

*Røða hjá Sólvit E. Nolsø, landsstýrismanni í almannamálum til ráðstevnuna:
"Contemporary Fatherhood(s) in the North", 29. mars 2022.*

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to open this conference "Contemporary Fatherhood (s) in the North".

The topic for this conference is an exciting one, since it's a topic that we're not too often presented with. Five exciting contributions will enlighten us and hopefully give us a much-needed insight into this field of research.

New and important results will be presented, which will give us a much more complete insight into the area, and at the same time will be a good foundation for a better understanding of fatherhood in our time.

The global community has evolved in recent decades, and we have seen great changes in our ways of life. Family patterns have changed as well as participation in the labour market. This has created debates about values across countries and cultures. Fortunately, research is becoming more extensive, so we can create knowledge-based dialogue across the same values and boundaries, for the common good.

At the same time as we have a global dialogue, our individual societies are also distinctive societies. We each feel connected to and recognize ourselves in our own values and contexts.

The Faroese community has relatively quickly moved from being largely agricultural to an industrialised fishing community, at the same time as several new industries and services have emerged. In addition, like the other Nordic societies, we have developed modern welfare schemes and our own version of the Nordic welfare model.

A significant part of the development of business and welfare in recent decades is that women - similar to the development in the other Nordic countries - to a much greater extent, participate in the labour market. A result of this development and a prerequisite for continued growth and development is the maternity and paternity scheme, which was implemented in the Faroe Islands in 2001.

The characteristic of this law has from the beginning been, that it is a labour market scheme, based on a clear agreement between the employers and the employee.

The scheme is now 21 years old, but despite its young age, it is adapted considerably. In total, there have been no less than 27 legislative changes over the years.

In general, these have been technical changes, with adjustments to the framework for the childcare period.

From the beginning, fathers were granted shorter leave periods than mothers, but over the last years, the law has been modified, so fathers now can get a leave for a considerable number of weeks. However, it is a fact that most fathers, only use their personally allocated number of weeks, which is four, and the mother uses the rest, even though several weeks are now in a common quota system and not allocated personally.

The Faroese society is a well-developed modern society, but we also tend to hold on to traditional values and many traditional attitudes also characterize the gender equality debate.

The discussion about leave with fixed maternal and paternal quotas, is one that is characterised by the contradictions between traditional and modern values. The majority today thinks that it must be entirely up to the individual families to decide how they choose to arrange themselves in relation to childcare leave.

This might be why it is more the rule than the exception, that it's the mother who stays at home the longer.

Another aspect is the economics of it. In most cases, it's still the fathers who have the higher income. With a father on childcare leave, the family's total income then falls considerably.

How and in what direction will our society then develop?

As already mentioned, we like to compare ourselves with the Nordic countries. But, at the same time, we also rest to a greater extent in our old family patterns and are still very closely connected in our traditional family ties.

The contributions to new knowledge that you will bring to light here, will reflect new directions for the roles of fathers today. The role of fathers is evolving today. They are a much larger part of the caring role than before and it's changing the relationship between fathers and children.

As minister for gender equality, I look forward to receiving new input on this subject area. And to hear more about the significance of the new developments and at the same time learn more about how societal development helps to develop us as fathers, as parents and as politicians.

Welcome to you all. A special welcome to you as guests of our beautiful country, I hope you enjoy your stay and that you also get input which will make you return home, wiser than you were when you came.

Thanks to the organizers and good luck with the conference.