

PUHEENVUORO 31.3 klo 10.00-10.15 (15 min) / PJ-kauden seminaari Nordic Fathers on Paternity Leave [STM, PMN, Miesjärjestöjen keskusliitto]

- Dear Friends,
- It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Nordic Conference on Nordic Fathers on Paternity Leave, hosted by The Central Association for Men's Organizations in Finland. The conference is part of our last year's Finnish presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers.
- I am very happy that the conference is happening live here at Musiikkitalo in Helsinki and online.
- The topics of today's conference include: shared parenthood, the child's right to its parents, equality between parents, fathers' relationships with their children, sharing good practices as well as experience and know-how of Nordic NGO's, experts and authorities.
- These are all very important topics. I want to thank you all for giving your time, expertise and effort to promote fathers' active parenting role and fathers' right to be an active parent. The Nordic countries have definitely come far, but we still can and must do better.
- My remarks today will focus especially on the roles of fathers and fatherhood, as the topic of today's event and a very important issue in itself. I will also say a few words on sharing parental leave. At the same time we of course know that caring families come in all shapes and forms. This also includes fatherhood.
- Fathers, as all parents, have a very important role for their child. Nordic studies show that the majority fathers want to play an active and present role in their children's lives, and believe that parental leave should be divided equally among the parents.
- Still, for instance in Finland, fathers only take out a small part – around 10 % - of parental leaves. The number is slightly higher in some of our neighbor countries (*Sweden 30 %, Norway 20 %*), but none of us have reached 50-50. It seems that in practice, there are still obstacles along the way for many fathers.
- I believe that everyone — the father, the child, the potential other parent, as well as the workplaces — can benefit from a more equal division of parental leaves.

- Equally shared parental leave means a chance to grow a closer relationship with one's child in the early stages of life, and the chance for the child to have a closer relationship to two parents. Having present parents supports is shown to support the child's development and long-term family relationships. It can also benefit the relationship between the parents and support the parents' equal opportunities and responsibilities at home and outside the home.
- The role of the workplace and employers is also important. Supporting family leave is an investment in the future also for the employer. Still, Nordic studies show that fathers often fear they will face penalties at work for taking family leave. Making family life possible can't only be the responsibility of parents, but something we as a society need to work towards.

Dear Friends,

- I want to say few words on the Government's work in regard to family leaves. The Finnish Government's family leave reform will enter into force on first of August 2022. The reform will, for the first time, give both parents an equal quota of parental leave. This especially strengthens the possibilities for fathers.
- In my view, this is an important step towards a more equal sharing of family leave. We want a more gender-balanced distribution of care. We want the family leave to be more evenly shared between parents.
- Equality between different families will also be increased. The starting point is the best interest of the child. A child has the right to the same period of care regardless of family constellation. For instance, single parent families receive the same amount of parental leave as families with two parent.
- This is also a major reform in terms of gender equality. It affects women's position on the labour market, increases parents' ability to look after their young child and also influences stereotypical attitudes. The change in attitudes is not done by laws alone, but the reform is a strong signal of what society wants to achieve.
- I am very much looking forward to this conference's discussions on how we can move forward and make shared parenthood even more of a reality in the Nordic countries.
- Thank you!