

Fatherhood Comparative Report

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Einurd



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Key findings

The results from the Gap-analysis indicate that fathers want and are in need of better service and information on becoming fathers. The result also shows that information material and courses on childcaring, the birth and more are not always accessible to fathers and are often more focused on the mother. Most of the fathers in all of the countries felt that mothers and women were more prepared for the role, and that they often had a better connection and ability to take care of the child the first weeks or months.

In all of the countries significant changes have happened in the last decade regarding the involvement of fathers with their children, with fathers in all of partner countries taking more interest and participation in their children's life. It was also mentioned that because of those fast changes it was important to fathers to have courses or role models, as the role of fathers is vastly different today than when they were growing up. It was also interesting that the changes in society have not been as much in the government or in the custody systems, and many fathers feel that the system is biased towards women. In all the partner countries custody is more often connected to the mother rather than fathers.

Also important from the research is that fathers want to be more involved in their children's life this can often be hard because of lack of support and economic factors. In all the partners countries some of the fathers felt they had the responsibility to be the financial provider of the home, and in some cases the fathers did not have the financial capability to spend as much time with their children as they liked. This problem is the labour market, and in the desk research and the interviews it was noticeable that women are much more likely to spend more time at home, take care of the home, and pull back on work after having a child.

Men often don't feel as they are as much prepared as women to be parents, and there is a lack and need of better service targeted to men.

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Desk research

All partners conducted desk research regarding the status of parents and fathers in partners countries. The report was divided into 3 chapters looking at the topics. The first chapter Parental rights and obligations looked at parental rights, parental responsibility, who has parental rights and custody processes in partner countries. In the chapter on Gender participation in children's upbringing the topics were gender roles in partners countries, gender participation in childcare and parenting and fatherhood. The final chapter situation and environment of parents, goes over support networks of parents, the labour market, day-care and schools and financial situation of parents in partners countries.

Parenting rights and obligations

Parents in the EU countries have many obligations regarding their child, for example they are responsible for their children's upbringing, education, and property. However, those obligations differ between the genders, with women having an automatically responsibility for the child, while responsibility of fathers differs depending on, the relationship status with the mother, and the country of birth. All EU/EEA countries recognize the right of the child to have a relationship with both their parents (Your Europe, 2020). This chapter will go over parenting rights and obligations in partner countries such as custody and visiting rights, responsibilities etc.

Parental rights

Parental rights are dependent on the culture and laws in each country, often they are more connected to the welfare of the child than the rights of the parents. For example, parental rights can be to have a right to physical possession of child, day to day care and being able to spend time with the child, having the right to discipline the child, and bringing the child up with your morals and ethical standards and more (Hall, B., 1999).

In all partner countries the rights of parents regarding their children are similar and is also connected to the rights of the children to have a connection and contact with both of their parents. Parents in partner countries have a right to make vital decisions in their children's life, such as education, healthcare, housing, discipline and so forth, as long as those decisions fall within the rights of the child of a safe environment. Who makes these decisions on behalf of the child is greatly connected to who has custody over the child and where the child lives. In Spain both parents have parental rights but the parents that live with the child, are responsible for most of the decisions related to the child, unless a judge has

decided otherwise. In Ireland the rights of parents seem to be related to the family structure of the parents involved and if they fit the traditional idea of family. The same can be said about Iceland where the custody and family law has not caught up with the changes in society and ideas of families in the last years.

Parental responsibility

The responsibility of parents seems to be fundamentally the same across partners countries. First and foremost, parents and guardians are responsible for the physical and physiological wellbeing of their children, and all that it entails. It is also important to note as they do in Greece that Parental responsibility is not only a right, but also a duty of the parents (Greece Report).

Responsibilities of parents:

- Safe home and environment
- Education
- Physical and Physiological Protection
- Legal responsibility
- Financial responsibility

In Spain as well as defining similar responsibility to other countries, they also talk about the obligation the children have to the parents, to obey and always respect them and contribute fairly, according to their means, to relief of family burdens if they live with them. It was also important that in most partner countries both parents have obligations to the child regardless of if they have custody or not, and it is the right of the child to have access to both their parents.

Who has parental responsibility / Custody processes

The laws on parental responsibility and custody processes are different in all countries. The custody processes were also a topic mentioned in all the report based upon results from interviews with the stakeholders and fathers, as something that was not equal between mother and fathers, as well as being something that in the questioner fathers said that they were not informed on and wanted to know more about.

In the desks research reports, there were similarities in Iceland and Ireland women are in stronger position regarding automatic custody, fathers who are married to the mother have automatic guardianship, however fathers outside marriage don't have as a strong position as those married. In Iceland the fathers who are married to the mother or those who are living with the mother at the time of birth get automatic custody of the child. In Ireland only fathers who are married to the mother get automatic custody of the child, if the fathers have been living with the mother for the last 12 months before the birth and 3 months after the birth, he can apply for custody of the child. In Spain paternity is given when the child is born, and custody is not based on the relationship with the mother prior to birth but is something that is done in agreement between the parents or in court. In Greece the custody legalization aims to ensure custody or communication rights to parents who have children outside of marriage or who live a lifestyle outside of the traditional context. Iceland and Ireland also have it in common that families don't fall under the traditional family ideas, for example LGBTQ+ families, are in worse positions regarding custody processes. In Greece the law regarding custody was revised in 2015 and they have taken a step to ensure that all types of families fall under the same law regarding custody processes. This has made a difference for families that don't fall under the traditional ideas about family structure. In Spain as in Greece laws on family are more favorable to LGBTQ couples (Imaz, E., 2017).

There are three types of custody in Iceland; joint custody was both parents have custody over the child, Custody of one parent and temporary custody (Icelandic report). In custody cases in Iceland in research that was conducted from 2006-2008, custody more often fell in the hands of the mother during court cases or in 62% of times. However, the researcher said that this was not necessarily because of gender, but that the individuals that the child currently lives with and has done more of the caretaking is more likely to get the custody of the child.

Gender participation in children's upbringing

To understand individuals' roles in children's life, it is important to look at gender and gender norms and how they can shape parents in their roles. In this chapter we will talk about gender norms, gender roles and social obstacles regarding parenting and fatherhood.

Gender norms/roles

To better understand gender norms, we must examine where the ideas of gender come from. Gender has been a definition used by researcher for a long time but has changed a lot due to increased awareness of gender diversity. It is a common mistake in public discourse to refer to sex and gender as one of the same, this however is not the case, while sex refers to a biological trait that individuals are born with, gender is a socially constructed behavior and gender norms can vary between culture and time (Rolleri, L. A., 2013). This also means that gender behavior changes and can be changes with differences in society.

Gender is often reflected in the gender stereotypes. These stereotypes do not only affect how other people in society see individuals but also how they see themselves (Ellemers, N., 2018). That is, we all are shaped and influenced by the stereotypical gender roles shaped by society, which then work as a guidance on how we should think, act, feel etc. (Mahalik et al., 2003).

	Male	Female
Stereotypical domain	Agency	Communality
Relevant behavior	Individuals task performance	Care for others
Anticipated priorities	Work	Family
Perceived qualities	Competence	Warmth
Neglected needs	Interpersonal connection	Professional achievement

Table 1 – retrieved from. (Mahalik et al., 2003).

As can be seen on table 1, the cultural messages that are given to women and men are not the same. While men overall are seen with more agency and career, and self-reliance characteristics, women are seen as more of the caretakers (Ellemers, N., 2005). This can be important when we are looking at the family patterns and the roles of men and women regarding family. While the cultural message to women is often that their biggest role and priority should be to have children and caring for a family, rather than personal endeavours (Mahalik et. Al., 2003), while men are often seen as a good father as a successful

breadwinner (Crespi, I. & Ruspini, E., 2015). However, we also must acknowledge that even though these gender norms can be similar in the EU countries, they also differ.

In Greece and Ireland, the traditional ideas of family and gender roles are deeply connected to religion and history. With marriage being an important factor of the culture, and traditional ideas of families, and the role of women within the marriage. However, both countries talk about the changes to society today with the changing role of the women, with the increased involvement of women on the labour market, but also that because of this the role has also become more demanding and multi faced. In both countries it is more common that the role of fathers is more focused on the financial responsibility of the home, than other factors in the home. Spain has also seen changes in the ideas of the genders with women being more involve in the labour market and having more agency than they did. While there are still trends towards women and men occupying different jobs and education, the overall census in society is that the genders should have the same opportunities and there should be gender equality.

In Spain and Iceland, the reports also mentioned the difference in field of study that men and women choose. While men are more likely to study math, engineering, women are more likely to learn humanities, nursing and so forth (you can say it fits into the gender norms). Research in Iceland also showed that men were also more encouraged than women by school's counsellors to perceive education within higher paying fields.

Both Iceland and Ireland have an high percentage of women on the labour market, which can often be looked at regarding gender equality. However, women in both countries are more likely to work part-time work than men, for example in Ireland 70 % of part – time workers are women. This can indicate that women or more likely to work part – time work because of their children, and we can for example see that in Iceland, were women with children are most likely to be working part – time job. This further indicates that women bear more of the responsibility regarding childcare and the home, despite the changes we have seen in society.

Gender participation in parenting

Looking at gender participation in all partner countries, mothers and women on whole spend more time in childcare and household work than fathers, but the involvement and the role of the parents in the home is also dependent on education, location, and financial situation of the family.

In Spain regulation and laws on the labour market have been encouraging for men and women to take the same responsibility in childcare. This was done to push equality in the right way and strengthening the position of women in the labour market and for men with their children. This has made some difference with men taking more responsibility; however, the changes still haven't reached the end goal, and women are still taking responsibility for most of childcare and family planning. In Iceland we can see a similar pattern, with laws that have been in place regarding parental leave, which has made an impact on the role of women on labour market, and the role of men in the home. However, what has also happened is that today women bear more responsibility than they did before, with women on the labour market having a much higher workload, combining their role on the labour market and at the home.

In Greece research showed that women seem to discourage their husbands, who are willing to participate in any kind of childcare activities, because of them being less capable as men to take care of them. Another research showed that fathers were more likely to take part in leisure activities, such as football, basketball and so forth, and seemed to prefer play time rather than talking and preaching less than the mothers, they were also the ones to often lead the children in their independence, such as sleeping themselves, or eating and so forth. In Iceland research also showed similar results that father if looked at all the time spent with the child, spend percentage wise more time playing than in other caretaking roles.

In Ireland the idea of the role of men and women has changes drastically, and especially with women increasingly are more involved in the labour market, and in fathers' involvement in childcare. However, research has also shown that despite of the change's women is much more involved in childcare and household chores than men. The same as Spain and Iceland. In Greece women are also more involved in parenting than men, but there is a difference when looking at education and status of the men, with men in rural areas spending less time with their children than in central areas.

Parenting and Fatherhood

With continuing changes to the gender roles inside and outside the home and increased involvement of women on the labour market, we have seen changes in parenting and the involvement of parents in children's upbringing, however research shows that women still play a bigger role in the home life and are responsible for more non-paid work than men (Leaper, C., 2014). However, the role of fathers and fatherhood has been through many changes in the last few decades, and these will be discussed here.

In all the partner countries the role of fathers has been through significant changes in the last decades. In both Iceland and Greece, it was mentioned that these new ideas and roles of fathers can be hard to navigate, and often lack role models about how to be a father in today's society. In the Greece report it was mentioned that fathers today try to focus on their own personal experience in their life, rather than follow the traditional or new model of fatherhood. In Iceland men often feel discouraged because they don't feel they receive the same support for their new role as women/mothers, and that these changes in roles of fathers in the family that has been in society and the culture, has not reached the institutional levels. In Ireland even with the changes of views in society the economic factor plays a big part in their availability for the family. While women are on the labour market men still have a bigger role and are much more likely to spend more time at work than women, many of them working long hours on weekdays and weekends. This affects their availability at home, and fathers are often not able to spend as much time with their children as they would have liked. And in Spain changes can be seen on what kind of father you are, from a father that is more authoritarian over their children and family to a father that uses his power for his children rather than on them. There have been changes on how fathers look at their role, and fathers are no longer looked at as the authority of the family.

Situation and environment of parents

There are many factors that shape and influence parenting. In this chapter the goal is to discuss the situation and environment of parents in partner countries. What support do parents get, for example when expecting a child, and is the support different for women and men, how supporting or flexible is the labour market to individuals with children, do parents have access to day-care, and how does the children's school shape the family, and finally does the economic situation of the family shape the life of parents in any way, and what is the financial situation of families in partner countries.

Support networks

In Spain you can receive benefits from social security if you have a child that is depended on you and is a minor. However, this support depends on your income and situation, and individual who have an income over specific amount, won't receive financial support. Single parent families receive a deduction from taxes.

In Greece paternity leave is depended on the sector you work in. For fathers in the public sector, they receive 9 months in parental leave for full time work, and for those working part time there is a deduction of 2 hours leave daily for children up to 2 years of age, and 1 hour leave daily for children from 2 to 4 years of age. However, fathers working in the private sector only receive 2 days paid leave, however they also have a right to 4 months leave with no additional financial support.

In Iceland parents have some support from the government while mostly the support is only under special circumstances. The municipalities health care center has birth classes and breast giving classes which parents pay a reduced price for. However, the parenting classes that are available are mostly targeted to specific issues, for example for parents of children dealing with specific problems. The classes also differ between municipalities in Iceland, and therefore depend on where you live in the country. It is mostly the role of municipalities to support parents in the first months, with healthcare venters playing the biggest part. After the child starts kinder garden, they provide material and support material for parents, and when the child goes to primary school, they offer help and guidelines on the children's development and more. If parents need further help after having children, the municipalities offer help through social workers, that is of vide variety.

In Ireland many social policies have been introduced that are designed to support parents. Such policies would include support in childcare, education, and housing. Furthermore, many policies that impact families are those that make changes to the legislation on taxation and benefits, such as child tax credit. The government also offers means tested medical cards so that the lack of finances does not dictate the ability of citizens to access health care. However, to qualify for the medical card your medical income must be below a certain figure for your family size. There are also many parental supports offered through the Health Service Executive (HSE) that are not means tested, such as pre-natal and parenting courses and access to helplines for parents.

Irish government legislation provides all parents with the right to parental leave. Parental leave is still out of reach for many families in Ireland.

The labour markets

The Icelandic labour market could do better regarding families and children. While most Icelandic people work more than in other Nordic countries a month, they have sick days for children (at least 1 a month) and parental leave. However, research has shown that in Iceland while the employers are positive that fathers take parental leave, or the 3 months that are especially for them, they are not as positive that men take some part of the parental leave that can be divided between the parents. The flexibility of the labour market is really dependent on the employer and the sector the parents work in.

In Spain parental leave is 13 days, that can be extended for 2 more days for each child from the second. Company and employers must give parents 15 days leave to take care of their child/children, and employers are obligated to give parents a leave the first 6 weeks after the child is born, for both mother and fathers.

In Greece the rights on the labour market are different between the private and the public sector. In the public sector fathers have a right to 4 days annually in sick days for their children or 8 if he is a single dad. If their child suffer from a medical situation, they could be eligible for a 22-day annual leave. In the private sector fathers are authorized to 10 days annually if their children get sick. If their children get hospitalized, they are entitled to maximum 30-day unpaid leave.

In Ireland parents are entitled to time off to deal with family life and children, however employers are not under any obligation to pay any wages for that time. The parents then often must use their holiday or their own sick days to cover for childcare. Parents in Ireland can take a forced majeure leave in emergency, which is 3 days in a 12-month period or 5 days in a 36-month period. This is a paid vacation. The flexibility of the labour market is depended on the nature of the work and benevolence of the employer.

Day-care and schools

In Ireland childcare and early years education for Irish children has been an issue for families, and the cost of the childcare is of major concern for Irish parents. International comparisons show that the cost for formal childcare for pre-school children in Ireland was second highest for lone parents and third highest for couple households in OECD countries. The government runs the Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), which is available for children over 2 years and 8 months of age and until they go to primary school. The ECCE is paid by the state to playschools and day care providers and provides for

part time care. In Ireland parents can also have 5 children under the age of 6 in their home, childminder. Ireland has been criticized for its lack of affordable childcare by international institutions and it has also become a widely debated topic domestically.

In Greece the government offers hosting of young children at school from 8 months of age up to 2,5 years of age or until they are enrolled into kindergarten of workers. Parents whose children study at primary schools can register their young children at the day-care school. This is optional and is suggested for working parents who are not able to be at home or don't have relatives to care of them.

In Spain the workers statute states that workers have a right to request a reduction in working hours to reconcile their work and family life. This right can be requested until the sons or daughter reach 12 years of age. In Spain children can be enrolled to preschools and nursery school, and Spanish public schooling is free for children age 3 to 18, but parents have to pay for the first 3 years in the school, but parents can also get aid from governmental financial aid programs for support of paying for childcare the first three years.

In Iceland there is no right to childcare in the first years of the child, and children don't have to go to kindergarten. Most of the public kindergartens in Iceland are subsidized by the municipalities and the prices are different depending on where you live. Parents who are in school, are single parent, receive disability benefits or have multiple children in kindergarten also receive a discount fee. In 2003 80% of children were in kindergarten, and it is thought of as an important institution for children and parents. The biggest obstacle for Icelandic parents are the years between 0-2, as most children don't get into kindergarten until the age of two. After parental leave parents can use daycare parents that are self-employed and work under permission from the municipalities, most municipalities subsidize the payments.

Financial situation

In Iceland there is a low percentage of families with children living in poverty. However, 2008 there were 9,1% of families with children living in poverty, with each child in the family increasing the risk. Although the percentage is low compared to all of Europe it is still the highest in the Nordic countries. The group who is at most risk of living in poverty are single parents, and single mothers in Iceland were at most risk. Single mothers who are working are also unusually high risk compared to other countries. While primary school in Iceland is free, and food in school is subsidized, the after-school care is paid by

parents. All parents in Iceland also get a leisure grant to use for sports, music, or other leisure's. This grant is paid by municipalities and the amount differs. The government pays child benefits (barnabætur) to parents with children under the age of 18, as well as additional amounts for children under the age of 7 years of age. They are calculated after the first year and are paid the year after the child is born. Child benefits are divided into four payments over the year. However, child benefits are income related and are determined according to the tax return.

In Ireland there is an ongoing housing crisis and rental prices, with rental prices at an all-time high, and many young families needing to move away from the support structures. One of five families in Ireland relies on the private rental market. The government has a program Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) where local authorities make a monthly payment to property owners where the contribution is based on the household income. The risk at poverty rate for single parents with child/children is 29,7 % in 2019 and has been getting better in recent years.

In Greece they rank last among countries in the EU in the gender equality index. The point of inequality is detected in economic situations, as for lone mothers and fathers and women and men that are born outside the EU boundaries. The gender pay gap, in full-time employment rate is six times larger between males and females in couples with children than in couples with no kids.

In Spain the stakeholder's mentioned study has concluded that the majority of those interviewed (85%) consider that the economic situation in Spain is bad and six out of ten say that it could worsen within a year. In this sense, one in six (16%) families has been affected by job loss and 40% by a reduction in their income level. In a year from now, 3 out of 4 families consider that the family's economic situation will remain the same (48%) or will worsen (30%). The current crisis and pandemic situations are affecting Families, 65% believe that their quality of life has decreased, and 1 in 2 Families affirms that purchasing power has also decreased. However, solidarity between relatives, friends and NGOs continues to be maintained in 56% of households.

In Spain, single, separated, or divorced parents are also entitled to help for a dependent child or minor or with a disability of at least 65%. It is a benefit administered by the same Social Security (INSS).

Stakeholders

In this chapter the results from the interviews with stakeholders from partner countries have been summarized. Each partner country took at least five experts or practitioners who have been involved either in research or training of parents. The main criteria for the selection of the stakeholders were that they have some kind of experience of working with families, fathers and parents. The purpose of the interviews was to get an insight into the situation of fathers in partner countries, and to hear from expert what service or topics were important for fathers.

Introduction to the Stakeholders

In Iceland 7 individuals who have been working in research, counselling, government institution or education related to families or fatherhood were interviewed. All the participants had vast experience either working with families or research relating to families or fathers. Because of the diversity of the stakeholders, there were often mixed opinions on topics, especially regarding custody, the role of genders and family life.

In Spain the group of stakeholders was also diverse given and their approaches to topics were very diverse in terms of understanding the problems and how to solve them. All the stakeholders were in direct contact with fathers and mothers.

In Greece all stakeholders had been directly or indirectly involved in some form in the parent-child relationship, either working with families or through school. All the stakeholders are in direct or indirect contact with fathers and mothers, divorced parents, single parents, and single-families and their thought and information was insightful into the problems that parents may have and the vital role as parents in families.

In Ireland all the stakeholders have been involved in service or organization that focus on families. Some working for national organization, others working with families that would not fall under the traditional family patterns, individuals that work in intervention and prevention, individuals that set up a community-based support group and more.

Fatherhood and father's participation

In Spain the stakeholders mentioned the legal framework, and that women and men don't have the same right to have a child. Saying that single women who wish to become mothers can go through artificial insemination while this is not a possibility for men. They also mentioned that men don't have access to counselling from psychological or orientation level and that sole custody is mostly provided to women.

In Ireland the law and custody are not good when it comes to unmarried fathers, as they don't get custody when the child is born, and it can often be hard to get. The stakeholders also said that while the men during custody processes need to show his work commitments the mothers do not have to do this. The stakeholders also mentioned the parental leave and that many dads were not able to take the time of as for many families this is not an option. They also say It is more common for men to work full time, with the mothers staying at home, with them being less present for childcare. However, it was also mentioned that with the economic crash more men or spending time at home with their children while the mothers are out working. They also mentioned that parents that are immigrants in Ireland are often isolated and can be vulnerable, as well as individuals that don't have extended family to help with children. The overall senses seemed to be that while women are more involved in childcare, the fathers want to be more present, but they often don't receive the same support, and the institutions, schools often only contact the mother.

In Greece all stakeholders agreed that raising children in Greece is the main role for the mothers, not only the children's upbringing but also the responsibility for nutrition and education of the kids. The stakeholders that were teachers mentioned that they rarely see fathers dropping of their kids at school. The stakeholders also mentioned that in Greece the father's main responsibility is to be financially responsible for the family, while it is the role of the mothers to take care of the family. Some of them though mentioned that while fathers don't have the main responsibility at home, they try to be as much involved in the life of their children, and especially young fathers. It was also mentioned that fathers are often wronged when it comes to custody and divorce cases, with the mother having more power when it comes to custody.

In Iceland all stakeholders agreed that the changes in the involvement of fathers in the life of their children has been through significant changes in the last 30 years. The stakeholders however did not agree on how far society has changed, while some though that Iceland had reached the point where fathers bear the same responsibility, with others saying Iceland was still not there.

Gender equality and gender norms

In Iceland stakeholder said that while gender norms still influence individuals in Iceland today, that society has come a long way, and that young people today have a more flexible idea about what it is to be a mother or a father. The ideas of being a father has also changed today, with fathers now facing social backlash if they are not a present father in the life of their children, much more than they had 30 years ago.

In Spain and Ireland, it is mentioned that the gender norms are different in urban and rural communities. In Ireland the catholic church and the GAA still have a strong influence on culture in the rural area, and in Greece rural areas are more likely to have more of a traditional view on gender. Both places also mentioned how the class and finances can also have an effect. With Irish stakeholders mentioning that while the middle class don't have to think about having to take parental leave, it can be a hard decision for fathers from lower income household who don't have the financial means to take time off. In Ireland most of the stakeholders still thought that gender roles were still deeply embedded in culture and tradition in Ireland.

Similarly, as in Iceland and Ireland, women are much more likely in Spain to be working part-time, and 75% of part-time workers are women. From the interviews they drew two conclusions that equality at the labour market was a long way to go, and that on equality on the social level women were more protected than men from the point of view of the law on gender-based violence. According to the interviews with the stakeholders in Spain, they reached two conclusions, that equality in the labour market there has still a long way to go, as well as equality on the social level, and that women are still more protected than men from the point of view of the law against gender-based violence rather than discrimination on the labour market..

All of the stakeholders in Greece said that gender norms had been through some changes, but that society still has a long way to go in regard to the social views of the genders. They also believed that men and women are not treated equally in the professional or the social sector. One of the stakeholders mentioned as an example that he and his wife war both teachers and his wife had a right to longer parental leave than him. However, it was also mentioned that this was also dependent on the sector your work in.

Gender norms and parenting

In Ireland the stakeholders said that fathers are in disadvantage when it comes to the law regarding guardianship and family. While mothers having automatic guardianships, unmarried fathers need to apply to the court for guardianship, access, custody, or joint custody, as well as the court looks at the fathers' working commitments but not the mothers. They also mentioned the parental leave and that Ireland is far behind other countries regarding fathers taking time off after the birth of their child, and that most fathers are not financially capable to take time off. Most of the stakeholders in Ireland considered mothers primarily being the main caregivers, but that father wanted to be more involved in the life of their children.

In Spain they say that support for fathers is not available and that the situation regarding sole custody it is mostly provided to women. All the stakeholder agreed that more flexible framework for the emotional care of the fathers after separation and support for reconciliation would help. The stakeholder also discusses same sex parent families and say that Spain is a pioneer in the integration of homosexual and bisexual people and their families, which generally feel integrated, experience little discrimination, and meet the needs of their children adequately.

According to one of the stakeholders in Greece, gender equality is a kind of "taboo" topic, especially in regional units in Greece, where women often don't have paid jobs and are at home with the children and often taking care of elderly people. Another stakeholder mentioned that Greek society requires a woman to have multiple roles, such as to be a mother, to work, to take care of the household chores but also to have time for her husband. Some of the stakeholder also mentioned that they think that women are prepared by nature to become mothers and that the men become dads over time, however one of the stakeholders mentioned that the genders are prepared by nature to become parents but said that this feeling is stronger in the women's nature rather than in men.

In Iceland stakeholders the discussion on parental leave had different opinions, while some thought that the parental leave being a law wasn't needed, but most of them agreed that it was important regarding and helped both women on the labour market and men in regard to connecting with the child. It was also mentioned that custody law in Iceland needed to be better, while parents can have joint custody the child can only have one legal domicile, and the parent that the child lived with had much more rights than the other parent. This is however changed this year, but there are still rules regarding joint domicile.

Fathers need for support

In Spain the stakeholders mentioned that programs and support for women is available but the same support for fathers is not to be found. The stakeholders in Spain found it important to promote measures in companies also regarding the single or separated man who is a father, providing training and support through specific courses for fathers oriented towards single or separated fathers, providing partnerships or public funds to enable the existence of male support bodies and exchanges of good practices.

In Ireland there is a need for further education and training both for fathers and educator in the sector. There also needs more support for fathers on the labour market and more legislation regarding fathers and parental leave. Single fathers also need more support regarding housing, fathers can be in the situation not to have appropriate housing for children. They also mentioned that it is important for fathers to have positive fathers role models that can share their experiences, and that teaching boys from a young age what it is to be a father and seeing good role models, can have a good impact on the future generations. It was also mentioned by the stakeholders that it was important that the service and more is the inclusion of fathers, that they are more included in the birth, in the service and so forth.

The stakeholders in Iceland said that the common idea is that parents should just figure this new role out themselves, as there isn't much service to parents to seek, unless they have some specific problem. It was also mentioned that fathers are often in more need of a service, as they often feel less capable and ready than the mothers. One stakeholder also mentioned that even though that is the feeling of the fathers, the mothers often don't feel more prepared, and that this is more of a social idea than the nature of the situation. In the whole stakeholders agreed that not only those fathers are in need for more support but the family as a whole, and that this support should start before birth. However, they also say that the little support that is available today is more focused on the mothers and the child, than fathers.

Most of the stakeholders in Greece thought that support for fathers needs special attention. In addition to general information about the changes coming to their daily lives, their finances, and their relationship with each other, they need to learn that they are role models for their children and to manage their emotion properly. In the interviews it was said that they needed support from the state such as; child-rearing permission, childcare facilities with long opening hours, camps in the summer and holidays, training for young fathers, psychological support during their partners pregnancy and mutual help group for older fathers.

What services is available for fathers and how can it be improved

In Spain one of the stakeholders mentioned that parental leave was an important factor, and that the state needed to focus on making it easier for fathers to be able to take parental leave. It was also mentioned that the employment market needed to change and needed to more work-life balanced for families. It was also mentioned that family-oriented activities and training needed to be promoted in schools, as well as developing a media campaign in support motherhood/parenthood in a positive way.

In Ireland there was a focus on three topics, Empowering fathers through education – education both parents on child development, how to support your child, what difficult issues you could face and what to do and so forth. Confidence building for dads – that it is important to build confidence in men that they are capable of being fathers. Inclusion of fathers in full lifecycle – those fathers are included from the start – the first appointment to the time that the midwife is calling home. Improved support – With mothers in the labour market, they don't have the capability to carry on the burden of parenting alone, so fathers need to more involved. Fathers generally want to be more involved in everything that regards their children, but they need more support.

In Iceland all the stakeholders agreed that more service for families were needed, and better support systems. They also mentioned that there was little to no service available to fathers today. Few stakeholders also mentioned that it was also beneficial for fathers to have service and education only for them, as they often feel safer to talk without women present. It was also mentioned that courses and service for the parents regarding relationships after birth was also needed to help relationships cope with this new role and how it changes the relationship. It was also mentioned that better service and education was needed for individuals splitting up or getting a divorce to better this time for the family. Finally, all stakeholders also mentioned that the healthcare system needed to better when it came to the involvement of fathers throughout the pregnancy, birth and the first month after the birth.

In Greece the stakeholders said that there were several, but not efficient support networks for fathers, and that they were especially for divorced fathers, mainly for legal support. They also mentioned that there are small counseling centers that are operate on a local level, and that fathers who are interested in topics regarding families, can turn to advisors/counselor and psychologist for personal guidance, support, and advice. They also suggested that these initiatives were crucial, and they need to be constantly promoted all over.

Best – practices

In Spain some schools offer a small workshop for parents, whose main objective is the management of emotions, recognizing the emotions of their children and how to manage time better. In the interviews they mentioned that the communication between parents is changing, and young fathers have less knowledge of how to develop their parental role because the models are changing.

In Greece the stakeholders all agreed that there was an urgent need for more support and guidance for fathers in Greece, and some of the stakeholders proposed that schools should take more initiatives taken by organizing counseling conferences by special advisors and psychologist hosted at schools.

In Iceland

In Ireland they mention; peer-to-peer networks, also highlighted by the stakeholders, as network and support groups for fathers, Bespoke service, which depends on the person, or their needs and is flexible and meets the person where they are, Open door policy and more.

In Iceland the stakeholders mentioned some independent courses that fathers can attend, but also said that there were little services available for fathers in Iceland. Most of the topics mentioned as best practices, were outside of Iceland.

Other topics

In Spain the stakeholders highlighted the need for series of materials that would be useful for parents and perhaps encourage good practices and dynamics to foster this parent-child bonding.

In Ireland the stakeholders mentioned education in secondary school and teaching them about brain development. The media also had a part to play, posting and news targeted towards mothers while a more gender balanced approach was needed. National stakeholders and policy makers also needed to contribute to better and more gender balanced policies related to parenting. Peer to Peer support is also needed.

In Iceland the topics that stood out in the interviews where, the importance of dynamics and the relationship of the parents and the Icelandic system (custody laws). It was also mentioned that by most if the stakeholders that parents need more support regarding childcare, policies and the employment market must change to fit better into family life.

In Greece several of the stakeholders pointed out that a change of mindset was needed from the fathers and mothers for proper child-rearing, education, and information. It was also mentioned that there is no specific model for masculinity, and the community is still working on it.

Peer Interviews

In the peers interview the goal was to get an insight into the life and experience of fathers in partners countries. The interviews were carried out in all partners countries, and each partner selected at least 5 young fathers, to interview, and did their best to have a diverse group of fathers. After the interviews partners selected fathers to take further part in the project.

Introducing the fathers and their situation

In Iceland the fathers came from different backgrounds, with some having a stable home growing up, while others struggled in their early life's. Some of the fathers had dealt with addiction but all the fathers who took part in the research were clean today. In Iceland all the fathers had it in common to have relatively young children, and 2 of them had children that were younger than on years of age and noted that it was hard to answer some of the questions because they didn't feel they had the experience.

In Greece they interviewed 5 fathers, all of them under the age of 35, from fathers that lived with his partner with his grandparents, father that was married, father that lived in the same city as the mother of the child, father with a joint custody, fathers who is divorced and a single father. There is experience then was from fathers in different experiences.

In Ireland the fathers also had different situations, from a father that was waiting for his first child to be born within a month, to a father of 5 children.

In Spain two father were in a relationship with the mother their child, one living with the mother and child, and the other worked around Spain which prevented him spending as much time as he wanted with his child. The other fathers interviewed were all single fathers, with a difference in custody agreements and arrangements. Two of the fathers have joint custody, one with changes of residence and one with shared residence, and one fathers lived in a different city than his child but had tried to stay close to the child throughout its life, with travelling and visiting.

The fathers who took part in the research as can be seen have a vast difference in occupation and situations and this gave the partners a wide variety of experiences throughout different social economical background, custody processes and relationships.

Fatherhood and father's participation

Most of the fathers in interviewed in Ireland said that they took an active role in caring for their children. They also mentioned that caring for a child was a hugely rewarding. They also mentioned that childcare is relative to the individual rather than the gender, and that fathers today taking an active role is more accepted than in previous generations. In the interviews it was also noted that because of high prices of living, fathers felt that they were not able to spend as much time as they would have wanted with their children, and their role was mainly as a provider. The fathers that had multiple children, also mentioned that while they saw their role with the first child mainly as a provider their view had changes with the later children.

In Spain they said that the childcare was shared but fell more on the mother than the fathers. However, it was also mentioned that it was difficult to reconciling family life and professional life, with many individuals on the labour market connecting legislations more to mothers than fathers. They also mentioned that there were few support groups for fathers, and most of the support had come from family. In all the interviews in Spain the fathers would like to have more time to spend with their children, but the labour market is demanding.

The fathers in Iceland said that they saw positive changes in the participation of fathers in their children's upbringing today, comparing to when they were growing up, and how they could see the changes in how their fathers approach parenting and then how them or their friends approach it today. The fathers also mentioned that they though that parenting should be 50/50 role between the parents. Some of the fathers however mentioned that even with these changes in society they felt the pressure to be the financial provider of the home, and said it was the pattern of society, that it was the role of the fathers to take care of the family regarding finances. Two fathers in the interviews also mentioned that custody laws in Iceland also needed to change, as there was not equality between the parents, with men being in vulnerable situation against the mothers.

In Greece all the fathers in the interviews indicated that fatherhood is a relatively hard issue, and that dads are predisposed by community to have the know-how in managing the house, which loads them with responsibility. They said that Greece still had a long way to go regarding fatherhood, even though there have been some changes in the last decade. They also say that young fathers are in a difficult position since they are confronted with the traditional concepts regarding the father role, and that the work of fathers become more demanding for males that are divorced and/or unemployed.

The changes between generations

In Spain more and more single fathers can be seen, and grandfathers that didn't maybe take part in raising their children, are helping and learning how to take care and do tasks related to children.

In Ireland the fathers interview said that they didn't grow up with father figures, and rather identified their mothers or siblings as their parental inspiration. Those who did have father figures responded in two ways, either they had a positive parental experience, and approached fatherhood similar as their fathers, or they had a negative experience and were determined to ensure that their children would not have the same experience.

In Iceland the discussion about the changes between the generations seemed to be connected to the personal experience as children and family life. Most of the fathers interviewed in Iceland talked about their upbringing in a positive light and mentioned that they at least look up to their fathers in some way. It was also interesting that most of the fathers that talked about having a good experience when growing up, wanted to approach parenting gentler than their fathers did. Some also mentioned that they saw changes in their fathers from having their first child to the later ones, and how they are today versus how they are now. There was also mentioned of that today it was culturally different how men are supposed to behave, as men as fathers.

All the participants in Greece agreed that being a father is not radically different than the experience of their fathers, and that their fathers grew up in completely different environment and background than they themselves. The social standard in previous decades were vastly different than the ones nowadays, that is the thought and new situations create different standards in terms of what their parent wanted and what they sought in relation to their children.

Parent Cooperation

In all the Icelandic interviews the fathers said that cooperation between parents was extremely important in parenting, regardless of whether the parents were together or not. They all mentioned that this was important for the wellbeing of the child. It was also mentioned by the fathers who were stepfathers that it was also important to have a good relationship with the father of their stepchild. The answers were divided into two themes, on the one hand that cooperation was important regarding the child and its wellbeing and the rules at home, and secondly the roles of the parents and cooperation was important to the relationship of the parents and the shared responsibility at home. Some of the fathers also mentioned that when there is not a good cooperation this can have a negative effect on the child, with the child feeling they need to pick sides, and talked about their own experience that this was harmful and stressful for the child, and the child's relationship with their parents.

In Spain the fathers highlighted in all the interviews the relationship between the parents. Will either make it more difficult for the fathers to care for his child or more difficult for him to care for his child. It was also mentioned that in joint custody, flexibility will exist if there is a good relationship between the parents. Many of the fathers mentioned that the mother takes her frustrations on the father through the child because they know that it is a way of hurting the fathers. In general terms, all the fathers gave them a view that the vision of mothers and their family nucleus is very important, as sometimes the in-laws also have an influence on whether everything is easier or more difficult.

In Ireland as in Iceland there was a widespread consensus that parental cooperation was vital to the raising of children. Regardless of the living arrangements of the parents, all respondents believed the welfare of the children and cooperation were intrinsically linked. As well as in Iceland the fathers also mentioned that the parental cooperation was vital for ensuring the stability of relationship between themselves and their parents in maintaining the connection between the fathers and their children. It was also reported that cooperation ensures that neither partner feels isolated in the rearing of their children, especially when the parents no longer live together and are trying to balance custody arraignment with work commitments.

In Greece all the fathers agreed that cooperation among the parents is more than essential, and strongly believed that with no cooperation, the upbringing of the child would not work otherwise, as couples and parents should divide the time spent with their kids between their work life and family life.

Becoming a father

In Ireland there were few responses to the questions about becoming a father. The majority talks about the connection they felt for their new-born child, and the huge emotional connection to the child and desire to be actively involved in their upbringing and being a support to their parents. The fathers also responded that they felt a huge sense of responsibility. One of the fathers also stated that the birth of the child signified a complete change in their lives and that he realized that it was time to “grow up” and “get a real job”. The fathers also felt that the less mature part of their life was finished and there was now a greater meaning to their lives.

In the interviews in Spain the fathers mentioned that in many cases the pregnancy was unplanned, and that the communication with the partners was important. There was also mentioned that the decision to abort is only made by the mother, so there is a little that the father can do if she refuses. It was also mentioned that when the pregnancy is not planned, the first months of the pregnancy can be frightening as the fathers do not know what the future may hold and are faced with something that they have not done before. When the parents were in a relationship the fathers tended to be more involved in the process.

In Iceland the fathers talked about the first weeks or months as a difficult time. Few of the fathers mentioned that they didn't feel the connection to the child and when it was born, and the shame and guilt that they felt because of it. Only two of the fathers in the interviews said that they had a connection with the child when it was born. Two fathers mentioned that their partners suffered from post-partum depression after the birth of the child, and one of them mentioned that it was important for fathers to be more aware of this, and how to help monitor and help the mother. The fathers also talked about this overwhelming feeling of protecting their child when it was born, and fear of not being good enough to care for the child. They also mentioned that they are feeling of responsibility and not being ready for the changes that it had on their life, for example on their social life.

In the interviews in Greece the fathers admitted that becoming a father was a new step in their life, and a one that changed their lives radically. They also talked about their experience of anxiety about health issues or with school exams, that they experienced connect to their children, as well as questioning themselves if they were ready for a child, how it would be to raise a child and so forth. While some of the fathers in Greece prepared themselves with reading books, articles or other, they said that the situation and feeling was completely different from the one written.

Gender Views

In Iceland more than half of the fathers mentioned that they thought that mothers were more capable of taking care of the child in the first months after the birth. They also felt that the mothers had a more connection with the child in the first months, which they said was possible connected to breast giving and that they carried the child for 9 months. However, all of them also agreed that in the long run there was no difference. In two interviews the fathers also said that their partners had though much more about having a child than they had. One father also said that the healthcare

In Spain this was a controversial issue, as the consensus in society is that it is more the role of mothers to take care of children. In the interviews they found that many of the fathers thought that women should take care of the children since most of them were the ones working. There was only in one case in the interviews were parents both were working and they considered taking paternity leave in order to be able to dedicate time to the child.

In Ireland all the fathers thought that they were every bit as capable and prepared for becoming a parent as their spouses. Two of the fathers also mentioned that however in their experience the relations that they were going to be parents resonated far earlier in their partners then in themselves, as they were carrying the child. Some of the fathers however mentioned that if the child was breastfeeding this seem to form a special bond between the mother and the child, which was hard for the fathers to replicate.

In Greece the participants stated that females feel more ready and prepared by their nature to become mothers in contrast to males, and said that fathers became fathers over time, and that they do not realize at the first moment of the child's arrival what it truly means for them. It was said that this was especially because the first year of the child's arrival, mothers are the ones taking care of the infant and the fathers are in a supporting role to them. In the interviews it was also mentioned that there is the notion that fathers do not receive the same encouragements in their parental role as mothers do.

Prepared for Fatherhood

Most fathers felt emotionally prepared for becoming fathers in Ireland and felt that fatherhood was something that you just dived into and was learn on the job. It was also mentioned that having a family member that have a child, gave a real-life experience on how to changes nappies, feeding and caring for a child, which was helpful. Some of the fathers read books in attempts to feel prepared but the overall census was that nothing can really prepare you for the child. Two of the fathers mentioned that there were courses to attend anti-natal, but that was good for the birth, but there was nothing available after the baby was born, and that some support after the child is born would be beneficial.

In Spain all the fathers said that caring for a child was not easy, and many of them did not know how to manage situations and they felt that handling a newborn was difficult and intimidating of you didn't have any experience. The fathers said they washed their hands many times of fears that they might catch an infection. The fathers also mentioned that they had fears about holding the baby from the beginning and talked about the issues relating to changing nappies and toileting, which many of the left the mother in charge of. In general, they all classified themselves as moderately competent, apport from two fathers who declared themselves manifestly clumsy in these tasks.

In Iceland, the three fathers that mentioned that they were not ready to be fathers, were the ones that were not in a relationship with the mother. The other fathers interviewed all said they were somewhat ready, and most of them had done some preparation like, buying clothes, reading something, but they mostly mentioned that they weren't mentally prepared for the role. It was also mentioned that it is hard to be 100 % ready unless you have done this before, as you can't know how having a child will affect your life. The two fathers who discussed being the readiest were the ones that already had stepchildren, and in sense already were fathers, so they knew more about this role than the other fathers in the interviews. In this discussion it was also mentioned that before you become a parent it is hard to understand how much your life is going to changes, regarding your social life. Finally, it was also mentioned that sleeplessness was something that the new fathers were not ready for, and how much if effect it can have both parents and the relationship.

In Greece some of the father's mention that they were not ready for the father role and did not prepare themselves personally to become a parent and mentioned that their initial though was that everything would come automatically with the arrival of the child. The fathers interviewed also tended to ask their friends and family for advice regarding their children, and said they looked for tips and information on the internet.

Role Models

In Spain most of the fathers had some male figures as a reference point, people like their fathers, brothers and even grandfathers. However, many of them preferred going to the mothers when they were in need for advice in how to care for their children. This was explained to be because the role of fathers has changed much in recent years, and that 20 years ago mothers were the number one caregiver while the fathers were second place. Many of the fathers in Ireland had bought books or manuals on childcare, and almost all of them sought advice from close friends in addition to the family mentioned above.

In Iceland most of the fathers mentioned someone in their family as their role model, fathers, grandfathers, or brothers. However, some of the fathers also mentioned that they didn't really have one role model but looked to specific things that they wanted to be as fathers that they wanted to do. What the fathers in Iceland seemed to value the most was the time and attention devoted to the children. For them it seemed most important that the child was number one in their life, and that they spend time with them and value them as individuals. Other things that the fathers looked up to were individuals that showed love and care despite being men, and men who go against the ideas of masculinity seemed to be valued characteristics. One of the fathers mentioned that he looked up to his brother because he had strict boundaries and healthy communication, where every child knew the rules and why they were in place, and this was something that he had valued and had respect for.

In Ireland many of the fathers reflected on the relationship with their own fathers when answering this question, and many of them responded that the advice they received from their fathers was valuable. The fathers gave different answers about what they looked up about in their fathers, one said that he appreciated his dad's encouraging approach to trying different things and thought him not to fear failure, and another said that his own father's empathic and understanding approach to parenting was pivotal for his good relationship with him and contributed to his father holding his family together in very difficult times. Two of the fathers in Ireland grew up without fathers, looked to mothers and sibling as their role models and valued their judgment and decision-making skills. One of the fathers then mentioned his neighbor as his role model, because he was reliable and took interest in him and sports he was playing, and he sees that man as an inspiration to this day.

In Greece the fathers gave various answers to who they look to for guidance or as role models regarding being a father. Some of the fathers said that they did not have one specific figure as a role model, instead they sought for assistance and advice from personal advisors/psychologist or journals and ligatures. While others mentioned that they had friends or family who they could turn to for advice.

Service for Fathers

In Spain many of the fathers mentioned that the common idea in society is that the mother is the primary caregiver, and that fathers necessarily shouldn't be able to take care of the child alone. It was mentioned that even in the situation where the father is widowed the grandmother or sister, that is the women in the father's life, take over the role. In this sense, Spanish society is still matriarchal regarding the care of children. Because of this all sectors, business, family and especially in public administration and political governance, not measures are taken to encourage fathers to have a certain amount of autonomy at work to care for children, or to have free time with them. It was also mentioned that women have access to economic and psychological help from a multitude of institutions in Spain, men have less access to such support.

Most of the fathers in Iceland said that the service available should at least be more visible than it was now. Most of the fathers interviewed had not sought out service or classes but also mentioned that they didn't know of any. One of the fathers also mentioned that it was important that those classes were free and not independent as they are now, as many of new parents don't have money to spend. Another father mentioned that he thought classes for fathers were especially important because of how much the role of fathers and the idea of being a father has changed in the last 30 years.

In Ireland the fathers felt that there was a range of service for fathers, but motivation by new fathers was needed to uncover and access them. One of the fathers thought that these services are only valuable to the fathers who are willing to be proactive in finding and engaging with them. The father said that even though these services are limited, there is also a cultural barrier in Ireland for men to reach out and telling people that they are struggling, and that a media campaign was needed to normalize vulnerability in fathers. One of the services that the fathers said should be more available were support groups for fathers which are open, and they can choose to use and talk about their experience. With this being a great network of support and mentorship from fathers with older children could be encouraged among the group.

In Greece the participants revealed that there were plenty of maternity programs and tutorials offered for maternity either in clinics or online, but that there was a lack of service for fathers. They either do not exist at all, or they are offered in limited amounts and placed around Greece. The fathers in Greece agreed that it would be extremely helpful if there were special schools or tutorials for fathers, or parents in general. One participant however mentioned that even though any kind of service would be much appreciated, they were not sure whether every male was ready for that.

Information and Service

In Ireland the fathers mostly felt that knowledge provided should be focused on the end results i.e., the baby and that the end of 9 months, their lives will change forever. They also said that fathers should know that the experience of having a child should be cherished and regardless of the relation with the mother, being cooperative in the parenting role is hugely important for the child. Overall, the advice was to reach out for support from family, friends and community and keep the focus on the child, regardless of the relationship with the partner.

The fathers in Iceland talked about the changes that happens when you have a child, and many focused on how hard it can be to have a newborn child. One of the fathers also mentioned that it was good to fathers to know that sometimes connecting to the child can take time, and fathers should know that this is okay, and they were not the only one. Another said that fathers should try to not focus on everything that can go wrong, and just go through this time. One said the child is not as fragile as you think it is, and one of the fathers recommended that the fathers went outside and did something with the child, because it was important for their mental health.

In Spain the fathers gave mixed comments with emphasis that fatherhood was a course of learning and that is important to slow down and enjoy the parenthood experience. There was also the view that services need to be focuses on both parents rather than only the mother. They mentioned that the need for mental health support services throughout the pregnancy was important to help fathers “get their heads around” how life will change after birth, and to support the transition into parenthood.

In Greece the fathers said that they wished that they had known more about and received more advice on how mental issues that can affect the mother after having a child, and how to help a new mother with all the burden of the arrival of the new family member. They also mentioned that how fathers become more connected, on an emotional level, with children since the child’s connection with their mom is stronger and more inevitable.

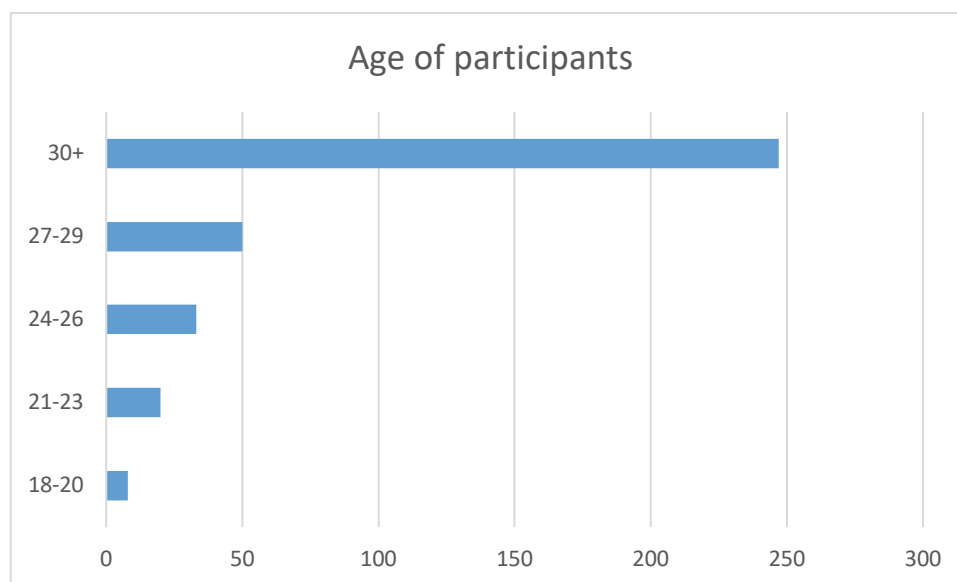
Questioner

In the final step of the research all partners sent out a questionnaire to get a better idea of the environment and situation of fathers in partners countries. It was also the purpose to get an insight into what the fathers themselves wanted/needed the most from the project, regarding information or teaching.

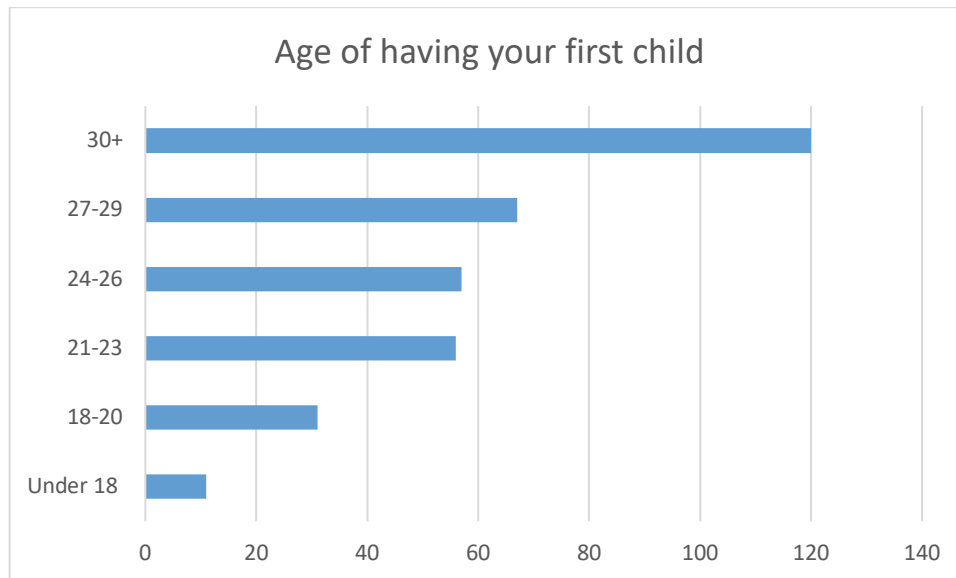
The target group for the questioner where fathers in partners countries, and 360 fathers located in Iceland, Ireland, Greece, and Spain took part in the questioner. As there were differences in the number of participants in each country it can be difficult to validate the difference between countries, but they however give us an idea about the situation in each country. In this chapter the results from the questionnaire will be introduced.

The Participants

Background information on the participants in the questioner.



As can be seen on the graph above the age of participants was high or more than 30 years of age. In Iceland 76% of the participants were 30 years and over, in Greece 42%, in Spain 60% and in Ireland 85%.



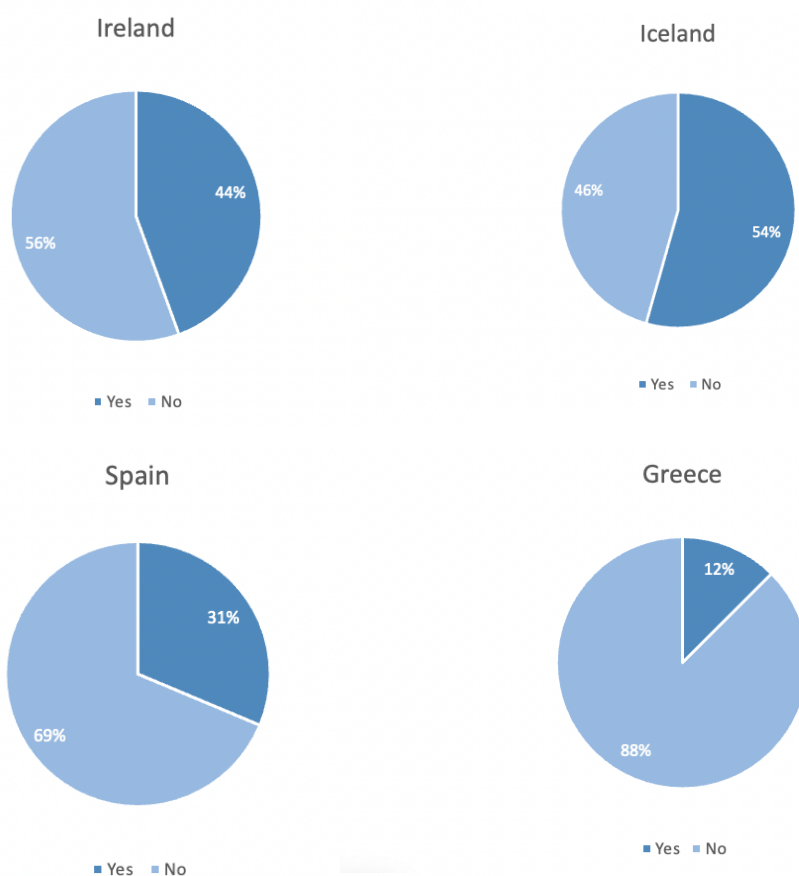
The fathers who took part in the questioner also most commonly had their first child over the age of 30, which fits to the developments in Europe, with individuals waiting longer to start a family than a decade ago. In Iceland, Spain and Ireland, 30+ the results were similar while in Greece seemed deviated from the rest, with the biggest age group being 27-29 years of age, and less variability between groups.

In all the partner countries, the biggest percentage of fathers were married or living with the mother of their child/children, and it was most common though narrowly that the parents had been living together for 1-4 years. There was a vast difference between the countries regarding the highest level of education the fathers had completed, but in all countries, it was most common for the fathers to be working full time or a full-time student.

Involvement with the child and the birth

In the questioner we wanted to see the involvement of fathers in the first months of the child, and during the pregnancy. As was mentioned in the stakeholders' interviews and in the research, these are important times to develop a connection to the child.

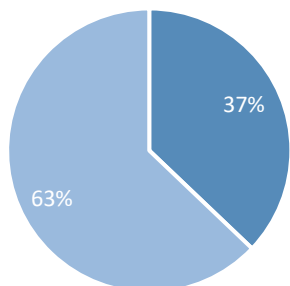
Below can be seen the answers to the question „Did you attend any training courses as preparation for becoming a parent? “



As can be seen on the results there was a vast difference between countries, with Icelandic fathers went to parenting classes 54% of the time, Irish fathers going 44% of the time, Spanish fathers going 31% of the time and finally Greece fathers who were least likely to go to parenting classes with only 12% of fathers going to classes. This however is also connected to the countries, as there was also a vast difference in opportunities for fathers to attend classes.

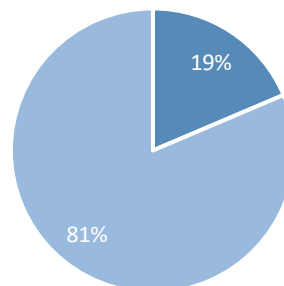
The question „Did you take parental leave? “ we saw a vast difference between countries.

Parental Leave - Spain



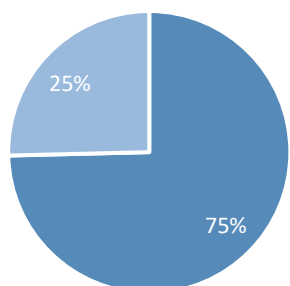
■ Yes ■ No

Parental Leave - Greece



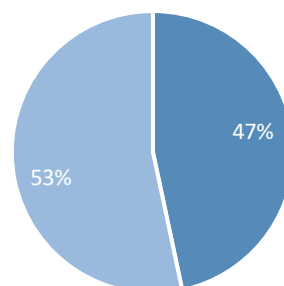
■ Yes ■ No

Parental Leave - Iceland



■ Yes ■ No

Parental Leave - Ireland

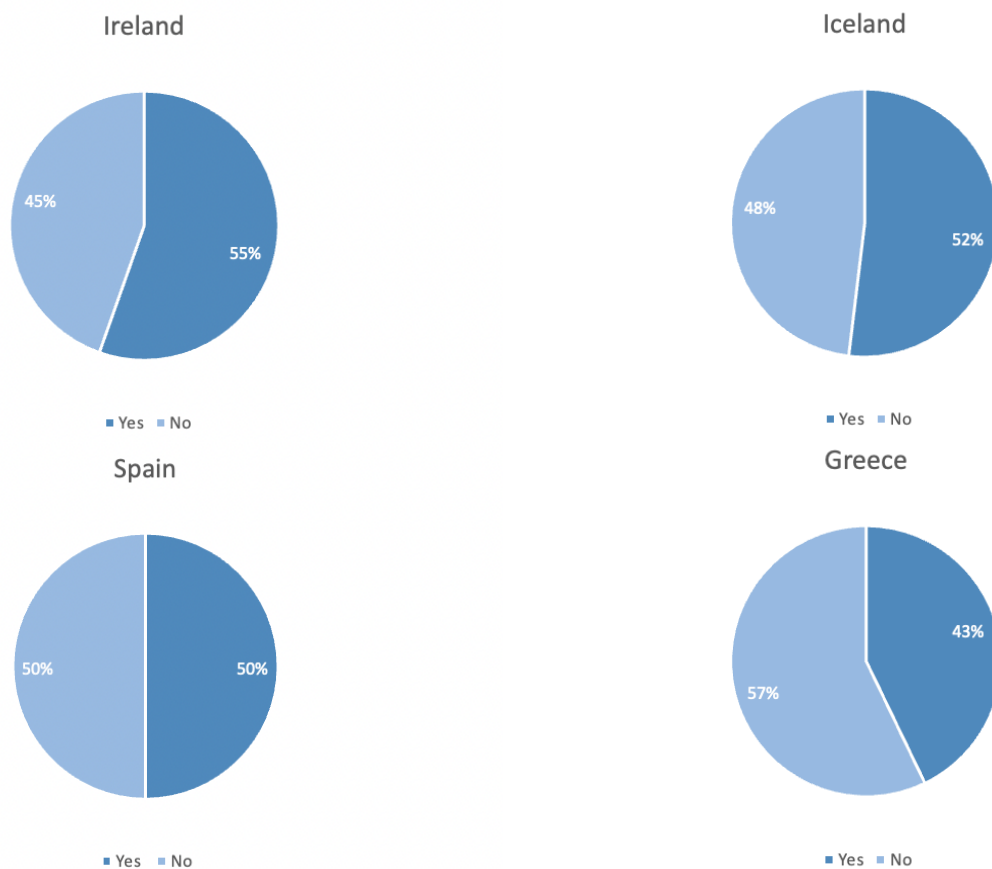


■ Yes ■ No

From the results above we can see that in Iceland 75% of fathers take parental leave after having a child, which is a trend that has been going up in the last decade after the changes made to parental leave in the 98', with fathers having 3 months. The results show that fathers tend to not be able to spend as much time with the child as the mother over the first year.

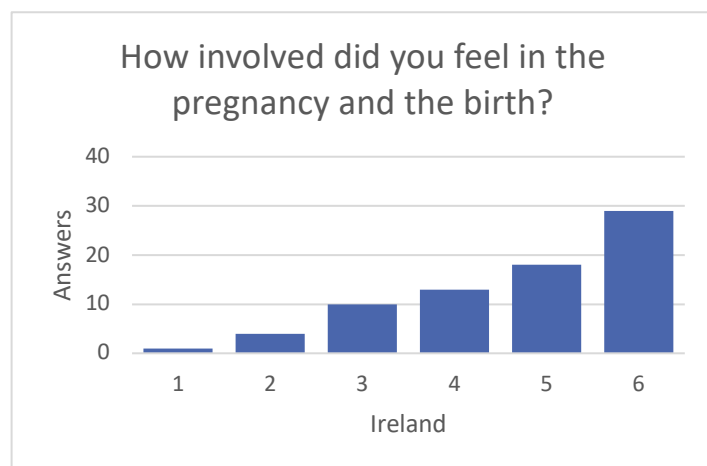
In the Questioner we also wanted to know how fathers felt about their role as parents, and how involved or how much support they experienced during time of birth and first year of the child's life.

Asked the question did you prepare for the birth of the child by reading books, websites or articles about the development and needs of a new-born? These were the answers in the four countries.



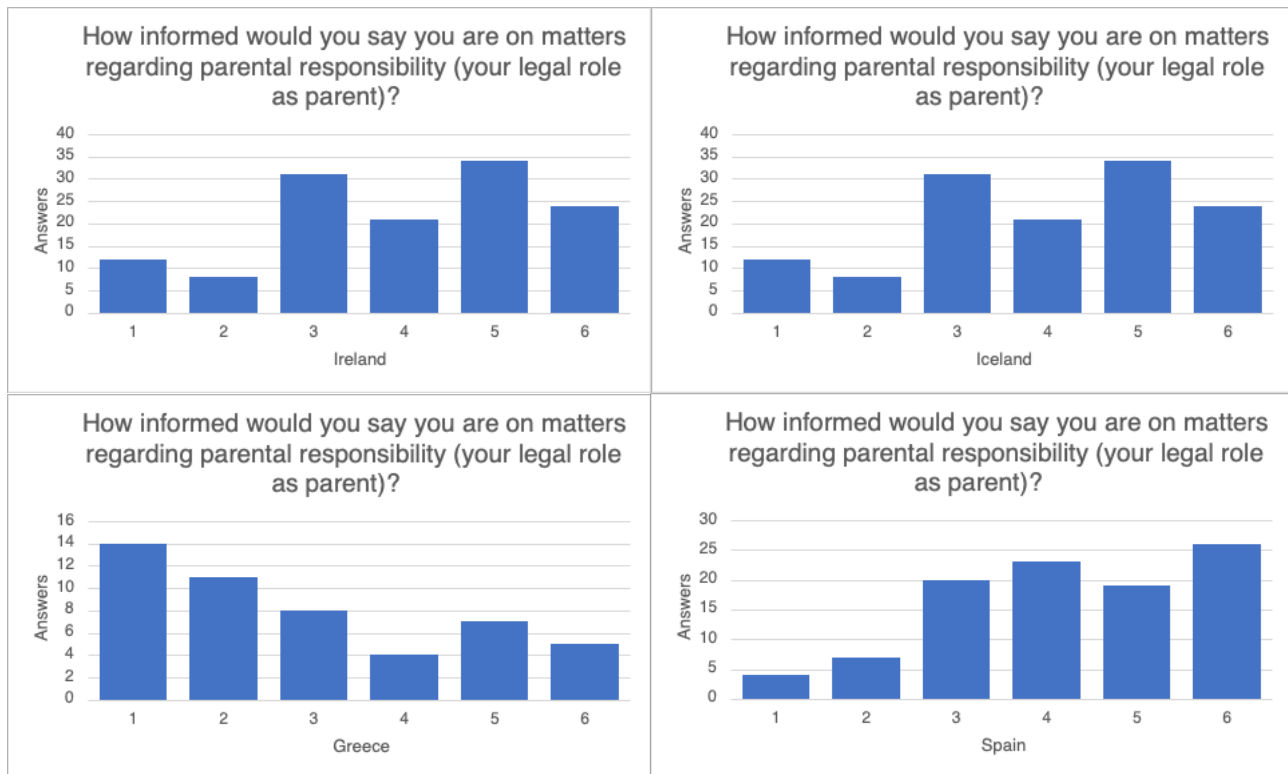
As can be seen on the results the results are similar between countries with about half of the fathers preparing for the birth of their child by reading books or information material about childcare before the birth.

The fathers were asked „How involved did you feel in the pregnancy and the birth?“



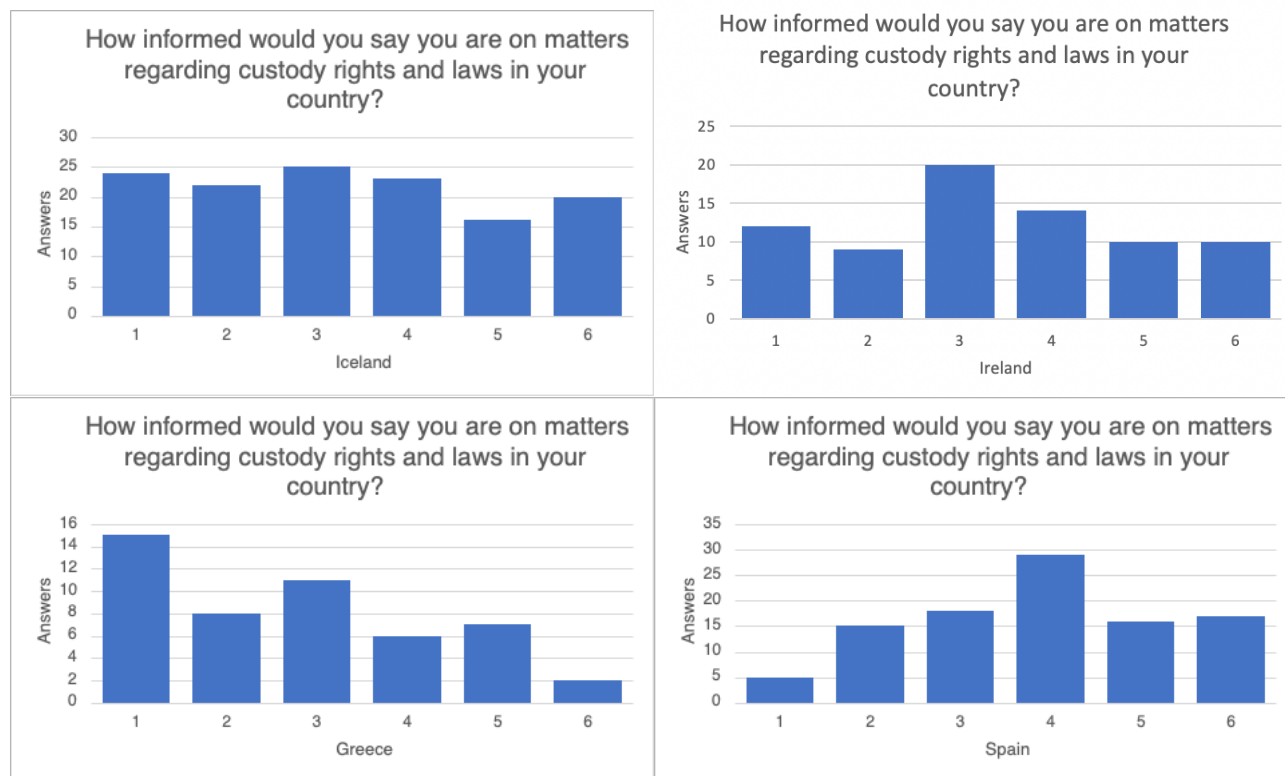
As can be seen on the results the difference between the countries was noticeable. While the results from Iceland were more evenly distributed, with the two mediums receiving the most answers the others were different. While both in Ireland and Spain had similar results with the highest percentage of fathers feeling involved in the pregnancy and the birth. The fathers in Greece felt least involved with the highest percentage of fathers feeling they were not involved in the pregnancy and the birth.

„How informed would you say you are on matters regarding parental responsibility (your legal role as parent)?“



The fathers in Spain seemed to feel the most informed regarding matters regarding parental responsibility, with fathers in Greece feeling the least informed. It would be interesting to look at this answer further and know why fathers in Spain were more informed on matters regarding parental responsibilities than in the other countries.

„How informed would you say you are on matters regarding custody rights and laws in your country?“

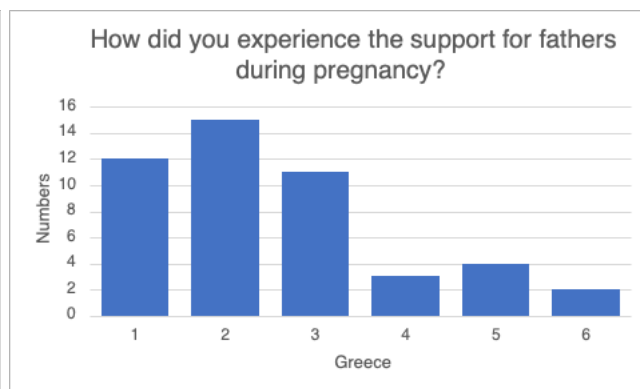
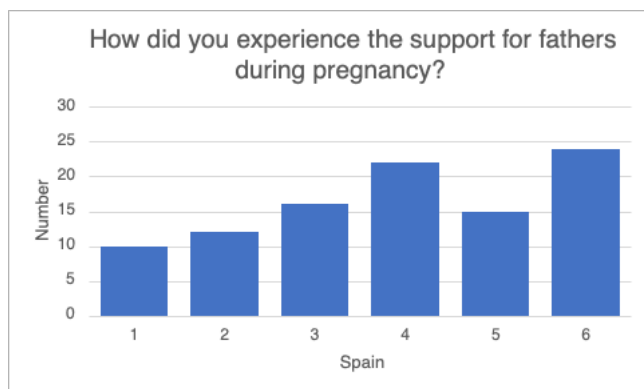
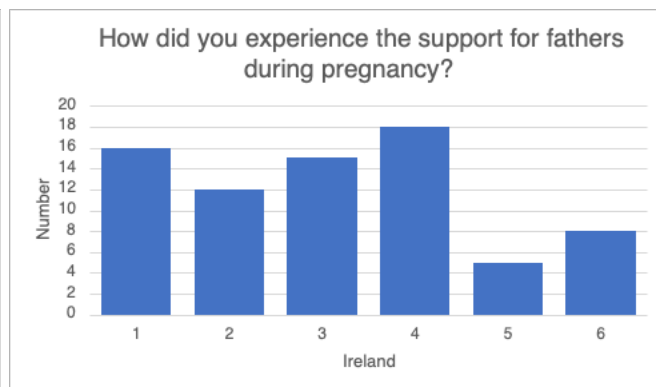
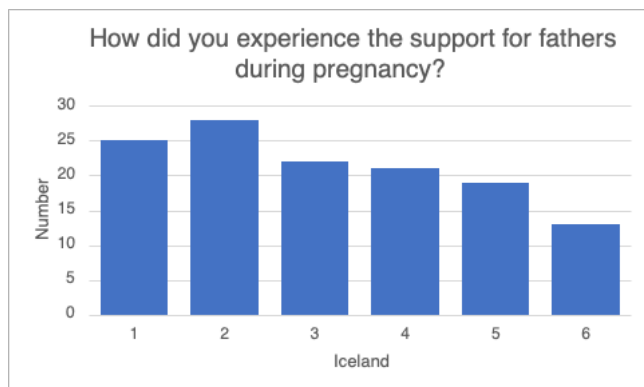


According to the results many fathers are not that informed on the matters on custody rights and laws in their countries. This was also notable in the answers in the end were many of the fathers would like to know more about these issues, as well as in the interviews with the peers (fathers). Fathers in Greece seem to feel the least informed of the partners countries with fathers in Iceland feeling they are most informed.

Support to fathers

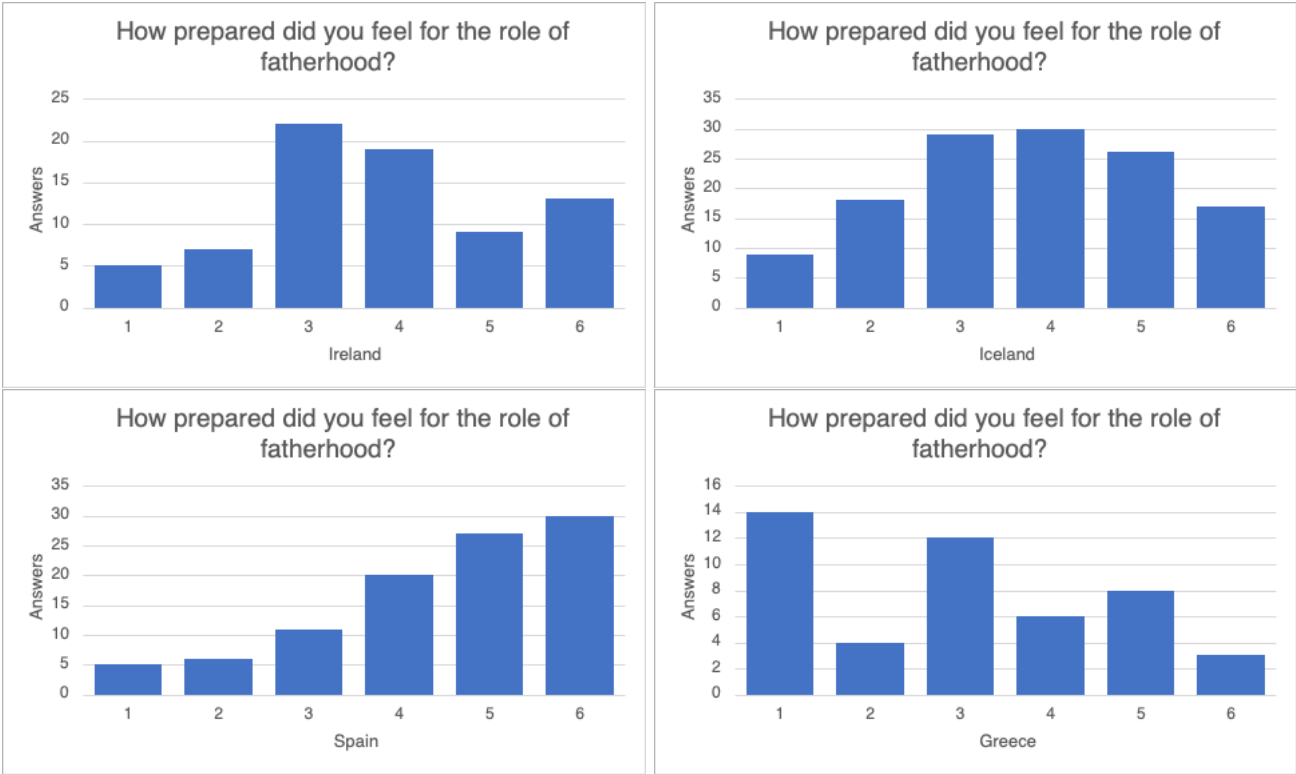
The fathers were asked questions about the support available when having a child, and if there was any difference between women and men when it came to this support.

Asked “How did you experience support for fathers during pregnancy?”



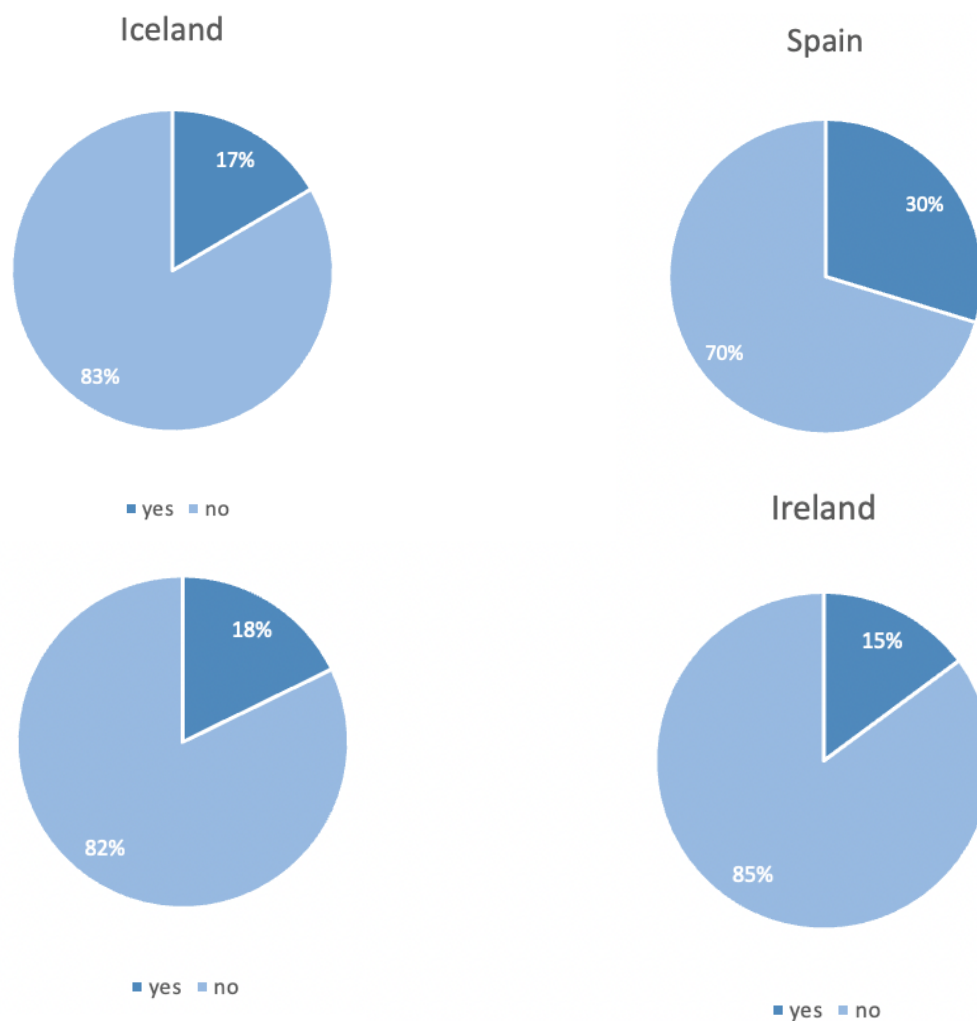
We can see a difference in how the fathers felt support in each country. In all the countries except Spain fathers seem to experience the most support out of the partner countries, while fathers from Greece were least likely to feel much support during this time.

When were fathers asked, “How prepared did you feel for the role of fatherhood?”



As can be seen fathers in Spain did feel they were most prepared for the role of becoming a father, while fathers in Greece felt they were least prepared.

When asked “Do you feel that men and women have the same support as parents?”



In all countries fathers feel that women receive more support than fathers. These are the same results as was seen in the interviews with fathers, were fathers commonly thought that woman received more support both during the birth and as parents.

Need for service

The fathers were asked to name three or more topics that they would have wanted to know more about regarding childcare and parenting. In the table below are the topics mentioned.

Mothers needs after pregnancy	Division of labor related to the child
Post-natal depression fathers and mothers	Emotional intelligence
Bonding with the child	Changes to the relationship
Child development	Boundaries
Attachment	Your role as a father
Breastfeeding	Emotional Care
Money management	Government aid
Housing	Vaccines
Future	Sex, sexuality, and gender education
Dietary Awareness	Divorce and children
Education	Puberty
Child behavioral training	Equality and diversity
Fathers' rights and custody	Information for separated parents
Parent support services available	Mental health care for children
Child general care	Childbirth
First Aid	Bullying / Cyberbullying
Sleep Training	Nutrition and Immune system
Rights to Parental Leave	Mental health – parents
Sleeping and the parents	Teething

Final words

What seems to be one of the factors that is important for fathers is to gain confidence in their ability to be good caregivers and fathers to their child. According to the research although difference opinions were between the stakeholders, women have often received more encouragement and had been given more agency in childcaring than men, even though they are not necessary the better suited person to be a parent, while men often feel they don't have the capability to take care of the child, especially for the first months. It can also be seen in the interviews that fathers say that they change after the first birth and are more ready when having children later, pointing to the notion that men need to believe in themselves as capable caregivers, and that can make a difference in their experience.

It is also important to note that father's role as a parent and their involvement in their children's life is not only dependent on themselves, and external factors can have an effect. The labour market and financial capacity of the family can play a big role in the father's capability to spend time with their children and being an active father in their life. In all the partner countries it was mentioned that fathers feel pressure to be the main breadwinner of the home, and men often work long hours outside the home to earn more, while women are more likely to spend more time at home. This can be down to both the societies gender roles, but also the gender pay gap on the labour market, men are more likely to receive higher wages, and hence more likely to work more than the mothers. Another external factor can be the support from municipalities and the government, the maternity and paternity leave, and financial support to parents, and custody processes.

The last factor that was mentioned was that in most of the partner countries fathers thought that more service and information was needed for fathers. In partners countries the service was either not available or fathers mentioned that the classes and information was more focused on the mothers than the role of fathers.

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