

Involved fatherhood in the Nordic context & involved fatherhood after divorce:

The Norwegian Fathers experiences

Comments by Guttorm Grundt, Board member MannsForum.

Norwegian fathers take their fatherhood seriously, and most take full advantage of the 15 weeks quota paternity leave. Many even prolong their paternity leave with up to ten more unpaid weeks. The 16 weeks common parental leave, where the parents are free to share or decide which one shall take the paid leave, functions in practice as a prolongation of mothers 18 weeks maternity leave (3+ 15).

Even though fathers are praised for taking their full paternity leave quota, his keen fatherly care contribution matters little when his wife wants divorce and the children for herself. He is then too often branded a second rate parent, and unfit to handle shared parenting or shared custody. If the mother do not agree on 50/50 shared living for the child with each parent after family break up, the children will be living with the mother in 9 out of 10 cases.

If the mother wants the child for herself, or more economic support from the father, or both, the mother may prevent the child from staying with the father, with no negative sanctions from the Family- or Child Protection Services for failing care. The child will be staying with the mother, even after having lost her case in court; "for the best of the child", as the Child Protection Authorities usually reasons.

Instead, the National Welfare Agency forces the father to pay the mother for the additional time that the children stay with the mother exceeding the formally signed arrangement.

In Norway "the best for the child" all too often means "the best for the mother".