



JOINT SIDE-EVENT AT CSW: WHAT WOMEN CAN GET—PROMOTING
TRANSPARENCY AND INCREASING ACCOUNTABILITY IN FINANCING FOR
GENDER EQUALITY IN THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

**FINANCING AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR GENDER EQUALITY: THE CASE
OF THE AUTONOMOUS REGION OF THE BASQUE COUNTRY**

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First of all, I would like to thank UN Women for inviting us to participate in this event. It is an honor to be here and have the opportunity to explain the experience of the Autonomous Region of the Basque Country in the field of financing and accountability for gender equality, with the purpose of contributing to the post-2015 development agenda.

1. Contextualization of the reality of the Autonomous Region of the Basque Country and its gender equality policies.

The Basque Country is an [autonomous community](#) of northern [Spain](#). Around 2,200,000 people live there. It enjoys a large degree of autonomy and has its own Government, Parliament, Ombudsman, police, taxation and universal health system. It ranks first in Europe in the Human Development Index (0.981 out of 1), second in productivity per employee (25% higher than EU average) and third in income per capita (30% higher than EU average). Industry represents 26.6% of the Gross Domestic Product (the average in the EU is 19.3) and 43% of its young people have a university degree (the average in EU is 24%). It is the country with the longest life expectancy in the EU, 82 years old. Besides, it has a very active civil society, including around 400 women's non-governmental organizations.

Public gender equality policies emerged in 1988, when the Basque Institute for Women, best known as Emakunde, was legally established. Emakunde is an autonomous body attached to the office of the President of the Regional Government of the Basque Country, who is also the head of the Board of Directors of Emakunde. Emakunde is the organization responsible for regulating, promoting, advising, planning and assessing equality policies in the Autonomous Region of the Basque Country.

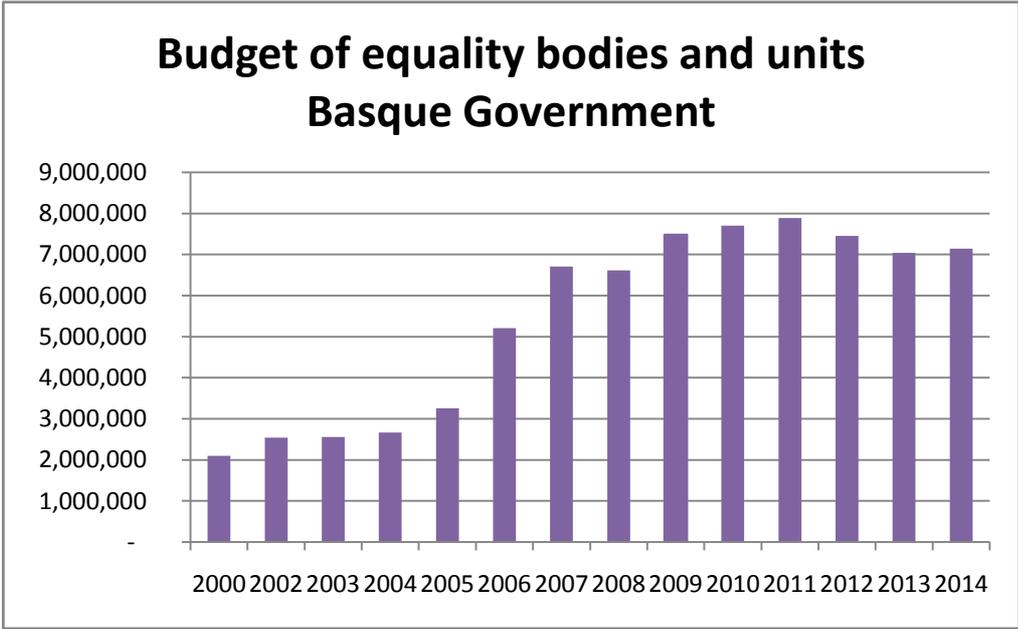
Until 2008, Emakunde was the only body responsible for promoting gender equality in the Basque Government. Nowadays, along with Emakunde, there is one equality unit in all

government departments, as well as in the Basque Employment Service and in the Basque Agency for Development Cooperation.

At provincial and local level, the three provinces of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country and around 50 local councils and 5 associations of local councils have equality departments, which represent approximately 40% of all of the local councils and bring together nearly 80% of the population of the region.

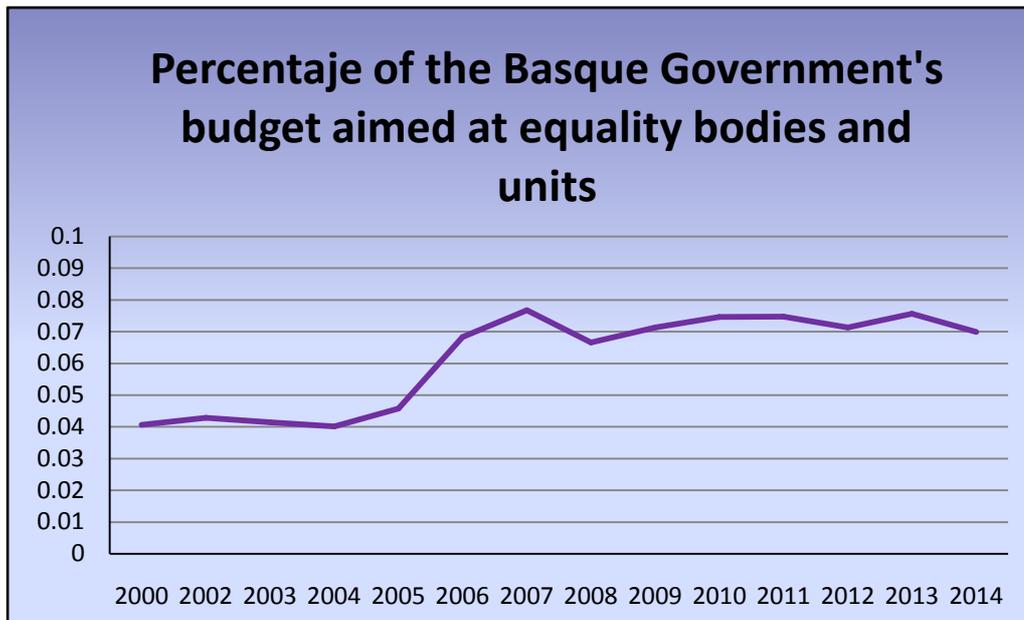
2. Financial resources allocated for gender equality by the Basque Government between 2000 and 2014.

The role of the equality bodies and departments is basically to promote, advise and assess equality policies. Their estimated budget is about 50% of the whole budget specifically allocated to gender equality policies. There are more financial resources in the government's budget for gender equality, although they are not specifically allocated as gender equality resources because they are included in broader programs. Take for instance, funds used to provide assistance to disadvantaged women (legal, economic, social, etc.) provided by other departments responsible for policies like employment, social services, health, security, justice, etc.



The budget of the equality bodies and units within the Basque Government¹ increased greatly in absolute terms from 2000 to 2011. However, since then it has decreased, mainly as a consequence of the economic crisis and cuts affecting the public sector. The highest annual increase was in 2006 and it was a turning point. The importance of this date for gender equality financing in the Basque Government can be seen clearly, if we analyze the change in the percentage of the government's budget for equality bodies and units.

¹ For this analysis we included the budgets of Emakunde, the equality units of each governmental department and the Direction of assistance to victims of gender-based violence, for the period 2009-2012, excluding the part of the budget of the latter aimed to provide assistance to victims.



Between 2000 and 2005, the annual budget of the equality bodies and units stayed constant at 0.04% of the overall government's budget; whereas between 2006 and 2014 that percentage on average increased to 0.07%, almost double that of 2000-2005.

What happened in 2006 to so improve finance for gender equality policies in the Basque Government? The answer is that a year earlier the [4/2005 Equality Act](#) was passed by the Basque Parliament. As the assessments carried out show, this law enabled a significant advance not only in financial terms, but also in terms of building capacity to incorporate the gender perspective into the activity of Basque public authorities. Among many other mandates, this law obliges all regional, provincial and local authorities to:

- have gender equality offices or units;
- elaborate and implement equality plans;
- ensure that their statistics reflect the gender perspective;
- elaborate and implement equality training plans;
- carry out preliminary gender impact assessments;
- include equality clauses in contracts and subsidies;
- promote a balanced representation of women and men in decision-making bodies, including quota systems.

3. Accountability mechanisms and other measures taken to monitor and control the implementation of financial resources for gender equality.

The 4/2005 Equality Act states in its Article 14 that “Regional, provincial and local authorities will allocate and specify, every year in their respective budgets, the necessary financial resources for the undertaking of the functions and the implementation of the measures established in this act”.

Nowadays the regional and municipal authorities comply with that mandate, but about 56 % of the local councils that have equality plans do not do so. It is estimated that the

budget allocated for gender equality represented on average 0.18% of the Basque public authorities' budgets in 2012.

In the Autonomous Region of the Basque Country there are four basic elements to monitor and control the implementation of the economic resources for gender equality:

a) The annual report on the activity of the Basque public authorities to promote gender equality. This report has been annually published since 1991 by Emakunde with information provided by the Basque public authorities.

b) The assessment of the equality plan that the Basque Government has to approve each parliamentary term. This assessment is undertaken at the end of each planning period by Emakunde with the information provided by Basque public authorities. So far, six plans have been approved, the first one in 1991 and the last one in 2013. Therefore a total of five assessments have been carried out.

c) The assessment of the Equality Act. This assessment must be carried out every five years by the Inter-institutional Commission for Equality of Women and Men. The first one was undertaken in 2010.

d) The preliminary gender impact assessment of the budget draft bill of the Basque Government. The gender impact assessment of the laws and regulations is a consolidated process in the government and the assessment of the budget draft bill has been carried out every year since 2008 by the Department of Finance. In that assessment, the financial resources aimed to promote gender equality are identified and the potential impact of the budget on the situation of women and men is analyzed.

What these four documents have in common is that they provide information open to the public regarding financial resources allocated for gender equality. The government is legally obliged to present this information to the Basque Parliament so that it can control the activity of the government in this field. For example, this last legislative term which started in January 2013, 8 out of the 8 parliamentary hearings and 56 out of 87 of the parliamentary inquiries and questions made in the field of gender equality were about funding and financial matters. Those reports and assessments have contributed to put on the public agenda the economic aspects of equality policies and the equality policies themselves.

In addition, gender budgeting has been carried out by the Basque Government, firstly in the period 1999-2000 and again in 2010-2012. These consisted in analyzing the output of some parts of the budget of various departments of the Basque Government taking into consideration the gender perspective.

4. Conclusions.

Considering the experience of all these years, the main conclusion that can be drawn is that having a solid legal framework has been the key to increasing funding and accountability for gender equality in our country. It is essential to have a legal framework that establishes specific obligations to all public authorities in the field of gender equality relating to financing; planning; undertaking specific functions; implementing substantial measures; creating specific departments and units; training; assessing and public accountability. Having a solid legal framework has enabled the Basque public authorities to carry out stable, systematic and continuous work in favor of equality and, to some extent, has shielded it from possible political vicissitudes and more severe budget cuts.

March 14th, 2014