

Recommendations for strengthening boys for care professions

The project *Boys in Care – Strengthening boys to pursue care occupations* (2017-2019) showed that the implementation of support measures to bring more (young) men* into caring occupations is necessary:

A closer link between men* and professional care is key to tackle horizontal (and thus, vertical) gender segregation which is a major and persistent problem of labour markets in the EU. It is also, from a labour market perspective, very important to bring men* in because in most countries there is a lack of nursing, educating and teaching professions. At the same time, there is a need at the individual level, because many boys* and men* would like to work in caring occupations but are hindered by gender stereotypes, like: “Cool boys*/men* are into cars and technique (and NOT into caring for people).”

The project showed that gendered stereotypes related to work are to be found in vocational orientation material in every participant country (Gärtner et al. 2018a). Some countries made significant progress in building gender sensitive programmes of occupational orientation, some of which also focus on men* and care; other countries, however, do not offer gender reflection in occupational orientation, nor care initiatives for boys and men*. One has to carefully distinguish between labour market structures and materials when talking about each country’s situation: In Slovenia and other countries, for instance, horizontal segregation is lower than in countries featuring more advanced materials, measures, and discourses (like Germany and Austria).

Gendered labour segregation is in most countries connected with a high level of educational segregation, such as segregated school types or gendered school subjects. Since the project *Boys in Care* is far too limited to identify differentiated solutions on this level, we strongly advise political players to address the issue of segregation and equal opportunities on the level of educational policies. The level of gender stereotypes and ascriptions in school materials might also be further addressed in broader, national, and international initiatives for structural changes of education systems.

In many countries, programmes already exist to increase the number of women* and to enhance their situation in STEM occupations and professions. The according networks, programmes and players can be supporters of programmes towards caring masculinities. In Germany, the Competence Centre Technology-Diversity-Equal Chances¹, which carries out

¹ <https://www.kompetenzz.de/English-Information>.



initiatives for women*/girls* (like the Girls' Day) and for men*/boys* (like Boys' Day, New Paths for Boys, etc.) is a player in both areas that can serve as a good practice example.

European societies should reflect and acknowledge the value of care work. This also means better payment and recognition for professional care workers, but it is not restricted to these. It also means having the insight to see that democratic and inclusive societies depend on care on many levels, all the more so in an ageing society. Here is also a chance to promote caring jobs as relatively secure jobs with future prospects.

On a practical training or pedagogical level, the attitude, knowledge and methodologies of the multiplier are important for gender sensitive vocational orientation. There is a need the knowledge about gender inequalities and how they are constructed as well as the adequate methodologies to work with the target group. Finally yet importantly is the attitude of the pedagogical staff, the knowledge of gender inequalities needs to part of their behaviour and actions. Fundamental is, when working on the topic of strengthening boys* for care professions, that skills and professions are not connected to gender. The most important themes one need to address during training or when working with boys* are the following:

- Gender (in)equalities
- Social construction of gender
- (Caring) Masculinities
- Functioning and influences on vocational orientation
- Awareness of stereotypes
- The value and picture of care and care professions

The *Boys in Care* project team developed recommendations for strengthening boys for care professions. They are differentiated by target groups: General recommendations, recommendations for practitioners, for producers of textbooks or pedagogical material, for parents and for policy makers.

General recommendations:

- Change of gender stereotypes proactively. Gender stereotypes narrow the vocational orientation. But career choices also materialise life chances and conditions, therefore they have to be expanded.
- Change value of care in society to show that care is essential for the whole society
- Strengthening of caring masculinities and open the room for plurality of masculinities.
- Important topics for strengthening Boys in Care professions are: Gender inequalities, social construction of gender, raising awareness of stereotypes, caring masculinities, value and image of care and care professions.



For practitioners and professionals who work with boys

- Make care and the effects of care professions visible, e.g. you can help people directly.
- Show male role models in care professions.
- Strengths and interests of the pupils should be the focus of vocational orientation but with the knowledge of gender stereotypes and gender inequalities.
- Practitioners should undergo gender training in order to reflect their own position and gendered practices and critical handling of teaching materials must be practised.
- Further training for teachers or counsellors should take into account that boys* are interested in atypical career choices and that the stereotypical views of pedagogical professionals can inhibit their interests.
- Using non-biased vocational orientation information material and if that is not possible, usage of stereotypical materials in a critical way.
- Professionals should reflect their images and ideas of care professions.
- Open and honest presentation of the challenges and work conditions in care professions.

For producers of textbooks or pedagogical material

- Vocational orientation material needs to be gender sensitive
 - gender-inclusive language (even if only representative of male* and female* and not of transgender and non-binary identities);
 - diverse representations of ethnicities and gender expressions in photos and names, when trainees/skilled workers are represented in their occupations;
 - Visualisation of occupations and activities in which men* and women* are represented, including visual material of men*/boys* in care occupations
- Information material in which care occupations are presented on an equal footing with other occupations
- Learning material that directly addresses gender issues and encourages readers to reflect on gender. This material could include questions about why people think this or that activity is male*/female* connotation. Readers should also be encouraged to reflect on the extent to which their career choices are guided by gender norms - and where they have learned these norms.
- Information on a variety of care professions (including day care, education and social work) that show which profession can be pursued with which vocational training. It should also show a range of male*, female* and trans*/non-binary people working in care. Alternatively, representations should be considered that do not show direct persons.

For parents

- Make the importance of care practices and care professions visible for oneself and the society.
- Show male role models in care professions.
- Sensibility to gender stereotypes and reflection of their own position and gendered practices.
- Open and honest presentation of the challenges and work conditions in care professions.

For policy makers

- Governments must invest money to promote gender sensitive career orientation and desegregation of the labour market especially in education and research. For example the *Boys' Day* is a good campaign and needs to be supported.
- Work conditions and wages in care profession must be improved.
- Change value of care in society to show that care is essential for the whole society.
- Policy makers should reflect their own position and gendered practices.
- Education administrations must help to organise schools and teachers have the resources and capacity to promote the topic.

Country specific recommendations

Austria

Austria has already implemented various measures in the last decade. Still, a lot remains to be done to challenge prevailing inequalities and segregation, like:

- Tackling horizontal segregation of school types on the level of educational policy.
- More (gender) diversity and less masculinity stereotypes in materials; transfer good examples from *Boys' Day* materials into school books/materials.
- Reflect diversity and intersectionality in the material; instead of distinguishing between “migrants” and “autochthonous Austrians”, reflect on the multi-ethnic reality in the Austrian society.
- Also apply an intersectional approach in teaching and consultancy; e.g., age and different qualification levels should be reflected upon when addressing target groups.
- Capacity building trainings in the Austrian regions, addressing various actors in the field of occupational orientation to facilitate exchange and mutual learning.

Bulgaria

Bulgaria is still at an early stage of discussion and implementation of measures, especially in terms of boys*/men* and care. However, the country could draw from a historically much higher share of men* on caring occupations decades ago. It seems appropriate to:

- ... get to a common societal understanding both of care work and of gender equality; plus, to establish a national research (including data) and public discourse on their intersections;
- ... enhance the image of care work, show (also boys*, parents, teachers and counsellors) its potential both for society and for the labour market, and professionalize it;
- ... introduce *Boys' Days* and *Girls' Days* and improve actions focusing on boys in care.

Germany

In the sample of *Boys in Care* project partner countries, Germany provides the richest sample of measures and materials. Although some positive effects are already visible, this advanced environment of initiatives contrasts with the continuously high level of segregation and inequalities. Therefore, we recommend:

- In order to enable teachers in schools to integrate existing approaches such as *Boys' Day* more strongly into their lessons, they need more training and preparation time. This requires a stronger integration of gender sensitive vocational orientation into school concepts and changed exemption possibilities by school management and school administrations.
- The existing and future materials of gender sensitive vocational guidance should be more closely aligned with the real diversity of the pupils and society, e.g. taking greater account of sexual and gender diversity. Further discrimination relationships should also be taken into account more strongly in the sense of an intersectional perspective. Beyond the materials of gender-reflective vocational orientation, all materials used in schools, such as textbooks and workplaces, should be free of gender stereotypes and be revised accordingly.
- The system of vocational education needs to address the inequalities between school-based training and dual training and balance the inherent flaw of some education having to be paid for and others being salaried. This is more often the case with school-based training.

Italy

Although some measures have already been implemented for girls* and women*, a more systematic approach in all Italy is still missing, as are any measures targeting at boys* and men* in care, such as:

- Educational and informational material addressed to boys* and to teachers/vocational counsellors regarding the involvement of boys* in care work
- Training courses addressed to teachers/vocational counsellors on the involvement of boys* in care work
- Organization of national initiatives, such as *Boys' Day*.
- Setting up of a group of experts to revise the implementation of the Polite Code for publishers against stereotypes in school books.

Lithuania

Like in many countries, segregation is seen as a “female issue” in Lithuania, while boys* and men* are not yet targeted. These are recommended steps:

- Review of textbooks and materials, at all levels of education, to eliminate gender stereotypes and critically assess education and professional segregation along gender lines.
- Projects and activities to target girls* in STEM and boys in care occupations
- Initiatives to address gender-biases of teachers and vocational consultants.
- Initiatives for girls* and boys* at school similar to *Girls' Day* and *Boys' Day* and encourage their engagement in untypical professions for their gender groups

Slovenia

Some Slovenian material and initiatives already aim at both genders. However, a more systematic approach is still necessary to fill the gaps:

- Need for gender sensitive career counselling.
- Need for informational materials on care occupations for primary school pupils, as well as tools for addressing boys interested in care occupations.
- Training courses for two target groups: counsellors in the Employment Services of Slovenia and in the Career Information and Counselling Centres (CIPS) as well as school counselling service.
- Introducing a support action for boys in the counselling system (comparable with *Boys' Day*) which would complement *Girls' Day*.



The project “*Boys in Care Work - Strengthening boys to pursue care occupations*”

The *Boys in Care* project is supported and financed by the European Union. The aim of the project is to expand boy’s options for career choices and include fields of work that were previously predominantly connected to women. The project works with partner organizations in Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, Lithuania and Slovenia. It supports the strengthening of boys in their decision for a career in care with:

- Online toolkit for gender sensitive educational and vocational counselling,
- Gender sensitive online informational material,
- Training courses for teachers and vocational counsellors,
- Manual, oriented on the needs of teachers and vocational counsellors (incl. strategies, tools, specific knowledge).

Further information:

<http://www.boys-in-care.eu/>

<https://www.facebook.com/Boysincarework/>

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