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WLB

Focus Groups : methodological outline

I. Rationale behind the individual interviews and Focus Groups (reminder from the kick-off)

We chose a methodology for the completion of Focus Groups (or Forums of participation) which encompasses two different steps: interviews on the one hand, groups on the other hand. Both phases allow obtaining different results. Generally speaking, an individual interview is efficient to gain an in-depth understanding of the subjective experience of the interviewee, his representations and attitudes. On the other hand, Focus Groups allow for exchanges among participants and leave room for contradictory arguments and discussions. It can also make participants collaborate in a common reflection about what kind of policies could help them solve some problems they encounter – as we saw it successfully done with the Belgian Focus Groups. Focus Groups are helpful in order to understand the relationship between the representations of the individual and those of the group. Both phases should involve the same participants. Each team may “recruit” its participants in the way which is found most suitable: working with NGOs, as was successfully done by the British team, proved to be particularly useful. However, since only one FG is should be completed, its composition should follow some rules of diversity: men working in public as well as private organisations, men of different age groups as well as men working at different levels in their organisations. Diversity of situations (divorced fathers, migrant fathers) is also welcome.

- **Individual interviews (7 to 9 interviews)**

Individual interviews will come first, so that their results could be introduced in collective discussions. Another benefit of beginning with the interviews is that all participants will already have thought about the topic and will therefore have reached more in-depth conclusions before the FG takes place.

Each team will use the same interview guide, to be found below. It is not the same as a questionnaire, since it allows a semi-structured discussion with the interviewee, in which

personal aspects can be developed without the interviewee being interrupted by the need of hurrying to the next question. So questions may be phrased in a different fashion, as long as all themes are brought up during the interview. One or two additional themes may be brought up if the team wishes it so (but the number of themes should be kept low so that enough time is left to discuss each). Each interview must be recorded for further transcription, but each team will also receive an interview restitution grid, which should be sent back to the CIR when it has been filled with the main results of each interview (in English).

- **Focus Groups (one Focus Group)**

Based on the results of both the inventory and the individual interviews, each team will receive a list of themes which should be brought up during the discussion.

II. Individual interviews

Individual interviews should explore the representations that interviewees have of transformations of masculine and feminine roles and how they might impact on new fatherhood practices. It should try also to assess how these transformations occurring in the private sphere contribute to societal change in general. As we have seen during the final conference of the Fathers project, practices of conciliation made by men may very well not alter significantly gendered patterns of labour. Therefore, it is particularly important that we explore the contradictions that may exist between various aspects of the representations of men and fathers. The themes brought up during the interview are general questions and it is expected that interviewees will cite their own experience or the ones of their relatives and friends.

- **Interview grid**

1. The traditional family model defined very well defined and separated roles for the father and the mother. However, we witness today some **changes in the roles played by fathers**, less punitive and more affective. In your opinion, what form does it take? What is the part played by fathers today in their kids' educations? How did you personally get involved?
2. We suggest that there may be **different stages in a child's life**. Do you think that fathers play different roles corresponding to these different stages in the life of the child?
3. Women's access to work is nowadays generalized, it is however a well known fact that **domestic tasks** are more often performed by women. In what ways does the fact that both the mother and the father work impact on men regarding the issue of domestic tasks? How did you experience it in your own life and couple?
4. Did you ever experience **difficulties** in finding a good work life balance? In which circumstances? In the case (and when) you faced these difficulties, which **person or organization** did you ask for support/assistance? Which person or organization helped you in combining your different tasks and roles?

5. We witness the emergence of “**new families**” slightly different from the traditional model of a patriarchal family placed under the responsibility of the father. We can list: couples living together without being married, single-parent families, spouses having children from previous couples, homo parenthood. Does it lead to changes for fatherhood?
6. In case of a **divorce**, the issue of child custody is brought forward, but also more generally the one of the role played by the father. Very often children of divorced or couples leaving separately see their fathers less. Do you think that fathers should ask for the custody of their children more often? Why?
7. Do you think that institutions such as **childcare facilities and schools** are father-friendly?
8. Do you think of **other institutions** that may play an important role in making it easier for fathers to participate in parental tasks? Do you think of any which blocks out fathers’ participations? Have you ever felt that your role as fathers was not recognized by institutions? If yes in which circumstances?
9. It is not always easy to negotiate with one’s **employer** to be able to take care of family issues. How do fathers nowadays combine their working tasks with their family tasks? Have you ever felt that your role of fathers was not recognized by your employer? (*For fathers who had a child after 1992: did you have the opportunity to take a fathers or a parental leave?*). Did it happen to you to be forced to take a day off when your child was sick? How often?
10. Did the fact to have children have positive or negative impacts on: your **work life, career and social life**? How would you explain it? When you look back at your work and life balance, would you say that it was possible for you to make the **choices** that you wished? Did you ever encounter situations of misunderstanding or discrimination related to how you organized your work life balance?.

NB: Do not forget to finish the interview by asking the person his/her socio-demographic information: gender, age, number of children, marital status, profession, (if applicable in your country) ethnicity.