



Strategic Plan MenEngage Europe 2014-2020

Background

*'...in order to improve the status of women and promote gender equality, more attention should be paid to how men are involved in the achievement of gender equality, as well as to the positive impact of gender equality for men and for the wellbeing of society as a whole'.
(Council of the European Union, 'Conclusions on Men and Gender Equality', 01/12/06)*

MenEngage Europe is part of the global Men Engage alliance of non-governmental organizations and UN agencies that work to engage men and boys to achieve gender equality, in collaboration with women's organisations. The official name of the Alliance is "MenEngage", and the tagline is "Working with Boys and Men for Gender Equality."

MenEngage Europe is unique in providing a feminist/profeminist pan-European network for advocacy, coalition-building, campaigns, communications and training on issues relation to working with men and boys on gender equality. Rather than being active in relation to a limited range of topics, it seeks to address a wide range of relevant issues (including fatherhood and caring; violence against women and children; and structural gender inequalities) and to explore the links between them.

MenEngage Europe is coordinated by the Swedish NGO, 'Men for Gender Equality', (Män för Jämställdhet) and was launched in 2009 with a consultation meeting in Stockholm. This was followed by a study conducted for the European Institute for Gender Equality by MenEngage

Europe and Men for Gender Equality to map and analyse organisations and individuals working with men in the (then) 27 European Union Member States. As a result of discussions at meetings in Amsterdam (November 2013) and Oxford (March 2014), the current Strategic Plan was prepared by the provisional Steering Committee established in Amsterdam. The text was finalised following comments from the wider membership at a meeting in Zagreb in September 2014.

Vision

The vision of MenEngage Europe is to achieve gender equality, and to advance human rights and social justice at all levels of society, both within the European region and beyond.

Mission

The mission of MenEngage Europe is to work with partners to engage men and boys in achieving gender equality, promoting health and well-being, and eliminating all forms of violence. This will involve efforts to foster positive caring masculinities at individual and community levels, and to address structural inequalities at institutional levels.

Principles for MenEngage Europe

The principles underpinning the work of MenEngage Europe are set out below. The network recognises that these themes may play out differently in different regional, national, and local contexts, and will take this into account in its activities:

Promoting gender equality: We are committed to the advancement of feminist goals of gender equality and social justice. We believe that the pursuit of gender equality – including more co-operative and equal relationships, greater sharing of care and work responsibilities, and reductions in all forms of violence – is key to improving the lives of women, men, and children.

Tackling the problems men create and the problems they experience: Whereas some groups of men wield enormous power within and across societies, other men and boys are vulnerable to dramatic social and economic change and/or non-equitable and violent versions of masculinity. We will challenge male privilege at both personal and structural levels, but also take into account the specific needs and experiences of all men and boys in our work.

Tackling all forms of violence: We understand violence against women and girls as a violation of human rights, which takes many forms (often interlinked). We will promote violence prevention strategies aimed at men and boys, emphasizing equality and respect in relationships, and challenging the objectification and trivialisation of women and girls. We will also work to address all forms of violence between men and boys.

Inspiring personal and social change: We are positive about men's potential. We seek to inspire men to involve themselves in personal and social change towards gender equality, and to develop respectful, trusting, and egalitarian relations with women and other men. We support men's efforts at positive change, and work to question or challenge notions of masculinity that can be damaging (eg. 'be tough, independent, competitive').

Educating boys and young men: We will promote educational strategies among boys and young men to develop understanding and support for equality, caring and co-operation in their relations with girls and young women, and with each other. We will provide opportunities for boys and young men (and girls and young women) to understand and challenge limiting gender norms.

Support for men as carers: We will promote men's involvement as equitable, non-violent caregivers and fathers, sharing responsibility for caring with women and mothers. We will support efforts to eliminate gender stereotypes, and promote educational approaches to improve the capacity of men and boys to care for themselves and for others.

Addressing intersectionality: The lives of men and boys (and women and girls) are shaped not only by gender, but also by inequalities in relation to class, ethnicity, sexuality, age, faith, and disability. We will take into account these factors, and the dynamic interrelationship between them, in our work and will promote this understanding more widely.

Promoting anti-racism: We deplore the spread of racist and misogynist attitudes across Europe, symbolized by the recent advance of right-wing and populist political parties in many states. We will stand alongside organisations working to challenge racism and xenophobia, and address in particular the links between these beliefs and backward-looking notions of masculinity.

Challenging homophobia: We oppose anti-gay prejudice, oppression and homophobia in all its forms towards those from lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans communities. We recognize the role of homophobia in maintaining the boundaries of conventional masculinity, and will work to develop supportive links with organisations working on these issues.

Working as allies: We are committed to working as allies with women and women's rights organizations to achieve gender equality. We will work with organisations working with men and boys where they adhere to the principles compatible with those of MenEngage.

Men Engage Europe also endorses the core principles set out by MenEngage globally to guide the conduct of its members and their activities (see <http://menengage.org/about-us/our-core-principles/>).

Objectives

The overall goal of MenEngage Europe is to contribute to bringing about greater gender equality. The specific goal during the period 2014-2016 is to become a strong regional voice and network for advocacy, information-sharing and capacity-building for engaging men and boys in achieving gender equality.

The short-term strategic objectives of Men Engage Europe during the period 2014-16 are set out below, as well as long-term objectives (by 2020), and medium-term objectives (by 2018).

Long-term (by 2020):

- Established transparent organisation with funding, staff, (communication and decision making) processes and procedures
- Lobby results/influence on national and regional levels
- Membership and status (recognition, all member states, national networks)
- Cooperation (projects, programmes, campaigns, exchange, research, advocacy)

Medium-term (by 2018):

- Common activities and campaigns; lobby
- Establish core themes for Europe
- International/global presence
- Cooperation with EU institutions
- Growing membership, national coordinators
- Functioning secretariat with funding and rotating responsibilities; democratic organisation
- European Symposium
- Visibility/communication

Short-term (2014-2016):

- **Ensure continuity:** To take active steps to ensure the viability and sustainability of the network and work towards a more established institutional structure. A programme of regular (twice-yearly?) meetings should be developed, to which members and potential members should be invited.
- **Develop visibility:** To seek to promote MenEngage Europe by participating in relevant fora at European and national levels (e.g. EU/CoE/EIGE meetings, NGO events).
- **Build communication capacity:** To establish mechanisms and channels to communicate with members and potential members on a regular basis, and to build a unified regional voice for the network. Materials should also be developed to promote the network and its activities and positions.
- **Participate in Campaigns:** To explore potential for participating in campaigns, either those established by MenEngage globally (e.g. on caregiving and involved fatherhood; on gender-based violence, and violence against women and children) or by other partner organisations.
- **Develop organisation structure and working methods:** To explore with members the most appropriate arrangements for coordination of, and participation in, network activities. This should include consideration of issues such as the development and hosting of a secretariat, democratic forms of leadership, and sharing tasks with the membership.
- **Building membership:** To build membership, MEE should contact a wider range of stakeholders and inform them about the development of the network and its activities. As a first step, membership criteria, the application process, and the rights and responsibilities of member organisations should be defined. Databases of actual and potential members should be developed, drawing particularly upon the EIGE database of stakeholders working on men and gender equality.
- **Explore funding:** To explore opportunities for funding aspects of the network's activities, bearing in mind the importance in this 'start-up' phase of maintaining the

network's independence and avoiding the skewing of its expressed organisational and/or thematic priorities. In the early stages, it is envisaged that network activities will need to be developed through the participation of members, and without significant funding.

- **Build relationships with women's organisations:** To engage with women's organisations at European and national levels, and develop mutual understanding and work towards effective collaboration/alliance-building. Any funding sought for MEE should not be at the expense of vital projects to support women and girls, such as refuges and rape crisis centres.
- **Build relationships with national or regional networks on men and gender equality:** To develop collaborative relationships with already existing national or local networks in order to maximise synergies and avoid duplication of efforts.
- **Start common activities:** To actively engage in the development of some common activity or project, as a way to strengthen and deepen the cooperation within the network – and possibly create possibilities for funding based on these activities.

Zagreb, September 2014.