



Launch of the Fathers Rock project to promote men’s engagement in the role of care and prevent domestic violence

19 March 2022

An EU-wide project will develop a cooperation model among services to support men’s involvement in co-responsible parenting and caregiving, and to target accountability of men who are (becoming) parents

Beginning in February 2022, five partners from Spain, Italy, Austria, and Germany, have joined forces to work on the EU-wide “Fathers Rock” project, which the European Commission chose to support with its CERV programme.

Engaged fatherhood is linked with a reduced likelihood of violence perpetrated by men. On the other hand, in the process of becoming fathers tensions also arise that may increase risks of violence, which are particularly harmful in this delicate period. Therefore, supporting fathers at this crucial juncture can enable them to cope, and to become supportive partners and engaged fathers. Fathers’ involvement in caring for their partners and children enhances the wellbeing of development of children and as well as both parents and their relationship.

“Working with fathers to understand how their behaviour can have positive or negative impacts on their children is crucial to children’ and mothers’ safety and wellbeing. Professionals from different areas can work together and play a crucial role in this”, comments advisory board member Marianne Hester.

Engaged fatherhood and violence prevention

Pregnancy and childbirth can pose an increased risk in of tensions and conflict within a couple, which may lead to domestic abuse. On the other hand, pregnancy and childbirth also present an opportunity to engage men through a transformation towards more caring masculinities.

Research on involved fathering in more than 23 countries globally concluded “greater involvement by men in daily care work brings benefits for everyone. Having involved fathers is good for gender



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equality. It is good for women's health. It leads to better relationships within couples and can be linked with a reduction in rates of men's violence against women. It is good for children, too. There is ample evidence from all over the world that engaged fatherhood has a positive impact on boys and girls – and the relationships they will have as adults. Girls are more empowered, and boys are more likely to believe in gender equality and to share the unpaid work if they saw their fathers do the same.”¹

Perinatal services as key to engaged fatherhood and DV prevention

Men becoming fathers are not systematically approached by perinatal care and family measures. Many fathers feel that they would not find traditional perinatal support helpful and useful, as they believe these services are developed keeping mothers in mind. Fathers seemingly continue to feel overlooked by maternity and family services around the birth of their child and during the postnatal period, which can often create feelings of helplessness and isolation.²

Fatherhood, wanting to be a good father and reducing the adverse effects of GBV on their children are some of the most important motivators for men who use violence to seek help and attend a behaviour change programme, making perinatal support services a privileged site to refer perpetrators to such programmes.

Unfortunately, most services involved in pregnancy, childbirth and early education fail to engage fathers by offering support specifically designed for them and to address GBV. Perinatal services and fatherhood programmes are uniquely positioned to support men through this juncture, and can play a role in preventing DV through broad relationship education and referrals to appropriate agencies such as perpetrator programmes.

“Professionals from perinatal services and early childhood education are in a privileged position to identify risks of gender-based violence and to refer those cases to the relevant services. The Fathers Rock project will boost these professionals' capacity to tackle this complex and multi-casual phenomenon by offering them free training and by developing together strategies to engage men in these services”, affirms Dr. Berta Vall, associated professor at Blanquerna.





The Fathers Rock Consortium will develop capacity-building for frontline services to identify and refer domestic violence, and for the engagement of fathers and the work on caring masculinities, and will disseminate institutional recommendations for multiagency prevention of gender-based violence and child safeguarding, in the three implementing countries and in Europe.

About the partnership

The Fathers Rock project is developed by an international, interdisciplinary team consisting of:

- [Fundación Blanquerna](#), research and education organisation within the Faculty of Psychology, Education and Sports Sciences from Ramon Llull University, Spain
- [Centro di Ascolto Uomini Maltrattanti](#), Centro di Ascolto Uomini Maltrattanti Onlus, NGO and perpetrator programme focussing on the intervention in violence against women and children by promoting the work with men who act violently in emotional relationships, Italy
- [Conexus](#), Associació CONEXUS Atenció, Formació i Investigació Psicosocials, no-profit NGO with GBV its main fields of expertise and activity, offering intervention programmes for women and children, and for male perpetrators, Spain
- [Männer und Geschlechterthemen Steiermark](#), Verein für Männer- und Geschlechterthemen Steiermark, the Association for Men and Gender Issues Styria is providing research and education on Caring Masculinities and violence prevention, gender-reflecting work with men and boys on violence prevention, masculinities, diversity and intersectionality, Austria
- [WWP European Network](#), the European Network for the Work with Perpetrators of Domestic Violence, Germany and Europe

An external Advisory Board will supervise and support the Team. The board consists of:

- **Marianne Hester**, Affiliated Professor and leading researcher of gender-based violence at the University of Gothenburg, and Chair in Gender, Violence & International Policy at School for Policy Studies at the University of Bristol



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- **Annina Lubbock**, Senior Technical Adviser on Gender and Poverty Targeting, expert in engagement of regional and national level institutions around gender equality and mainstreaming in multilateral cooperation
- **Andrea Santoro**, Chair of Cerchio degli Uomini and Giardino dei Padri for the engagement with fatherhood with special focus on guidance to men who are (becoming) fathers, conscious parenting and the work on masculinity

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- 1) Román-Gálvez, R. M., Martín-Peláez, S., Martínez-Galiano, J. M., Khan, K. S., & Bueno-Cavanillas, A. (2021). Prevalence of intimate partner violence in pregnancy: an umbrella review. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 18(2), 707.
- 2) van der Gaag, N., Heilman, B., Gupta, T., Nembhard, C., and Barker, G. (2019). *State of the World's Fathers: Unlocking the Power of Men's Care*. Washington, DC: Promundo-US.
- 3) Bateson, K, Darwin, ZJ, Galdas, P et al. (2017) 'Engaging fathers: Acknowledging the barriers'. *Journal of Health Visiting*, 5 (3). pp. 126-132



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