

# Thematic Panel 15 – Men, work and care in contemporary families

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### Men, work and care in contemporary families

#### Convenor and Discussant:

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In recent decades, the new social role of women, female educational advancement, and the gradual weakening of men in the labor market, exacerbated by the recent financial and economic crisis, have strongly affected men's identities and roles and their educational, labor, conjugal and reproductive trajectories. As a matter of fact, men have gone from being mere economic providers and protectors to adopting a larger and more significant role as *caregivers* in contemporary families. Caring is a competence that is acquired through dedication and practice, but *learning to care* is not offered equally to women and men in different social and public policy contexts. For instance, maternity and paternity leave often consider mothers and fathers differently and, therefore, do not take advantage of the human and care capital of both parents to enhance children's wellbeing and gender equality. Consequently, women are absent longer from their jobs when children are born, which generally constitutes a penalty in their work trajectories. An increasing number of studies show, however, that men's use of parental leave alone is associated with a greater long-term involvement in domestic and care tasks. In addition, men's involvement may not only differ in terms of *total time investments* but also with regard to the *dimensions of care* in which women and men engage. The empirical evidence suggests that it is not so much the amount of time per se that matters for a father-child relationship but, rather, the extent to which men are transforming their identities and practices as fathers.

This panel aims to analyze the role of men in family dynamics, with special emphasis on care. We will study the changes in men's attitudes, values and behavior concerning both their breadwinner and nurturing role over time. Special attention will be paid to comparative studies, those that investigate the new role of men as partners, parents and care providers from a longitudinal approach, and those that deal in a novel way with theoretical, methodological or political issues about nurturing

and practical care. Studies that address the importance of men being involved in the care of children and/or dependants, as well as the potential of public policies and normative changes in workplaces for the encouragement of shared caring responsibilities and the promotion of family life-work balance for both women and men will also be appreciated.