



MenEngage  
EUROPE

boys and men for gender equality

# MenEngage Europe

Membership  
meeting

18—20 October  
Vienna, Austria



**In October in Vienna we had the opportunity to meet with over 50 participants representing 40 member organisations from 21 countries<sup>1</sup> from all over Europe, all working to engage boys and men in gender justice. The network meeting gave opportunity for both formal and informal networking, a lot of interaction and participation, good vibes and inspiring discussions!**



**For almost 10 years the MenEngage Europe network has been committed to involving men and boys from Europe in achieving gender justice. Currently the network finds itself in an interesting place with increasing membership, multiple activities at country level, national and international collaborations, media interest, campaigns, public talks, #metoo dialogues, policy lobby, and more.**

Four years after the last grand membership meeting in Zagreb 2014, we finally got together to further enlarge, deepen and strengthen MenEngage Europe's network, and to revitalize its structure and strategic direction. This meeting truly contributed to strengthening the interconnectivity among the network's member and to the European community of practitioners in the field.

During the meeting members discussed content matters and strategic issues such as cooperation with and accountability towards women's rights and social justice movements. We also looked at methods of organizing, house rules and principles for a more formalized democratic structure.

The main objectives of the meeting were:

- » To create a space for and with MenEngage Europe members and partners for exchange, learning, networking, joint strategizing and agenda-setting;
- » To inform the review and update of the strategic plan for the network with a collective vision for strengthening the regional network; and
- » To inform the process of formalizing the network's governance structures and procedures, including the election of a new steering committee and agreements on MenEngage Europe house rules

<sup>1</sup> *Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Kosovo, Macedonia, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom*

# October 18: Day 1

## – Getting to know each other

Since several years have passed since we last had the opportunity to bring together the larger membership of MenEngage Europe, and since many of the participating member organizations also were fairly new to the network – we dedicated the whole first day to get to know each other better. Presentations, discussions and conversations circled around questions like what is the MenEngage Alliance?; what do you and your organization do?; what are your experiences and aspirations?; what brought you here?



### MenEngage Europe and the MenEngage Global Alliance

*Laxman Belbase, Regional Networks Manager at the MenEngage Global Secretariat, and Lena Wallquist, MenEngage Europe Coordinator, introduced the MenEngage Alliance.*

The MenEngage Global Alliance is a global network of over 700 civil society organisations across 70 countries, committed to dismantle patriarchy and unequal power relations by engaging boys and men, together with women and girls and people of diverse gender identities, in promoting gender justice and positive masculinities. The Alliance is currently organised in 40 country and six regional networks. The Alliance is a decentralised network linking local, regional and global initiatives, campaigns, activism and advocacy and is supported by a Global Secretariat based in Washington DC.

MenEngage Europe is one of the six regional networks within the Global Alliance. The European network was founded in Stockholm in 2009 and presently consists of 67 members – primarily organisations but also some individual practitioners, consultants and researchers across 28 countries. Members must adhere to the MenEngage Global Alliance's Code of Conduct and Core Principles, including taking a human rights perspective and engaging as allies to organisations working for the rights of women and children.

The Strategic Plan 2014-2020 for MenEngage Europe (adopted in Zagreb 2014) outlines the principles of the European network and established objectives on short, medium and long term. Among the principles it's worth highlighting tackling all forms of violence; inspiring personal and social change; support for men as carers, promoting anti-racism and challenging homophobia. Concrete objectives include developing the organisational structure, building membership, gaining visibility (for advocacy purposes) and ensuring continuity.

MenEngage Europe has not had any funding prior to 2017/2018, but has recently received some support from the MenEngage Global Alliance and from Oak Foundation, which currently enables a part time secretariat function in Amsterdam. The coordination and growth of MenEngage Europe however primarily depends on time and resources volunteered by its member organisations and individuals. Of the 67 members, 10 sit on the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee has met regularly (mostly over Skype but occasionally in person) to implement the strategic plan; secure funding, represent the network in relation to external stakeholders and to attract new members. MÄN (Sweden) and Emancipator (the Netherlands) are co-coordinators for the network, and MÄN represents the European region at a global level with a seat on the MenEngage Global Alliance board.

The Alliance works to strengthen and support its regional networks (Europe, Africa, Latin America, North America, the Caribbean and South Asia), based on the region's interest. The regions are diverse in structure and funding but also share many similar ambitions and challenges. Accountability guidelines and toolkit have been developed to support regional networks and members in the responsibility to maintain accountability towards the feminist and social justice movements.

The Alliance's expertise lies with its members; it depends on member's inputs and guidance to shape how to bring the work together and create spaces for exchange and learning. Members can become part of global working groups on seven thematic areas. The work of the Alliance is becoming increasingly political with emerging focus areas including SOGI/LGBTQI, climate change and faith-based approaches. The 3rd MenEngage Global Symposium is being planned to take place in Beirut, Lebanon, in 2020.



### Safe space

Being aware that many people were new to each other and to the network, we elaborated on some rules for the meeting. The purpose was to create a safe space where everyone's voices could be heard, and where both personal and professional experiences could be shared in a safe way. The group highlighted the following points to be mindful of, which formed the ground rules for our meeting:

Be respectful, show patience, be open (to challenge), be encouraging, connecting and contributing, be constructive, listen actively, be mindful (step in/step out to let everyone speak and be involved), create trust for each other, take care of each other, acknowledge differences, be mindful of the language challenges (speak slowly as English is not everyone's mother language) and respect the time.

### Timeline – Who we are and why we are here

All participants were encouraged to write down key moments in their life that in different ways had contributed to them being present at this meeting today. It could be experiences from the childhood and adolescence, people that has opens our eyes, experiences of injustices, privilege or violence, professional choices, transformative insights etc. Personal stories were shared in smaller groups and finally we created a timeline on the floor with all the important moments. The timeline manifested clearly that we are in this growing movement for political but also deeply personal reasons.

At the end of the first day we had a session guided by the question 'Where is the energy?'. Through an interactive exercise we mapped the expertise that was represented in the room, giving everyone the opportunity to manifest interest and identify others with similar or complementing knowledge. Some of the key topics where several members had vast experience and knowledge was 'preventing gender-based violence', 'men and caregiving' and strategic skills like 'program development', 'advocacy', 'campaigning' and 'mobilisation'. To explore together the thematic priorities and the experiences and expertise among the membership lay an important foundation for the rest of the meeting. Based on this collective 'energy-mapping' collaboration and interconnectivity throughout the meeting was facilitated and encouraged.



# October 19: Day 2

## Open Space

During the second day we discussed urgent and prioritized topics using the methodology of open space. The question at the heart of the session was: **What are the practical, thematic and strategic priorities for MenEngage Europe and its members?**

Open space is a co-creating, open and highly participatory methodology, designed to facilitate engaged and relevant discussions based on the needs and priorities of the participants. We chose this methodology because we wanted to ensure interactivity and inclusion of both old and new members. We also wanted to get a sense of where the energy and commitment of the whole membership was, in order to inform the upcoming revision of the MenEngage Europe strategic plan year 2014–2020.



The co-created agenda for group discussions included the following topics, put forward by a wide variety of members from different types of organisations throughout Europe:

- » Sexual violence and objectification in everyday life
- » Confronting misogynistic and nationalist backlash
- » Men and caregiving
- » Fatherhood – changing institutions
- » How do men become feminists?
- » Communication for change
- » Men and masculinities/diversity among men
- » Accountability
- » Sexual and reproductive health and rights
- » Members needs and network development
- » Economic (in)justice
- » How to deal with resistance against gender equality in organizations
- » Advocacy towards the European Union
- » Measuring impact
- » #MeToo, what's next?

After a full day of interactive discussions in smaller groups, we gathered to look at the reports from each group; what had been discussed and what suggestions were there for the future work of the members and the network?

With sticky dots each participant could indicate which topics they found most important to continue working on. In this way we could collect input for the strategic document and make sure that we continue to move in the direction where the network in its totality has the most needs and energy.

# These were the key issues that received the highest number of sticky dots:

## **Misogynistic/populist/nationalist backlash in Europe**

What is the situation in our respective countries? How can we counteract the open hostility towards marginalized groups and what to do with the silent majority? How can we use our knowledge regarding men and masculinity to understand why some men end up being radicalized? What are the forces that drive (mainly) men into right wing extremism? When political correctness erode, the resistance to social justice becomes more visible – could that be a “good” thing?

## **Accountability**

The group discussed accountability both on an individual and organizational level. What happens when men/we don't manage to “walk the talk”? We cannot expect men to have a clean past – but they need to take responsibility. How can we encourage self-reflection on power and privilege? How to create mechanisms for feedback? How can we relate to the women's rights movements as allies – in an accountable way? Ask for input on our agenda and strategies, do collective action together with women's rights groups etc.

## **Economic injustice and its links to gender inequalities**

Unpaid care work; stereotypical gender roles that disadvantage women on the labour market; political resistance; the need to work with men that are ‘left out’. The need to link up with feminist groups addressing these issues!

## **Sexual violence and objectification in everyday life**

How does gender inequality and objectification of women and girls express itself in everyday actions? We need to talk about the more subtle expressions of sexism, not only the explicit violence. In youth work, it is important to work not only with boys but also to involve girls in the discussion. How can we make gender stereotypes and the limitations that boys and girls face visible? Inventory of best practices. The importance of accountability: call out harmful behaviours and challenge them.

## **Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)**

The need to address “male sexual misery”. We need to talk about what we want and what we wish to eradicate: sexual health (joyful, wellbeing, pleasure, respectful) in contrast to sexual violence and harassment. The need for porn education directed at youth and parents. The need for research on the effect of porn consumption on the behaviours of boys and men. Sex as a lifelong learning. Would like to see a MenEngage manifesto of healthy/respectful/feminist sex – how do we define it and what conditions do we need to reach it?

## **Member needs and network development**

How could and should the European network balance the three pillars of capacity building, advocacy and networking? So far, networking has been at the core, with at focus on connection, inspiration, belonging and collaboration. This is important and a clear role for the network. Capacity building (to share, learn and improve our practices) could be further highlighted, is there need for this? Advocacy (to raise awareness, go public and influence policy) carries with it more challenges, but might give important results.

## **Fatherhood, changing institutions**

Bring the concept of fatherhood policy inside the concept of family politics and policies. Change our own institutions and advocate for part time job systems. Push for fathers groups, and educate and encourage fathers to use the paternity/parental leave, and take responsibility for the unpaid household and care work. Elaborate FAQ:s on fatherhood and care. Corporate with motivated medical staff to work on change from within the maternal health care system.





Besides all the relevant and interesting ideas that surged from the group discussions, some people also took on concrete actions to be taken in the nearest future. Among them one can highlight the creation of a national MenEngage network in Spain and the establishment of a communication group to facilitate sharing, online discussions and joint campaigning.

### Conclusions

The open space methodology and the conversations held throughout the day was highly appreciated by the participants. The session gave the opportunity to invite others to a topic of one's own choosing, and to get input into things that we struggle with. Or it opened up the possibility to follow someone else's lead, listen to new ideas, and get to know the work of others. Altogether, it showed that topics such as men and caregiving, the struggle against sexual violence and normcritical work with boys continue to be at the heart of the work that we do throughout Europe. The discussions also showed the great commitment of the membership to the quality aspects of the work that we do. How do we measure impact? How do we ensure accountability? How do we develop as a network to advance gender justice?

Furthermore the session made evident that there are emerging issues where we need to develop our knowledge and understanding and to elaborate on ways to address them. The rising of nationalist movements, ranging from conservative to flat out misogynist, in different parts of the region is one of those emerging issues. The work on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights including how to address pornography and its effects on men and boys is another one. The overall conclusion was that the strategic plan adopted in Zagreb remains largely in line with the priorities of the broader membership, even though it will require some updating. Knowing that the possibility to meet and develop thoughts and ideas jointly have been scarce in the last four years, this is a very comforting result.

# October 20: Day 3

## Formal meeting

On the last day we carried out the more formal part of the membership meeting with two major points on the agenda; adoption of house rules and the election of a Steering Committee. The house rules proposal put forward by the outgoing Steering Committee had been on display on a wall during the two previous days, so that members could post questions or counter-suggestions. The opportunity for nominations to the Steering Committee was open until late Friday night, to make it possible also for newcomers to consider and present their candidacies.

### House rules

The house rules document, that serves to give clarity on the democratic structure of the network and outlines basic principles for membership division of responsibilities, mandates etc, was adopted with some minor adjustments.

### New Steering Committee

The Following organizations people were elected to form the Steering Committee during the coming two years:

- » Associating Roditeli – David Kiuranov (Bulgaria)
- » CARE International, Balkans – Besnik Leka (Kosovo)
- » Emancipator – Jens van Tricht (the Netherlands)
- » European Network for the Work with Perpetrators of Domestic Violence (WWP) – Anna McKenzie (Germany)
- » Katrien van der Heyden – independent consultant (Belgium)
- » MÄN – Lena Wallquist (Sweden)
- » männer.ch – Markus Theunert (Switzerland)
- » Men's Development Network – Sé Franklin (Ireland)
- » Poika – Teresa Schweiger (Austria)
- » Sandy Ruxton – independent consultant (United Kingdom)
- » Status M – Leila Younis (Croatia)

The broad MenEngage Europe membership thanks all candidates for putting themselves forward. A special thanks to the outgoing previous Steering Committee and all others who with their commitment and energy have moved the network forward to where it is today.

*From left to right: Laxman Belbase from the MenEngage Global Secretariat, who chaired the formal meeting, and the new Steering Committee; Lena Wallquist, Besnik Leka, Leila Younis, Markus Theunert, Sé Franklin, Jens van Tricht, David Kiuranov, Anna McKenzie, Katrien van der Heyden and Teresa Schweiger. Absent from the photo: Sandy Ruxton*





**Final remarks from the Steering Committee:**

***“We are all key players in making this network vital and a contributor to a world free from gender based violence. The network is all of us! Therefore, it is the task of all members to take leadership, to connect, and to move things forward. The Steering Committee will proudly take on the task of facilitating and coordinating, and to open up for the contributions and energy of others. We encourage all representatives present at the meeting to stay in touch, share experiences, challenges and ideas, and to bring this meeting and spirit back home to our organisations!”***

# Participants at the meeting

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## The Steering Committee members before the elections (in alphabetical order, by first name)

1. Anna Lindqvist (MÄN, co-coordinator), Sweden
2. Anna McKenzie (WWP, European Network for the Work with Perpetrators of Domestic Violence), Germany
3. David Kiuranov (Association Roditeli), Bulgaria
4. Heinrich Geldschläger (Connexus Association), Spain
5. Jan Reynders (independent consultant, Jan Reynders Gender Justice Consultancy), the Netherlands
6. Jens van Tricht (Emancipator, co-coordinator), the Netherlands
7. Leila Younis (Status M), Croatia
8. Lena Wallquist (MÄN, co-coordinator), Sweden
9. Markus Theunert (männer.ch), Switzerland
10. Sandy Ruxton (independent consultant), United Kingdom
11. Sé Franklin (Men's Development Network), Ireland

## MenEngage Europe members

12. Aleksandar Slijepčević (Perpetuum Mobile – Institute for Youth and Community Development), Bosnia & Herzegovina
13. Andrea Santoro (Cerchio degli Uomini / Il Giardino dei Padri), Italy
14. Annina Lubbock (CAM, Centri Ascolto Maltrattanti / Il Giardino dei Padri), Italy
15. Armin Cerkez (YP, Youth Power International), Bosnia & Herzegovina
16. Besnik Leka (CARE International, Balkans), Kosovo
17. Boris Konakov (INGI/CCW, St Petersburg Regional Public Organisation Institute of Non-discriminative Gender Interrelations / Crisis Center for Women), Russia
18. Branko Birač (Center E8), Serbia
19. Christopher Muwanguzi (Working with Men), United Kingdom
20. Custodio Delgado (RHXI, Red Hombres por la Igualdad), Spain
21. Daniel Bekcic (männer.ch), Switzerland
22. Denis Kudriavtsev (DTC, Doctors to Children), Russia
23. Dragana Jovanovska (CID, Center for Intercultural Dialogue), Macedonia
24. Elena Triffonova (BGRF, Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation), Bulgaria
25. Hilario Sáez (RHXI, Red Hombres por la Igualdad), Spain
26. Ilze Smit (Rutgers), the Netherlands
27. James Buhagiar (Men Against Violence), Malta
28. Joaquim Montaner (RHXI, Red Hombres por la Igualdad), Spain
29. Kadri Gashi (PEN, Peer Educators Network), Kosovo
30. Kalle Röcklinger (RFSU, Riksförbundet för Sexuell Upplysning), Sweden
31. Katrien Van Der Heyden (independent consultant, Nesma Consulting / MenEngage Network Belgium), Belgium
32. Krizia Nardini (CJAS, Centre Jove d'Atenció a les Sexualitats), Spain
33. Magda Seewald (VIDC, Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Cooperation), Austria

34. Miguel Gonzalez Lazaro (AHIGE, Asociación de Hombres por la Igualdad de Género), Spain
35. Nadja Schuster (VIDC, Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Cooperation), Austria
36. Nedjma Ouerdane (CARE Austria), Austria
37. Olen Dashi (Counseling Line for Men and Boys), Albania
38. Sergey Zakharov (ANNA – National Center for the Prevention of Violence), Russia
39. Sofia José Santos (Promundo Portugal), Portugal
40. Stanislav Khotckii (M21, Autonomous Non-profit Organization "Men of the 21st Century"), Russia
41. Stephen Burrell (researcher, Durham University), United Kingdom
42. Tania Tisheva (BGRF, Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation), Bulgaria
43. Teresa Schweiger (Poika), Austria
44. Torben Hede Hansen (DareGender), Denmark

## MenEngage Global Alliance

45. Laxman Belbase (Global Networks Manager), United States of America
46. Sinéad Nolan (Programs Assistant), United Kingdom
47. Tom Hornbrook (Communications / Website Project Coordinator), United Kingdom

## Secretariat of MenEngage Europe

48. Floor van Schagen (Regional Secretariat Project Officer, Emancipator), the Netherlands

## Invited consultants

49. Ger Roebeling (MDF Training and Consultancy)
50. Diederik Pratte (MDF Training and Consultancy)



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We extend our cordial gratitude to Oak Foundation  
for making this meeting happen.