

# MEN AND GENDER EQUALITY



# CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION p3

## I. INFORMING MEN ABOUT PROFESSIONAL EQUALITY POLICIES p5

1.The challenges in mobilizing men p5

2.The impact of gender stereotypes on both men and women p6

3.Question masculine power and the place of men in companies p7



.Key levers for action p7

## II. DEVELOP BI-DIRECTIONAL JOB DIVERSITY p8

1.The excesses of a highly gender-segregated working world p8

2.«Care»: an innovative concept in business management p9



.Key levers for the effective promotion of occupational diversity p10

## III. RETHINKING CORPORATE ORGANIZATION p11



.Key levers for action p11

## IV. OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH p12



.Key levers for action p12

## V. COMBATTING WORKPLACE VIOLENCE p13



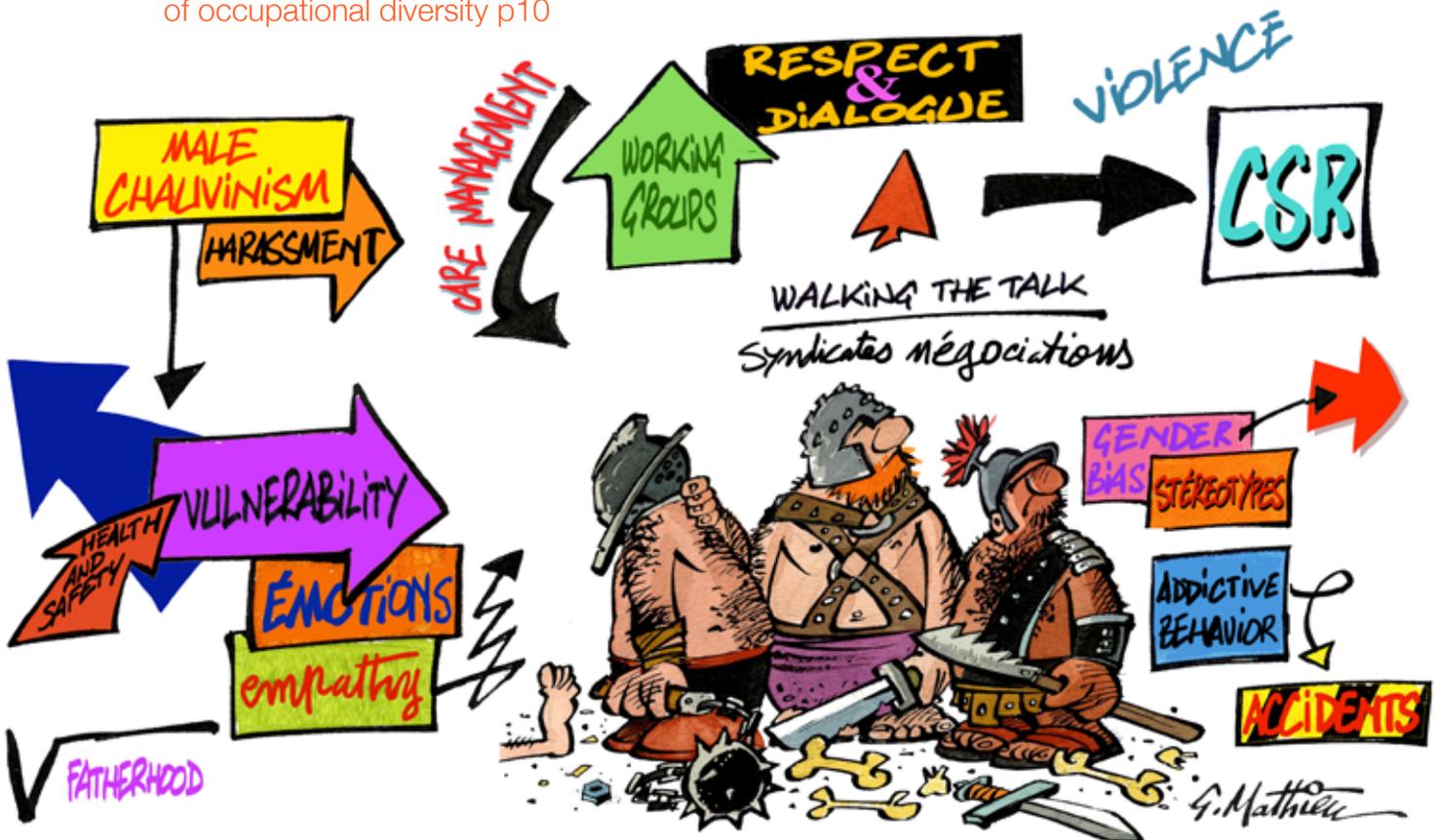
.Key levers for action p14

## VI. PROMOTE THE PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY OF MALE EMPLOYEES : A PREREQUISITE FOR PROFESSIONAL EQUALITY p14



.Key levers for action p15

CONCLUSION p15





## INTRODUCTION

Over time, professional equality has become a priority for businesses, but also for the public authorities. However, inequalities persist due to glass ceilings, wage gaps, the devaluation of «feminised» occupations and a range of discriminatory practices. The existing battery of legislative and regulatory tools does not appear sufficient to counter these workplace inequalities. Accordingly, the study conducted by ORSE presents a business case for companies that wish to launch a more in-depth consideration of professional equality between women and men within their organisations. This study, the first of its kind in Europe, shows why the struggle for professional equality is not exclusively reserved to women and how it also targets men, both as the subjects and beneficiaries thereof.

A Study by Michael Kimmel  
highlights [three barriers](#) to the involvement of men in gender equality policies:

### 1. THE INVISIBILITY OF GENDER ISSUES

Those who enjoy privileges due to their membership to a dominant group («white, male and middle aged» for example) do not realize how many advantages they have. They see their situation as the norm and do not feel as if they benefit from these invisible privileges. They believe that their access to professions, promotions and certain clubs, goods and services, flows solely from their own merit.

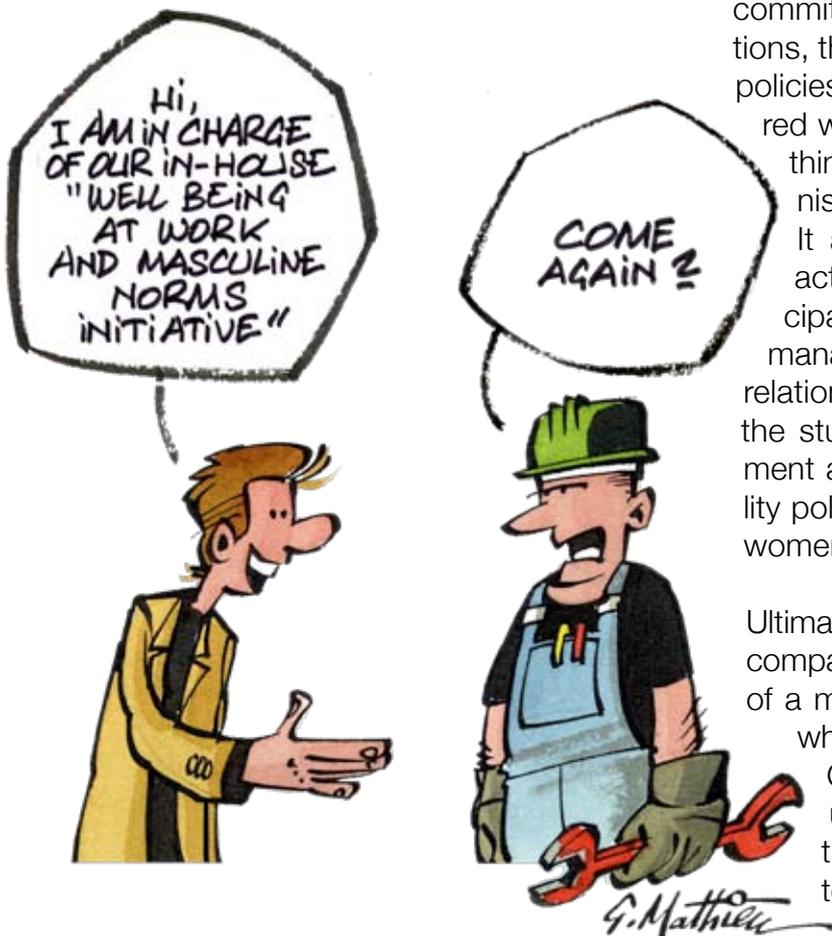
## 2. THE FEELING OF ENTITLEMENT

Any positive action in favour of women is seen as negative discrimination against men, despite the historical fact that the greatest positive «discrimination» has always been in favour of men: they have had a 100% quota throughout History. For women, the path is steep just to reach the spheres in which men have already established their dominance. Thus, any attempt to level the professional playing field to help women achieve success is seen as an invasion, although it simply aims to correct the existing asymmetry.



## 3. THE BEHAVIOUR AND VIEWS OF OTHER MEN

Men pay attention to the opinions of their peers. However, their colleagues in the business world are also men. We may gauge just how problematical this may prove to be through the example of business executives who wish to take paternity leave in the very few companies where this is possible in the United States. They are told that, if they do take leave, they will be on the «daddy track», i.e. a career dead-end path. Accordingly, such executives develop strategies to conceal their desire to become involved in family life.



Based on testimonials from business leaders, the work of researchers worldwide, and the commitments of major international institutions, the study illustrates professional equality policies that appear ineffective when compared with the means employed. It advises rethinking corporate management and organisation by questioning masculine power. It also describes the available levers for action aimed at showing that men's participation is a prerequisite for more inclusive management styles that introduce a win-win relationship between all stakeholders. Finally, the study shows that it is possible to implement actions to include men in gender equality policies without limiting the participation of women.

Ultimately, the study suggests inventing the company of the future by reaping the benefits of a model based on equality and integration, where all stakeholders play a decisive role. Challenging preconceived ideas, it invites us to change our perspective on systems that we have all integrated and pushes us to imagine something that we still thought to be impossible until recently.

## I – INFORMING MEN ABOUT PROFESSIONAL EQUALITY POLICIES

Most avowedly «feminist» policies are based on the premise that actions to promote workplace equality are exclusively beneficial to women, since the patriarchal system places them under pressure in both the professional (part-time work, wage gap, restricted access to leadership positions) and private spheres (80% of household tasks and child care, psychological load of organising the household).

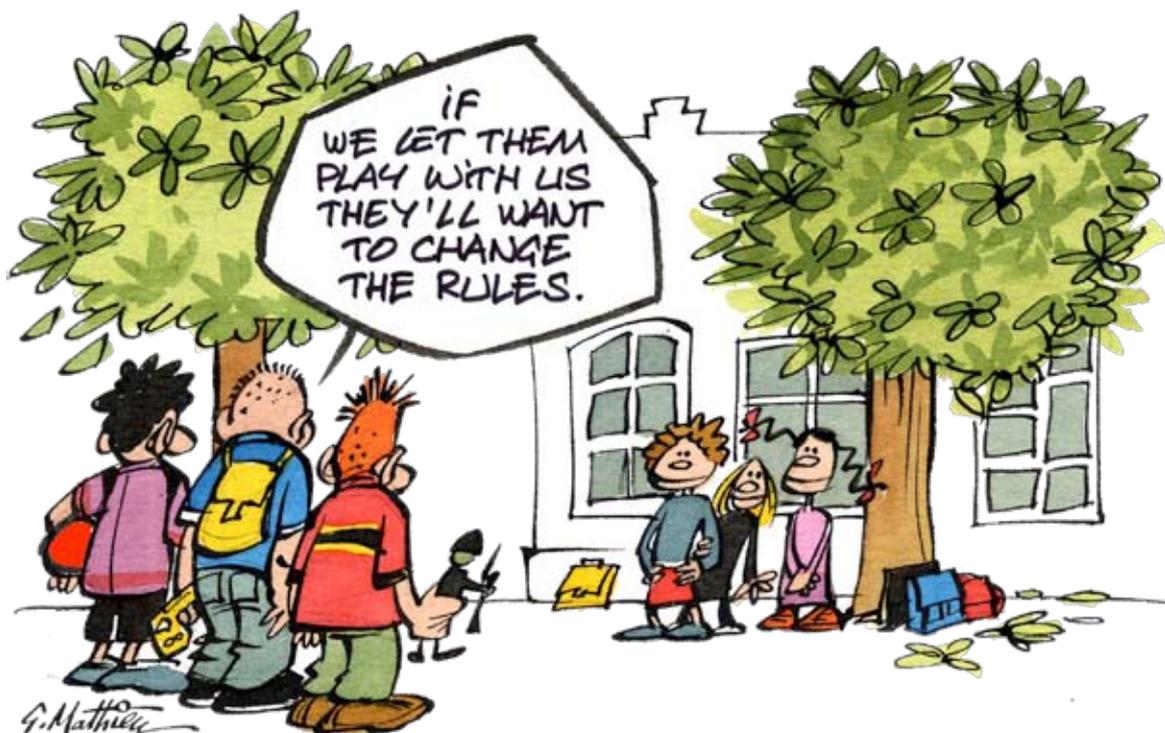
The result is that actions in favour of professional equality focus on the benefits for women and the constraints on men, reducing the latter to a passive role. However, studies show that such actions that promote professional equality are much more effective when men are included, both as subjects and actors.



### 1. THE CHALLENGES OF MOBILISING MEN

The first challenge in involving men in professional equality is to help them perceive the benefits. What interest is there for men to become concerned about the issue of equality?

Their standpoint on the issue may be ambiguous and their interest in changing is not necessarily clear. Why sacrifice tangible privileges (salary, prestige, dominance, etc.) for the uncertainty of change?



In order to change this point of view, it is important to draw men's attention to the hidden costs of inequality for their families, society as a whole and for themselves. Once they are convinced of their interest in active participation in gender equality, men become decisive players because women are no longer required to be the sole defenders of the right to equal treatment. The aim is thus to find the right levers to generate strong male commitment in the corporate sphere, the benefits of which will flow on to the global working community.

The table below, based on an analysis by Catalyst, shows the main costs of inequality and the main benefits of the inclusion of men in equality policies.

<b>Costs</b> <b>What men suffer due to gender inequality</b>	<b>Benefits</b> <b>What men gain from gender equality</b>
Imposition of the household's main breadwinner responsibility	The freedom to share the financial responsibilities with one's spouse
More distant relations with one's spouse	More rewarding and intimate relations with one's spouse
More distant relations with one's children	Freedom for deeper involvement in parenting; more rewarding relationships with one's children
Competitive pressure to acquire status compared with other men	Freedom to define oneself according to one's own values rather than standards of traditional male behaviour
A decrease in psychological and even physical well-being	Improved physical and mental health



## 2. THE IMPACT OF GENDER STEREOTYPES ON BOTH MEN AND WOMEN



Gender stereotypes are veritable shackles dealt out by society at birth, imprisoning each of us in certain roles and limiting our potential throughout our lives. Contrary to popular belief men, like women, are subject to gender stereotypes in their work and family lives. In a 2009 study, the American Catalyst Institute identified the four most widespread male norms in the corporate sphere:

- *Avoid all things feminine*, which means that men should not adhere to, or respect, female standards;
- *Be a winner*, whether by accumulating wealth, social prestige or power;
- *Show no chinks* in the armour: a man should be tough in body and mind;
- *Be a man's man*, by winning the respect and admiration of other men.

These norms involve a non-negligible cost for men and are largely responsible for the persistence of inequality. To the extent that companies are a reflection of the way broader society functions, the costs of male domination affect the community symmetrically. Thus we need to deconstruct what the author of the Catalyst Study calls «men's contradictory experience of power».

Gender systems have given concrete content to the identities of men and women. These models tell us what is expected of us at every stage of our lives. To achieve equality, we must work to reconstruct the culture, language, symbolism and physical aspects of the feminine and the masculine.

If women are the only initiators of this new perspective, the results can only be insufficient. Indeed, to ensure real change, our understanding of stereotypes and social roles must evolve within the relationship between men and women.

This means that we must also work on masculine identity to bring the genders closer together and build healthy relationships.

### 3. QUESTION MASCULINE POWER AND THE PLACE OF MEN IN COMPANIES

The patriarchal system of representation impacts both men and women. Accordingly, professional equality must be integrated through an inclusive approach, open to men, that fosters debate on the place of women in companies. Masculine power, which tends to exclude women and constrain career men, is an out-dated heritage.

The inclusive approach opens new perspective for collaboration going beyond the male/female cleavage in all spheres of society. Redefining the place of men goes beyond the corporate sphere to raise questions about masculine power throughout the structure of society, while redefining gender-related systems of representation. Everyone must be allowed to transgress gendered boundaries by permitting membership to groups without being subjected to any sexual norms. Collective unconsciousness thus becomes collective conscience, allowing a veritable transformation leading to sustainable equality.



#### KEY LEVERS FOR ACTION

Clearly, heightened consciousness alone is not enough to trigger long-term change. Stereotypes are deeply rooted in the way companies function and traditional masculine identity is omnipresent.

Below are the main levers for action in order to include men in professional equality policies:

- Corporate leadership plays a decisive role, through its hierarchical position, in showing the example to all male employees and avoiding disengagement due to fear of disapproval from colleagues;
- Leadership and traditional power spheres (Board of Directors, Executive Committee and staff representative bodies) can use discussion groups to exert real influence over their employees;
- An in-depth approach, through the establishment of dedicated men's networks working in collaboration with women's networks to establish a constructive dialogue and exchange good practices to ensure professional equality;
- Review the true effectiveness of the economic model based solely on competition and profitability. The corporate world may be seen as a naturally competitive milieu promoting the strongest, most aggressive, highly available, dedicated employees. However, it has been shown that a more balanced or participative management style promotes corporate economic performance and reduces work-related accidents and absenteeism.
- Helping men to express their emotions through direct intervention to share nurturing and conflict resolution skills with boys and prospective fathers. This may include workshops and support groups that engage boys and men in a process where their natural barriers come down and they learn to speak openly about their feelings and their lives.

## II - DEVELOP BI-DIRECTIONAL JOB DIVERSITY

Many studies show that balanced management and occupational diversity promote corporate economic performance. Thus, beyond actions aiming to mobilise men in favour of professional equality, occupational diversity must be encouraged within companies, by redefining the concepts of masculinity and femininity. This allows women to access so-called «male» jobs (including leadership positions) and men to access «female» jobs. This bi-directional approach is essential to the success of professional equality.



### 1. THE EXCESSES OF A HIGHLY GENDER-SEGREGATED WORK ENVIRONMENT

Male behaviour, often associated with a risk-taking culture, authoritarian management and presenteeism, tends to have a counter-productive effect on the way companies function and, accordingly, corporate profits.

All-male teams exacerbate these features, which are nothing more than a legacy of the masculine standards imposed on men in the working world:

### THE CULTURE OF PRESENTEEISM

France is a country which favours co-optation through availability, time present and a culture of excessive work. Not only does this exclude women (who, due to their double-days, do not have the same availability), but this tradition, an implicit condition for success, prevents men from establishing a better work-life balance.

### RISK-TAKING CULTURE

Masculine norms require men to be strong, regardless of the circumstances, which impacts occupational health and decision-making processes. During the banking crisis, it was shown that companies with balanced executive bodies were less affected.



## AUTHORITARIAN MANAGEMENT

The issue of varying forms of workplace violence is a recurrent problem. Power, the source of domination and control, often turns against women, who have very limited access to corporate governance bodies. This violence, considered to be structural because it relates to educational schemas, has a highly negative impact on working conditions within companies and on collective welfare. More indirectly, it can impede professional equality, since many women have no desire to evolve in a world of male violence (sexual and psychological harassment).

It should be noted that masculine norms impact both the corporate world and the community at large (traffic accidents, domestic violence, addictive behaviour...).



## 2.«CARE» : AN INNOVATIVE CONCEPT IN BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

The «care» concept, imported from the United States, assumes that performance and autonomy eventually cede to dependency. Rather than ignoring this reality, the «care» philosophy recognizes the fragility and vulnerability that characterizes each of us at some stage in our lives, which is in total contradiction with masculine norms valuing strength and independence.

Yet, in ageing societies such as France, dependency issues are becoming a priority for public policy due to the related economic challenges. They have an impact on pension funding systems, the social security deficit and the country's general competitiveness. Thus, the process of increasing occupational diversity should emphasise the importance of jobs in the so-called «caring» business (i.e. all linking and accompanying activities that support and promote people's cognitive, physical and emotional aptitude), aimed at placing them at the top of the social ladder in terms of their importance to the community.

This approach will help to enhance the perceived value of pre-conceived feminine aptitudes and increase the awareness of employees concerning other forms of success.



## KEY LEVERS FOR THE EFFECTIVE PROMOTION OF OCCUPATIONAL DIVERSITY

Gender stereotype issues have been identified in students' choice of orientation in universities. Incentives have recently been implemented to encourage girls to take up scientific studies, a field where the female population is clearly underrepresented. Thus, beyond increasing the intrinsic value of so-called feminine sectors in the professional world, work is required at the base level, i.e. the educational system and collective representations. Even if we manage to give a more positive image to some feminised sectors (services for early childhood and the elderly...), some men won't dare enter them for fear of peer judgements. The struggle against sexism must, thus, integrate all strata of society if attitudes are to change.

In companies, efforts to increase occupational diversity must be conducted in collaboration with social partners and the Human Resources departments. These players must also be convinced that the lack of occupational diversity is prejudicial to all stakeholders. Companies must commit themselves internally and externally :



- To develop communication and outreach activities promoting the recruitment of men in feminised occupations, by focusing on their attractiveness as well as remuneration and working conditions;

- To recognize the technical aspects of feminised occupations, since this is valued by masculine corporate norms;

- Not to reproduce gender stereotypes in advertising campaigns;

- To add value to highly feminised occupations by promoting the concept of «care», namely strengthening social links by upgrading careers in hospitality, customer relations, secretariat and support services.



### III. RETHINKING CORPORATE ORGANISATION

Men can become subjects of and players in professional equality if they are helped to invest more in the family sphere.

The evolution of society (increasing numbers of single fathers, greater involvement of women in the labour market, etc.) encourages men to assume their role as fathers, but this requires them to find time that was formerly spent on their professional lives. Companies must facilitate the search for a better work/life balance. Indeed, such a redefinition of work organisation will also benefit women.

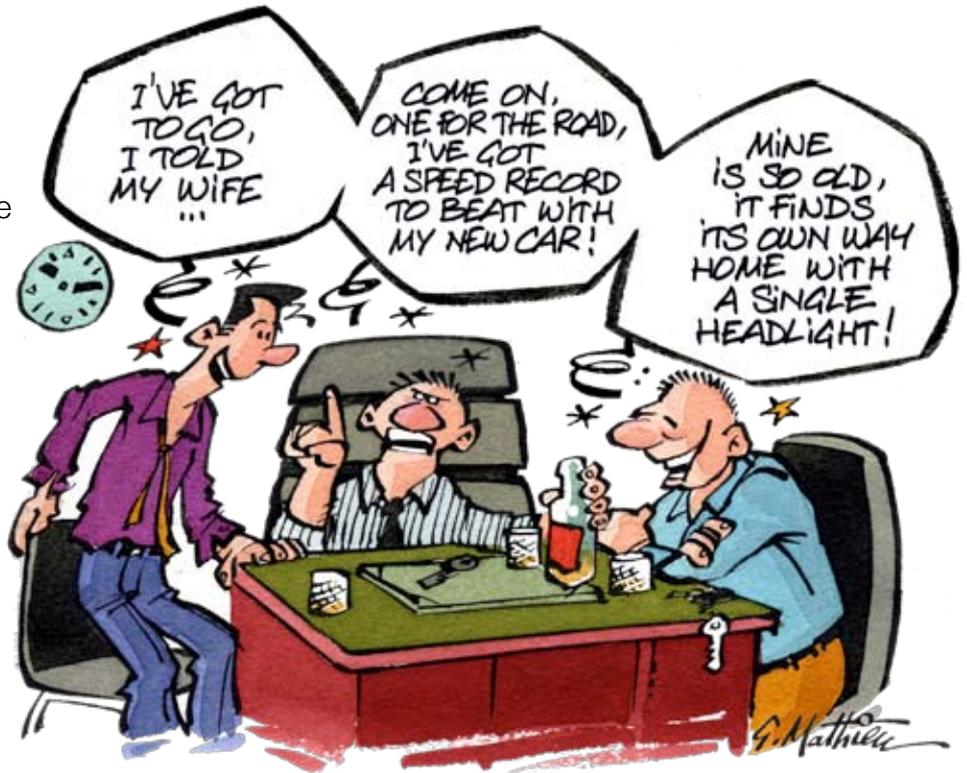


#### KEY LEVERS FOR ACTION

- Change the planning of meetings, which are a vector for integration, to allow all men and women to participate.
- Develop telecommuting, while remaining vigilant that the culture of presenteeism is not replaced by «virtual presenteeism».
- Review corporate «bonus» systems, since the masculine norms that favour visible and quantitative bonuses tend to create artificial hierarchies and false motivations.

## IV. OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

Masculine norms often lead men to ignore their own health problems and those of their families. Moreover, exclusively masculine spheres lead to abusive behaviour that deeply affects occupational health. Addiction to alcohol and drugs, poor workplace hygiene and risky driving techniques are issues that must not be minimized. Indeed, these excesses disturb the proper functioning of companies, sideline other spheres (social and emotional life) and cost the health system dearly. The latest public figures show that, despite high life expectancy in France, 77% of preventable deaths relate to men.



(Inserm, 2006).



### KEY LEVERS FOR ACTION

- Implement preventive policies in the HR strategies to increase the quality of working life.



- Raise awareness of and provide training to HR and staff representative bodies.

- Prevent risk-taking behaviour particularly affecting men. Indeed, men make more frequent and more intensive use of tobacco, alcohol, cannabis and hard drugs.

- Review management standards by focusing on relational issues.

## V. COMBATTING WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Workplace violence does not only affect women. Several researchers have highlighted the masculine dimension of workplace violence. In his book (in French) on «Suffering in France», Christophe Dejours argues that *«manhood is measured precisely in terms of the violence that we are capable of committing against others, especially against those who are dominated, starting with women. A man is a truly “manly” man if he can inflict suffering or pain on others without flinching in the name of the exercise, demonstration or restoration of domination and power over the other; including by force...»*

Male violence (against oneself and others) cannot be reduced to biological reasons (testosterone) or the perpetuation of archaic traditions. It is mainly due to how men construct their identity in the early years of life, at school, in their career...

The violence exercised towards men is thus structural: the sacrifices needed to assert themselves as men, as part of a group, require violent compensation, often seen as an individual aberration when in fact it is systemic. We can, thus, speak of the «privatization of profits» related to the profitability of employees working in a sacrificial fashion, and the «socialisation of losses», visible in the blatant male monopoly on violence. These losses are, however, transferred back to the company in the form of absenteeism, low morale, high staff turnover, conflict, etc.





## KEY LEVERS FOR ACTION

Companies can attempt to put an end to violent behaviour towards women and men, through concrete action such as :

- Combating sexism and homophobia
- Finding solutions to psychological harassment
- Fighting sexual harassment
- Speaking out against domestic violence
- Encouraging debate on the incivility and violence suffered by employees



## VI. PROMOTE THE PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY OF MALE EMPLOYEES: A PREREQUISITE FOR PROFESSIONAL EQUALITY

Like women, men are not just workers : they also exist outside the professional sphere. Numerous studies point to the importance of a good work/life balance in ensuring sustainable wellbeing as a vector for equality, both within companies and in the home. It is essential to articulate this balance equitably between women and men (parental leave, part-time work and time off for sick children), since there can be no equality at work if, in parallel, men do not invest in the domestic sphere.



## KEY LEVERS FOR ACTION

- Provide outreach and develop internal communication campaigns on the rights of fathers and the benefits of paternity leave;
- Ensure that taking parental leave will not have a negative impact on the careers of those who decide to take it;
- Establish financial incentives to accompany the choice to take leave;
- Help future fathers to prepare themselves for this new role and thus support parental co-responsibility;
- Encourage discussion groups for fathers.



## CONCLUSION

It goes without saying that men are not a homogeneous group whose main aim is to block the emancipation of women. Many male employees are highly sensitive to equality and the necessary balance between family and work responsibilities.

Most men reproduce masculine norms unintentionally, simply by trying to «do the right thing» and adapt themselves to corporate reality. That is why sound information, heightened consciousness and debate initiated by business leaders can be sufficient to provoke quick progress, even though organizational resistance and the strength of pre-conceived ideas should not be underestimated.

Targeting men specifically and turning them into allies in the fight for gender equality is a lever that is insufficiently employed in France. Doing so will help France catch up with dynamic international debate and practice.

Finally, this contributes to global transformation of the working community, establishing a new balance on the scale of occupational value and founding professional motivation on a healthier, more humane basis.

Empathy, listening and dialogue are not the property of one gender and have no negative impact on sustainable economic performance.



# ORSE

Observatoire sur la Responsabilité Sociétale des Entreprises

ORSE is a membership non-profit organization studying and promoting CSR towards a diversity of actors such as: large listed companies, public as well as private, banks and insurers, investors and asset managers, professional and social organizations, trade unions, NGOs, universities and graduate schools. Governance is also structured as a multi-stakeholder group including investors, companies, the major trade unions and an NGO.

ORSE works on various levels through its missions of:

- Advising its members in order to assist them through the development and implementation of their CSR strategy
- Raising awareness about CSR issues among the general public, political and economic decision makers
- Providing expertise for all the actors interested in CSR and seeking for examples of good practices and tools implementing the actions led by companies.

ORSE's works concerning gender equality are:

2008: Promoting parenting among male employees

2009: Access and representation of women in corporate governance bodies

2010: Fathers in advertising - An analysis of stereotypes at work

2013: How to implement an international diversity policy

ORSE 25, rue du charolais 75012 Paris 33 1 43 46 02 22 [contact@orse.org](mailto:contact@orse.org) [www.orse.org](http://www.orse.org)



**ONU FEMMES** **COMITÉ NATIONAL FRANCE**  
Entité des Nations Unies pour l'égalité des sexes et l'autonomisation des femmes

The UN Women French National Committee is a non governmental organisation, created in 2013. It is composed of volunteer men and women from a variety of sectors (private, non-profit, institutional) committed to developing a common project for the defense of women's rights and the promotion of gender equality. The Committee's mission is to represent UN Women, its mandate, messages and priorities, and to relay its actions in France, in partnership with women's networks, associations, and other institutions working to advance gender equality. The committee develop advocacy, public education and sensibilisation on 3 of the 7 thematics of the organisation :

- Increasing women's transformation and leadership;
- Ending violence against women;
- Engaging women in all aspects of peace en security processes;

The committee is also in charge of raising ressources from individuals and compagnies to support the work of UN Women in France and worldwide.

Comité ONU Femmes France 8 rue Thomas Mann 75205 PARIS Cedex  
58 [contact@onufemmes.fr](mailto:contact@onufemmes.fr)

Twitter : @ONUFemmesFR

33 1 57 27 94  
[www.onufemmes.fr](http://www.onufemmes.fr)