, and they continue to play a more active role." (Expert, City of Graz)

6.2 Characteristics of successful measures targeting fathers

This section elaborates the characteristics outlined by the interviewees which made offerings and services successful, in terms of attendance by fathers and in terms of their engagement during the events and activities and their satisfaction with them. To summarize:

- Incentives work well for creating regular attendance at education based offerings
- Sensitive scheduling is a crucial factor to make participation of fathers possible
- Requiring little preparatory effort by participants works well for father-child-interaction based offerings
- Trusting personal relationships between responsible persons/organizations and fathers are an important factor
- Providing role models for fatherhood serves a need among fathers
- Men-only groups are well received, but need good hosting strategies
- Provide an entertainment factor

These characteristics are now described in some detail.

a) Incentives & course passes

Many of the educational offerings are organized successfully in the form of pass-based systems with (financial) rewards for full participation, often increasing the reward amount by two if fathers attend alongside the mothers. The rewards can be discounts for educational events, but also city vouchers which can be used in shops and actual cash-in-hand. This encourages regular attendance. One such system is explained here:

"So there is the parent-child education passport, which consists of 8 modules. These depend on the age of the children, beginning with pregnancy/birth, then the first half year of life and then the first to sixth



year of life. The whole family is always invited. There is childcare all day long, 4 impulse lectures and enough time for exchange. There is cooking and eating together and in these general activities the exchange works quite well. 2-3 times a year you have the possibility to complete these modules and so the same people meet again and again, because the children are the same age. Half of the fathers come along for the first modules. From the moment when there is only one reward for the whole family, only a third of the fathers come along." (Expert, regional networks)

Passes with rewards have several strong points. Firstly, they provide motivation for "collecting" the events on offer. One expert discusses different perspectives on offering rewards for participation:

"Sometimes you don't get so little, 100-200€ city vouchers. That's en vogue at the moment and everybody wants to do that and everybody thinks it's great. On the other hand it is questionable how sustainable this is. Did I only sit in a lecture and didn't listen just to get a stamp? I also got the feedback that especially fathers sit there and say that they were sent by their wife to get a stamp and later a voucher. Of course you don't get anything right away and you have to go somewhere repeatedly and you take away something for yourself everywhere, but well... [...] I think it serves the purpose of parents making the first contact. We promote above all low-threshold parental education. It is important to us that the parents are in contact and know that once they have a problem, that they can turn to somewhere and that there are other parents who support them. So that they can exchange ideas and find similar questions. It makes sense if it opens doors." (Expert, provincial government of Styria)

The second strong point of passes is that they make it very easy to see which events are available. One expert explains that the pass has worked to increase visibility:

"The offers were bundled much more strongly and thus the information goes much more easily to the public. With the "Klein hat's fein" parent pass, which every family living in Graz receives at birth, information about further education opportunities, courses and places to get advice is provided. The visibility is there in any case. It is strengthened in the media." (Expert, City of Graz)

During the interviews, it became clear that a number of these systems are currently being re-designed, re-thinking rewards systems and offerings to be included into the pass (such as getting rewards points when participating in fathers' group meetings). There is also the question on how these passes interlink, for example the Styria-wide one and the municipally organized one, in order to increase visibility and overall attendance.

b) Sensitive scheduling & personal reminders

On the level of event planning, the message from the experts was to be very sensitive to time constraints of fathers. Events scheduled for Saturday mornings seem to work very well. Also, events during first three weeks after birth are attended well by fathers, because a lot of fathers take off work (in the form of holiday requests or the Papa month) for this period of time. One expert is quoted here as an example for what many have said:

"Saturday from 9 to 11. The men have told us that evening or weekdays are not good. This is difficult to reconcile with their job and in the evening they prefer to go home to their wife to help her. These Saturday mornings were also a time-out for the mothers, because the children were taken away by the fathers." (Expert, City of Graz)

Migrant families have similar time constraints as fathers who have no migration background, although some experts seem unsure what exactly the deciding criteria would be to increase their attendance:



“Reaching fathers of migrant families is very difficult. Many people say it's women's business. It is difficult to ask them whether the formats or times may not fit.” (Expert, City of Graz)

Connected with scheduling is also the issue of reminders for events. These work best when sent to mobile phones shortly before the event, e.g. Wednesday for a Saturday event. According to the experts, people who are very busy (e.g. with a full-time job) or not well organized will not write down a list of dates from information materials provided and will therefore benefit from personal reminders.

c) Requiring no pre-planning & make events uncomplicated

Regarding events during which fathers and children do something together, activities which are organized wholly by third parties with no necessary preparation by participants work very well. This can mean no registration in advance, no packing of supplies or materials for the children, having a third-party institution providing the setting/space, and making financial contributions (e.g. towards food) as uncomplicated as possible to attendants. Uncomplicated father-child group activities without itineraries are said to work very well. Leaving it up to the children what happens, providing the space, food and materials, but not an agenda, themes or pre-planned activities.

One regional organizer puts it this way:

“It must be uncomplicated for fathers. When you make a father-child breakfast where everyone has to take their own stuff with them, it gets complicated. When you have to register, it's already complicated. One factor that made the father-child breakfast so successful is that it was supervised by an institution. The parent-child centre has provided the framework all around. The legal, the location, the contracts and the whole thing are ready and nobody has to worry about it. The second thing is that the whole process of payments is kept as simple as possible. All the things we have bought have been bought via delivery note and have been settled directly. The only challenge we had was to predict how many rolls we would have to buy so that there wouldn't be too many left. For example, we needed four cubes of butter for one morning. Three would have been too little.” (Expert, regional networks)

This advice holds not only for breakfasts but also for camping trips and the like, although pre-registration is often necessary.

d) Trusting, personal relationships between organizers and fathers

One characteristic of successful involvement of fathers in parental education and other fatherhood-related measures are relationships of trust with organizers/organizations. This is true for involving families in general and specifically for involving fathers. Organizations use many different strategies to establish connections to families, and introduce themselves to the family unit. Especially representatives of the social services/child welfare department are often faced with mistrust by some families and have to work harder to connect to families. Once the first barrier is broken down, relationships can be built and word of mouth is working to attract other families to the offerings. One strategy to make families more comfortable is to give the opportunity to bring along friends and family members (e.g. sister, mother) so they are not alone the first time.

In order to involve fathers, the consensus among experts seems to be to address both parents and raise consciousness among mothers for the importance of dual attendance or even solo attendance by the fathers (although this is not yet done systematically by the providers). The experts mentioned that it is vital to gain the trust of mothers in order to enable them to “let” fathers and children attend events without their presence. From the experience of the experts, mothers sometimes are reluctant to transfer responsibility for “family issues” to their partners. One suggested strategy was talking



individually to fathers to explain about events, while also using mothers as ‘cheerleaders’ to convince them of the value of events.

"Once you have both of them, you can strengthen your father and offer special offers to your father."
(Expert, regional networks)

"At the beginning the men learned about the offerings through the active mothers again. I talked to one man and his wife supported him and then the other women sent their husbands there. We never handed out notes or anything like that. We have made the experience that this does not help. The hurdle is always the first contact." (Expert, City of Graz)

Once the fathers are present and involved, a personal contact between organizers and fathers before and during events should be cultivated. What works well, according to one expert who has a lot of experience in men-only events, is personally and individually welcoming every father and saying goodbye as well, thanking for their attendance.

e) Role models

Experts have found that it is successful to involve men in the measures who act as role-models, show tangible and diverse examples of fatherhood and make these role models/examples continuously available to fathers. There are different ways this can work, according to successful past experiences:

- Professionals (e.g. social workers) share their experience as fathers, their praxis can serve as an example

An important factor is that men are part of the staff at the organizing institutions.

- Local experts give talks and remain approachable through the organization after the event

"The speakers will be selected according to the topic. However, it is important that they come from the region. So the men immediately have a reference person with whom they can inquire later again and who is approachable." (Expert, regional networks)

- Volunteers who are fathers themselves are in charge of a series of events and remain available

Many experts have found that the use of volunteers is successful. For example, strengthening local fathers who want to be active fathers and involving them as volunteers:

"Our background often seems to be a problem. If the parents know that we are present on behalf of the Youth Welfare Office, then they can no longer accept the help so easily. In contrast, the breastfeeding and baby carrying group is carried out by volunteers and we only provide the room and the child care so that the parents can devote themselves completely to the topics. This makes it easier for the parents to get involved and a lot happens by word of mouth." (Expert, City of Graz)

- Persons of trust from the community of the participants can be useful or a hindrance

There was some debate among the experts on the issue of gaining trust in work with migrant men by using key persons from the communities to involve fathers more strongly. Examples were working with a priest to establish first contact with members of a migrant community, or the use of interpreters who are male:

"If a woman works there and then the interpreter is also female, then it is completely different than if the interpreter is male and perhaps even knows the community. The interpreter swings more with the



man than with a woman. Often these are unpleasant topics that you do not want to discuss with a woman. The interpreters play a key role when it comes to sensitive topics and openness in conversation.” (Expert, City of Graz)

The downside to this, as other experts argued, could be a sudden loss of contact because the key person themselves loses trust in the organization, but also shame of opening up to difficult issues when members of the community are present.

f) Men-only groups

Experts also said that men-only groups are very useful to participants – a group feeling helps to promote enthusiasm about active fatherhood:

“If the group feeling is there and the identification is offered, then the hunger for active fatherhood is there. If several men form an agreement together, then it works.” (Expert, City of Graz)

One deterrent for male participants in parent education and other measures is that they are often on their own among women. Being singled out, standing out, being the only man is hard – this is not the case in men-only spaces. Networking happens organically if spaces and a setting are provided according to experts, while also mentioning that self-organization usually does not work out. A number of experts mentioned the need for moderation or hosting to keep groups running. The use of topics for each meeting and short introductory impulses was suggested:

“If the group is very low-threshold, the impulses are very important at the beginning. If you haven't been there a few times, it's a bit difficult to get started at the beginning. When you have topics, you think: ‘Oh, that's my topic, I'm going there again’”. (Expert, City of Graz)

Even though participants have no trouble to fill the space with conversation, little impulses are apparently needed. This might also make it easier to motivate participants who are interested in a special topic and come along for the first time because of this, and it raises interest to come back after maybe having been absent for some meetings.

g) Other best practices from experts' experience

The experts named a number of other characteristics which made their measures and projects successful, here listed:

- Education with an entertainment factor (example: a child-raising expert who is also a comedian is giving lectures which are very well attended)
- Offer measures for a longer amount of time: It sometimes takes a long time until projects start to gain momentum
- Be flexible and tailor offerings to individual situations of individual clients

6.3 Suggestions regarding reaching the target group

The following section summarizes advice from interviewees on how to invite fathers as regular participants in measures, i.e. how to attract them as a target group.

a) Start with supporting men in their current needs and talk about fatherhood later

When creating a program or deciding on topics for events targeting fathers, experts suggest to use topics which are relevant to the life-worlds of men in society, and therefore serve some need for them personally that might go beyond “how to be an active father”. Some also suggest to support men holistically in the challenges to their identity in order to make them available as active fathers. One expert explains that sometimes identity troubles can block men, and these have to be addressed first:



“Men are easier to address about the educational success of children than about other issues that are further away from their interest. We often work with men who are looking for a job themselves and it is easier to, in a first step, respond to them and not to the child or the rest of the family.” (Expert, City of Graz)

Experts stress the need to talk to the men about their life goals and life ideas and where they would need support. The whole person has to be addressed (not sent to the job agency to sort out the breadwinner-problem and sent to the family counselling to sort out family problems) and there should ideally be a central person who can guide you through the system.

b) Strengthen awareness of fathers to ask for services for themselves, not just for the mother
Men are in contact with experts and inquire about services and offerings, but there is little awareness that there might be things on offer especially for them. A suggestion would be to raise awareness that men/fathers are clients of parent-focused organizations in their own right and can access their services.

“A striking example is that men also call us and say: ‘We are pregnant. My wife and I are pregnant. I need an appointment for my wife to prepare for childbirth.’ But he doesn't ask if there is anything for him. We mention that there is also a partner session. Then he asks if the other appointments are for the woman anyway. Or when the men call and say: ‘We have a rupture of the bladder’. Or when they ask if there are any courses for the woman, but they are not looking for anything for themselves.” (Expert, regional networks)

c) Consciously use the role-model effect

Experts make the experience that when one father starts to regularly attend, other fathers follow. Be aware of the role-model effect and word-of-mouth in attracting men to measures and services and use it. For example, provide materials and leaflets when organizing fathers' groups which can be passed on to friends.

“If such groups for men were to take place, I think it would be great if there were leaflets about them. That when men come along, you can say: ‘It's great that you came along. Talk to other fathers about it and look, I'll give you something.’ That you can put something in people's hands, such as “How can you practice good fatherhood”. Do consciousness building.” (Expert, regional networks)

d) Work preventatively, but don't directly advertise & address sensitive topics

Experts see the need to address topics like violence and mental health preventatively. Violence for example is an issue they are confronted with, but there is a lack of preventative work.

“There are some institutions, whether it is the Child Protection Centre or other various initiatives, that make efforts and offer counselling. But I don't perceive this as prevention work. They are there to help in case of need. I think that they try to work preventively, but the way you perceive it, they are all extreme cases. If they do exist and have to do work, it shows that there is violence in the family. This also shows that it would be extremely necessary for them to take preventive action. Institutions such as early help are trying to do something preventive. Nevertheless, I have the feeling that not so much is being done in this direction.” (Expert, regional networks)

The experts also feel that men and families would be reluctant to participate in measures if they were directly advertised as, for example, a talking group for violence prevention, or a lecture on alcoholism.



"Like they must have a really bad problem if they are going there. They don't want to come out and they don't want anyone to recognize them. In [rural town] last year we wanted to do something about alcohol prevention, but we had to cancel that because nobody came." (Expert, regional networks)

Experts mentioned that it works well to address sensitive topics indirectly. For example, create events with a general topic/open agenda and use the space to organically begin to talk about sensitive issues (such as dealing with feelings of aggression, addiction, crises, etc.). Or include the topic as a part in more general event series, or in the context of other topics as a subdivision.

e) Present information materials in user-friendly ways

It is a challenge to present information materials (e.g. about measures and events for fathers) to parents, since they often are overwhelmed with information. Experts have a number of suggestions on how to target men successfully and where to provide the materials:

- During the weeks shortly before the birth, since this is a time for intensive planning and preparation where the couples are still well rested
- In locations where couples go together but only the mothers are actively doing something (e.g. doctors' waiting rooms, lactation rooms), because then fathers have time to read
- In the men's toilets
- Through home visits, in a well-summarized form
- Keep the information always current
- Less is more

f) Create free spaces for children under 5 for targeting fathers of all societal areas

Experts addressed one current lack of offerings which at the same time seem a very promising approach towards attracting fathers of a diverse societal spectrum: free spaces to frequent with children under school age.

"There are many events and offers. But what is missing is the familiar setting, where nothing has to happen and it provides some relief and perhaps a coffee is standing around. That would be great, but it's missing." (Expert, City of Graz)

If these spaces were offered at times where fathers usually are free, they could go there to spend time with their children. This could target families with a low income but also other families who appreciate the opportunity to play and get to know other families.

"I think there is a lot of need for 0-3 year old children - a consumption-free room that can also be used in winter and where there is no agenda. If something like this takes place at the weekend, you also catch the fathers. Parents ask again and again what you can do with small children in Graz in a relaxed and consumption-free way." (Expert, City of Graz)

"Or you can extend it to 0 to 5 years. That would be until the first compulsory kindergarten year. Families with a migration background often have several children but do not get a place in a crèche or kindergarten. The mother is at home there anyway and perhaps the father, too, because he is not allowed to work. We often got the feedback that it would be great if they could meet somewhere." (Expert, City of Graz)

7. Needs & challenges according to the professionals

This chapter explains the current needs from the viewpoint of the professionals interviewed for this report: Firstly, structural challenges are outlined which are barriers to the equal involvement of both



parents. Next, issues and needs for consultation and information which fathers have are described. Finally, the training needs of multipliers are elaborated.

7.1 Structural challenges for realizing active fatherhood

The interviewees brought to attention a number of critiques regarding structures surrounding parenthood and fatherhood, on the level of policies, societal institutions (such as labor market, welfare payments), as well as on the level of services. These barriers to realizing a strong involvement of fathers in parenting are summarized below.

a) Dominant model of the father as sole bread-winner

There is a dominant model of distribution of tasks and roles within a family which is still very effective culturally, and structures many public institutions. Experts addressed that there is a complex interplay at work which inhibits change towards allowing active engagement of fathers:

“Many screws must be turned at the same time. In the social and educational sector, women make up most of the staff. So fathers meet women and hardly men as contact persons. There are also always part-time jobs when it comes to women and earning extra money. They are also in badly paid sectors, such as retail. That is so massive and so solid. Also in the political thinking of many it is the case that they think, where is the problem? Women should stay at home for the first two years.” (Expert, regional networks)

Experts mentioned that the opportunity to take paternity leave is effectively not open to everyone. Also, the model of one-month leave makes it hard for employers to find coverage, so there is additional stress for the employees:

“An important area would be job and paternity. Not everyone can take advantage of the paternity month or paternity leave and not everyone can afford it. Craftsmen in particular do not have this opportunity. You have to be happy when you get the 14 days. Many also only get the 5 days nursing leave and that is all. Some fathers do not even get time off for the birth, although it is regulated. If the money is scarce, then unfortunately these offers cannot be afforded.” (Expert, regional networks)

The pressure is on families to find individual solutions, and think hard about what they are willing to sacrifice in order to have both parents involved equally, as one expert explains, using himself as an example:

“That is a permanent interplay. If you want to be an active father and you are constantly in these societal and economic constraints, then you can expand that, but you will reach its limits. When I became a father, the option did not exist. That means I quit my job and was unemployed for a while, because I also wanted to have time with the child. But we did not last long financially. Of course we could have said that the mother should start working again. Then the question of merit arises again.” (Expert, regional networks)

Connected with this, there is a more general critique regarding the financial challenges of raising a family in general. Experts described the pressure on financially insecure families with little professional qualifications – these situations of pressure do not allow a lot of flexibility.

Experts also addressed the availability of public childcare as a barrier to equal involvement in family work:



"It is impossible due to the structure. One would have to organize it in such a way that every woman can afford to go to work. That there are crèches and care models in every community or unit. Only in this way it is possible to see the father role in a modern and different way." (Expert, regional networks)

Examples for enforcing traditional roles such as communes paying financial rewards to families where the women stay with children for three years are mentioned.

b) Scattered landscape of services & information

Young families and families to be are, according to the experts, faced with complicated bureaucracy and need for information, e.g. regarding different models of leave, insurance options for the children (with mother or father), and custody law, in addition to the other challenges of parenting. Three experts are quoted here:

"People don't know where to go anymore. They know they have a problem, but they don't know where to put it. In a construction business there is a foreman at the entrance with a checklist and which financing you have to apply for. There should be such a thing for the region. A sort of geographical approach to what the municipalities offer, so you don't have to drive anywhere to get there." (Expert, regional networks)

"At our hospital, if you fill out the registration form, you will receive a note for care. But this takes place in the puerperium. That's just too much. We once had a look at the daily schedule for a mom and that's a hammer what's going on." (Expert, regional networks)

"A central platform would be nice. It's enough if the doctor has a poster saying 'You're going to be a father. Here you can look things up.' Such a homepage with all the information would be important." (Expert, regional networks)

There is a variety of provider institutions and professional groups involved with families, as well as services available, information materials, guides, apps and the like. Although there are many attempts to be user-friendly and create centralized information points, and there is a good system of referrals to relevant institutions, it can still be confusing for fathers (and mothers) to find out where to turn to for specific needs. On the level of establishing new projects for father involvement, it was strongly suggested to not develop something else additional, but to connect to and make visible existing services.

One critique regarding the way services are structured is relevant only to Graz: Because of the concept of "Sozialraumorientierung" (the city is divided into four areas in which municipal social services are provided) the respective organizations can only offer support for people living in the area they are responsible for. While this is useful, because certain areas can be supplied with specialized personnel and targeted services, sometimes it has problems, according to one expert. Area 1 might have resources availed which would be needed by a person in area 4 who cannot be given access to them due to their place of residence. Fathers groups, for example, could be more efficiently organized if they were open for all four areas, some experts said.

c) Lack of male professionals in caring professions & lack of resources in the social sector

On the level of organizations providing support to fathers, it becomes clear from the analysis that male points of contact are very valuable for fathers seeking support. However, the professionals interviewed in this study mentioned that the male professionals are often overbooked, because there are significantly less of them in the teams that there are women. Another issue seems to be that fathers are not well reached because the organizations providing for them do not have the resources to be flexible and cater to their needs. This can mean not having staff available to work on



evenings/weekends, when many fathers would have time, or having to stop successful offerings because of staff shortages, or not being able to provide interpreters for people with different first languages full-time, but just on demand with lots of pre-planning required.

d) Fathers-to-be are not officially registered as such and therefore hard to target personally. Experts raised the issue of how organizations approach family units. In the case of social services having to step in because of dangers to the child welfare, the registered custodian is approached and is part in contracts and the like. This is largely the mother, due to the lack of information described in the point above: There is no systematic information about the need to register as a father regarding custody law. Also, when organizations want to distribute information pre-birth, or after birth, there is no available information about fathers.

"In our cases, it's often only the mother who has custody. The social worker does not think about the family system, but about the need for the institution to find out who there is. This thinking in legal responsibilities has consequences. The father may then be surprised that the mother is invited and he is not. He knows nothing about the legal situation, or why that is so, and is therefore already a step on the outside. We then try to get him back in again. The contract with goals is with the mother. The father is not included in this process and so it is easy to overlook the fathers." (Expert, City of Graz)

"This is also visible in problematic divorce cases. The fathers are no longer accessible from one day to the next. This is very difficult in practice." (Expert, City of Graz)

"Fathers are often not active because society is shaped that way. Societal norms make it easier for us to have access to women and more difficult to have access to men." (Expert, City of Graz)

7.2 Issues faced by fathers & needs to be addressed

The experts raised a number of issues fathers face, when preparing for the birth, during the birth and shortly after. These issues and challenges for men as parents are partly already addressed in existing measures and services, but should nevertheless be an important point of reference for creating the programme for fathers and training multipliers.

a) Issues for fathers-to-be and in early stages of fatherhood

Among the issues in the very early stages of fatherhood the experts mentioned are:

- Financial issues & uncertainty (sole-provider status, consumption, price of baby goods/foods)
- Job-related issues (finding a job, holding on to a job, need to commute for job, im-/possibility to take paternity leave)
- How to handle possible illnesses (of mother & baby) if they come along
- Changes in the relationship with the mother (adjustment to new roles, tasks, time management, sexuality, exhaustion)
- Labour in the home, sharing tasks, developing competences in household & childcare tasks
- Medical crises (such as health conditions during/after birth, death of mother or child, premature birth)
- Physical childcare (such as bathing, handling the child, caressing the child, baby massage)

b) Issues regarding the father-child relationship and identity as a father

In the contexts of relationships between fathers and their children, as well as regarding identity as a father, the experts mentioned:

- Strategies for a deep relationship when there is little time outside of work



- Alternative work-family life-concepts (how can family time and work time be arranged differently, how can acceptance be found for alternative arrangements)
- Supportive or non-supportive wider family networks
- Supportive network of (male) friends (mothers often have supportive female friends, fathers less so)
- Dealing with challenging behaviours of children
- Alternatives to violence as educational measures
- Reconciling the role of men & fathers in Austrian society with concepts from societies of origin (in case of migrant fathers)
- How to play & engage with very young children
- Responsibility towards elderly family members, care needs apart from children
- Cultural lack of awareness of the importance of active fatherhood, especially in rural areas
- Admitting the need for help, fear of authorities stepping in and taking away the child
- How to develop and maintain a calm and relaxed attitude

These are all issues fathers want and need information and training on, and areas in which they benefit from opportunities for exchange with others.

7.3 Multipliers' needs regarding the CBP

When asked for their perspective on important issues to integrate into the training course for multipliers, there were answers regarding topics on which the multipliers would need additional training. This is listed below, divided into training on reaching target groups and communicating successfully with them and special skills and knowledge which could be deepened in the professionals' further education.

a) Reaching target groups & communicating successfully

Educate about...

- strategies for reaching fathers, using the strategies that work well already, e.g. personal contact, providing male role models, getting mothers on board & gaining their trust
- best practices for organizing, formats and methods: e.g. sensitivity in scheduling
- how to gain access to migrant fathers and support integration into mainstream society

"So I already know what methods there are. But I often ask myself: 'How can I approach bringing fathers on board with me?' It's like with the issue of migration. We speak a bit of a different language. Women find it quite easy in counselling situations. They quickly start talking. Men are knitted differently. I often notice their insecurity and it sometimes transfers to me. You notice that you don't really know the whole system. Not at all meant negatively. Some fathers are open anyway. But with some it is difficult, especially when it comes to unpleasant topics." (Expert, City of Graz)

- how to communicate with fathers without alienating the mother or sending the wrong message

Multipliers would benefit from training on attitudes towards fathers. Approaching fathers brings with it a number of possible wrong impressions: "the mother failed, now the father needs to act", "men are patted on the back & handled with kid gloves for things women are expected to do naturally", "someone is offering help, and therefore they must think I am useless as a father".

- how to systematically integrate active fatherhood into every information and interaction
- how to cultivate and support volunteers who want to serve as role models



- how to systematically shine a light on fathers in the family system

"I'd like to confirm that the helper system should sharpen the view of how fathers are seen. Only when the mothers were completely out of order and psychologically finished did one think of the fathers. At first they tried to help the mother to support and strengthen her. Then it turns out that the father is socially phobic, so he also has a hard time, but he has a great connection with the children. He brings in exactly what is missing in the family." (Expert, city of Graz)

"You can also see that in the ideas in team. When the cases are presented, perhaps the penultimate question is 'What about the father? Is there a father?' You already notice this in the case presentation and this is reflected in the work." (Expert, City of Graz)

- how to act as a role model and share one's own experiences with raising children and relate them to the clients' experiences – and how to deal if you are young and have no parental experiences

"For me, self-awareness and the confrontation with the father role and the image of the father would be totally important. What is the inner attitude of the multipliers towards the topic?" (Expert, city of Graz)

"Often they are asked whether they have children at all, although that shouldn't play a role. Somehow this is an elephant the room. There comes this feeling that you struggle as a parent and have stress every day and then you sit opposite a young person. We have a lot of young professionals in our field. The young person himself has never had this experience, tells me what to do and then comes up with alternatives that you as a parent may not be able to accept immediately." (Expert, City of Graz)

b) Special skills & knowledge for teaching & supporting parents

Educate about...

- how to support parents to be self-realized & happy with themselves and in their relationships
- how to deal with & support parents with mental health needs
- how to support fathers in reconciling career and family
- how to support communication within a parent couple on roles and tasks
- knowledge in developmental stages of small children to better educate parents

"That immediately brings to my mind developmental psychology. It used to be modern. At what stage of development is a baby actually at? What should a child between the ages of 0 and 3 years be able to do? What must it be able to do? What is the wiggle room? What can I expect from my children? I suspect that the professionals have little specialist knowledge than would be good, or that they have outdated knowledge." (Expert, City of Graz)



8. Summary and findings

In the following, the findings as well as recommendations will be presented with regard to the capacity building programs and fathers' groups which will be implemented within the PARENT project.

The Austrian research team carried out a qualitative inquiry consisting of three focus group interviews with local experts and network representatives as well as three experts' interviews. Experts were asked to describe the way in which they currently engage fathers in their work, measures in their professional networks and environment which target fathers, success criteria and challenges, as well as needs regarding formats, topics and target groups.

Among existing measures supporting active fatherhood can be found activities providing space for father-child-interactions, activities promoting exchange between fathers, skills and information offers available to fathers (e.g. courses, workshops, presentations), consultation-based services available to fathers (e.g. consultation hours).

The analysis of existing measures showed who is reached through existing measures and who is not. Fathers do not equally participate in the measures which are on offer, either due to time constraints or because of traditional distribution of responsibilities in the family. They are also not systematically approached or addressed and often feel uncomfortable if they are the only men attending events. There are special barriers for families who lack German language skills since interpreting is not widely available. Fathers who are reached through the measures are usually from well-educated and economically comfortable backgrounds.

Characteristics of successful measures targeting fathers are:

- Incentives & course passes
- Sensitive scheduling & personal reminders
- Requiring no pre-planning & make events uncomplicated
- Trusting, personal relationships between organizers and fathers
- Role models
- Men-only groups

Suggestions regarding reaching the target group are:

- Start with supporting men in their current needs and talk about fatherhood later
- Strengthen awareness of fathers to ask for services for themselves
- Consciously use the role-model effect
- Work preventatively, but don't directly advertise & address sensitive topics
- Present information materials in user-friendly ways
- Create free spaces for children under 5 for targeting fathers of all societal areas

The analysis established a number of needs & challenges according to the professionals. There are structural challenges for realizing active fatherhood:

- Dominant model of the father as sole bread-winner
- Scattered landscape of services & information
- Lack of male professionals in caring professions & lack of resources in the social sector
- Fathers-to-be are not officially registered as such and therefore hard to target personally



The experts raised a number of issues and challenges for men as parents, which should be an important point of reference for creating the programme for fathers and training multipliers. There are issues faced by fathers & needs to be addressed in early stages of fatherhood:

- Financial issues & uncertainty
- How to handle possible illnesses
- Changes in the relationship with the mother
- Labour in the home, sharing tasks, developing competences in household & childcare tasks
- Medical crises
- Physical childcare

In the context of relationships between fathers and their children, as well as regarding identity as a father, the experts mentioned:

- Strategies for a deep relationship
- Alternative work-family life-concepts
- The role of wider family networks
- Supportive network of (male) friends
- Dealing with challenging behaviours of children
- Alternatives to violence as educational measures
- Reconciling the role of men & fathers in Austrian society with concepts from societies of origin (in case of migrant fathers)
- How to play & engage with very young children
- Care needs apart from children
- Cultural lack of awareness of the importance of active fatherhood, especially in rural areas
- Admitting the need for help
- How to develop and maintain a calm and relaxed attitude

The multipliers' needs regarding the CBP are:

- Strategies for reaching fathers
- Best practices for organizing, formats and methods: e.g. sensitivity in scheduling
- How to gain access to migrant fathers and support integration into mainstream society
- How to communicate with fathers without alienating the mother or sending the wrong message
- How to systematically integrate active fatherhood into every information and interaction
- How to cultivate and support volunteers who want to serve as role models
- How to systematically shine a light on fathers in the family system
- How to act as a role model and share one's own experiences with raising children and relate them to the clients' experiences – and how to deal if you are young and have no parental experiences

Regarding special skills & knowledge for teaching & supporting parents, trainers should offer to educate about...

- How to support parents to be self-realized & happy with themselves and in their relationships
- How to deal with & support parents with mental health needs
- How to support fathers in reconciling career and family
- How to support communication within a parent couple on roles and tasks
- Knowledge in developmental stages of small children to better educate parents.