



Engaging Men in Nurturing Care

A Roadmap for Systemic Change

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Engaging Men in Nurturing Care (EMiNC) initiative is a multiyear project dedicated to promoting gender equity in caregiving, particularly during the early years of a child's life. EMiNC was implemented through a partnership between the International Step by Step Association (ISSA), [Centro per la Salute del Bambino – Centre for Child Health \(CSB\)](#) in Italy, [Observatory of Masculinities – Center of Social Studies \(CES\)](#) in Portugal, and [CONEXUS](#) and the [Barcelona City Council, Office for Feminism and LGBTI Affairs](#) in Spain. It leveraged the extended expertise and experience of partners on issues related to gender equity, child development and system change. Supported by the [OAK Foundation](#), EMiNC was launched in February 2023.

Resulting from the multi-level and cross-sector work in the initiative, this Roadmap synthesises tested approaches, cross-country lessons, and actionable strategies for policymakers, practitioners, training institutions, employers, and civil society organisations seeking to advance shared caregiving and gender equality in the early years with a system-level view.

Why It Matters

Despite progress on gender equality, caregiving across Europe remains deeply gendered. Fathers face persistent structural barriers, including inadequate leave policies, inflexible workplaces, and mother-centric services that can discourage or limit their everyday participation in care. Research consistently shows that fathers' active involvement benefits children (stronger emotional security and cognitive development), families (reduced maternal stress and more equitable division of labour), and societies (greater gender equality and more balanced norms). Transforming this reality requires reshaping the policies, services, workplaces, and cultural narratives that shape how care is distributed and valued.

Three Game-Changers

- ✓ **Strong evidence paired with compelling narratives:** Data reveals patterns; stories shift hearts. The most powerful advocacy combined quantitative evidence with real voices from fathers, professionals, and families.
- ✓ **Tested, adaptable interventions:** Proven models that are practical, replicable, and locally adapted, lower resistance and accelerate scaling. They demonstrate that father-inclusive practice is not abstract aspiration but everyday routine.
- ✓ **Cross-sector alliances:** Progress on fatherhood requires coalitions bridging early childhood, health, gender equality, municipalities, workplaces, and civil society. Partnerships created resilience, legitimacy, and shared ownership beyond individual project cycles.

The EMiNC Approach

EMiNC adopted a multi-level, cross-sector approach, working simultaneously across policy (equitable parental leave and family frameworks), services (father-inclusive early childhood, health, and social services), parenting support (structured father groups and peer networks), professional training (in-service, pre-service, and trainer capacity), workplaces (dismantling cultural and structural barriers to men's leave uptake), and media and public communication (narratives that normalise involved fatherhood). Caring masculinities have been a cross-cutting theme throughout: transforming norms around fatherhood means addressing masculinity as a social structure,

ensuring that men’s increased participation in care goes hand in hand with deeper shifts in gender power relations.

Key Findings and Lessons

1. **Professional training works – when embedded in systems:** Father-inclusive training proved most effective when anchored in local training catalogues, accredited national platforms, or university programmes, not delivered as stand-alone activities. Cross-sector cohorts (combining educators, health professionals, and social workers) built shared understanding and consistent messaging for families. Practical tools, booster sessions, and mentoring were critical to sustaining practice change.
2. **Pre-Service education is a long-term investment:** Integrating father-inclusive content into university curricula for educators, nurses, paediatricians, social workers, shapes professional identity before workforce entry. Students responded strongly to interactive, case-based learning – and participation was significantly higher when modules were embedded in mandatory courses rather than offered as optional seminars.
3. **Fathers engage when services create space for them:** Structured father groups, birth preparation sessions, and family programmes that directly address fathers saw meaningful engagement. Trust, skilled facilitation, relevant tools, and flexible scheduling were decisive factors. Fathers were most effectively reached through existing institutions they already trusted, including schools, health services, and community centres.
4. **Workplace engagement requires sustained effort:** Companies were more receptive when approached through trusted local intermediaries than through direct outreach. One-off sessions were insufficient; repeated engagement, practical tools, and framing father engagement in terms of organisational performance and employee well-being were more effective.
5. **Policy and culture must move together:** Supportive leave policies and enabling legal frameworks are necessary but insufficient on their own. Without simultaneous cultural norm change, even well-designed policies go underused. Conversely, norm change without structural reform fails to create conditions for fathers to act. EMiNC’s integrated approach, working on both, was fundamental to its impact.

How to Use This Roadmap

The Roadmap is designed as a flexible, adaptive framework, not a prescriptive manual. Users are invited to:

- **Diagnose local realities:** Map policy environments, service structures, professional training systems, and prevailing norms.
- **Tailor interventions:** Adapt approaches to local contexts, starting with available entry points and building outward.

- **Build partnerships:** Engage actors across governance levels who can open access, legitimise the agenda, and sustain change.
- **Adapt communications:** Develop narratives that reflect local values, challenge stereotypes, and align with national policy debates.
- **Monitor and iterate:** Track attitudinal, practice, and systemic changes through mixed methods and continuously refine approaches.

***Key Take-Away:** When evidence is turned into a compelling narrative, when tested models provide practical pathways, and when cross-sector alliances carry the work forward, change becomes not only possible but inevitable. The EMiNC Roadmap offers a comprehensive guide for making that change real – in cities, in services, in homes, and across Europe.*



Section 1: Rationale and purpose

Why engaging men: Theoretical Framework

Across Europe, caregiving remains deeply gendered. Despite important progress in gender equality, norms and expectations continue to position women as primary caregivers and men as secondary or optional participants. Evidence from recent global research further highlights a persistent gap between fathers' intentions and their lived realities: while many men express a strong desire to be more involved in caregiving, structural barriers, such as inadequate leave policies, inflexible workplaces, and unsupportive social norms continue to limit their everyday participation in care.¹

These patterns reflect long-standing social norms that are reproduced from early childhood onward and reinforced by policy, workplace culture, and service design. Decades of research, however, show that fathers' and men's engagement in the early years is critical for children's development, family well-being, and societal progress.

- **For children**, involved fatherhood is associated with stronger emotional security, enhanced cognitive development, and improved social and emotional skills. From the prenatal period through early childhood, fathers' involvement and caregiving have a positive affect on child outcomes and overall well-being. When fathers share caregiving, children benefit from more stable, less stressed family environments.
- **For families**, father involvement supports maternal well-being, reduces household stress, and contributes to more equitable division of labour. Co-responsibility in care strengthens couple relationships, improves maternal mental health, and enhances family resilience during transitions, crises, or challenging periods such as the early months of parenthood.
- **For societies**, shared caregiving is essential to gender equality, economic participation, and social cohesion. When men engage in care, labour market inequalities diminish, women's employment stabilizes, and social expectations shift toward more balanced norms. Policies that enable fathers to take parental leave, participate in early childhood care, and be visible in public life contribute directly to more inclusive and democratic societies.

Yet, in practice, fathers and men across Europe continue to encounter barriers: lack of adequate leave policies, workplace cultures that discourage men from taking leave, mother-centric early childhood services, limited professional training on father engagement, and persistent stereotypes that devalue men's caregiving capacities. Engaging Men in Nurturing Care (EMiNC) emerges in response to these structural gaps, with the vision of building societies where men and women can contribute equally to their children's care, and where services and policies actively support that reality.

Engaging Men in Nurturing Care (EMiNC) Initiative in a nutshell

[EMiNC](#) is a multi-year initiative (2023-2026) led by ISSA - the International Step by Step Association and implemented in partnership with Center for Child Development in Italy, Conexus in Spain, and Center for Social Studies, Observatory on Masculinities at University of Coimbra in Portugal to strengthen men's and fathers' active involvement in early childhood care, development, and well-being. The initiative aims to (1) build a compelling EU- and national-level narrative on and violence prevention, engaged fatherhood, and gender equality in the early years; (2) transform practices in early childhood services by equipping professionals with the knowledge, skills, and tools to better engage fathers; and (3) establish lasting partnerships across local, national, and European levels to drive sustainable policy and program change. Through professional training, fathers' groups, advocacy, communications campaigns, and multi-sector collaboration, EMiNC supports more equitable, responsive, and nurturing caregiving roles for men.

¹ Promundo & Equimundo. (2023). State of the World's Fathers 2023: The desire for care vs. structural barriers. Washington, DC.

EMiNC Initiative's approach to change

Principles and values at the core of the EMiNC Initiative

The EMiNC Initiative is grounded in a coherent set of principles that guide its programming, advocacy, and partnerships. These principles serve as the foundation for the Initiative's approach to change.

Child-centered and rights-based approaches. The Initiative is anchored in the understanding that children's rights to nurturing care, safety, and emotional support depend on the practices and environments created around them. Fathers are essential in ensuring these rights.

Gender equality and social justice. Supporting men's engagement in care is not separate from promoting women's rights. It reinforces gender equality by redistributing unpaid care work, reducing the load on women, and supporting more equitable family dynamics.

Shared caregiving and co-responsibility. EMiNC promotes caregiving as a shared responsibility between all caregivers, regardless of gender. This includes the practical, emotional, and relational aspects of care.

Positive masculinities and violence prevention. The Initiative advances visions of masculinities that are nurturing, emotionally literate, respectful, and non-violent. It recognises that masculinities are shaped by social norms and institutional cultures that influence how men relate to care, authority,

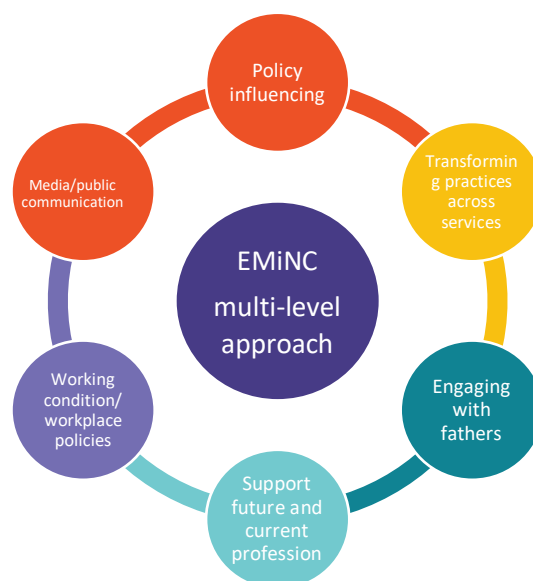
vulnerability, and responsibility. Promoting caring masculinities supports the redistribution of unpaid care work, strengthens co-responsibility within families, and challenges dominant models of masculinity centred on control, emotional restriction, and breadwinning primacy. Working with fathers and men in the early years provides a critical entry point for promoting empathy, non-violent conflict resolution, and more equitable gender relations, contributing to both gender equality and violence prevention.

Equity, inclusion, and intersectionality. EMiNC acknowledges that caregiving experiences differ across socioeconomic, cultural, and migration contexts. Its approach emphasizes inclusion and accessibility, ensuring that interventions resonate across diverse communities.

Systems thinking and relational change. The Initiative recognizes that individual behaviour is shaped by the systems around it. Lasting change requires coordinated shifts across policies, services, workplaces, communities, and cultural narratives.

EMiNC's approach combines two complementary strategies that are well established in gender equality work.

On the one hand, it promotes a mainstreaming approach, integrating a shared caregiving and co-parenting perspective across policies, services, training, and programmes. On the other hand, it includes targeted, father-focused initiatives designed to address the specific barriers men face in engaging in care and to support fathers in recognising and exercising their caregiving role. These two dimensions are intentionally pursued together to strengthen gender equality, ensuring that work with fathers contributes to shared power and co-responsibility with mothers rather than reinforcing unequal dynamics.



EMiNC's systemic approach to change

The EMiNC Initiative adopts a multi-level, multi-sector, system-wide approach to shifting norms, policies, and practices around men's engagement in nurturing care. It works simultaneously at the policy, service, home and community, professional training, workplace, public and media levels, recognising that fatherhood is shaped by interconnected environments. (See Figure 1.)

This approach is informed by EMiNC's **Theory of Change** and is inspired by a broader body of tested and evaluated theories, frameworks, and practice-based models developed in the fields of early childhood development, gender equality, and men's engagement in care. It emphasizes both bottom-up, practice-based change and top-down policy influence, with cities serving as catalytic hubs for innovation and scaling.

1. Policy-making level: Influencing decision-makers and legal provisions

At policy level, the Initiative works to strengthen enabling conditions for father involvement, including parental leave design, work-life balance provisions, and national strategies that recognize fathers as key caregivers. Advocacy efforts focus on generating and disseminating evidence, mobilizing alliances, and leveraging opportunities within national and EU policy environments. The goal is to align legal frameworks with the needs of families and to encourage uptake of policies that promote co-responsibility.

2. Service-level: Transforming practices across sectors/services

In EMiNC's approach, early childhood education, health, social services, and community programs are equally supported in becoming father-inclusive and gender-responsive. This includes building workforce capacity, reshaping communication norms, adapting environments, and strengthening cooperation across sectors.

Rather than treating father engagement as a stand-alone activity, EMiNC embeds it within existing service routines, aligning tools, curricula, and training pathways across early childhood systems.

3. Parenting empowerment and support: Engaging with fathers directly

Supporting fathers at home and in their communities is a key component. EMiNC invests in fathers' groups, peer support structures, and engagement efforts that help men build confidence, share experiences, and reflect on caregiving and gender roles. These interventions address emotional, relational, and practical aspects of caregiving, contributing to healthier family dynamics and stronger co-parenting.

4. Preparation and support of future and current early childhood professionals

Strengthening professional competence is essential for sustainable change. EMiNC supports:

- **In-service training**, both sector-specific and cross-sector, for early childhood educators, health professionals, social workers, family support staff, and equality units.
- **Pre-service training**, integrating fatherhood, gender equality, and caregiving modules into university curricula for educators, nurses, social workers, psychologists, and others.
- **Training-of-trainers models**, building a cadre of professionals who can cascade content and institutionalize father-inclusive practices.

By seeking to influence both current and future generations of professionals, EMiNC's approach shapes long-term cultural change within early childhood systems.

5. Working conditions and workplaces

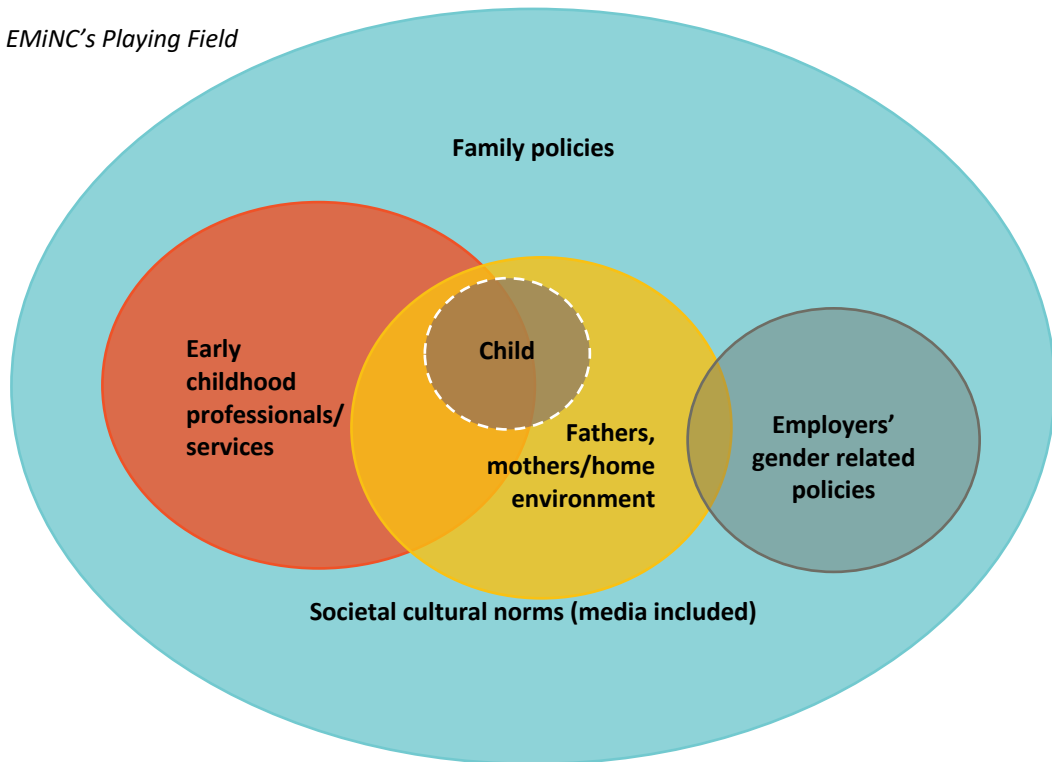
EMiNC stresses the engagement with employers and workplace networks to address structural barriers that limit men's caregiving. Interventions include supporting companies to develop father-inclusive policies, improving internal communication about (paternal) leave rights, addressing workplace stigma, and promoting non-simultaneous leave uptake. These efforts position the workplace as a key arena for transforming norms and supporting families.

6. Media influence and public communication

Media plays a powerful role in shaping perceptions of care and gender. EMiNC requires working with media actors, advocacy networks, and communication specialists to deliver campaigns and narratives that normalize involved fatherhood, highlight diverse models of masculinity, and reinforce the shared responsibility of caregiving.

By elevating positive stories and evidence, EMiNC approach amplifies its impact beyond service systems and into public consciousness.

Figure 1: EMiNC's Playing Field



Theoretical and evidence-based underpinnings of the EMiNC approach

EMiNC's approach draws from decades of research across multiple fields. It integrates:

- **Early childhood development science**, which demonstrates that secure attachment, cognitive stimulation, and responsive caregiving from multiple caregivers, including fathers, are foundational for young children's outcomes.
- **Gender and masculinities research**, which shows how social norms shape caregiving behaviour and how men's involvement can disrupt cycles of inequity rooted in gendered expectations.
- **Life-course and family systems approaches**, which emphasise the importance of engaging men during key transition points such as pregnancy, birth, and early childhood, when identities and routines are being formed.
- **Competent systems frameworks**, which highlight that lasting improvements in early childhood services require supportive governance, trained workforces, enabling environments, and multi-stakeholder collaboration across sectors.
- **Evidence from tested programs**, including Program P, PARENT, KINDER, Fathers Rock, MenCare, and local models addressing gender norms and caregiving implemented across Europe and Latin America. Evidence grounding the EMiNC approach draws on a combination of structured feedback, local assessments, and implementation data generated through project activities, complemented by more

in-depth evaluations from earlier or parallel initiatives applying similar approaches. Together, these programs provide validated and practice-informed approaches for shifting attitudes, strengthening skills, supporting fathers' groups, and transforming professional practices.

- **Policy and rights frameworks**, including EU's Gender Equality Strategy, European Care Strategy, the Work–Life Balance Directive, and the Barcelona Targets. These frameworks provide normative and policy backing for promoting co-responsibility and reducing gender disparities in care.

Together, these foundations shape an approach that moves beyond isolated interventions toward sustained, systemic transformation.

EMiNC Multi-level Approach

EMiNC's approach acknowledges that fathers' ability to care is influenced by policies, services, workplaces, cultural expectations, and professional preparation. By working across all these layers simultaneously, the initiative builds the conditions in which fathers, children, and families can thrive.

Why Caring Masculinities Are Central to the EMiNC Roadmap

Engaging fathers in caregiving is essential. However, strengthening nurturing care systems requires not only encouraging fathers' participation in care practices, but also addressing masculinities themselves as broader social norms. Masculinities are not just personal attitudes; they are socially produced power structures shaping how care is valued, distributed, and practised across society. As highlighted in this Roadmap, caregiving remains deeply gendered, shaped by social expectations that position women as primary caregivers and men as secondary or optional participants. Transforming this reality demands going beyond fatherhood-focused interventions, as change risks remaining at the level of individual participation rather than achieving the systemic transformation envisioned by the EMiNC project, reaching the deeper systems that organise gender, work, and care.

Caring masculinities extend beyond fathers. They include boys and young men forming their identities before parenthood, male professionals shaping service cultures, managers and policymakers setting institutional priorities, and men without children contributing to communities and social care. EMiNC's intersectional approach recognises this broader framing, acknowledging that caregiving norms are influenced by socioeconomic conditions, cultural expectations, and migration contexts.

Masculinities influence how men relate to care, emotions, vulnerability, and responsibility, while also shaping (and being shaped by) institutional cultures: definitions of professionalism and authority, leadership models, workplace leave and flexibility, and public narratives about men's family roles. Within EMiNC's multi-level approach, across policymaking, services, parenting support, professional training, workplaces, and media, an intersectional take on masculinities and the centrality of caring masculinities must be understood as a cross-cutting structural lever for change. When masculinities are analysed and reshaped, the transformation extends beyond households into policies, workplaces, and media narratives. Increasing men's participation in caregiving is necessary, but participation alone is not sufficient. Men may engage in care while hierarchies that associate care primarily with women persist. Workplace penalties for caregiving can take many forms: leadership cultures, financial constraints linked to leave uptake, and stigma from colleagues, alongside gatekeeping in services and institutional resistance rooted in gender norms. By explicitly integrating caring masculinities into the Roadmap's Theory of Change, these dynamics become visible and addressable, challenging dominant models of masculinity centred on control, emotional restriction, uninterrupted productivity, and breadwinning primacy. It legitimises care, interdependence, and emotional literacy as central to masculine identity (Elliott, 2016). This shift is not merely behavioural; it is normative, institutional, and political, aligning directly with EMiNC's principles of gender equality, shared caregiving, violence prevention, and systems thinking (Jewkes et al., 2015).

Infusing caring masculinities across all intervention levels strengthens action. At the policy level, it reinforces advocacy for equitable leave design, work – life balance provisions, and legal frameworks that normalise men as caregivers. At service and parenting support levels, it promotes organisational change and deeper reflection on gender roles and co-responsibility. In professional education, it equips practitioners to recognise how gender norms shape institutional cultures and care practices. In workplaces, it situates father-inclusive measures within broader shifts in leadership and productivity norms. In media, it supports narratives that normalise diverse, caring, and non-violent masculinities. Without explicitly addressing masculinities as structures of power and meaning, engaging men may increase participation while leaving institutional cultures unchanged.

Embedding this perspective more centrally strengthens the EMiNC Roadmap's transformative ambition and long-term vision of societies where care is shared, valued, and institutionally supported. It clarifies the distinction between increasing father engagement and gender norm transformation, improves the capacity to anticipate resistance, and supports robust monitoring change in policy design, norms, identities, and institutions. Crucially, it positions nurturing care as a societal and political issue rather than merely a private or family matter (Fraser, 2016).

Sources:

Elliott, K. (2016). Caring masculinities: Theorizing an emerging concept. *Men and Masculinities*, 19(3), 240–259.

Fraser, N. (2016). Contradictions of capital and care. *New Left Review*, 100, 99–117.

Jewkes, R., Flood, M., & Lang, J. (2015). From work with men and boys to changes in social norms. *The Lancet*, 385(9977), 1580–1589.



Section 2: A Roadmap for EMiNC

2.1 Roadmap Overview

2.1.1. Main purpose and overview

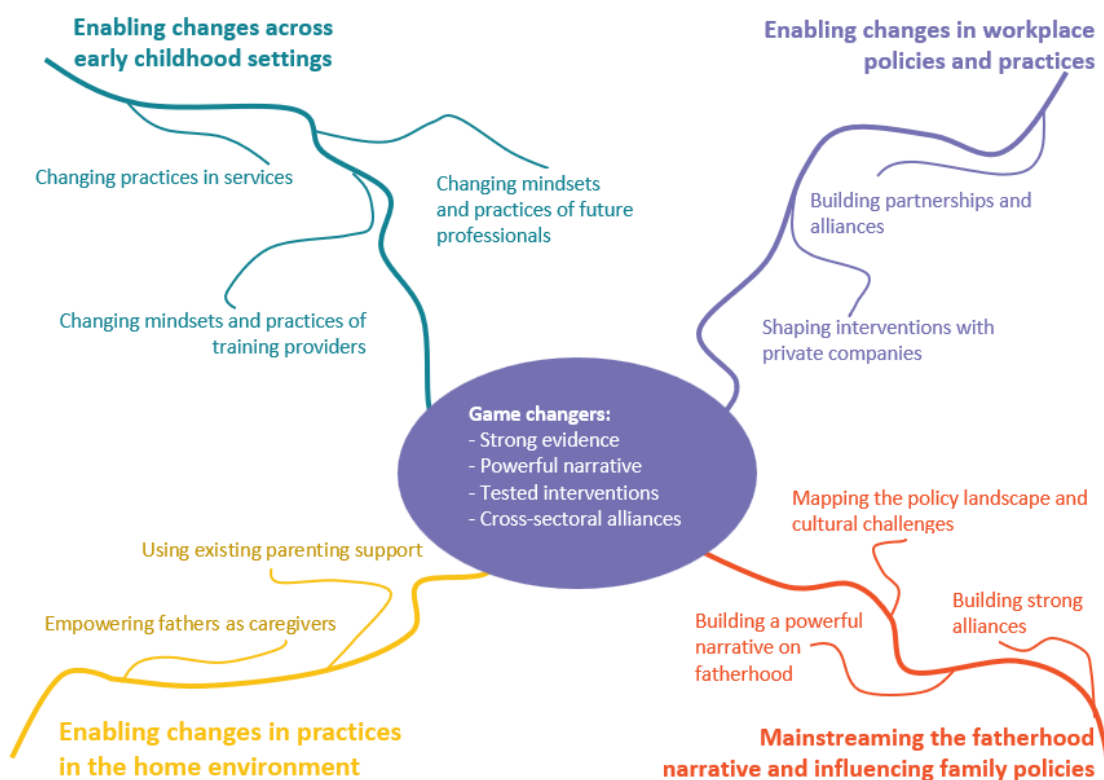
The EMiNC Roadmap provides a structured, evidence-informed guide for strengthening men’s and fathers’ engagement in nurturing care across Europe. It is designed for policymakers, practitioners, training institutions, local actors, and civil society organizations who aim to create more gender-equitable conditions for families with young children.

The Roadmap brings together knowledge from the EMiNC multi-year initiative, including tested approaches in Italy, Portugal, and Spain; regional and EU-level evidence; and decades of work from the gender equality, early childhood development, and positive masculinities fields. It translates this collective expertise into a coherent and practical framework for action grounded in a competent-systems perspective.

This Roadmap outlines:

- Why engaging fathers and men is critical for child development, gender equality, and social cohesion,
- How EMiNC partners have developed and tested approaches across services, communities, workplaces, and public narratives,
- Practical steps that actors at different system levels can take to strengthen father engagement,
- Key enablers, risks, and conditions that support effective and sustainable implementation,
- Examples and insights drawn from diverse national and local contexts.

By providing a structured way to integrate father-inclusive practice into existing policies and systems, the **Roadmap** supports stakeholders in adapting and scaling the EMiNC approach to their own context at local level, extending it to national level.



2.1.2. Target audiences

The Roadmap is designed for **multiple audiences** who play various roles within the early childhood ecosystem, each sharing a responsibility towards meaningful changes in mindsets, attitudes, practices:

- **Service leaders and practitioners**
ECEC providers, health professionals, family centres, social services, and community organizations whose daily interactions shape how families experience caregiving support.
- **Training institutions and academic programs**
Universities, training centres, accreditation bodies, and professional associations responsible for preparing current and future professionals.
- **Policy and decision-makers**
National and local governments, ministries of equality, health, education, labour and social affairs, and EU-level institutions seeking to strengthen legal and policy frameworks for co-responsibility, leave design, early childhood services, and work–life balance.
- **Employers and labour actors**
Companies, HR departments, employer networks, and unions who influence men’s ability to take leave, work flexibly, and participate in caregiving.
- **Civil society and advocates**
Organizations working on gender equality, early childhood development, parenting, men and masculinities, or social inclusion.
- **Media actors and communicators**
Journalists, campaigners, and communication professionals shaping public discourse around parenting, gender norms, and caregiving.



2.1.3. How to use the Roadmap

The Roadmap is far from being a prescriptive manual. Instead, it provides a **flexible, adaptive framework** that can be used to design, strengthen, or scale interventions supporting father engagement and promote programs aimed at transforming gender norms. Users can apply it to:

- **Diagnostic work:** to understand local realities and identify gaps in policy, services, and cultural norms.
- **Strategic planning:** to design multi-level interventions that address both structural and relational barriers.
- **Capacity building:** to train professionals, organizations, and trainers using evidence-based principles.
- **Advocacy:** to support narrative change and influence legal and policy frameworks.
- **Program development:** to design father groups, service adaptations, or workplace interventions.
- **Monitoring and learning:** to track progress and refine approaches based on evidence.

Because systems vary across countries, regions and municipalities, the Roadmap emphasizes adaptation, contextualization, and partnership-building.

Key factors for successful interventions

These following elements work together to create enabling environments where father engagement becomes normalised, supported, and sustained:

Child-focused evidence-based foundations

Ground interventions in evidence about what supports children’s healthy and holistic development, well-being, and rights, including research from early childhood development, attachment, and nurturing care frameworks.

Relevant content addressing gender stereotypes in caregiving

Ensure that interventions challenge gender stereotypes and support practical skill-building for fathers, professionals, and policymakers.

Capacity for implementation

Invest in training, institutionalization, mentoring, and partnerships that strengthen service capacity.

Key partners

Engage institutions across sectors who can enable access, sustainability, and legitimacy.

Continuous adaptation

Use feedback from professionals, fathers and mothers, and institutions to refine curricula, tools, and strategies.

2.1.4. How to adapt the Roadmap to your context

Because countries, regions and municipalities differ in policy environments, service structures, cultural expectations, and institutional capacities, adapting the EMiNC approach requires a systematic and context-sensitive process.

Step 1: Understand the local realities

Begin by mapping the ecosystem:

- policy landscape, legal provisions, and leave policies
- structure and governance of the early childhood development (ECD) system
- decision-making structures for services, training, and funding
- prevailing norms and values around caregiving and gender
- attitudes toward fathers in early childhood institutions
- existing pre-service and in-service curricula
- current parenting support programs and fatherhood initiatives

This diagnostic step identifies entry points and system-level gaps.

Step 2: Tailor EMiNC interventions to the system level

Define what is needed:

- **At policy level**
 - opportunities for influencing leave design, financing, family policies, city-level strategies
 - alignment with national frameworks (e.g., Work-Life Balance Directive, Care Strategy)

- **At service level**
 - professional development needs of professionals
 - institutional routines that can be adapted
 - opportunities for cross-sector collaboration
- **At home/community level**
 - father groups, community support, programs aimed at changing unequal gender norms in caregiving.

Use EMiNC country examples to illustrate possible pathways at different stages (emerging, consolidating, scaling).

Effective adaptation requires combining mainstreamed changes to systems and services with targeted father-focused activities, recognising that both are necessary to achieve shared caregiving and gender equality outcomes.

Step 3: Build partnerships and engage allies

Engage actors who influence norms, policies, and daily practice:

- government bodies (national, regional and local)
- training institutions and academic programs
- early childhood education and care (ECEC), health, and social services
- civil society and parent organizations
- employer networks, unions, labour actors
- media and communication actors
- fathers and families themselves

Strong partnerships create legitimacy, access, and sustainability.

Step 4: Customize messaging and campaigns

Develop narratives that reflect local values, cultural contexts, and linguistic realities, while actively promoting gender- and diversity-inclusive language and representations.

Adapt imagery, testimonies, and examples so they resonate with local audiences. Align messaging with national debates and policy windows.

Step 5: Translate and culturally adapt curricula and tools

Ensure that training modules, toolkits, father-friendly materials, checklists, and group facilitation techniques reflect local norms, language nuances, service structures, institutional expectations. This adaptation strengthens uptake and long-term sustainability.

Step 6: Monitor, evaluate, and iterate

Use mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative) to track:

- changes in attitudes
- shifts in professional practices
- father participation
- service-level adaptations
- institutional changes
- policy and narrative impacts

Refine approaches continuously based on this evidence.

2.2. Enabling change across early childhood settings

2.2.1. Changing practices of professionals in early childhood services

How EMiNC approach strengthens professional practice in early childhood systems

Across countries involved in the EMiNC Initiative, efforts to transform professional practice in early childhood settings demonstrate that father-inclusive change becomes sustainable when it is anchored simultaneously in **city-level systems** and in **national professional development frameworks**. Municipalities, regional authorities, and accredited training bodies serve as powerful levers for embedding new standards, creating consistency across services, and ensuring that professionals receive structured opportunities to develop skills that promote gender equality and shared caregiving.

Professionals change their routines when they are offered:

- a clear narrative about why father engagement matters
- practical tools that can be used immediately in daily work
- structured training that is reinforced over time
- institutional backing that legitimizes the focus on fathers
- cross-sector dialogue that aligns ECEC, health, and social service practices

The EMiNC Initiative's multi-sector approach allows professionals to see father engagement not as an additional task, but as a core element of quality early childhood practice. By engaging local institutions, nursing and education schools, regional health systems, and community services, the EMiNC Initiative's approach helps build a shared professional culture where fathers are recognized as essential caregivers from the prenatal period through the early years.

To influence practices of early childhood professionals:

- Begin with **existing local training systems or professional networks** and align them with national accreditation frameworks, when planning similar initiatives in your context. This makes interventions immediately credible and easier to scale.
- Combine **sector-specific modules** with opportunities for **cross-sector learning**. When ECEC, health, and social service professionals learn together, they develop a shared understanding of their complementary roles and offer consistent messages to fathers and families.
- Ensure that training goes beyond theory. Professionals need **realistic scenarios**, case-based reflection, and opportunities to practice inviting, retaining, and engaging fathers during everyday service encounters.
- Where possible, **involve role models** from within the professional context. These practitioners have already implemented father-inclusive practices and **help anchor learning in real-life experience**, strengthen credibility, and reduce the perception of an overly theoretical approach.
- Promote a holistic, intra-institutional approach that connects **top-down leadership commitment with bottom-up professional practice**. Active engagement of leadership is essential to legitimize change, align institutional routines, and ensure that new practices are sustained over time.
- Finally, support implementation through **follow-up sessions, mentoring, and simple tools**. Practice change strengthens when professionals can test small adaptations, receive feedback, and refine their approaches in community with peers.

How to enable change in professional practice

The EMiNC Initiative's experience showed that professional practice shifted most effectively when training was intentionally embedded within formal systems rather than delivered as stand-alone activities. When training was integrated into **local training catalogues, accredited national platforms, university programmes, or regional professional development systems**, practitioners perceived father-inclusive practice as part of their professional mandate rather than an optional project activity. In several countries, accreditation for education and health professionals ensured that the training counted toward required professional development hours. This increased participation significantly and created a common foundation of knowledge across large numbers of practitioners.

At city level, municipalities that incorporated EMiNC content into their official offers to early childhood services or family support centres saw clearer institutional uptake, with father-inclusive practices becoming embedded in organisational routines, leadership expectations, and service standards rather than remaining dependent on individual initiative. Professionals felt authorised—and expected—to adjust routines, revise communication approaches, and include fathers more intentionally because the guidance came through established city structures rather than external initiatives. In contexts where regional or supra-municipal bodies supported dissemination, alignment across different municipalities and services strengthened the consistency of father-inclusive practice.

In higher education, embedding modules in pre-service courses clearly helps future educators, nurses, and social professionals internalise father-inclusive principles and approaches that challenge unequal gender norms in caregiving early in their professional preparation. This contributes to a longer-term shift in professional culture. Finally, ministry-level alignment around accreditation standards, parental leave policies, and national training requirements reinforces the relevance of the work and signals political commitment to co-responsibility.

Together, these mechanisms have shown their potential in helping to transform father engagement from a small innovation into a **system-supported expectation**, embedding father-inclusive routines into everyday professional practice and ensuring continuity beyond individual projects or funding cycles.

Cross-sector focus and objectives

The EMiNC Initiative's approach is built on the understanding that for significant impact changes in professional practice should not occur within a single sector. Early childhood education, perinatal and child health services, family support, social services, and equality structures together shape the daily environments in which young children grow and where fathers encounter services. When these systems share a common vision of co-responsibility, child-centered care, and gender-responsive practice, they collectively create an environment that recognizes fathers as essential caregivers from the earliest stages of a child's life.

Across countries involved in EMiNC, interventions aimed to encourage professionals to normalize fathers' presence from pregnancy onwards, integrate caring masculinities into their work, and adopt communication practices that invite and retain fathers rather than implicitly directing information solely toward mothers. This included rethinking daily routines and materials to ensure that fathers see themselves reflected in service environments and strengthening the links between education, health, and family support so that families receive consistent messages regardless of where they enter the system.

Professionals engaged in this work included early childhood educators, pedagogical coordinators, community and family center staff, midwives, nurses, paediatric professionals, psychologists, social workers, literacy volunteers, and equality and local teams. Their collective reach demonstrated how a cross-sectoral effort can shift the broader service culture rather than producing isolated pockets of change.

Obstacles addressed

The approach also confronted several systemic obstacles that limit father engagement. Many early childhood and health services remain unintentionally “maternalized,” shaping staff expectations and service routines

around mothers as the primary point of contact. In some contexts, a lack of accredited training opportunities made it difficult for professionals to develop skills to recognise and address how gender norms and power relations shape caregiving practices, while time pressures and scheduling constraints limited the uptake of voluntary initiatives. Siloed professional cultures sometimes led to inconsistent messages for families, and administrative or political shifts created uncertainty within institutions. Finally, many services struggled to reach fathers directly, particularly when traditional communication channels targeted mothers by default.

Interventions, formats, tools, and curriculum

The interventions under the EMiNC Initiative show that effective practice change requires a dual focus: **capacity-building** and **system integration**. Training must be practical, embedded in institutional frameworks, and continuously reinforced through collaborative practice.



Training formats

- In-person workshops and multi-session ToT-s.
- Accredited in-service pathways (for example, programs combining face-to-face learning with work-based projects).
- Online distance learning (for example, tracks for each sector).
- Mixed-cohort cross-sector sessions with ECEC, health, and social service professionals.
- Booster or follow-up sessions to support implementation.



Core Curriculum Content

- Why fathers matter for child development and gender equality
- Practical strategies to invite, include, and retain fathers
- Father-friendly routines, spaces, visuals, and materials
- Emotional literacy, empathy, and basic non-violence and safeguarding approaches
- Home to service bridging (talk, play, reading routines)
- Cross-sector alignment and light referral flows
- Co-responsibility and caring masculinities frameworks



Tools and Materials

- Professional guides, father-friendly unit checklists, and environment prompts
- Scripts for first-contact and routine invitations
- Booklets and father-addressed materials
- Pedagogical toolkits on masculinities and caregiving
- Digital learning modules, videos, quizzes, downloadable tools
- Gender-Equitable Men (GEM) Scale based and Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) pre and post assessments
- Short follow-up surveys, implementation logs, and staff observation tools

When training professionals:

- Prioritize applied learning with real cases and role plays.
- Encourage professionals to examine their own assumptions about gender and caregiving.
- Mix online modules with interactive in-person sessions.
- Use cross-sector cohorts to build shared language and consistent referral pathways.
- Integrate simple, low-threshold tools that can be implemented the next day.
- Support staff to try small changes and share results with peers.

Results, lessons, and tips: Overall synthesis

Evidence of change

Interventions on EMiNC suggest that when father-inclusive training is embedded in professional systems, it can contribute to shifts in routines, mindsets, and service culture. Professionals who completed modules such as those used in the EMiNC Initiative and other related initiatives, including EU-funded PARENT and 4EParent for example, reported increased confidence, stronger awareness of gender and caregiving norms, and greater readiness to engage fathers. These observations are consistent with evidence generated in earlier and parallel projects applying similar approaches, where more in-depth evaluation was possible, and with impact evaluations conducted by some EMiNC partners at local or programme level.

Within the EMiNC Initiative, partners also reported observed changes in practice, including the introduction of new materials, reorganisation of service environments, and adaptations in communication practices to make fathers more visible. In some contexts, partners carried out local assessments or evaluation activities, providing additional indications of positive change. Cross-sector alignment was also associated with greater consistency between ECEC, health, and family services.

Changing practices of professionals in early childhood services

What worked well

- Embedding training within formal systems, for example local departments and nationally accredited in-service training.
- Using distance learning to reach large numbers and prepare staff for deeper sessions.
- Providing mixed-sector training, which built collaboration and aligned messages.
- Offering practical tools and immediate application tasks alongside independent work followed by structured feedback.
- Using existing literacy, family support services, or health programs as entry points.

What required adaptation

- Limited time availability of participating professionals required shorter, more focused sessions. Content was delivered in modules over different periods, with small tasks completed between sessions.
- Accreditation gaps in some sectors required creative ways to encourage participation, such as shorter sessions offered at intervals and the use of participatory, experience-based learning methods, even when formal accreditation was not available.
- Low completion of follow-up activities showed the need to simplify follow-up formats and reduce time demands. Completion improved when follow-up activities were clearly connected to professionals' daily work and existing routines.
- Recruitment challenges in some ECEC settings required new outreach strategies and closer collaboration with equality units, schools, or health services to reach professionals and normalise participation.



Lessons learned

- Sustainability increases when training is integrated into official local/national or accredited systems.
- Online prerequisites help harmonize knowledge and improve the quality of in-person sessions.
- Accreditation and formal recognition motivate participation, especially among health professionals.
- Booster sessions, mentoring, and work-based projects support implementation and prevent drop-off.
- Cross-sector cohorts of trainees create shared understanding and foster collaboration across institutions.
- Flexible design helps professionals manage time constraints and competing priorities.



Tips for scaling and adaptation

- Anchor initiatives at city level while partnering with regional and national bodies for expansion.
- Start with a common curriculum and adapt local modules as needed.
- Plan accreditation early and involve institutional partners from the beginning.
- Combine online learning with in-person practice and mentoring.
- Integrate work-based projects to ensure training leads to concrete service-level changes.
- Encourage small case-based peer groups to deepen reflection and learning.

Country Insights: Barriers and Strategies for Overcoming Them

Creating coherence in training pathways – Centro Per la Salute delle Bambine e dei Bambini CSB, Naples and Campania Region, Italy,

In Italy, one of the central challenges was the fragmentation of training pathways across sectors, particularly the limited accreditation options for early childhood educators and pedagogical coordinators compared to the health sector. Participation among volunteers and educators was also uneven due to competing responsibilities and limited availability. Italy addressed these barriers by creating a unified national entry point through distance-learning courses that reached a very large number of professionals and established a shared baseline of knowledge. Making the online modules a prerequisite for in-person training improved consistency and allowed local Training-of-Trainers sessions to focus on deeper skill building. Local and regional leadership helped legitimize the work and facilitated flexible scheduling, follow-up sessions, and gradual integration into existing professional development structures. This combination of national reach and city-level anchoring made it possible to link training with institutional expectations and overcome gaps in accreditation and participation.

Overcoming accreditation delays and strengthening cross-sector access – Center for Social Studies CES, Coimbra, Portugal

Portugal faced challenges related to lengthy bureaucratic procedures for accreditation in the health sector, uneven access to health units compared with the education settings where access was easier, and limited opportunities for cross-sector dialogue. To overcome these constraints, partners leveraged their partnerships

with higher education institutions and key stakeholders to build access pathways and reach the target audiences. In parallel, CES acted as a certified training provider, reducing reliance on external accreditation timelines and allowing implementation to continue without interruption. These approaches ensured that both education and health professionals could participate through recognised and credible pathways. The development of a pilot training involving health and education students, complemented by a national diagnostic based on surveys targeting families, health professionals, and education professionals, as well as GEM-based tools, generated relevant evidence that informed the adaptation of the curriculum to sector-specific needs, thereby increasing its relevance and practical value for trainees. Cross-sector cohorts, practical tools, and the involvement of experts from multiple disciplines throughout the training supported gradual changes in professional routines. In parallel, Father-Friendly Unit (FFU) criteria and self-assessment checklists, building on the PARENT project, guided organisational reflection and improvement. By grounding the work within established university and professional development systems, Portugal was able to mitigate access barriers and create a more coherent training offer across sectors.

Overcoming Limited Availability and Deepening Institutional Integration – CONEXUS, Barcelona and Catalonia Region, Spain

In Spain, the main challenges related to the limited time availability and scheduling challenges of professionals for training, difficulties reaching fathers through ECEC settings alone, and the need for institutional structures that could sustain practice change beyond individual teams. The strong alliance built with the Municipal Institute for Education and embedding EMINC content into its official training system helped resolve these issues by ensuring that participation aligned with existing municipal expectations and professional development cycles. A cascade model allowed small groups of trained professionals to support their colleagues, making the approach more scalable and resilient. Collaboration with equality units², health services, and other local structures improved recruitment pathways and created a more consistent cross-sector message. Practical, application-oriented training content based on needs assessment surveys and focus groups with both fathers and professionals helped professionals integrate father-inclusive practices into daily routines. Follow-up sessions 2 to 3 months after the initial training to exchange and revise implementation experiences not only served to overcome obstacles in transfer to practice but also to cross-fertilize initiative between different ECE centres and professionals. These strategies collectively strengthened the system's ability to maintain momentum despite time constraints and variation in staff engagement.

² Local government gender equality departments responsible for promoting shared responsibility in caregiving, gender equality, and more balanced participation of women and men in care and family life at the local or district level.

2.2.2. Changing mindsets and practices of future professionals

Preparing the next generation of early childhood professionals

The work with universities and higher education institutions undertaken under the EMiNC Initiative shows that preparing future professionals before they enter the workforce is essential for long-term system change. By integrating content that challenges unequal gender norms in caregiving into pre-service curricula, this work ensures that new generations of educators, health professionals, psychologists, and social service practitioners internalise father-inclusive and co-responsible caregiving as part of their professional identity, not as an optional add-on.

Across Italy, Portugal, and Spain, the introduction of EMiNC content into university courses revealed two critical insights. First, students are highly receptive to new perspectives on fatherhood, caregiving, and gender norms when these are taught through interactive, reflective methods. Second, universities present both an important opportunity and a structural challenge: they can reach thousands of students annually, but institutional inertia, curriculum rigidity, and scheduling barriers can slow adoption. This makes strategic partnerships with faculties, academic champions, and local or regional institutions essential for achieving broader integration.

Ultimately, the experience under the EMiNC Initiative demonstrates that empowering future professionals requires intentional, context-sensitive design (and ensuring awareness and commitment of the institutions housing the courses, and its academic staff). Short pilots and optional seminars can open doors (especially if they award points within the higher education institution's accreditation system for non-curricular activities) but long-term impact comes from embedding modules directly into existing coursework and cross-sector programs, wherever possible.

To introduce approaches that support fathers' engagement in caregiving and promote shared responsibility into pre-service education:

- ⇒ Begin with **faculty allies or departments** already open to innovation and gradually expand.
- ⇒ **Integrate sessions into mandatory courses** whenever possible, rather than offering optional workshops. This increases participation and signals academic legitimacy. If optional courses are offered it is important to ensure that they are recognised within the academic accreditation system for non-curricular activities.
- ⇒ Use **active learning pedagogy** with small group, participatory and experiential learning methods that allow students to analyze real cases, reflect on their experiences from internships, and practice conversations with families.
- ⇒ Highlight the **cross-sector nature** of early childhood care. Invite practitioners from early childhood education and care, health, and social work to co-teach, demonstrating how collaboration works in practice.
- ⇒ Where institutional constraints limit time, embed **short modules or condensed sessions into existing courses**, then build outward.
- ⇒ Pair academic content with ready-to-use scripts, visuals, and simple tools so students can **easily transfer learning** to their future practice.

How systems enabled change

Across EMiNC countries, progress in pre-service training was possible where the work was or could be anchored within local partnerships and national academic structures. Universities that collaborate with early childhood departments, equality units, and health services are better positioned to frame fatherhood and content addressing gender equality in care as relevant across multiple professional pathways. Embedding modules

within existing teacher training, nursing, or social work curricula can increase legitimacy and helps ensure that students encounter the material as part of their formal preparation rather than as an optional activity.

Accreditation frameworks can further strengthen recognition, signalling alignment with professional standards and expectations. Cross-sector teaching teams can help bridge disciplinary cultures and demonstrate in practice how education, health, and social services can work together to support families. In several contexts, diagnostics and student feedback have informed curriculum design, helping ensure that content reflects local realities and needs. Together, these institutional anchors point to clearer pathways for strengthening credibility, simplifying course integration, and supporting long-term scaling.

Cross-sector purpose and objectives

The EMiNC Initiative's approach emphasizes the need to focus on pre-service training to prepare future professionals to see fathers as essential caregivers from the beginning of a child's life and to understand how gender norms shape everyday interactions in early childhood settings. The goal is to help students internalize principles of co-responsibility and caring masculinities, and to develop the skills needed to create inclusive communication, environments, and routines in their future roles. By introducing students to cross-sector perspectives during their studies, the approach fosters a professional identity grounded in collaboration across education, health, and social services, ensuring that families receive consistent and coherent messages as they navigate different parts of the system.

Under the EMiNC Initiative, pre-service interventions reached future practitioners, including students preparing for careers in early childhood education, primary education, nursing, midwifery, psychology, social work, and family intervention. Academic staff responsible for courses in gender studies, child development, and family relations were also engaged, helping ensure that shifts in content and pedagogy could take root institutionally.

Obstacles addressed

The work uncovered several structural and cultural barriers that make pre-service engagement both essential and challenging. Father-inclusive practice is rarely integrated into standard curricula, leaving many students unprepared to engage fathers confidently once they enter the workforce. Optional seminars often reach only the most motivated students, particularly in health fields where clinical obligations limit availability. Universities can be slow in adopting new content due to administrative procedures, competing priorities, and rigid scheduling structures make interdisciplinary teaching difficult to coordinate. Traditional lecture-based methods also tend to reduce student engagement with topics that require reflection, dialogue, and practical application such as EMiNC.

To navigate these barriers, partners in the EMiNC Initiative used strategic integration, flexible formats, and strong faculty partnerships. Where this was possible, embedding modules within existing courses, co-teaching across disciplines, and adapting content to academic calendars helped ensure that approaches addressing gendered expectations in caregiving and professional practice became part of mainstream professional preparation rather than isolated or peripheral activities.

Formats, tools, and curriculum

Across countries involved in the EMiNC Initiative experience shows that future professionals learn most effectively when academic content is paired with active learning and experiential methods, grounded in real-world practice, and integrated into existing institutional structures.

Training formats	Core Curriculum Themes	Tools and Materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Multi-session pilots: for example, weekly programs across several cohorts. ⇒ Condensed modules: blocks embedded in existing nursing or education courses. ⇒ Short workshops: university seminars on stereotypes, caring masculinities, or father engagement. ⇒ Cross-sector co-teaching: interdisciplinary teams combining educators, midwives, pediatric staff, and social workers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Socialization, caregiving norms, and gender stereotypes in early childhood ⇒ Early Childhood Development and Nurturing Care (First Thousand Days) ⇒ Why fathers matter for child development and family well-being ⇒ Invitations and scripts to engage fathers in practice settings ⇒ Emotions, empathy, and non-violence with basic safeguarding awareness ⇒ Caring masculinities and co-responsibility frameworks ⇒ Inclusive environments, materials, and communication strategies ⇒ Home to service bridging practices such as reading, talk, and play routines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Lecture slides, reading packs, and case vignettes for classroom use ⇒ Scripts, visuals, and scenarios for practice in internships or simulations ⇒ Father-inclusive toolkits developed under EMiNC and related projects ⇒ GEM scale based pre and post assessments tailored for academic cohorts ⇒ Short reflection assignments linking content to students' field experiences

When designing pre-service training:

Use short, dynamic sessions that fit within university timetables while maintaining depth.

Prioritize small-group discussions, role-play, and case-based work, as students engage more actively in these formats.

Embed modules inside mandatory courses whenever possible to ensure participation.

Invite practitioners from early childhood services, health services, and equality units to co-teach and situate content within real professional contexts.

Provide simple tools such as father-inclusive scripts, checklists, and visuals to demonstrate how ideas translate into practice.

Coordinate content with ongoing city-level or municipal initiatives so students can link academic theory to practical interventions.

Results, lessons, and tips: Overall synthesis

Evidence of change

Where pre-service pilots under the EMiNC Initiative or related initiatives were accompanied by structured feedback or evaluation activities, findings suggest that early engagement with students can contribute to shaping professional mindsets. Students reported increased awareness of the importance of father engagement, greater understanding of how gender norms influence caregiving, and clearer insight into the practical implications of caring masculinities for their future work.

Small-group, interactive formats were consistently experienced as particularly effective, as they allowed students to connect content to real-life situations and reflect on their own assumptions. Participation tended to be higher when modules were integrated into mandatory courses rather than offered as optional seminars, highlighting the value of formal curricular anchoring. Teaching delivered by multidisciplinary teams from different sectors, such as education, health, and social services, helped students better understand how cross-sector collaboration works in practice and why consistency across services matters for families.

Across contexts, students also identified gaps in their existing training and expressed appreciation for content that felt relevant and immediately applicable. Taken together, these insights point to pre-service education as a promising entry point for longer-term change, helping shape professional attitudes early and laying a stronger foundation for more father-inclusive practice across sectors, while recognising that the depth and scope of evaluation varied across countries.

Changing mindsets and practices of future professionals

What worked well

- Cross-sector teaching teams that model multidisciplinary and cross-service teams.
- Condensed modules and stronger incentives for students who could not attend extracurricular sessions.
- One or more modules inserted in the regular curriculum or providing extracurricular sessions providing credit.
- Integration of EMiNC themes into university-led workshops and national events on gender equality and caring roles.
- Use of real cases from field experiences of initiatives for engaging men into nurturing care to connect theory with practice.
- Offering students ready-to-use scripts and tools for their internships.

What required improvement

- Large lecture-style workshops provide limited interaction and reduced impact.
- Optional enrolment reduces participation, especially among health students.
- The autonomy of academic institutions and faculties, as well as cultural resistance within some disciplines, such as a predominantly clinical approach in medical training, required long-term engagement to embed fatherhood engagement content into curricula.
- Slow administrative processes to embed EMiNC content in the curriculum required flexibility and persistence.
- Faculty turnover occasionally can disrupt continuity.



Lessons learned

- Students respond best to participatory and practice-oriented methods rather than lecture-based formats.
- Embedding modules into existing courses is more effective than offering optional seminars.
- University autonomy means that curriculum change requires strong, sustained partnerships.
- Faculty buy-in strengthens continuity and opens the door for repeat editions or expansion.
- The physical layout of the classroom can shift dynamics and influence engagement.
- Linking academic content to local initiatives helps students see concrete applications.



Tips for scaling and adaptation

- Negotiate with academic authorities to embed modules into mandatory coursework for sustainability.
- Build long-term relationships with universities and identify faculty champions.
- Provide shared teaching packs to make adoption easier.
- Adjust module length and format to match academic constraints.
- Maintain multidisciplinary components to ensure holistic understanding.
- Include reflective, case-based, and exploratory tasks, as well as small assignments to reinforce learning.

Country insights: barriers and strategies for overcoming them

Addressing the absence of fatherhood content in academic training - Centro Per la Salute delle Bambine e dei Bambini CSB, Naples and Campania Region, Italy

In Italy, the main challenge was that father-inclusive practice, and more broadly the non-clinical and social dimensions of care, had little presence in academic curricula, especially in the training of medical doctors. In Initial activities were offered as optional seminars with limited institutional anchoring. Partners found that while students were highly receptive to the themes of gender, co-responsibility, and father engagement, attendance remained inconsistent without credit recognition. By collaborating with universities and aligning content with existing course structures, the sessions gained legitimacy and clearer relevance for students preparing for careers in psychology, education, and early childhood practice. Faculty interest grew as lecturers recognised the thematic gap in current curricula, and several committed to integrating the material into future teaching. This shift—moving from ad hoc seminars to embedded coursework—proved essential for overcoming participation challenges and laying the groundwork for sustainable curricular inclusion.

Overcoming low participation through curriculum integration - Center for Social Studies CES, Coimbra, Portugal

Portugal initially struggled with low participation among both health students and health professionals. In the case of students, limited engagement was observed in optional training sessions, while among professionals participation was constrained by demanding clinical schedules and challenges related to the accreditation of the training by the Order of Nurses. To overcome this initial low participation, partners focused on integrating the programme into existing institutional and curricular structures. Accreditation by the organisation (Centre for

Social Studies) and strengthened coordination with key stakeholders in the health sector proved essential in expanding reach and participation among health professionals. For students, the modules were redesigned into shorter formats that fit within existing course timetables and secured their inclusion within required nursing and education subjects. This adjustment significantly increased attendance and allowed students to engage more deeply with case-based discussions and applied activities. Larger pilot sessions demonstrated strong interest but also revealed the limitations of lecture-based formats for sensitive, reflective topics. Feedback and survey data prompted refinements in pedagogy, with greater emphasis on interactive methods and real-life scenarios. These adaptations helped align the content with academic structures while maintaining its focus on shared caregiving, gender equality, and reflective professional practice.

Overcoming administrative delays through strategic partnerships – CONEXUS, Barcelona and Catalonia Region, Spain

In Spain, the main obstacles were slow administrative processes and uneven engagement from university faculties, which made it difficult to secure stable curricular space for pre-service modules. Early pilots nevertheless demonstrated strong student interest, especially among those in early childhood and primary school education, social education and psychosocial intervention programs who were encountering these themes for the first time. Students noted that more time was needed to practice facilitation skills and explore how father-inclusive approaches could apply to their future roles. Partnerships with local and regional actors created additional entry points by signalling institutional support and reinforcing the relevance of the topic for early childhood and social services. Although progress was gradual, these collaborations helped overcome initial hesitations and opened pathways for longer-term integration into teacher training and health education programs.

2.2.3 Changing mindsets and practices of training providers

Building the capacity of trainers and training institutions

The EMiNC Initiative experience across Italy, Portugal, and Spain shows that training providers are a critical leverage point for changing professional cultures in early childhood systems. When trainers, pedagogical coordinators, university staff, volunteer networks, and local training departments acquire the capacity to recognise and address how gender norms shape caregiving practices, these approaches spread organically through their organizations. This multiplier effect is particularly powerful at city level, where ECEC systems, local institutes, and health networks often serve as training anchors.

Across countries, the work confirms that training providers require more than technical content. They need mentoring frameworks, structured curricula, accreditation pathways, and institutional mandates that allow them to cascade content with confidence. When these conditions are met, trainers shift from seeing father engagement as an optional topic to treating it as a foundational component of high-quality caregiving and early childhood development.

The cross-country activities in the EMiNC Initiative demonstrate that training providers can drive systemic change when learning is embedded in existing structures, aligned across sectors, and supported by simple, adaptable tools. This builds training ecosystems that outlast project cycles and enable sustainable scale-up.

To equip training providers effectively:

- ⇒ Start with institutions that already offer regular professional development, such as local ECEC training systems, accredited training centres, or university departments.
- ⇒ Give trainers a shared framework and ready-to-use materials so they can immediately integrate content into their existing curricula.
- ⇒ Offer mentoring or follow-up sessions to help trainers troubleshoot early implementation and maintain motivation.
- ⇒ Use hybrid approaches: online prerequisites create baseline alignment, while in-person sessions allow deeper skill development.
- ⇒ Support cross-sector dialogue among trainers to help harmonize messages across ECEC, health, family support, and equality units.
- ⇒ Ensure accreditation or official recognition wherever possible, as this increases uptake and institutionalizes the content.

How systems enabled training providers to shift practice

Across countries involved in the EMiNC Initiative, the effectiveness of Training-of-Trainers efforts depended largely on how well they were anchored within existing institutional structures. When training providers worked through local bodies, accredited training centres, higher education institutions, or national platforms, the content gained legitimacy and became easier to integrate into ongoing professional development systems. These structures enabled consistent cascading, created clearer expectations for trainers, and offered mechanisms for structured follow-up rather than relying on isolated individual efforts. **National distance-learning platforms** provided a unified entry point in some contexts, while **cross-sector coordination** helped keep curricula aligned across education, health, social services, and equality units. Taken together, these institutional anchors allowed training providers to shift from one-off participation to sustained, system-level engagement. Country-level examples illustrate how this anchoring supported continuity and strengthened the professional culture around father-inclusive practice.

The purpose of work in the Training-of-Trainers on EMiNC is to build the capacity of those responsible for shaping and delivering professional development systems. By engaging trainers across early childhood education, health services, social services, and equality structures, the initiative supports a shared understanding of practices that promote gender equality in caregiving and support fathers' active involvement. Trainers are encouraged to model inclusive communication and environments, embed father-focused modules within existing training pathways, and harmonize practices across sectors. This approach enables knowledge to be disseminated more broadly and sustainably within institutions, creating the conditions for change to reach frontline professionals at scale.

Training providers involved in the EMiNC Initiative included pedagogical coordinators, ECEC trainers, health-sector trainers and consultants, local and regional staff, volunteer network leaders, social service trainers, equality units, and university lecturers engaged in continuing professional development. Their engagement demonstrates the importance of working across sectors to create coherent, system-wide expectations around father engagement.

Obstacles addressed

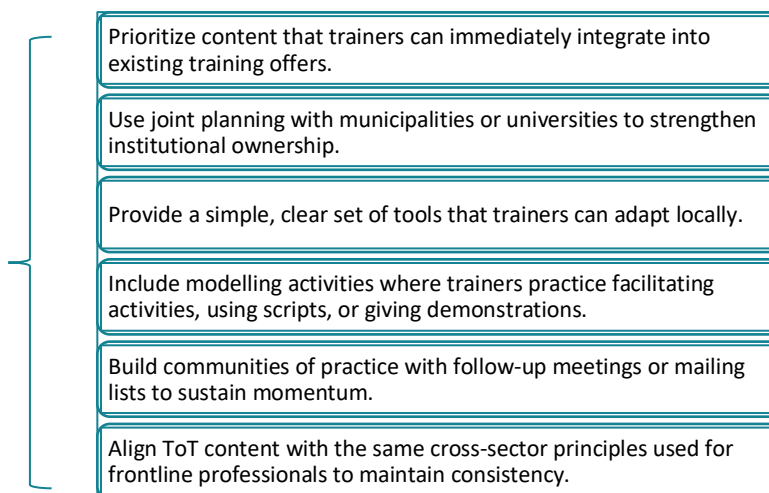
Country experiences highlighted several barriers that training providers often face when attempting to embed father-inclusive practice into their work. Accreditation systems were uneven across sectors, making it easier to institutionalize training in some fields than in others. Health and education professionals often operated under different recognition structures, complicating cross-sector alignment. Staff shortages, high workloads, and inconsistent availability limited participation and follow-through. Administrative delays sometimes slowed scheduling or approval processes, while the absence of structured mechanisms for follow-up meant that implementation could vary widely across trainers and municipalities. Differences among regional or local training systems also created inconsistencies, and training providers sometimes struggled to adapt content for mixed-sector groups with diverse roles and expectations. The EMiNC Initiative helped mitigate these barriers by

supporting flexible training formats, fostering institutional partnerships, and using hybrid approaches to accommodate varying needs.

Formats, tools, and curriculum

EMiNC's ToT models varied across contexts but shared a common emphasis on practical, replicable methods and system integration.

Guidance for designing training-of-trainers programmes:



Results, lessons, and tips: Overall synthesis

Evidence of change

Across implementation contexts, Training-of-Trainers activities highlighted increased confidence among training providers, deeper attention to how gender norms shape caregiving and professional practice, and stronger capacity to engage fathers more intentionally in the trainings delivered. Participants developed new materials, adapted existing modules, designed work-based projects, and shared learning with colleagues. The involvement of local or regional authorities contributed to greater legitimacy and encouraged the integration of this content into ongoing training programmes.

A key insight emerging from implementation was that Training-of-Trainers initiatives were more effective when providers were supported through structured follow-up and when institutional leadership reinforced expectations for knowledge sharing and cascading within organisations.

What worked well

- Municipal leadership in Barcelona and Naples that embedded ToTs in official systems
- Regional health authorities in Italy providing patronage and consultant support
- Accredited frameworks in Portugal that legitimized training content
- Combination of distance learning (DL) and in-person formats to achieve both reach and depth
- Work-based projects in Portugal that linked learning to real institutional change
- Use of volunteer networks for rapid diffusion of father-inclusive practices

What required improvement

- ECEC accreditation gaps slowed uptake and required alternative arrangements
- Volunteer participation varied, requiring flexible scheduling and follow-ups
- Trainers sometimes deprioritized cascading without clear institutional mandates
- Administrative delays in universities or training bodies required adaptive planning
- Advanced courses needed stronger recruitment and incentives



Lessons learned

- Cross-sector ToTs work well when trainers are offered both sector-specific and joint sessions.
- Accreditation or official recognition is important for strong uptake, especially in health sectors.
- DL prerequisites create a common baseline and prepare trainers for deeper skill-building.
- Trainers need simple, ready-to-use materials to feel confident cascading content.
- Without follow-up or mentoring, cascading becomes uneven.
- Training providers value participatory methods over lecture-based formats; modelling is key.
- Regional or supra-municipal councils can multiply reach more easily than relying on individual services.



Tips for scaling and adaptation

- Anchor ToT programmes within city or regional training systems for sustainability.
- Use DL prerequisites to harmonize knowledge before in-person sessions.
- Incorporate accreditation early and coordinate with professional councils or training bodies.
- Provide structured booster sessions to maintain trainer engagement.
- Create communities of practice or mailing lists to enable continuous exchange.
- Develop centralized repositories of curricula and tools for easy replication.
- Blend sector-specific and cross-sector ToTs to maintain coherence across systems.

Country Insights

Addressing accreditation gaps to strengthen training pathways – Centro per la Salute delle Bambine e dei Bambini (CSB), Naples and Campania Region, Italy

In Italy, one of the central challenges was the uneven recognition of training across sectors, especially for early childhood professionals who lacked the formal accreditation pathways available to health staff. This made it difficult to ensure consistent uptake and limited participation from some groups. By combining a national distance-learning platform with locally organized in-person Training-of-Trainers sessions, partners created a layered structure that reached a wide range of trainers while establishing a shared foundation of content. Local and regional authorities played an important role by providing logistical support, visibility, and a clear institutional mandate, which encouraged trainers to integrate father-inclusive concepts into their ongoing professional development work. Volunteers in literacy programmes were also prepared to incorporate father-oriented practices, although their availability varied. To address these constraints, the team used flexible scheduling, distance learning prerequisites, and follow-up sessions that helped trainers and trainees gradually apply the content within their own institutions and cascaded it to frontline professionals.

Ensuring continuity amid accreditation delays – Centre for Social Studies (CES), Coimbra, Portugal

Portugal's experience showed that even well-designed ToT programmes can face obstacles when accreditation processes move slowly or when health-sector staff have limited capacity to participate. The partners addressed these challenges by positioning CES and an accredited training centre as core providers, enabling implementation to continue despite delays from external professional councils. The initial plan design for the 50-hour programme included both sector-specific sessions and shared, cross-cutting modules. However, due to an uneven distribution of participating education and health professionals (the latter being underrepresented), the sessions were restructured to mainly focus on cross-cutting themes relevant to both sectors, bringing together a single, cross-sectoral cohort. This approach demonstrated that mixed groups could successfully learn together while still receiving content relevant to their professional roles. Work-based projects were a key feature, helping trainers apply concepts directly within their institutions and building evidence for incremental practice change. Scheduling difficulties, especially among health professionals with shift-based workloads, required flexibility and a broader target audience within this sector (for example, including psychologists). This allowed the programme to maintain consistency and remain accessible to trainers across sectors.

Leveraging existing training systems to build a distributed trainer network – Conexus, Barcelona and Catalonia Region, Spain

In Spain, instead of creating separate ToT programmes, partners worked through existing local and regional training mechanisms, enabling pedagogical coordinators, equality-unit staff, and social service trainers to integrate EMINC content into their routine training responsibilities. This approach created a distributed network of trainers who could reach colleagues across multiple services, although it also meant that follow-up varied depending on local priorities and workloads. In the ToT of ECE professionals through the Municipal Institute of Education cascading of training to their teams allowed reaching many more professionals but was uneven due to high workload and varying priorities in the different centres, which was addressed by follow-up sessions and support. Embedding the content within official training systems helped maintain continuity, provided institutional legitimacy, and ensured that father-inclusive principles were gradually incorporated into broader professional development agendas. The experience highlighted the value of leveraging established structures to strengthen training providers' capacities while minimizing additional administrative burden.

2.3. Enabling change in practices in the home environment

2.3.1. Empowering fathers as active caregivers

Supporting fathers directly

Across EMiNC countries, work with fathers in the home and community environment emphasizes **creating safe, accessible, and meaningful spaces** where men can learn, reflect, and engage in caregiving. The most effective interventions share three elements:

1. **Structured group spaces** that normalize men’s emotions, questions, and caregiving roles.
2. **Professional or volunteer facilitators** who use participatory, culturally sensitive methods.
3. **Partnerships with local services** (ECEC, health, family centres, municipalities) that provide stable entry points.

Experience in the EMiNC Initiative shows that fathers are willing to engage when activities are relevant, non-judgmental, and connected to their daily realities. But reaching them requires intentional outreach, trusted facilitators, and collaboration across municipal and community systems. It also shows that father groups grow stronger when embedded in **existing city networks**, reinforced through **multi-day facilitation training**, and equipped with **practical tools** that fathers can use at home.

When setting up activities for fathers:

- ⇒ Begin with existing family services, ECEC centres, or health units because **fathers trust** these spaces and already visit them for their children.
- ⇒ Use **participatory approaches** (circle methodology, group dialogue, Theatre of the Oppressed, case-based reflection) to encourage sharing and to challenge norms that may make it difficult for fathers to openly discuss caregiving and emotional experiences.
- ⇒ Recruit **facilitators** who can build rapport and model non-judgmental attitudes.
- ⇒ **Keep groups small and structured**, ideally meeting multiple times to build cohesion.
- ⇒ Provide **concrete tools** (prompts for play, reading, talk, co-responsibility activities) so fathers leave with something they can immediately apply.
- ⇒ Track participation and gather simple feedback to adjust quickly.

Partnerships built

Across countries involved in the EMiNC initiative, efforts to engage fathers were strengthened by partnerships that connected services, communities, and trusted institutions. Municipalities, family support centres, health units, literacy networks, schools, and equality departments played crucial roles by offering recruitment channels, providing venues, and lending institutional legitimacy to activities. These partnerships allowed father groups to be embedded within familiar spaces—such as community centres, schools, or health services—making participation more accessible and signalling that fathers were welcome and expected. Collaboration with academic institutions and local organisations also helped sustain activities over time, especially when facilitators or staff turnover created gaps.

Types of intervention activities with fathers

Across the initiative, countries experimented with a range of activities designed to meet fathers where they are and provide meaningful opportunities for connection, reflection, and skill-building. The most impactful interventions were **structured father groups** that met over several sessions, giving participants time to build trust and explore topics such as caregiving routines, co-responsibility, gender norms, emotional expression, and non-violence. **Perinatal and birth-preparation sessions** created early entry points for expectant fathers and allowed health professionals to engage them before caregiving patterns were established.

Community-based workshops provided flexible formats for fathers who could not commit to longer series, while pilot activities in early childhood or family spaces highlighted the need for intentional outreach—especially for fathers less connected to formal services. **Follow-up and backstopping sessions** supported continuity, allowing facilitators to keep groups active beyond the initial cycle and, in some cases, enabling fathers to continue meeting independently. These varied formats demonstrated that flexibility, relevance, and relational depth are essential for sustaining engagement.

Capacity building of facilitators and volunteers

Engaging fathers meaningfully required facilitators who were confident, reflective, and equipped to lead sensitive conversations. Countries involved in the EMiNC Initiative invested in multi-day facilitator preparation that combined content addressing how gender norms shape caregiving and engagement with fathers with participatory methods, group dynamics, and practical tools for inclusive communication. Professionals from ECEC, schools, equality units, and health services were trained to integrate father engagement into their everyday roles, while volunteers and community workers received targeted preparation to support literacy or parenting activities with a focus on fathers.

Ongoing mentoring proved essential. Facilitators benefited from support during their first implementation cycles, opportunities to debrief challenges, and peer meetings that allowed them to refine their approach. Over time, trained facilitators became internal champions who helped normalize the expectation that fathers should be included in programs and services. This **internal leadership** was one of the strongest enablers of sustainability, ensuring that practice continued even when project cycles or staffing shifted.

Tools and materials used

Across countries involved in the EMiNC Initiative, the effectiveness of tools and materials became clear through fathers' engagement and the way activities unfolded in practice. Fathers responded most positively to tools that offered concrete, immediately usable ideas—prompts for play, shared reading, or communication at home—because these helped translate reflection into everyday caregiving. Exercises that encouraged emotional sharing and personal storytelling proved particularly powerful, creating a sense of cohesion within groups and helping fathers feel less isolated in their experiences. Materials explicitly addressed to fathers, such as posters, invitations, and take-home resources, also increased visibility and signalled that services were genuinely interested in their participation. In settings with diverse families, culturally attuned tools, whether through language adaptation, imagery, or facilitation style, played an important role in strengthening inclusion and encouraging participation from fathers who might otherwise remain on the margins. Together, these elements helped create environments where fathers felt recognized, welcomed, and motivated to take part more actively.

- Common tools on EMiNC included:
- ⇒ Guides for fathers' groups and facilitator manuals
 - ⇒ Father-inclusive scripts and communication prompts
 - ⇒ Circle methodology materials
 - ⇒ *Theatre of the Oppressed* exercises
 - ⇒ Father-oriented reading and play prompts
 - ⇒ Digital or print resources adapted from PARENT, KINDER, and local projects

Results and lessons learned

Across EMiNC countries, work with fathers revealed several consistent lessons about what helps men engage meaningfully in caregiving. Fathers benefited most from spaces that allowed them to reflect on their experiences, share concerns, and develop practical caregiving skills in a supportive environment. When groups met over multiple sessions, trust deepened and fathers became more confident in taking on caregiving roles,

making continuity an important driver of impact. Skilled facilitation also proved essential; facilitators who were reflective, empathetic, and well-prepared created safe environments where fathers felt comfortable discussing sensitive topics and challenging gender norms. In several contexts, having a father as a facilitator further strengthened engagement, as it fostered identification, credibility, and a sense of shared experience, and could serve as a positive role model. Institutional anchoring strengthened sustainability, as groups connected to schools, health services, or local structures were more likely to continue beyond the initial cycle. Outreach emerged as another critical factor: fathers were more likely to participate when invited through trusted intermediaries or personal contact rather than through generalized announcements.

At the same time, several challenges were common across contexts. Recruiting fathers through early childhood settings alone proved difficult, often because communication still tended to target mothers or because fathers had limited contact with staff. Time constraints and work schedules affected attendance, requiring flexibility in planning. Engaging fathers from diverse cultural or linguistic backgrounds demanded tailored strategies, culturally attuned materials, and facilitators who could bridge different contexts. Together, these insights highlight the need for intentional design, strong facilitation, and sustained institutional support to create meaningful father-focused spaces.

Country Insights

Building facilitation capacity when direct father recruitment is difficult – Centro per la Salute delle Bambine e dei Bambini (CSB), Naples and Campania Region, Italy, in collaboration with Cerchio degli Uomini

In Italy, efforts to engage fathers highlighted the challenge of recruiting men directly into group activities, particularly in settings where services were already stretched or where fathers had limited contact with staff. Early attempts to establish father circles revealed that participation initially came mostly from professionals rather than from fathers themselves. Instead of seeing this as a setback, partners used it as an opportunity to build facilitation capacity, equipping family centre staff with participatory and experiential methods that could later be applied with fathers. These preparatory steps helped establish a local cadre of facilitators who were comfortable leading reflective discussions on gender norms and caregiving. Local partnerships provided institutional grounding, and planned backstopping mechanisms created a pathway for transitioning from facilitator training to fully operational father groups. This phased approach allowed the work to move forward even when direct recruitment was difficult.



Tips for scaling and adaptation

- Anchor father groups within existing municipal, school, or health services.
- Train facilitators using experiential methods and support them with mentoring.
- Develop short, structured cycles that fathers can commit to.
- Offer father-addressed materials to reinforce home engagement.
- Use flexible schedules (evenings, weekends) for working fathers.
- Build partnerships with equality units, health services, and school associations to expand reach.
- Collect short feedback surveys to adapt quickly.

Strengthening readiness for father engagement through academic partnerships – CES, Coimbra, Portugal

In Portugal, father engagement work was closely linked to the development of Father-Friendly Unit criteria, based on the PARENT project . While this created a promising framework, implementation was initially slowed by workload pressures in health units and limited opportunities to pilot structured activities directly with fathers. To maintain momentum, partners collaborated with nursing schools and community health units to map barriers that fathers encountered during health visits and to refine criteria that could guide future practice. These academic partnerships helped keep the work visible within institutional structures and ensured that facilitators were prepared once pilot opportunities emerged. By building the conceptual and training foundation first, Portugal strengthened its readiness for implementation in a context where direct access to fathers required careful coordination with overstretched services.

As a next step, the team plans to engage selected national-level health units by sharing the Father-Friendly Unit criteria map and requesting brief forms of evidence, such as written descriptions or photographs, to assess alignment with the criteria. Units meeting most of the criteria will be awarded the Father-Friendly Unit seal, supporting the transition from framework development to implementation.

Using Multi-Channel Approaches to Sustain Father Participation – CONEXUS, Barcelona and Catalonia Region, Spain

Spain developed one of the most diverse ecosystems for father engagement across the consortium, yet this breadth also brought challenges. Recruitment varied significantly across settings, and sustaining participation required ongoing coordination between health services, schools, equality units, and municipal family and ECE programmes. Partners addressed these challenges by using multiple entry points—birth-preparation classes, school-based initiatives, community activities—and by working through staff who already had established relationships with families. Follow-up consultations revealed that some school-based groups continued independently, demonstrating how institutional anchoring and local ownership supported sustainability. In several municipalities, small adaptations such as involving equality staff in outreach or linking fathers’ groups to existing family programmes helped stabilize participation and strengthen continuity. These experiences underscored the value of using a multi-channel approach to father engagement, particularly in diverse urban contexts.

2.3.2. Using existing parenting support programs

Strengthening father engagement through existing programs

Countries involved in the EMiNC Initiative found that one of the most effective ways to reach fathers is by embedding father-inclusive messages, tools, and activities into **existing parenting support programs**. Instead of creating new structures from scratch, this approach uses trusted programs that families already know, such as early literacy initiatives, birth preparation classes, school-based family activities, or community parenting programs. Integrating father-focused components into established systems reduces barriers to participation, increases sustainability, and ensures that messages about co-responsibility and caring masculinities are reinforced across multiple touchpoints in a family's life.

Across Italy, Portugal, and Spain, successful efforts used existing platforms to normalise fathers’ presence, distribute materials addressed directly to fathers, and adapt long-standing parenting approaches to better reflect gender equality in caregiving. These adaptations ranged from relatively simple changes, such as introducing father-oriented prompts during reading or play activities, to more substantial revisions, including updating curricula and session content to address how gendered expectations shape caregiving roles and service engagement. Country experiences show that when existing parenting programmes become more inclusive of

fathers, families benefit from more representative support, and fathers gain access to spaces that had previously been oriented primarily toward mothers.

When integrating father-focused approaches into existing parenting support structures:

- ⇒ Begin by examining current practices and materials to identify where fathers appear and where they are missing.
- ⇒ Adapt scripts, visuals, routines, and messages to explicitly include fathers rather than assuming they are secondary participants.
- ⇒ Build staff and volunteer capacity to engage fathers confidently and recognize their unique needs and strengths.
- ⇒ Ensure that new father-focused content complements, rather than replaces, the original program goals.
- ⇒ Use simple, low-cost adaptations (for example, updated posters, invitations, or prompts) to shift culture without overwhelming staff.
- ⇒ Collaborate closely with program owners or coordinators to sustain changes over time and embed them into official practice.

Types of parenting support programs expanded

Partners in three countries adapted a wide range of existing parenting programs to include a stronger focus on fathers. In some contexts, early literacy initiatives incorporated father-addressed messages and materials to encourage shared reading routines at home. School-based programs integrated activities for men, training male teachers and involving fathers in ways that strengthened their connection to the school community, with some groups continuing independently after initial support. Health-based parenting programs used birth preparation and early parenting sessions as entry points for engaging expectant fathers, while efforts within health systems also contributed to broader criteria for father-friendly practices. Parenting programs rooted in gender norms-transformative frameworks³ were adapted to national contexts, reinforcing co-responsibility and challenging stereotypes within families. Municipal family spaces provided additional settings for father-focused workshops, though participation varied depending on staffing and outreach. Using these existing structures allowed countries to extend their reach with minimal additional infrastructure while maintaining coherence within broader family support systems.

Partnerships built

Integrating father engagement into existing parenting support programs required strong institutional partnerships that could open access to families, lend credibility, and enable adaptation within established structures. Across countries involved in the EMiNC Initiative, this work was supported by partnerships with literacy networks, health services, school associations, local family centres, and national or regional bodies responsible for parenting programs. Academic partners contributed evidence and helped refine materials, ensuring that adaptations were grounded in research and aligned with local needs. By working through organisations that fathers and mothers already trusted, EMiNC partners were able to introduce father-inclusive content without creating parallel systems, making the work more sustainable and easier to scale.

Capacity building of facilitators and volunteers

Sustaining father-inclusive adaptations depended on developing the confidence and competence of those delivering parenting programs. Facilitators from literacy networks, schools, health services, community centres, and equality units received preparation in father-inclusive communication, gender-sensitive pedagogy, and

³ In this context, “gender norms-transformative frameworks” refers to approaches that seek to address and change unequal expectations, roles, and power relations between women and men in caregiving and family life. These approaches focus on promoting shared responsibility, challenging stereotypes that position mothers as primary caregivers and fathers as secondary carers, and supporting more equal participation of fathers and mothers in care. The term does not refer to gender identity, but to gender relations and social norms related to caregiving.

participatory methods that help fathers feel welcomed and engaged. Many benefited from ongoing mentoring, booster sessions, or follow-up consultations, which were especially important in settings where participation fluctuated or where new practices required continuous adjustment. In programs that encountered challenges—such as low enrolment or difficulty reaching fathers—facilitators played an essential role in analysing barriers, redesigning outreach strategies, and helping maintain group momentum. Their capacity to adapt and respond to local contexts was one of the strongest enablers of successful implementation. Activities varied in duration from one-off workshops to multi-session cycles, and their success often depended on the degree of institutional commitment and facilitator confidence.

The effectiveness of these tools was consistently linked to their practicality and immediacy. Staff and volunteers found that even small adjustments, such as adding fathers to visual materials or directly addressing them in scripts, helped shift group dynamics and increase fathers' visible presence.

Results and lessons learned

Integrating father engagement into existing parenting programs produced several important outcomes across countries. Programs that had not previously considered father participation began to view it as a core component of quality support. Staff and volunteers recognized that fathers were often overlooked in traditional program design and became more intentional about creating space for them.

Fathers responded positively when familiar programs became more inclusive. Shared reading sessions, birth preparation classes, and school activities that directly addressed fathers saw greater engagement and more meaningful interactions. In Spain, school-based programs demonstrated strong sustainability, with several father groups continuing independently after the Initiative's support ended. In Italy, volunteers found father-specific scripts and reading prompts easy to incorporate, enhancing participation among fathers during literacy sessions. In Portugal, the process of designing criteria for the Father Friendly Units (FFU) deepened understanding among health professionals about how structural and cultural norms shape father involvement.

A key lesson was that **programs rooted in health services and schools tended to engage fathers more effectively** than ECEC or community spaces alone. These environments often provided clear entry points (such as prenatal visits or school activities) where fathers already had a defined role. Another lesson was the importance of **coherence and reinforcement** across programs.

When fathers encountered consistent messages across services, it validated their involvement and encouraged them to participate more actively.



Tips for scaling and adaptation

Scaling father-inclusive adaptations within existing programs involves:

- anchoring changes within institutions to ensure they persist beyond project cycles
- building long-term partnerships with ministries, municipal departments, and program owners
- training facilitators to deliver father-inclusive content confidently and adaptively
- maintaining a balance between standardized tools and context-specific flexibility
- using school and health settings as primary entry points for reaching fathers
- ensuring that materials are simple, accessible, and culturally sensitive
- monitoring participation and outcomes to refine approaches over time

The most scalable models are those that align father engagement with the program's existing mission and workflows. When father-inclusive practices feel like a natural extension of existing routines rather than an added burden, staff are more likely to adopt them consistently, and fathers are more likely to respond.

Challenges included administrative delays, limited facilitator availability, uneven father recruitment across settings, and cultural barriers that required tailored outreach. Programs learned that targeted invitations, flexible scheduling, and inclusive visual materials can substantially improve participation.

2.4. Enabling changes in workplace policies and practices

2.4.1. Partnerships and alliances built

Across countries involved in the EMiNC Initiative, workplace engagement was made possible through a strategic network of partnerships that created entry points into companies and employer systems. Municipal institutions played a foundational role, especially those already offering corporate support or equality-related services. These institutions provided legitimacy, access to existing employer networks, and a direct link between gender-equality agendas and workplace practice. In some contexts, collaboration with city-level employment agencies and municipal training programmes made it possible to integrate EMiNC content into official corporate training catalogues, signalling that father-inclusive workplace practices are not niche but part of the broader public policy agenda on work-life balance.

Alliances with employer-facing organizations, gender-equality foundations, and workplace consultants were equally crucial. These partners brought expertise in corporate culture change, HR engagement, and compliance with equality frameworks. They also facilitated introductions to companies that might not have been reachable through traditional social-sector channels. Collaboration with national networks advocating for parental leave reform and equal parenting (such as paternity leave coalitions or men-and-care networks) provided an evidence base and helped align EMiNC's narrative with ongoing public debates.

Finally, connections with EU-level initiatives, advocacy networks, and cross-project collaborations strengthened the coherence of the workplace component. These partnerships ensured that EMiNC's messages about co-responsibility, non-simultaneous parental leave, and equitable workplace norms were grounded in broader regional frameworks, especially the Work-Life Balance Directive and the Gender Equality Strategy.

2.4.2. Type of intervention with companies

EMiNC Initiative's engagement with workplaces focused on helping companies reflect on how workplace arrangements, HR practices, and organisational cultures shape fathers' ability to engage in caregiving. Interventions typically included tailored sessions for HR managers, company leadership, and diversity officers. These sessions addressed barriers to leave uptake, gendered expectations within teams, and the practical steps companies can take to create family-friendly and father-inclusive cultures. Training content often highlighted the importance of non-simultaneous parental leave uptake, equitable internal communication about leave policies, and strategies for reducing the stigma associated with men taking leave or flexible arrangements.

Some municipalities integrated workplace training on EMiNC into their official corporate training portfolios, making it available to companies citywide as part of existing business support services. This approach allowed EMiNC to reach companies that were already engaged in training on gender equality, HR development, or organizational well-being.

Other interventions included participation in employer network meetings, collaboration with workplace foundations, and contributions to events that gathered companies interested in equality and work-life balance.

These platforms allowed EMiNC partners to share evidence, present tools, and establish new relationships for future engagement.

Although interventions varied in form, they consistently aimed to help companies see father engagement not just as a family matter but as an organisational responsibility linked to employee well-being, gender equality, recruitment, and retention.

2.4.3. Outcomes and lessons learned about workplace engagement

What worked

Companies were more responsive when the invitation came through trusted institutions that already provide corporate support services. Integrating EMiNC content into municipal corporate training catalogues helped normalize the issue and embed it within broader business development and equality agendas. Cross-project collaboration also strengthened the quality of training content. Drawing on ongoing initiatives focused on workplace equality, parental leave, and organisational culture allowed EMiNC Initiative to offer companies tools that were well aligned with current HR practices.

What was difficult

Direct outreach to individual companies was often slow and produced limited results. Many companies, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, face competing priorities, limited time for training, and the misconception that father-focused policies are not relevant to their workforce. Scheduling constraints also affected participation, especially in periods of high workload or organisational transition. Furthermore, companies often lacked clarity about their own leave practices or had inconsistent internal messaging, which limited the immediate effectiveness of training. There was also some resistance to having outsiders look into and advise on their internal HR management practices, as well as difficulty in committing to change practices without opportunities to integrate them into their business and HR development plans.

Insights

One key insight was that workplace culture change requires repeated engagement rather than one-off sessions. Companies need time to understand how gender norms influence men's leave-taking behaviour and to reflect on how internal messaging, managerial attitudes, or peer dynamics may discourage men from using available benefits. It was also clear that companies benefit greatly from practical tools, such as checklists, communication templates, and scenario-based exercises, that simplify the translation of training content into action. In several contexts, framing these issues in relation to organisational performance and productivity, including the potential costs associated with staff turnover, burnout, or underuse of leave entitlements, was helpful to make the case for supporting men's caregiving roles more tangible for employers.

Another insight was the importance of linking workplace engagement to broader national or local debates on parental leave and gender equality. When public conversations about caregiving, leave policies, or work-life balance are active, companies are more open to dialogue and more willing to consider internal reforms.

Challenges

Several challenges persisted. Companies often saw father engagement as a "soft" issue, less urgent than other HR concerns. Many lacked internal champions to drive change. The diversity of company structures and sizes required tailored approaches that could be resource-intensive. Additionally, political transitions and administrative changes in municipal structures sometimes slowed progress or required renegotiation of agreements.

Emerging opportunities

Momentum is growing around issues such as equitable parental leave, mental health, and more responsive workplace cultures. In some contexts, municipal programmes and employer networks are increasingly open to dialogue on caregiving and work–life balance, creating opportunities for engagement with companies. At the same time, pathways for influencing workplace practice vary across countries, and direct links between local policies and company practices are not always in place.

An important incentive for change in several contexts lies in national gender equality certification systems, which assess companies against key performance indicators related to work–life balance and equality for both women and men. These schemes can encourage companies to reflect on internal policies and practices, but they also present limitations. Larger companies are often better positioned to meet certification requirements, while small and medium-sized enterprises may face structural barriers and would benefit from additional fiscal or policy incentives. Moreover, existing certification frameworks do not consistently capture the specific role and rights of working fathers, pointing to an opportunity to strengthen these systems by more explicitly recognising and valuing men’s engagement in caregiving.

Tips for moving forward

Future workplace engagement should build on municipal training systems and employer networks as primary entry points. EMiNC actors should continue to refine tools that help companies assess and improve their internal practices, including templates for leave communication, diagnostic checklists, and guidance on supporting men’s caregiving roles. Establishing long-term relationships with HR departments, employer coalitions, and equality-focused organisations will increase sustainability. Finally, aligning interventions with ongoing debates on parental leave and gender equality will help ensure that workplace engagement remains timely, relevant, and responsive to both corporate and societal needs.

2.5. Mainstreaming the fatherhood narrative and influencing family policies

The advocacy approach of the EMiNC Initiative is built on the understanding that policy change and cultural change must reinforce one another. The initiative works through a dual strategy: **bottom-up**, by demonstrating what is possible in cities, services, and community settings; and **top-down**, by engaging national and EU decision-makers who shape the enabling environment for families. Local pilots provide concrete proof that father-inclusive practice is feasible, beneficial, and welcomed by families. These practical demonstrations make the case for broader policy reform more compelling and credible.

Supportive national and EU frameworks, such as the Work–Life Balance Directive, the European Care Strategy, the Barcelona Targets, and the EU Gender Equality Strategy, provide legitimacy and political momentum for local actors. By aligning its messages with these frameworks, the EMiNC approach helps municipalities and civil society organisations advocate more effectively for leave reforms, investment in early childhood systems, and stronger attention to gender equality in care. The interplay between local practice and national/EU policy windows is a defining feature of the EMiNC Initiative’s ecosystem. This approach allows learning to flow in both directions: bottom-up experience informs policy proposals, while top-down frameworks create incentives for systems to adopt and sustain father-inclusive approaches.

2.5.1. Policy Landscape: National and EU Level Enablers and Challenges

Across Europe, policies increasingly recognise the importance of shared caregiving, yet significant gaps remain between formal entitlements and actual practice. Many countries offer parental leave to fathers, but uptake is still limited due to financial disincentives, workplace cultures, and persistent beliefs that caregiving is primarily a maternal role. The 2019 Work–Life Balance Directive sets minimum standards, but national implementation varies widely, and generous provisions often remain underused when organisational norms or low compensation rates hinder men’s leave uptake.

EU frameworks such as the European Care Strategy, including the Barcelona Targets , and the Child Guarantee provide strong guidance by emphasising quality early childhood services, equitable sharing of care, and comprehensive family support. These frameworks create opportunities to embed father-inclusive approaches within broader policy agendas.

Despite this supportive environment, challenges persist. Governance is often fragmented, leaving early childhood, family policy, and gender equality spread across different institutions with limited coordination. Issues related to masculinities and violence prevention are not consistently integrated into family policy, and cultural expectations continue to shape behaviour even when policies change. EMiNC Initiative’s contribution lies in showing how these frameworks gain meaning in practice, when services, workplaces, and communities reinforce co-responsibility and actively invite fathers into caregiving.

Efforts to influence policies are strongest when it is backed by clear narratives, grounded in lived practice, and carried by broad alliances. Here are the **key reflections** that emerge:

1. Fatherhood is not a niche topic, it is a system issue

EMiNC Initiative shows that fatherhood is deeply connected to child development, gender equality, and social cohesion. When we frame father engagement only as “support for men,” it stays marginal. When we reframe it as:

- improving outcomes for young children
- reducing the unpaid care burden on mothers
- promoting healthier masculinities and preventing violence

then it becomes a **mainstream policy issue**, relevant for family policy, early childhood, health, labour, and equality portfolios.

2. Narratives must be evidence-based and emotionally resonant

The project demonstrates the value of combining hard data (e.g. State of South European Fathers report 2024, professional and parent surveys, literature reviews) with stories from practice (fathers groups, ECEC change, health services). Evidence helps convince policymakers and experts; stories move public opinion and professionals’ hearts. EMiNC Initiative’s experience suggests that:

- statistics alone do not shift norms,
- and stories without data struggle to influence policy.

The sweet spot is a data-informed narrative that shows fathers’ care as both normal and beneficial and makes visible the structural barriers that hold them back.

3. City-level practice is a powerful lever for national change

Across the EMiNC Initiative, **cities and municipalities acted as laboratories for change**. Integrating father-inclusive training, campaigns, and pilots generate concrete examples that can be translated upward into national or EU-level arguments.

To influence policy and norms, it helps to show working models, not just demand reforms. City pilots and municipal alliances become proof that “this is possible, feasible, and already happening”.

4. Policies and cultural norms reinforce each other – you must work on both

EMiNC Initiative shows that:

- Without supportive leave policies, flexible work arrangements, and father-inclusive services, cultural expectations of mothers and fathers remain unequal.
- But without norm change, even good policies (like leave entitlements) are under-used or resisted.

Policy and culture need to move together. Advocacy must therefore:

- push for legal and institutional reforms (leave design, ECEC standards, training frameworks), and
- simultaneously invest in narratives, campaigns, and professional practice that make it “normal” and desirable for fathers to care.

5. Multi-stakeholder alliances are non-negotiable

EMiNC Initiative’s policy and narrative work only gains traction because it connects:

- early childhood networks
- gender equality bodies
- ministries (health, education, labour)
- municipalities
- men and masculinities organisations
- parenting and family associations
- unions and employer platforms (for workplace issues)

Lesson: influencing policy and norms around fatherhood requires coalitions that bridge “care”, “gender” and “children” worlds. None of these alone can carry the agenda; together, they can.

6. Resistance is normal – and needs to be anticipated, not avoided

EMiNC Initiative’s partners encountered resistance:

- the idea that focusing on fathers “takes away” from mothers
- the belief that services are already neutral
- political shifts that deprioritise equality
- scepticism in some professional and academic spaces

The learning is that resistance should be expected and handled strategically: with calm, evidence, and an intersectional narrative that insists this is about improving conditions for *all* caregivers and children, not competing with existing feminist gains. Positioning father engagement as deepening gender equality, not diluting it, is crucial.

7. Embedding fatherhood into existing frameworks works better than adding new silos

Another lesson: the agenda moves faster when fatherhood is woven into existing policies and strategies, rather than treated as a separate vertical. For example:

- integrating fatherhood into ECEC quality frameworks,
- into gender equality strategies,
- into mental health and violence prevention agendas,
- into parental leave and work-life balance reforms.

Mainstreaming means: wherever we talk about care, children, or equality, fathers appear clearly.

8. Messages need to be hopeful, concrete, and non-moralising

EMiNC Initiative practice suggests that messages work best when they:

- show practical “next steps” (what professionals, fathers, and policymakers can actually do),

- invite men in rather than shaming them,
- recognize structural barriers (leave design, workplace cultures, service norms),
- and celebrate positive examples of caring masculinities without exceptionalising or romanticising (e.g., superhero father), idealising or stereotyping.

This tone is essential to avoid backlash and keep fathers, professionals, and policymakers engaged.

2.5.2. Building a powerful narrative on fatherhood in early childhood

Data and evidence-informed narratives

Across countries involved in the EMiNC Initiative, narrative change has been strongest when grounded in rigorous evidence and informed by the lived experiences of fathers, families, and professionals. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data has been central to shifting discourse away from stereotypes about fatherhood and toward a more accurate, nuanced understanding of men's caregiving roles.

Surveys, focus groups, and needs assessments conducted with fathers and professionals, together with regional datasets such as the State of Southern European Fathers (SoSEF) and national-level spin-offs, have provided the empirical foundation for a narrative that is both compelling and credible. This evidence challenges persistent assumptions that fathers are less competent or less interested in caregiving and instead shows clear patterns of willingness, barriers, and untapped potential. For policymakers and practitioners, these data points highlight structural obstacles such as workplace norms, service design, and limited parental leave incentives rather than lack of paternal motivation.

Evidence has also allowed partners in EMiNC to articulate the multiple benefits of father involvement, linking caregiving fathers to improved child development, enhanced maternal well-being, strengthened couple relationships, and more equitable sharing of domestic labour. This systems-oriented framing connects fatherhood to broader policy agendas on early childhood development, gender equality, and social cohesion.

Developing policy briefs

The preparation of policy briefs informed by EMiNC-related data has played a critical role in translating evidence into actionable recommendations. These briefs have addressed **topics** such as:

- the need for equitable parental leave policies
- the importance of monitoring father uptake of leave
- the design of father-inclusive early childhood services
- the role of municipalities in promoting shared caregiving
- the cultural and institutional barriers faced by fathers in early childhood systems

In several contexts, drafts of national or regional policy briefs served as tools for engaging policymakers in structured dialogue. By pairing empirical findings with concrete, feasible policy actions, these briefs positioned fatherhood as a mainstream issue that intersects with labour, education, health, and equality sectors.

Showcase messaging and narrative-building strategies

Changing societal perceptions about fatherhood requires clear, consistent, and emotionally resonant messaging. Partners in EMiNC Initiative learned that narratives work best when they:

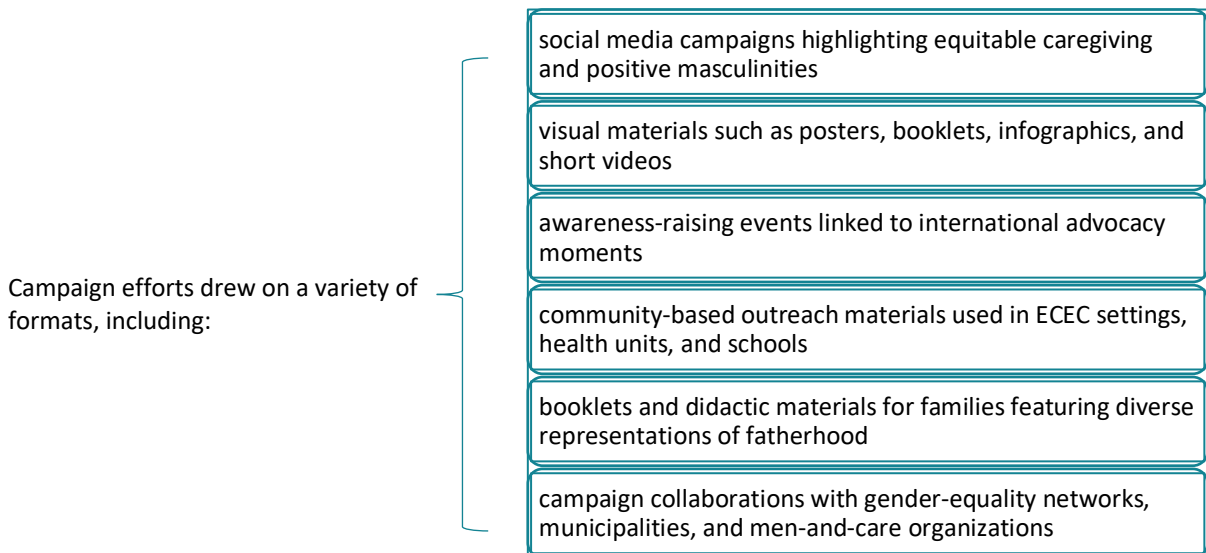
- emphasise fathers as nurturing, competent caregivers
- show caregiving as a source of personal growth and satisfaction rather than weakness

- connect father involvement to better outcomes for children and gender equality
- avoid moralising tones that alienate men or reinforce stereotypes
- challenge the maternalisation of services without positioning fathers and mothers in competition

Across countries, partners developed messaging grounded in co-responsibility and caring masculinities, portraying fatherhood not as an optional “extra” but as a fundamental dimension of healthy family life. Messaging also highlighted the societal responsibility to create enabling conditions—through leave design, workplace policies, and service practices—so that fathers can participate fully.

Campaign materials

These materials reinforced the broader narrative by ensuring consistent messaging across multiple public and professional spaces. Impact was strengthened through strategic partnerships with established campaigns and networks, including collaboration with MenCare and the Changemakers campaign, which expanded reach, visibility, and credibility beyond EMiNC Initiative’s immediate audiences. Campaigns were most effective when combined with on-the-ground training and service transformation, allowing messages to be experienced in daily practice rather than only consumed through communication channels.



2.5.3. Building strong alliances

Effective policy influence and narrative change depend on strong, multi-level alliances. EMiNC Initiative experience highlights that progress emerges when actors from different sectors and levels of governance align around a shared goal: promoting nurturing, equitable fatherhood as a societal priority.

Local alliances

At local level, alliances with local government institutions, NGOs ECEC networks, family centres, community organisations, and equality units created the institutional foundation for father-inclusive practice. Local leadership was crucial in several countries, enabling integration of fatherhood into official training systems, community outreach mechanisms, and city-wide messaging. Local alliances ensured that narrative change was visible in everyday environments such as kindergartens, schools, health units, and community spaces. These alliances also fostered trust and legitimacy, essential for engaging fathers and professionals.

National alliances

National alliances included collaborations with ministries (education, health, labour, equality), professional associations, parental organisations, national NGOs, trade unions and networks advocating for parenting or gender equality. These partnerships helped bridge local practice with national policy agendas. They also facilitated the dissemination of data, positioned fatherhood within broader legislative debates, and increased awareness of structural barriers to men's caregiving. National coalitions proved especially important in framing parental leave reform, workplace policies, and training accreditation systems.

International alliances

At the international level, the EMiNC Initiative leveraged the strength of European and global networks focused on parenting, care, masculinities, and early childhood development. Participation in international advocacy platforms, research collaborations, and cross-country campaigns supported the harmonisation of messages across borders. These alliances enabled the sharing of evidence, amplification of key messages, and alignment with EU frameworks such as the Gender Equality Strategy, European Care Strategy, and the Work–Life Balance Directive.

By coordinating with international organisations, the EMiNC Initiative contributed to the growing global conversation on men's caregiving and positive masculinities, helping position father engagement as a necessary pillar of early childhood development and gender equality worldwide.



Section 3: Game-changers in working on fatherhood in early childhood

3.1. Strong evidence and powerful narratives

A central lesson from the EMiNC Initiative is that transforming caregiving norms and practices requires more than isolated interventions. It depends on clear narratives, credible evidence, and alignment across systems and actors. A key game-changer was bringing together system-wide approaches to shared caregiving with targeted initiatives that help fathers engage more actively in care.

When data and lived practice come together, they reshape how institutions, professionals, and families understand caregiving. Evidence helps reveal patterns that often remain invisible: the maternalisation of services, the barriers created by organisational cultures, the eagerness of many fathers to be involved, and the tangible benefits for children's development when they are.

But data alone is not enough. Change happens when evidence is translated into a **narrative that is accessible, hopeful, and widely shared**, one that positions fathers not as helpers but as essential caregivers, and caregiving not as a burden but as a relational and social good. The EMiNC Initiative's experience shows that when narratives speak to people's values and daily realities, they motivate professionals, attract policymakers' attention, and help shift cultural norms over time.

The game-changer is not simply producing evidence but **deploying it strategically** to inspire action across sectors: letting it guide policy reform, shape training curricula, inform service design, and deepen public conversations about care, gender equality, and early childhood.

3.2. Using tested interventions

Another decisive factor is the importance of **tested adaptable interventions**. The EMiNC Initiative demonstrated that change accelerates when interventions are not theoretical ideals but **practices that professionals can see, touch, and replicate**. Whether through fathers' groups, cross-sector trainings, ToT models, or adjustments to ECEC/health environments, the project showed that people learn best from concrete examples that have worked in real contexts.

Tested models reduce uncertainty and lower resistance. They show that father-inclusive practice is not an abstract aspiration but a **set of practical routines** that can be integrated into busy services: a different way of greeting families, a revised communication script, a change in room set-up and materials, or a redesigned birth-preparation session. These models also demonstrated that even small shifts can create momentum across systems, particularly when supported by simple tools and consistent reinforcement.

The game-changer here is the **combination of credibility and usability**. Interventions grounded in evidence, refined in practice, and adapted for local contexts become catalysts for scaling and adaptation. They offer a roadmap that others can follow without reinventing the wheel.

3.3. Building strong cross-sectoral partnerships and alliances

Progress in fatherhood and early childhood emerges from a combination of knowledge, practice, and collective action. When evidence is turned into a compelling narrative, when tested models provide practical pathways, and when cross-sector alliances carry the work forward, change becomes not only possible but inevitable.

Father-inclusive transformation - shifting norms, policies, and practices so that fathers are included as active and responsible caregivers - does not happen in isolation. It requires **coalitions that bridge sectors, silos, and levels of governance**. Early childhood services, health systems, equality bodies, municipalities, academic institutions, workplaces, and civil society all shape the conditions under which fathers care for children. When these actors collaborate, they generate alignment, policy coherence, and sustained public attention.

Partnerships helped embed fatherhood into training systems, legitimise new approaches within local structures, influence national debates, and connect practice with policy. They also created resilience: when political environments shifted or institutional challenges arose, alliances ensured continuity, shared ownership, and protection of the agenda.

The game-changer, therefore, is not simply building partnerships, but **building the right ones**, rooted in shared responsibility for children, gender equality, and social well-being. These alliances make fatherhood visible across systems and ensure that change is not temporary but structural.

Resource Library

A Situação da Paternidade e do Cuidado em Portugal em 2023 [State of Fatherhood and Caregiving in Portugal in 2023]: <https://masculinidades.pt/recurso/a-situacao-da-paternidade-e-do-cuidado-em-portugal-em-2023/>

BE KINDER: unravelling paths to address gender stereotypes in education and early childhood: <https://kinder.ces.uc.pt/resources/be-kinder-unravelling-paths-to-address-gender-stereotypes-in-education-and-early-childhood/>

BE KINDER [Campaign]: <https://kinder.ces.uc.pt/resources/be-kinder/>

Children's Book (ages 7 to 12) "O Bicho Verde Ensinou o Pai a Cozinhar [The Green Bug Taught Dad How to Cook]" https://kinder.ces.uc.pt/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/OBichoVerde_7-12anos.pdf

Children's Book (ages 3 to 6) "O Bicho Verde Ensinou o Papá a Cozinhar [The Green Bug Taught Daddy How to Cook]" https://kinder.ces.uc.pt/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/OBichoVerde_3-6anos.pdf

EMINC Campaign (materials are available upon request)

[Fathers Rock](#)

[Global Boyhood Initiative](#)

[4EPARENT](#)

VAMOS CONVERSAR? Desbloqueadores de conversa [Let's Talk? Conversation Icebreakers]: <https://kinder.ces.uc.pt/resources/vamos-conversar/>

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