



Elina Kļaviņa
Head of the
Association
“Fathers”



The main mission of the association is to take care of returning fathers to the family and child raising which reduces violence against women and improves fathers’ health and welfare.

In year 2014 the centre “Dardedze” contacted the head of the media agency “Inspired” Kārlis. At that time Dardedze was implementing a project on groups of fathers envisaging a broad social campaign in mass media. Kārlis liked the idea very much and wanted to support it on long-term basis. The project manager Elina was employed and has been working only on the projects of the association since then. The first campaign of the team was “To be a father – it is art”. Following a successful project implementation the idea of founding an association for supporting families “Fathers” was born. The association is on its way to become a social company because it offers also services for a fee, like groups of fathers and lectures on topics related to children.

The association has completed two studies on the father’s role from the anthropological point of view – the first study described how the society views the father’s role in the family and the second study was focused on divorced fathers and attracted men in particular. Elina points out that this is an example that equality is a concept important not only for feminists, but every person.

<http://tevi.lv/en/>

In the result of the studies anthropologists developed the family cognitive system. The system creates the perception about the image of the family in Latvia – there is a core of the family consisting of the mother and children and there are “free agents”, i.e. fathers floating around and some of them help mothers: “I help my wife by taking the child to the kindergarten”, or “I help my wife by taking care of the child while she takes shower”. This split of roles changes and the role of taking care of children is split equally increasingly often, however, the society still considers that the mother will always be closer to the child.

In Latvia there is the highest mortality rate of new-borns and mothers in Europe – there are studies that it correlates with the fathers’ involvement in the process of raising children. If the father does not participate in raising a child, 100% of responsibility rests on the mother and the woman does not have time and energy to take care of herself. If the father is active in the family he helps to take care of the mother’s health and wellbeing, moreover, higher father’s involvement improves the child’s wellbeing and confidence. American studies indicate that participation in the process of delivery and raising a baby improves fathers’ health and reduces involvement in crime, as people become more sensitive and understand the baby’s wishes.

“There was an age or a personal condition when you know what is correct. After these four years I definitely know that I don’t know what is correct.”

– ELINA

The differences are biggest between the West and East cultures, for example, the Islamic culture where the child is more important for a man and the mother just serves as an “incubator”, while in our countries the father serves as a “donor” and a child is closer to the mother. In Nordic countries there is a visible progress in equalising these roles, while in Latvia there is still a prevailing myth regarding the mother’s instinct. The special relationship does exist, however, it is hardly related to the instinct, according to Elina’s explanation.

The association “Fathers” operates as a part of the international Mancare program by promoting involvement of men and equal distribution of duties within the family. The association also supports couples of the same gender and the possibility of adopting children by them.

5 GENDER EQUALITY

