



# MEN & MEDIA CHILD CARE

NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF MEN AS CARERS IN SEVEN EU COUNTRIES



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# MEN, MEDIA AND 'CHILDCARE'

Newspaper coverage of men as carers in seven EU countries

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*This report forms part of the European Commission's contribution to the United Nations International Year of the Family, which includes among its underlying principles the need to 'foster equality between women and men within families and to bring about a fuller sharing of domestic responsibilities and employment opportunities'.*





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This report has been prepared by the European Commission Network on Childcare and other Measures to Reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities for Women and Men. The contents of the report reflect the opinion of the author. It does not necessarily represent the European Commission's official position.

# BACKGROUND

Ideas about fathers and fatherhood, what it means to be a 'good father', are the product of particular cultures and times. They change over time and vary between societies. These ideas and meanings are reproduced and represented in different ways: through the family, religion, the law, education and other social institutions.

**R**ESearch provides insight into fatherhood - but is not itself culture-free. The issues that are researched and how they are conceptualised are, in part at least, the product of a particular time and place. For example, in the 1940s

and 1950s, research into the role of fathers in children's development focused on sex-role development, achievement and psychosocial adjustment, especially in sons. Also in this period and running into the 1960s, studies focused on families in which fathers were absent. But in the mid-1970s, coinciding with growing maternal employment, research developed on the nature and extent of fathers' involvement with their children, and more recent studies have taken this theme further by considering the effects of highly involved fathers. At the same time, the growth of separation and divorce and of lone parenthood has given rise to a new interest in father absence, for example the issue of non-residential parenting<sup>1</sup>.

THE MEDIA IS ANOTHER SOURCE of insight into current ideas about fathers and fatherhood, as well as being a powerful force in shaping those ideas. For example, a study by a Swedish researcher examined how the image of the Swedish father has changed by examining magazines, advertisements and textbooks between 1934 and 1988. In the 1930s, the Swedish father was typically shown in a relaxed 'weekend' atmosphere, then later began to be portrayed as a 'working day' parent. Recently, fathers have moved into areas such as household work and child care. The definition of a 'good father' is consistently grounded in middle class values<sup>2</sup>. A similar exercise has been

conducted for American fathers, this time however using newspaper cartoons. Until the 1970s, these cartoons portrayed fathers as incompetent child caretakers, but during the 1970s there were signs of a shift: fathers began to appear as potentially useful but failing to achieve their potential<sup>3</sup>.

BECAUSE OF THE MEDIA'S ABILITY both to reflect and shape images of fathers and issues about fatherhood, the Network on Childcare and Other Measures to Reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities for Men and Women (referred to below as the 'Childcare Network') has undertaken a project for the European Commission's Equal Opportunities Unit to monitor the extent and nature of newspaper coverage of fathers and fatherhood, as well as of men and their participation in the care of children, mothers and motherhood and the reconciliation of employment and family responsibilities. Interesting and important as these broad areas are, the project had a more specific focus arising from the particular policy concerns of the European Union.

THE EUROPEAN UNION has recognised for some time that reconciliation of employment and family responsibilities is an important condition for achieving gender equality in the labour market - and that reconciliation requires more equal sharing of these family responsibilities between men and women (see box for statements by the Commission and Council of Ministers on this subject). This commitment in principle has begun to inform policy. Article 6 of the Council Recommendation on Child Care, adopted in 1992, recommends that 'Member States should promote and encourage, with due respect for the freedom of the individual, increased participation by men (in the care and upbringing of children) in order to

achieve a more equal sharing of parental responsibilities between men and women'. While, in its White Paper on Social Policy, published in 1994, the Commission commits itself to 'looking at ways of addressing the issues of stereotyped roles of the sexes in society'.

*'The sharing of family responsibilities between parents is an essential part...of strategies designed to increase equality in the labour market'*

**Explanatory Memorandum to the proposed Council Directive on Parental Leave, 1983**

*'Existing attitudes, behaviour and structures based on the idea of a traditional division of roles in society between men and women' (has prejudicial effects on women in employment and seeking employment)*

**Council of Ministers Recommendation on Positive Action, 1984**

*'For women with children ... to be properly integrated (into the labour market) considerable progress in the reconciliation of working and family life needs to be made. This situation also requires that men - as well as women - should be able to benefit from the full range of measures directed towards the reconciliation of working and family life and thus be enabled to take on a fair share of family responsibilities'*

**Third Community Action Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, 1991**

*'The gender-based division of family and employment responsibilities not only constrains women's lives but also deprives men of the emotional rewards resulting from the care and development of children'*

**European Commission Green Paper on Social Policy, 1993**

*'Greater solidarity between men and women is needed if men are to take on greater responsibility for the caring role in our societies and if flexibility in employment is not to lead to new pressures on women to return to the ranks of the non-salaried population or be obliged to accept paid work at home in isolation from the community'*

**European Commission White Paper on Social Policy, 1994**



**THE NETWORK'S MONITORING PROJECT** has been particularly influenced by these policy objectives of the Commission and the European Union. The priority has been to review how the issues of sharing family responsibilities and men as carers for children are publicly discussed and to what extent the care and upbringing of children and the reconciliation of employment and family responsibilities are presented and discussed as women's issues or issues for women and men. In short, the EU has an agenda on fathers, employment and caring for children: but how far is this agenda also the agenda for public discussion in Member States, at least as revealed by newspapers?

**THE NETWORK TOOK ON THIS PROJECT** as part of a programme of work on the theme of 'men as carers', developed by a small Working Group whose members come from Belgium, Denmark, Italy and the United Kingdom. The aim of the programme is to support implementation of Article 6 of the Council Recommendation, by exploring ways of promoting and supporting increased participation by men in the care and upbringing of children. Work on this issue has included analysis of fathers' as well as mothers' employment in the EU; a review of leave arrangements for working parents, which pays particular attention to fathers' take-up of different types of leave, including Parental Leave; a report on strategies and measures to support change<sup>4</sup>; a report on ways to increase the number of men working in childcare services (in preparation); and participation in a project which is exploring ways of increasing fathers' participation in childcare services and the potential use of these services as means to promote cultural change.

**THE PROJECT TO MONITOR NEWSPAPERS** complements this other work

which is mainly about how to promote change in men's participation in the care and upbringing of children. This report provides a clearer view about public images and discussions of fathers and men as carers, and whether these are at a point where they support wider change in gender roles, identities and relationships.

<sup>1</sup> For more discussion of the development of fatherhood research, see M. Lamb (1994) 'Paternal influences on child development', paper presented at a conference on *Changing Fatherhood*, University of Tilburg, May 1994.

<sup>2</sup> See L.Hagstro (1991) 'Den massmediale fadern : fadersrollen spegled i veckopress, reklam och larobocker genom femtio ar', *Nord-Nytt*, 44, 25-33.

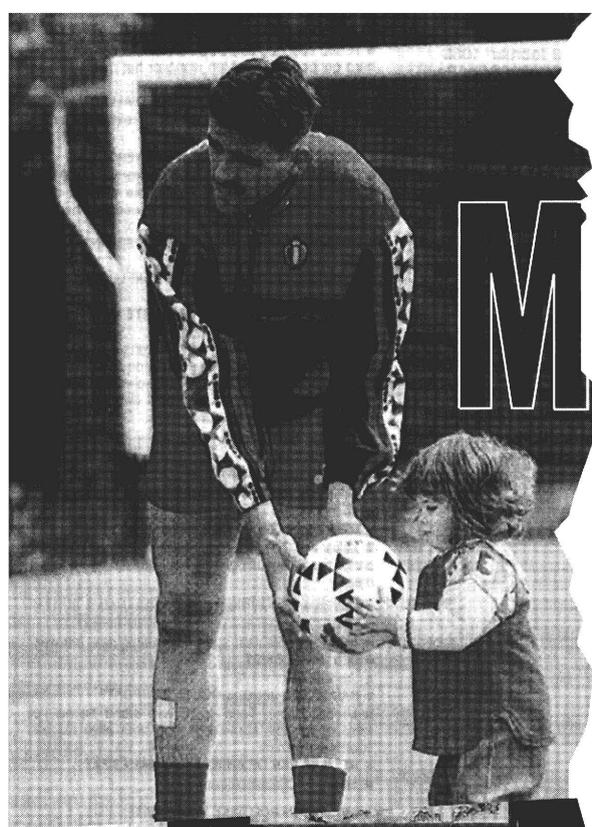
<sup>3</sup> See RD Day and WC Mackey (1986) 'The role image of American fathers: an examination of a media myth', *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 17 (3): 371-388.

<sup>4</sup> See the following reports by the EC Childcare Network: *Mothers, Fathers and Employment 1985-1990* (1993); *Leave Arrangements for Workers with Children* (1994); *Men as Carers - towards a culture of responsibility, sharing and reciprocity* (1994). All published in Brussels by the European Commission Equal Opportunities Unit (DG V).

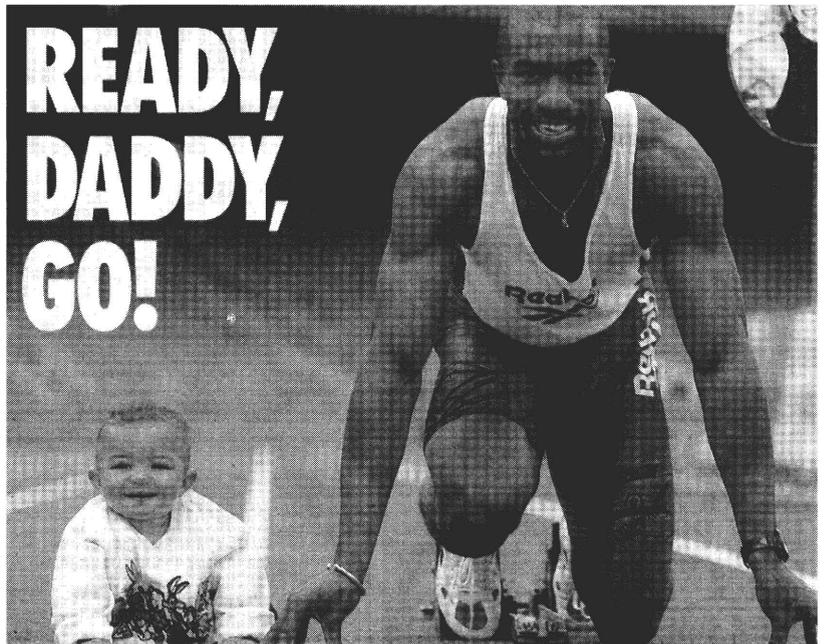


# METHODOLOGY

This project work has been undertaken in seven Member States of the European Union: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom. Ideally, the project should have covered all Member States. However, the timetable for the project involved a series of very tight deadlines. It was therefore necessary to strike a balance between the number of countries covered and ensuring that the timetable could be achieved.



**READY,  
DADDY,  
GO!**





**F**OUR OF THE SEVEN MEMBER STATES (Belgium, Denmark, Italy, UK) were selected on the basis that they are represented in the Network's Men as Carers Working Group. The other three countries (France, Germany, Spain) have been selected because of their size and location. The seven countries also give a good spread of Member States in terms of location, size and other characteristics.

**IN EACH MEMBER STATE**, a selection of ten newspapers was monitored every day for a four week period (June 1994); where there were different newspapers on Sundays or weekends compared to weekdays, then ten weekend/Sunday newspapers were selected in addition to ten weekday newspapers. Half the newspapers have been selected on the basis of their circulation, to ensure inclusion of newspapers with the largest readerships. The remainder were selected to reflect the range of other newspapers in the country and normally included at least one financial paper. The monitoring of the selected newspapers in each country and the preparation of national reports was undertaken by an expert selected with the assistance of the Network member in that country (for further details, see Appendix 1). 'Notes of guidance' were prepared, covering the themes to be monitored (ie. fathers and fatherhood; mothers and motherhood; parents and parenthood; men and caring for children; and reconciliation of employment and caring for children) and the range of items to be included. However the 'notes of guidance' were

not prescriptive; the expert was expected to use her/his expertise and knowledge to identify items even if they did not appear under a clear headline. In practice, there was some variation in the range of items covered. For this and other reasons, quantitative analysis and comparisons is difficult and potentially misleading. However, Table 1 does show the number of feature articles in each country falling under one of the five main headings (see Appendix 2).

**AT THE END** of the monitoring period, a national report of about 15 pages was prepared for each country. Each report (a) presents an analysis of the results of the monitoring exercise covering the number of references to the five key subjects, the type of references (eg. news items, articles etc), and the content of the references; and (b) places this analysis in context, for example indicating if the coverage during the monitoring period was unusual or not, or influenced by some recent event or debate. The reports also draw attention to items of particular interest and significance.

*Die Fixies Familie*

**Trocken macht fröhlich.**

So wird jedes Kind aus leicht genossen. Mit Fixies Ultra Dry. Saugstark in der Mitte und mit Auslaufschutz bis zum Rand. Dieser wird von einem Innenbündchen aus wasserabweisendem Dry-Vlies gebildet, das bis zum äußeren Rand der Windel reicht. Jetzt aber hopp!

**FIXIES ULTRA DRY**  
Mit Auslaufschutz bis zum Rand.

Auch in Österreich auf der Schiene erhältlich.

# MAIN FINDINGS

Newspaper content obviously reacts to events to a large extent; any analysis of newspaper coverage of a particular subject needs to bear in mind what was making big news at the time. Certain events in June 1994 influenced events in all countries: the elections for the European Parliament, the commemoration of the D-Day invasion, two major sport events (the Football World Cup and the Wimbledon tennis championship) - and Fathers Day. The monitoring also took place in the middle of the International Year of the Family, which has generated a wide range of newspaper coverage in all countries on relevant issues.

**S**OME EVENTS WERE MORE SPECIFIC to individual countries and affected the coverage of our themes, for example a Government-funded advertisement campaign to promote part-time work (Belgium) and a project on part-time work as a remedy against unemployment (Germany); the implementation of a new Family Law (France); and pregnancies in unusual circumstances - a 63-year old woman, and two young lesbian women (Italy).

1994, the coverage was extensive in feature articles, columns and readers' letters. These reflect criticisms of the scheme (from some opposition parties and employers), some worries (by some equal opportunity campaigners who fear that leave will be used mainly by women) and enthusiasm (in practice, the scheme has been a success judged in terms of take-up).

A GOVERNMENT MINISTER, a man, received considerable attention when he took a period of leave. He wrote in an article that *'the leave schemes are an*

*indication of a new, positive conception of work in which giving priority to the progress and value of life, to work and to children, are the central issues'*. Finally, a newspaper undertook a small survey asking how foreign business people view Danish 'leave' regulations. Reactions ranged from sympathy to indignation (*'Competition and care are two completely different factors that cannot be combined'*; *'I would be very upset if I were to be let down by a Danish businessman because he had to look after a child with a cold. I would take it as an insult'*)<sup>6</sup>.

3.1

## RECONCILING EMPLOYMENT & FAMILY LIFE

Newspaper coverage under this heading mainly related to leave arrangements and part-time work. To a lesser extent the issue of reconciliation is also touched on in some items on survey results and other statistical data published during the month, on family-related job discrimination and on certain structural features of the labour market.

IN DENMARK, a lot of attention was given to new leave arrangements, introduced at the beginning of the year, and which include 6 months 'child care' leave for each parent as an individual and non-transferable right and another 6 months if agreed by the employer<sup>5</sup>. A year ago, 'leave' did not appear in Danish newspapers; in June



# Make it a Father's day to remember!



During the month, the Danish Social Ministry published a report on social support offered by businesses to their employees. This included policies to help working parents such as flexi-time, extra leave for care reasons and extra payments to workers on leave. It received a lot of media coverage. Finally, a Danish survey of children's feelings about unemployment, reported in several newspapers, led to some discussion about lone fathers and employment. The chair of the Equal Status Council referred to the difficulties that such fathers face at work and calls for a study of lone fathers and their 19,000 children.

<sup>5</sup> For more information, see Jytte Jensen (1994) 'A new Childcare Leave Scheme: towards a better family life and less unemployment' in the *Childcare Network's 1993 Annual Report*. Published by and available from the European Commission's Equal Opportunities Unit, (DG V).

<sup>6</sup> 'Konkurrence og omsorg er to helt forskellige størrelser, som ikke kan forenes ... Jeg ville blive meget sur, hvis jeg blev braendt af en dansk forretningsmand, som skulle passe et forkolet barn...' (source : *Berlingske Tidende*, June 5).



EN ALS U  
NU EENS  
BETAALD  
WERD OM  
HET WAT  
KALMER  
AAN TE  
DOEN?

IN BELGIUM the issue of part-time work received a good deal of attention with some references made to initiatives involving childcare provision. But the main story concerned public reactions to a campaign commissioned by the Flemish Government to advertise some financial incentives to promote part-time work. The gender biased way in which the message was publicised offended supporters of equal opportunities. Two different photographs were used. One pictures a well-dressed woman hurrying along with a briefcase and a crying child in her arms; it is subtitled 'And if you were to be paid to take it more easily?'. Another pictures a man under stress in an office, on the phone in front of a PC screen; the subtitle here is 'And if you were to be paid to enrol again in training?'

INITIALLY, IN EARLY JUNE, several newspapers simply referred to this advertisement campaign. By mid June, they published some public reactions criticising the gender role stereotypes. At that time, the spokesperson for the community Government declared there were no problems. But the **federal** Minister of Employment and Equal Opportunities stated publicly that she considered the material used in the campaign to be flawed. Overall, no reference to these events was found in the French-language Belgian newspapers.

'De vrouw zal wel thuisblijven'

Belgium



**IN GERMANY, SEVERAL ITEMS REFLECT** an ongoing discussion about part-time employment, including its pros and cons, its potential to reduce unemployment - and to facilitate the involvement of fathers in childcare. It is noted that the number of men taking parental leave remains very low (about 1%). An article reflects on 'Profession : Housewife', considering the possibilities for utilizing this experience and competence in future employment. The specific problems faced by highly qualified women in combining motherhood and a professional career are also dealt with, as well as the unequal opportunities for mothers to get involved in (regional) politics, especially in the state of Bavaria.

**IN SPAIN, MUCH ATTENTION WAS GIVEN** to the publication of the report *Women in numbers (1982-92)* from the national Institute of Women. It mainly documents developments in the labour force participation of Spanish women and the changes occurring in family structures. At the same time, an institute in the Autonomous Community of Catalonia published survey data indicating a less encouraging situation in terms of attitudes and practices. Some attention was also given to a government decision to extend parental leave. Most Spanish newspapers report on the increasing involvement of women in the labour force and consider this as a positive development.

## Allein unter Frauen



es publica el estudio «La mujer en cifras: una década, 1982-92»

## Desigualdad entre sexos persiste, aunque disminuye

educativas y laborales entre los  
do considerablemente durante  
os, pero todavía las mujeres se  
aspectos, en una situación de  
es la principal conclusión del  
por el Instituto de la Mujer, «La  
una década, 1982-1992», que  
Madrid la ministra de Asuntos

Sociales, Cristina Alberdi. El dato alentador se  
encuentra en la educación: las mujeres representan  
más del 50 por ciento del alumnado universitario  
español. La otra cara de la moneda es, sin embargo,  
la falta de correspondencia de este porcentaje con los  
referidos al trabajo: de cada dos parados, uno es  
mujer y la retribución de las féminas es, por lo  
general, un 20 por ciento inferior a la de los hombres.



# Spain

IN ITALY, THE ISSUE OF RECONCILIATION gained little attention. The results of a regional survey were dealt with, as local news, mostly referring to the difficulties women encounter in trying to reconcile family and work.

ALTHOUGH FRENCH NEWSPAPERS frequently refer to this issue, they rarely deal with it in its own right. It appears in items on subjects such as women's employment (or their higher rates of unemployment), unequal salaries or women having part-time jobs in traditional 'feminine' sectors. The observation that women's jobs are more precarious, of less interest and on average receive substantially less payment brought both the Minister of Social Affairs and the Minister of Employment to revive the High Council for Equal Opportunities which has not met since 1992. The former put the issue as follows:

*'In legal terms, all seems to have been planned in order that women have equal opportunities as men. But to further change minds, behaviours, traditions and customs as well as to tackle taboos is more difficult than to pass legislation'*<sup>7</sup>.



REFERENCE IS MADE IN UK newspapers to sex discrimination cases, in particular a long running story about a Royal Navy nurse who was awarded financial compensation for being sacked from the service because she was pregnant. Some coverage is also given to an OECD job study suggesting an extension of part-time work in the public sector.

<sup>7</sup> 'Sur le plan législatif, tout semble avoir été prévu pour que les femmes soient à égalité avec les hommes. Mais faire évoluer les esprits, changer les comportements, les habitudes, les traditions et combattre les tabous est plus difficile que de faire voter un texte législatif' (source : France-Soir, 15 Juin 1994).

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## PARENTS AND PARENTHOOD

PARENTS AND PARENTHOOD SEEM TO BE no news unless there is bad news. Parenthood remains a non-issue as long as parents take their responsibilities and do their 'job'. Only a number of problematic dimensions are highlighted. Two main problem areas feature in the newspaper coverage of mid 1994. First, the complex issue of joint custody arrangements, viewed against the background of rising divorce. Custody is often raised in letters, which voice negative experiences. Fathers are often blamed for evading maintenance payments.

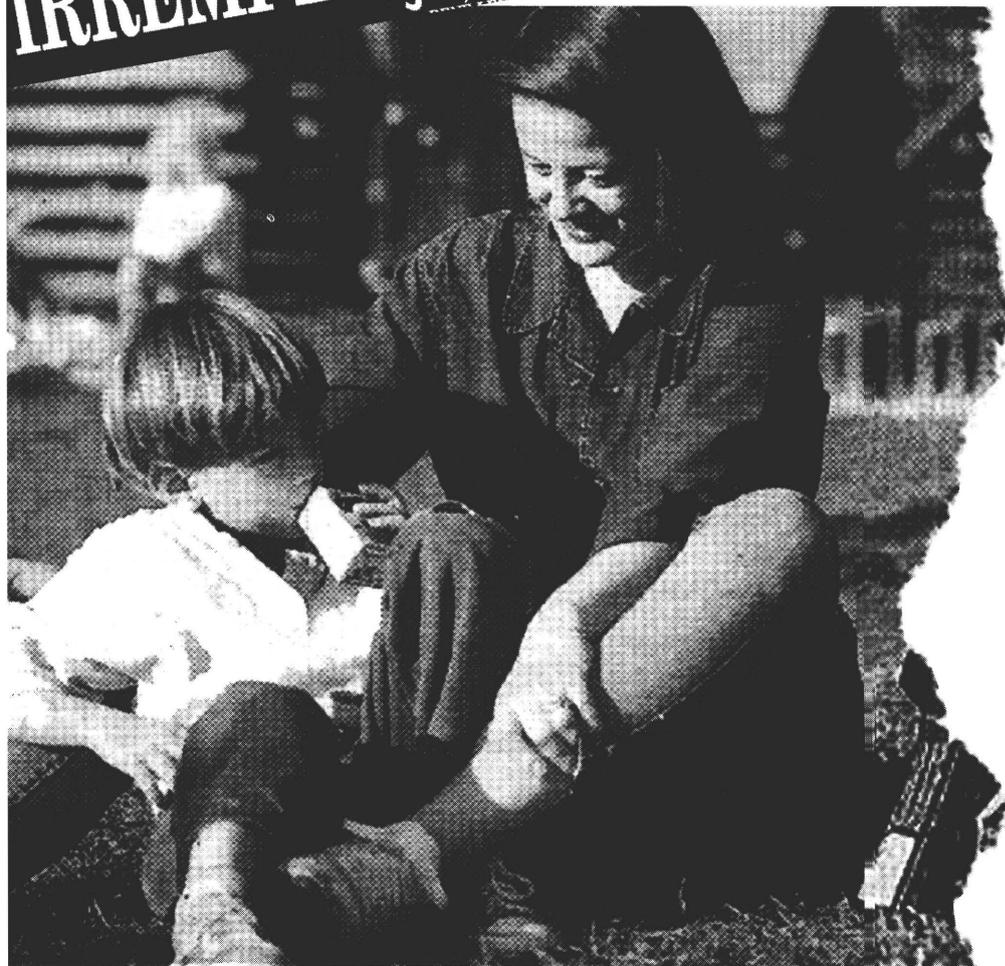
IN DENMARK, THE ISSUE OF CHILD CUSTODY following separation/ divorce received substantial attention - it was, in the words of the national expert, 'June's hottest topic'. Should there be obligatory joint custody, or can the child simply be the responsibility of one of the parents (usually the mother)? During June, this debate was fuelled by a new book by a psychologist who argued that alternate custody arrangements run against the child's interest.

IN THE SPANISH NEWSPAPERS, a particular child custody case was commented upon; a court in Madrid delivered a controversial decision that the divorced parents should take it in turns to live in the parental home while their child lived there permanently. Most items on parents and parenthood voice opinions about family life and changing family structures, many about the 'family in crisis', some regretfully viewing the loss of basic values, while others considered such changes as improvements for the situation of family members. But according to the results of a survey reprinted in a publication of the Ministry of Social Affairs, harmonious and 'positive' parent-child relations still characterize Spanish families despite different types of concerns.

Una jueza otorga el uso del piso familiar a una niña y la custodia compartida por turnos



# IRREMPLAÇABLE FAMILLE



# France Germany

**THE SECOND PROBLEM AREA** referred to in the newspapers relates to child abuse, neglect or ill-treatment by parents. For example, the UNICEF annual report *'The Progress of Nations'* refers to **Denmark** having the fourth highest death rate among children due to presumed ill-treatment by parents. This stimulated discussion about the right of parents to inflict corporal punishment on their own children. More generally, incest, ill-treatment, neglect as well as the pressure on children to perform (exams!) were also dealt with.

**IN BELGIUM, MANY ITEMS** are labelled as 'crisis' issues and related to parenthood, such as children and AIDS, drugs, adoption, divorce, learning difficulties, as well as bio-ethical questions. In **UK** newspapers, writers seem more prepared to give their opinions and views and generalise about parents and parenthood. Parents are said to need training and values, they must tackle drugs and maintain standards and control schools.

**SEVERAL NATIONAL EXPERTS** include discussions on family life and demographic characteristics (eg fertility levels, marriage patterns) in the parenthood category. This certainly applies to the newspapers in **France**. Several issues can be looked at under this heading, although none explicitly focuses on parenthood as such. Some newspapers pay attention to the specific difficulties which parents/families of foreign nationality are facing; the common ground is that reference is made to these families being at risk of expulsion despite the fact that at least one member is French. Demographic changes invite a number of reflections on declining marriage rates or on comparisons of the national fertility level with the situation abroad (eg. in Sweden). Finally, the Minister of Social Affairs submitted a proposal to Parliament to change Family Law, and part of the discussion about this proposal is also voiced in terms of parenthood.

**IN THE GERMAN PRESS,** besides the discussion on the pros and cons of joint custody, a variety of items are dealt with: the financial situation of and structural support for large families; the search for appropriate school-age child care services or for a communal living arrangement involving children; and the strenuous procedure required for the adoption of foreign children.

**IN ITALY, VERY FEW REFERENCES** referring to 'parents' were found. It is suggested that this topic does not make 'news' or that the interest in previous years, related to intergenerational conflicts, has faded away. Or it could be that attention shifted towards 'family and children'.

# Belgium

# Italy

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## MOTHERS AND MOTHERHOOD

IT IS NOTED IN MOST NATIONAL REPORTS that 'mothers' and 'motherhood' as such are only occasionally dealt with. Although frequently referred to, when part-time work or leave arrangements are discussed (see section on 'Reconciling Employment and Family Life'), mothers otherwise seem hardly to feature in newspapers except for extreme or unusual situations. The issue of 'late motherhood' is an example.

IN ITALY, maternity does not seem to evoke any special interest in newspapers, unless 'exceptional' situations are involved. This occurred in June 1994 when several newspapers commented upon the situation of a 63-year old woman becoming a mother, as well as of a lesbian couple deciding to have a child through artificial insemination. Both events provoked a great deal of attention, including comments from experts and representatives of associations.

THE DISCUSSION ABOUT MOTHERHOOD in the Danish press is often part of other articles on issues such as labour market, leave arrangements and childcare. In Belgium, the analysis provides only a few examples of women dealt with as mothers. In Spain, the limited number of items under this category mostly deal with Constitutional or Supreme Court decisions guaranteeing pregnant women or mothers with babies basic rights as employees. In France, the issue of motherhood is almost completely absorbed in discussions about women's employment or their role in family life when the proposed Family Law is reflected upon.

## ...ra, bimba in provetta per 2 lesbiche



### L'ANALISI

## Avere due madri e nessun padre ultima frontiera dell'egoismo

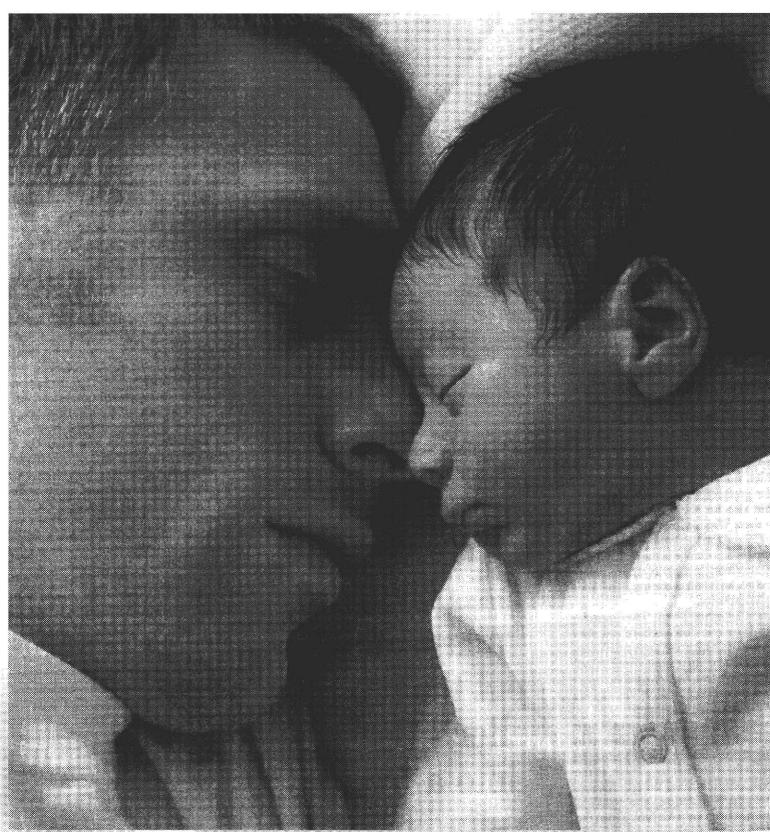
**A**RRIVERA' proprio come «figlia di due lesbiche» la piccola Sara, che nascerà fra poco in una clinica della Riviera ligure: non sarà adottata ma generata, col sistema dell'inseminazione artificiale. E arriverà attesa e desiderata dalle due componenti del nucleo familiare, che farà da cop-

andare al ristorante o in vacanza, avere una casa, insomma vivere l'amore omosessuale) è una condizione liberata a cui manca l'estremo requisito per essere felice: i figli. Aver figli vuol dire non-morire, e vuole dire non-morire, e felice di essere vivo: così felice, che desidera essere continuato. E' possibile che la presenza di un figlio rafforzi l'unione omosessuale, o che sia

sarà qualcosa che nessuno di loro (medico, donna partoriente, e sua compagna) può mettere in conto e valutare: la figlia. Se le due donne vogliono non-morire, come tutti i figli vorrà semplicemente vivere, come tutti i figli vorrà immediatamente contraccettivo: non ha chi l'ha al mondo. Non ha il padre, non ha nemmeno la madre, perché la madre è la madre, e questo non è un fatto. E' una donna che non ha un padre, e questo non è un fatto. E' una donna che non ha un padre, e questo non è un fatto.

# Germany

THE GERMAN NEWSPAPERS too have few items on mothers, beyond the socio-political discussion of part-time employment and the issue of reconciliation discussed earlier. The situation of adolescent mothers is raised, describing a home-like living arrangement (in Berlin and München) allowing them to finish their education while staying with their baby. Finally, mothers are also referred to in other 'extreme situations' such as infanticide.



Eine Frau versucht zu erklären

## Warum töten Mütter ihre Kinder?



Notarzt, Sanitäter versuchen die kleine Chawwan (15 Monate) zu retten. Vergabens. Der Sturz war tödlich.

sie waren nicht so isoliert. Sie lebten noch in Großfamilien, unterstützten und halfen sich gegenseitig. Und heute? Die junge Mutter ist mit ihren Problemen und dem Frust allein. Keiner kann verstehen, daß sie mit ihrem Kind nicht klarkommt. Sie fühlt sich als „schlechte Mutter“, als Versagerin. Sie wird depressiv, trägt



Chawwans Mutter Kirsten W.

Situation eskaliert, schick sie ihr Kind „schon n voraus in den Tod“. Zu Tod, den sie am liebsten selbst suchen würde. Ein Teufelskreis. Aber einen man durchbrechen kann. Durch Gespräch Hilfe von außen, Verständnis für die Situation. „I sollten wir alle nicht z schauen, sondern müssen zucken – oder?“

THE MOTHERHOOD ROLE of 'famous women' may also be dealt with, though they feature less prominently than 'famous men' (see below). In the United Kingdom, for example, quite similar types of item are noted for fathers and mothers, with the exception of beauty and recovery from childbirth which were naturally more prominent in stories about famous mothers. While there was a similar amount of personal interest stories for both fathers and mothers, the latter were more emotionally oriented (angry, desperate, fulfilled, etc). Moreover, a number of pieces of research were published about mothers and motherhood (eg. abortion, post-natal depression, drinking). Issues affecting mothers were being researched and investigated in a way that they were not for fathers and fatherhood.

## FATHERS AND FATHERHOOD

The coverage of 'Fathers and fatherhood' in the newspapers bears a number of parallels with what has been observed for 'parents' and 'mothers'. Fathers feature for failing to provide for the family, especially following divorce and custody settlements.

IN GERMANY, A VARIETY OF ITEMS appear under this category. They mostly relate to the issue of custody. The overall tone about joint custody is rather negative, for example in letters accusing most fathers of claiming contact with their children following separation or divorce but showing hardly any interest in really assuming childrearing responsibilities. Negative consequences for children are referred to in cases of 'degenerated' fathers ('*Rabenvater*'), broken families and/or women being blamed for turning their children into 'orphans' following their decision to separate/divorce. Responsibility and blame is clearly put more on 'feminist' mothers than on fathers, even if the latter hardly care about their children.

IN SPAIN, ONLY A LIMITED NUMBER of articles are labelled under this general category. This may partly be due to the fact that the Spanish language uses the same word ('*padres*'), both for fathers and parents. Despite this source of confusion, it is felt that fathers feature rather anecdotally in the newspapers. They are usually portrayed negatively (eg. poor payment of maintenance, a father leaving his baby in the car while visiting pubs) or ironically (eg. a regional celebrity changing the nappy of his baby).

FATHERS ARE ALSO PORTRAYED as 'monsters', whenever situations of violence and/or neglect are highlighted. The discussion in the Danish newspapers on custody also questions whether it is necessary to give visiting rights to men who have acted violently against women and children: the

Danish Minister of Justice is quoted as saying '*the question is whether the equal rights for men should suffer because an individual man is violent - I'm not sure about that. It's a difficult choice and I don't like it*'<sup>8</sup>.

MORE GENERALLY, MEN/FATHERS are also associated with mental cruelty ('Father was a tyrant') or patricide. In the United Kingdom, for example, the newspapers describe and picture fathers in various ways, featuring them rather

prominently as 'monsters' having killed, abused or bullied those who are close to them.

<sup>8</sup> 'Spørgsmalet er, om ligestillingen for mænd skal lide under, at enkelte mænd er voldelige. Det er jeg ikke sikker på. Det er et svært valg, men jeg kvier mig ved det (source: Berlingske Tidende, June 6; Tidende, idem).

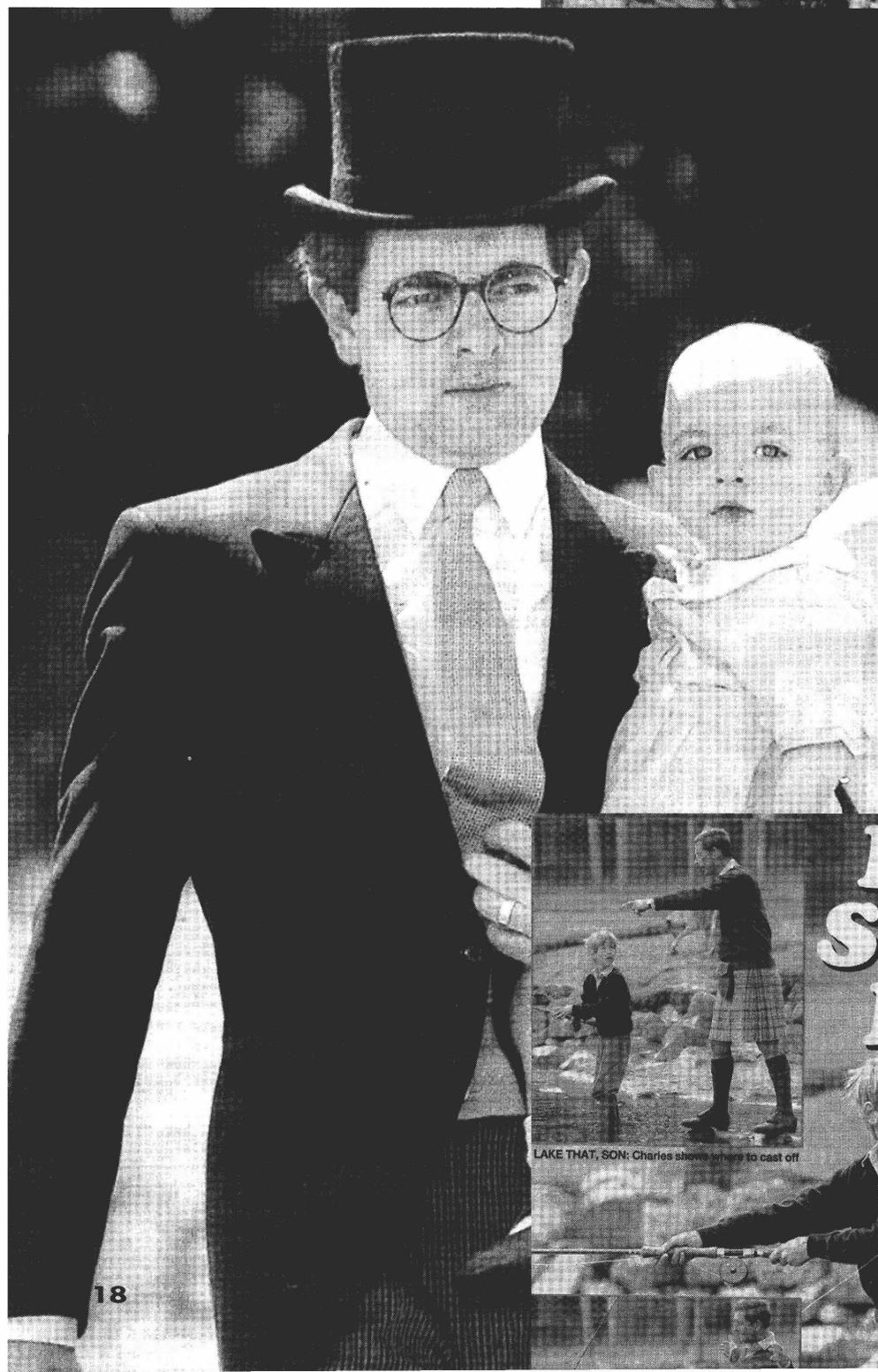
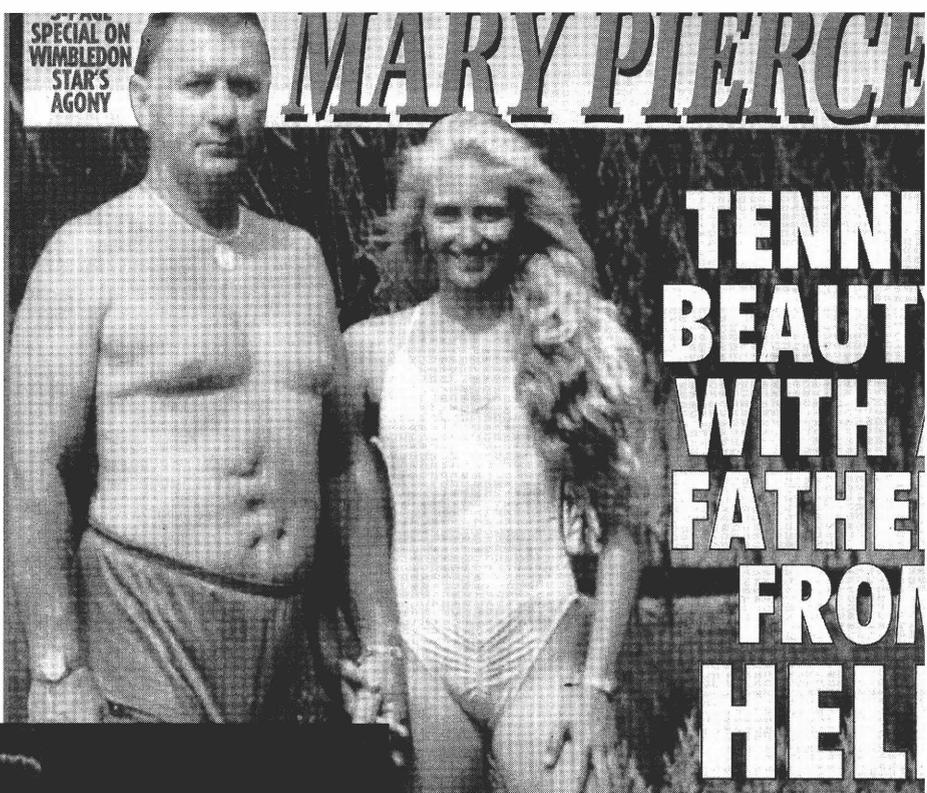
## Papa hat keine Zeit

Die deutschen Väter machen von ihrem Recht auf Erziehungsurlaub keinen Gebrauch

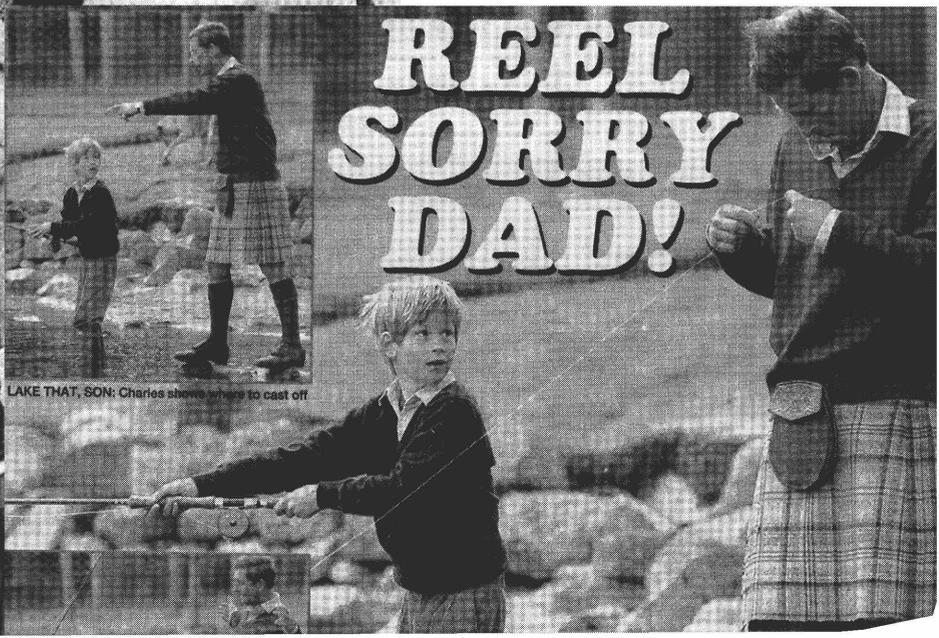


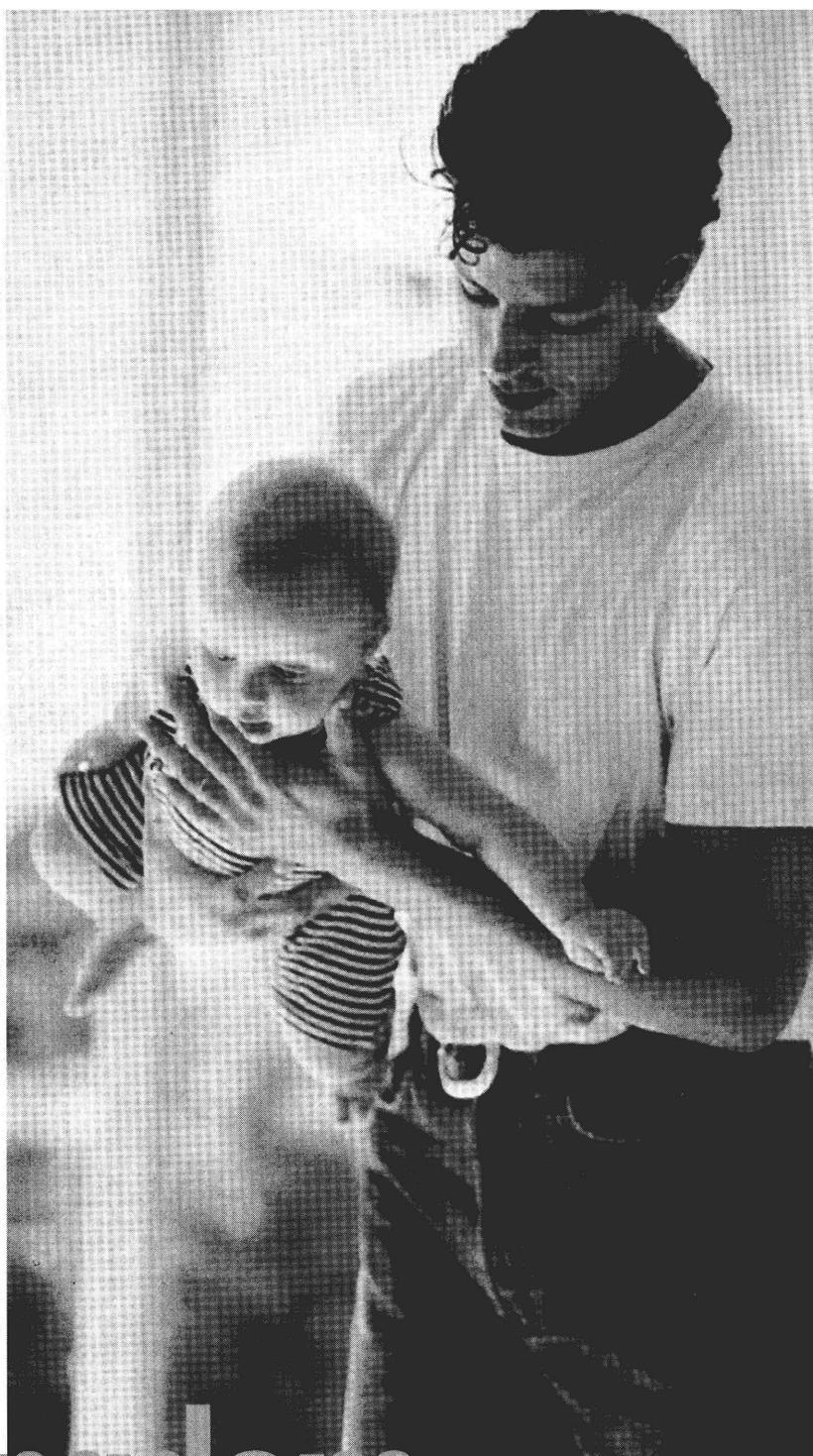
AT THE OTHER EXTREME, most national reports refer to 'Sports' items which picture famous sportsmen also as kind and dedicated fathers, albeit mostly at the time they leave their home and country in order to participate at a major sports event abroad; for example, football players were portrayed positively as fathers, holding their son or daughter before taking off for the World Cup in the USA.

IN DENMARK, as well as in some other countries, the fathers of tennis stars (Mary Pierce, Steffi Graf) featured negatively in a number of newspapers.



MORE GENERALLY, NEWSPAPERS like to portray 'famous men' in their role as fathers. In the UK press, Prince Charles provides a very prominent example of this. There are many photographs presenting well-known men as good-looking fathers with their children, reflecting the pre-occupation of some newspapers with the 'private lives' of the rich and famous. A number of items exemplify the impact children have on their father's behaviour and vice versa. But reflecting back on their famous father some children also provoke less generous newspaper comments (e.g. Montgomery, 'great general, lousy father').





# Kingdom

**TWO OTHER ISSUES GAINED** some prominence in the **UK**: the actions of the Child Support Agency assessing and collecting maintenance payments from non-resident fathers, and men in relation to childbearing (sperm donors, post-natal depression). The issue of procreation (e.g. artificial insemination, sperm donorship), also appeared in **Italy** where two major issues were dealt with: child custody and the non-existence of a 'father' in specific cases of artificial insemination (63-year old woman, lesbian couple).

<sup>9</sup> 'Welcher Mann geht schon freiwillig in die schlechter bezahlten Berufe? Männer verdienen, im statistischen durchschnitt, in Frauenberufen, gut 700,-DM weniger als in Männerjobs, wenn auch immer noch mehr als Frauen in denselben Berufen'. 'Mangeldes Ansehen und eingeschränkte berufliche Perspektive spielen bei der Berufswahl die entscheidende Rolle' (Source: Süddeutschen Zeitung, June 16).

3.5

## **MEN AND CARING FOR CHILDREN**

Compared to the previous categories, 'men as carers' was hardly found in newspapers in the seven European countries dealt with. In **Italy**, it was a non-issue in the newspapers and the expert concludes that this subject is fairly unappealing for journalist of newspapers, who consider it to be 'narrow' or 'specialized'. **French** newspapers do not seem to have dealt with this specific issue during June 1994. In **Belgium**, there is almost no reference except for one extensive report about the advantages of breastfeeding which refers to the role of men; it suggests that fathers should not feel excluded and can take the lead at night in caring for the baby. In the **UK**, although there were few items on this issue, some were negative (e.g. rape by a male baby-sitter, a male teacher being accused of sexual abuse of pupils).

**SOME ARTICLES DEALT WITH MEN** in 'caring professions' (e.g. teachers, dentists) and some reference was made to childcare professionals. In the **German** press, one article explicitly documents and reflects on the enrolment of men in so called women's jobs, including work in kindergartens (where men account for about 2% of workers) and creches (less than 1%). The discrepancies are highlighted between preferences at the individual level and characteristics of the labour force system at the structural level. To account for such differences, reference is made to the impact of lower salaries and modest job perspectives 'Which man would freely enter into poorly paid jobs? On average, men earn about 700,- DMark less in women's jobs than in men's jobs; but still more than women in the same type of job' ... 'A lack of social esteem and reduced professional prospects are the most influential factors in choosing a profession'<sup>9</sup>.

# Denmark



There were many examples of this in June, including letters by fathers about their children's childcare services.

**JUNE ALSO SAW ONE DANISH NEWSPAPER** run a series on men - 'the weaker sex' - and masculine values. This covers issues about fatherhood and men caring for children. A veteran of the Danish men's movement comments: *'With women out in the labour market, care and the feminine domain are increasingly becoming men's affairs. Many of today's men have grown up either with their mother alone or with a father who was, in practice, not part of their daily life ... They have to learn to be a father and they also have to learn to be a man'*.<sup>10</sup>

There are also articles, in different newspapers, about a father who has taken leave from his job to help look after his five year old son, who has leukaemia; a man who becomes foster father to a young HIV-positive child; and a man who nursed his terminally ill wife.

<sup>10</sup> *'Med kvinderne ude på arbejdsmarkedet bliver omsorgen og det feminine felt i stigende grad mændenes anliggende. Mange af dagens mænd er vokset op enten hos deres mor, eller med en far, der i praksis var fraværende i deres daglige liv ... De skal lære at være far, de skal også lære at være mand'* (source : Information, June 28).

**ANOTHER ARTICLE DESCRIBES** the 'mothering' experience of a father, a journalist, facing gender-stereotyped reactions and comments. In **Spain** too, the expert included here some items dealing with the work of men in 'caring' professions such as teachers or dentists.

**IN DENMARK**, the quality of childcare services is carefully monitored by parents and in the press. The Danish expert notes that *'if the standards in a nursery are changed, if grants to kindergartens are reduced, if school districts are altered, if the cost of childcare services is raised, if the standard of service is curtailed, if an institution is re-built...then it is in the newspapers and parents react by summoning meetings and writing angry readers' letters'*.



# DISCUSSION

Having looked in the previous section at some of the main points from the review of newspapers, we turn now to reflect on some of the findings and to do so in the context of the general comments and conclusions made by the national experts in their national reports.

**I**T IS IMPORTANT to remember the 'snapshot' nature of this exercise, covering as it did just four weeks. The national experts were asked whether they felt that the period covered was unusual: for example, had the key issues received more or less attention in previous months? In general, the answer was 'no'. Probably with the exception of Italy, the coverage in June was fairly typical.

**IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER** that newspapers are by no means the only media, or even the only printed media. Compared to other printed media, newspapers are characterised by their focus on 'news' items and, to some extent, by the transience and superficiality of the attention they pay to issues. The experts from France, Germany and Italy, for example, noted that newspapers did not fully reflect the discussion about the role of fathers that could be found in magazines and books, and which seemed better able to provide more substantial comments and reflections.

**NATIONAL EXPERTS ALSO REFERRED** to differences between popular, more 'sensation-oriented' newspapers and newspapers with more general interests. This division can also be looked at in terms of the social class of the readership of different newspaper. The Danish expert, for example, noted that issues about fathers and men as carers were

mainly reflected in those newspapers with a more middle-class readership. At the same time, financial newspapers also had little coverage of the main themes in our monitoring exercise, including reconciliation of employment and family life. The Danish expert voiced her surprise that the new leave arrangements in her country were hardly dealt with in the national business newspaper, despite the potential impact on workplaces of many Danish workers taking leave.

**THE UK EXPERT NOTED** that 'human interest' stories which involved fathers made up nearly a third of the items under the 'fathers and fatherhood' category; virtually all of them were news items and focused on events, rather than the wider issues involved. In particular they reflected a more general preoccupation of British newspapers - mostly in the 'tabloid' press - with the private lives of the rich and famous and with representations of fathers as either heroes or villains: *'monster stories (about fathers) were as popular as glossy rich and famous men looking good with their children... Fathers did heroic things or side-stepped their responsibilities - but very little in between'*.



SI TU TRAVAILLAIS À MI-TEMPS,  
ÇA DONNERAIT UN EMPLOI À UNE CHÔMEUSE





**THE UNITED KINGDOM HOWEVER** was not alone in this matter: although the newspapers in the majority of countries in this analysis featured items about men as fathers, very few of these items looked at wider issues concerning fathers and fatherhood. For example, Fathers Day was mostly represented in the French press through advertisements and other commercial items, rather than any discussion of fatherhood and fathers' involvement in child care and childrearing. The Belgian experts refer to some catching-up in newspaper coverage of the parent-child relationship; newspapers have previously dealt with the situation of well-known working mothers and how they combined work and family responsibilities. But although well-known fathers are now also dealt with, their stories do not deal with the issue of reconciliation.

More generally, the UK expert summed up his analysis of the British press as follows: *'There is very limited debate within the media about fathers (and men and childcare). What debate there is focuses on the changing role of men as breadwinners .. Items either concentrated on men who were working (the rich and famous included) and [referred to] their role in the family as leisure time and the effects on fathers, mothers and children when they are not in work.'*

**DANISH NEWSPAPERS PROVIDED** some exception to this general picture. The Danish expert concludes: *'Men are well featured in Danish newspapers. Where previously the focus was on the man in relation to, for example, gender and employment, a part of the debate in recent years has been about men as fathers and caring persons as the newspapers in June showed quite clearly...All in all, a new, modern caring man is pushing forward. This development is perhaps going slowly but it is taking the direction of*



*the re-united man who is capable of being a caring father yet also capable of preserving the masculine qualities.'*

**FINALLY, A NUMBER OF EXPERTS REFERRED TO ISSUES concerning language.** The Spanish expert noted that it was sometimes difficult to know whether items referred to 'fathers' or 'parents' because the Spanish language uses the same word for both. Gender-neutral language is used quite frequently in Belgian newspapers, not because of the French or Flemish languages but because of an informal consensus to refer to 'parents' instead of 'mothers' when writing about care and childbearing. The Belgian experts, however, also observe that this clearly applies less when sport is the subject or when 'popular' newspapers are analysed. They notice that gender-based stereotypes and clichés remain alive and well in the accounts of sporting events and in the way that sportsmen report about their performance of family tasks. Finally, both the Spanish and Belgian experts refer to an ironic style used in some newspapers when reporting about men caring for babies.

**THE MONITORING EXERCISE REPORTED** here shows that there was little newspaper coverage of the focal themes of this report - more equal sharing of family responsibilities between mothers and fathers and reconciling employment and family life for men as well as women. Coverage of fathers and fatherhood focused on other issues, for example custody of children, and on individual stories. Newspapers offered little in the way of role models, guidance or support for men seeking a new and more equal role and place in the family: as one expert observed, *'any discussion falters after the breadwinner role except for a general 'take more responsibility''*.





**DO NEWSPAPERS REFLECT** a 'culture' of fatherhood and men as carers for children which is behind the beliefs and values held by citizens in the European Union? Or, put another way, how far is the European Union, in its emphasis on more equal sharing and men's responsibility for children's care and upbringing, in tune with what ordinary men and women in Europe think today about gender roles in the family? We can get some indicators from results from the Eurobarometer survey<sup>11</sup> conducted in Spring 1993; the survey is conducted twice a year throughout the European Union, with a sample of over 12,000 men and women aged over 15 years.

**ACCORDING TO THE SURVEY**, a large majority of Europeans subscribe to the opinion that *'it is better for a child if the father is very involved in bringing up the child from an early age'*. Most also believe that 'both parents' should be involved in carrying out a number of child-related tasks; younger people (25-39 year olds) most frequently held these views. But there are some important variations from this general picture, when certain tasks are considered: *About one third of Europeans questioned consider the tasks of dressing, changing nappies, feeding or taking children to the doctor are mainly the responsibility of the mother, whereas about one fifth consider that playing sport is mainly the responsibility of the father.* The gendered nature of child-related tasks is empha-

sised, on average, rather more by men than women and by the oldest age groups as well as by the youngest age group (15-24 years) of men.

**BUT EVEN MORE REVEALING** are attitudes to the employment of mothers. There is widespread awareness of the adverse effects of motherhood on women's employment. A large majority of men and women in the survey agree that neither marriage nor fatherhood are obstacles to men's involvement in the labour market - but about a fifth consider marriage an obstacle to women's working life and the proportion increases to a half for motherhood. Even so, more than three-quarters of respondents think that mothers should stay at home when children are young rather than go out to work, and although this view is more common among older people, it is still held by more than two-thirds of men and women under 40; it is also more commonly held by parents than non-parents.

**TAKEN TOGETHER, THESE RESULTS** point to a continuing belief by many men and women in Europe in gender differentiation in the care and upbringing of children with primary responsibility continuing to rest with mothers, who preferably should not go out to work. Fathers should be 'very involved' - but this seems to mean that their role is to support and 'help out' rather than share equally. The model of shared parenting, with employment and caring work and responsibilities divided more equally, still has only minority support. This holds in all Member States, although of the countries involved in this monitoring exercise, Denmark shows most eviden-





## Allô, maman bobo

ce of support for shared parenting. Compared to the EU Member States overall, substantially fewer Danish citizens say mothers should stay at home, that changing nappies is mainly the mother's responsibility and that playing sport with the children is mainly the father's responsibility.

**THE SOCIAL FABRIC OF EUROPEAN SOCIETIES** continues to be based on a socialisation process which assumes a gendered division of roles between the nurturer-caretaker and the protector-combatant. This division developed to meet the characteristics and requirements of hunting and peasant societies, and was reinforced to lie at the heart of old industrial societies - all of which societies were very different to today's service-based societies. Despite the need to develop gender roles that are appropriate to these new service-based societies, the past leaves a legacy of symbolism which precludes men, as a class, from assuming the **primary** child caretaker role and precludes women, as a class, from the role of **primary** protector/provider<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> See N. Malpas, and P-Y. Lambert (1993). *The Europeans and the Family; results of an opinion survey* (Eurobarometer 39), Brussels: European Commission (DGV).

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, R.D. Day and W.C. Mackey (1986) *The role image of the American father: an examination of a media myth*, *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 17 (3): 371-388.





algemeen en met de moeders in het bijzonder. Ze moeten groot en sterk zijn, zacht en lief, begrijpend en attent, strijdlustig en vertederend. Ze moeten kunnen kuisen en koken, luiers verversen en papflessen geven. En werken ook, ha ja!

# CONCLUSIONS

The monitoring exercise reported here shows that the issues considered (fathers, mothers, parenthood, reconciliation) are dealt with in a wide variety of newspapers. Such issues rarely make front page news, unless they touch upon the exceptional and sensational, nor are they often examined in any great depth. Newspapers reflect, rather than lead, public opinion in relation to gender roles in employment and family life: leave arrangements and part-time work are predominantly discussed in relation to working mothers, while fathers attract attention in relation to custody and maintenance.

# O

**ONLY IN DENMARK** is there any substantial evidence of a different public discourse, which recognises and addresses men's role as carers, and in this case it is more likely again that newspapers are reflecting rather than forming public opinion.

**PROMOTING MALE INVOLVEMENT** in the care and upbringing of children, as the Union seeks to do, needs a variety of measures within a broad strategy, based on a careful analysis<sup>13</sup>. The 'hardware' of policy measures, such as leave arrangements, together with other structural, legal and institutional factors are important. But they are not sufficient conditions to promote increased involvement of men in caring for young children. The 'software' of cultural, interpersonal and psychological factors (e.g. images, role models, beliefs) needs also to be addressed<sup>14</sup>.

**NEWSPAPERS PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE** in creating the 'culture' of fatherhood in our societies. They can sustain the view that men have less nurturing potential than women. For example, they can denigrate the idea of the male as a primary child caretaker (cartoons have often been a powerful tool for such devaluation), and by so doing reinforce the idea that caretaking and providing are distinct and mutually exclusive roles<sup>15</sup>.

**BUT THEY CAN ALSO CHALLENGE** this idea, by acknowledging and exemplifying men's capacity for intimacy and attachment, rather than dominance and competition. Actions often speak louder than words. The popular press can have a significant impact when they picture famous footballers, such as the Laudrups of Denmark, in their role as caring fathers, or if they highlight the decision of a Government Minister to take Parental Leave.

**YET AS THESE EXAMPLES SHOW**, there are limits to what newspapers can do at a cultural level. If there are no men acting as role models of more participant fathers, newspapers cannot represent them. If there is no public discussion or initiatives, newspapers cannot report them. Moreover, newspapers are commercial products, subject to market economic principles and rules, not agents for social and cultural change.

**THERE MAY BE MORE POWERFUL MEDIA** such as television in creating 'images' of fatherhood and of men as

carers. As noted before, one needs to remain aware of social class differentials. It has been documented for TV-situation comedy in the USA that the character of the ineffectual, even buffoonish working-class man has persisted as the dominant image contrasted with consistently competent working-class wives and middle-class fathers<sup>16</sup>.

**AT THE SAME TIME**, media do have some responsibilities-to consider and question the assumptions that underlie their reporting, to ensure that they are not thoughtlessly reinforcing views and beliefs that are, at least, open to question. Perhaps too they have some responsibility to consider the implications of social and economic developments, not least the growing number of women with children who are employed, the fact that the great majority of parents are now in the labour market, and gender roles that are appropriate to the new service societies.

**BUT IF THE EUROPEAN UNION** and the Member States believe that more equal parenting, with men more participant in the care and upbringing of children, is both right and necessary, then it places a responsibility on them to stimulate public debate, take initiatives and encourage role models (not least politicians and other men in prominent positions). The Steering Committee for

Equal Opportunities in Broadcasting of the European Commission could contribute on these issues. Overall, both the European Union and the Member States need to adopt an innovative, comprehensive, and dynamic approach. In this way, they will create events, stories and agendas that newspapers and other media will then report and discuss.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, J.A. Levine, D.T. Murphy and S. Wilson (1993) *Getting Men Involved: Strategies for Early Childhood Programs*, New York: Scholastic Inc.; and EC Childcare Network (1994) *Men as Carers: towards a culture of responsibility, sharing and reciprocity*, Brussels: European Commission (DG V).

<sup>14</sup> See F. Deven (1994) 'Male Involvement in Childrearing and Childcare: reaching the promised land?', in P. Ghedini (ed.) *Men as Carers: proceedings of an international seminar held in Ravenna, May 1993*, Bologna: Regione Emilia-Romagna.

<sup>15</sup> See W.C. Mackey (1985) 'A cross-cultural perspective on perceptions of paternalistic deficiencies in the united States: the myth of the derelict daddy', *Sex Roles*, 12 (5/6): 509-533.

<sup>16</sup> See R. Butsch (1992) 'Class and Gender in 4 Decades of Television situation Comedy: plus ça change ...', *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 1992: 387-399; see also M. Cantor (1990) 'Prime-time fathers: a study in change and continuity', *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 1990: 275-285.



# APPENDIX

## NATIONAL EXPERTS AND SELECTION OF NEWSPAPERS

### **BELGIUM**

Wim JANSEN & Annemie VAN WINCKEL\*

*'Het beeld van mannen als vaders en zorgdragers in de Belgische pers'*.

De Standaard, Het Nieuwsblad, De Morgen, Het Laatste Nieuws, Het Volk, Gazet van Antwerpen, Le Soir, La Libre Belgique, Vers l'Avenir, Le Peuple.

### **DENMARK**

Gitte HANSEN

*'Danske avisers daekning af maend i rollen som faedre og omsorgspersoner'*.

Politiken, Jyllands-Posten, Berlingske Tidende, Aktuelt, Information, Ekstra Bladet, Boersen, Week-end-avisen, Aarhus Stiftstidende, Herning Folkeblad.

### **FRANCE**

Gérard NEYRAND

*'Les soins des pères et des hommes aux enfants. Etude de la presse quotidienne française en juin 1994'*.

Le Figaro, La Croix, L'Humanité, France-soir, Le Monde, Libération, Aujourd'hui, les Echos, Le Figaro Madame, Le Figaro Magazine, L'Humanité Dimanche.

### **GERMANY**

Corina KÖNIG

*'Inhaltsanalyse von Zeitungsberichten über Väter und Männer als Kinderbetreuer'*.

Die Zeit, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Bild, Bild der Frau, Focus, Brigitte, Eltern, Wirtschaftswoche, Wochenpost.

### **ITALY**

Maurizio QUILICI

*'Padri, Madri e Lavoro di Cura : Analisi dei Quotidiani Italiani'*.

La Repubblica, Corriere della Sera (ediz. romana), Il Giorno, La Stampa, Il Resto del Carlino, La Nazione, Il Messaggero, Il Mattino, La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno, Il Sole 24 Ore.

### **SPAIN**

Monica Garcia MARINOSO

*'Los Hombres y el Ciudadado de Ninos : la Situacion en Espana'*.

ABC, El Pais, El Mundo, La Rioja, La Voz Galicia, Diario 16, Avui, El Correo Espanol, La Vanguardia, El Periodico C.

### **UNITED KINGDOM**

Trefor LLOYD

*'Analysis of Newspaper Coverage of Fathers and Men as Carers'*.

The Sun, Daily Mirror, Daily Mail, Daily Express, Daily Teleraph, Daily Star, Daily Record, Today, Times, Guardian, Independent, Financial Times, Sunday Sport, Observer, The People.

## METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

TABLE 1.

Quantitative distribution of 'ARTICLES' into five categories referring to the main issues, by country (In percentages).

Category	Country						
	B	DK	F	G	I	E	UK*
FATHERS	38	10	14	33	32	6	21
MOTHERS	14	-**	22	33	61	11	25
PARENTS	24	40	34	19	1	38	37
CHILDCARE	0	15	4	1-	0	9	2
RECONCILIATION	24	35	25	13	5	36	15
N= 100%=	143	396	125	69	75	53	143

\* B= Belgium, DK= Denmark, F= France, G= Germany, I= Italy, E= Spain, UK= United Kingdom

\*\* The search of the Danish expert excluded items dealing **exclusively** with motherhood, due to the necessity of limiting the extent of the materials.

The selection procedure has had some impact on the newspapers monitored. For example, financial newspapers were not included in Belgium as this would have required the inclusion of two papers (French and Flemish). For Germany, the expert included four magazines to provide a more comprehensive picture. In Italy, some important newspapers from Northern Italy were left out in order to maintain geographical balance.

The extent to which 'information bites' were counted as a unit differs to some extent (news item, (photo) feature, storyline, letter, comment, advertisements, interviews, editorial, reviews of books, as well as 'Column's and Pages'). The Italian expert, for example, decided to exclude those items simply mentioning the mother/father-label in the context of documenting some event (eg murder) and focused instead on main articles. By contrast, another expert (UK) included every item which referred to 'mother', 'father' etc. For Spain, the expert

strictly took 53 'pieces of information' into account, having noticed 141 items if she would take less strict criteria, still not including 42 photographs and 9 graphs. For Belgium, almost 80% of all 'information items' are articles, and 8% are pictures.

Moreover, there remains the risk of double-count viewing the overlap (quasi-identical news items) whenever two newspapers belong to the same concern/publisher. Therefore, a mere quantitative analysis and comparison of all these 'information bites' is quite hazardous and difficult. However, in order to provide a quantitative indication of the amount of information in a variety of newspapers related to our issues, the national experts were requested to identify and count feature articles only (see **Table 1**).

# EUROPEAN COMMISSION NETWORK ON CHILDCARE AND OTHER MEASURES TO RECONCILE EMPLOYMENT AND FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

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**READY,  
DADDY,  
GO!**

