



## EQUALITY POLICIES FOR WOMEN AND MEN IN THE BASQUE AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY

Vitoria-Gasteiz, February 2019

The Basque Country is an autonomous community in northern Spain. With a population of around 2,200,000 people, it enjoys a large degree of autonomy and has its own Government, Parliament, Ombudsman, police, taxation and universal health system.

Although is a country with a very high Human Development Index (0.915 out of 1), it is not immune to the universal problem of inequality between women and men. The Basque Country, as in other regions in Europe, still need to fight against gender inequalities; if we have a look at the Gender Equality Index (GEI), the Basque Country obtains 69.3 points out of 100, which places it in ninth position in the GEI ranking of the countries of the European Union.

The following data is a sign of the work have to be done to overcome the inequality between women and men:

- The employment rate of women is 45% compared to 54% for men.
- The average income of women is 15.578 euros, far behind the 25.696euros average for men.
- Women have, on average, a 24% lower salary than men.

- Women spend an average of 2 hours and 20 minutes per day on domestic work and men 1 hour and 50 minutes.
- Women have an average of about an hour and a half less leisure time per day than men.
- 75% of the mayors are men.
- Women represent 28% of the people who make up the boards of directors of financial institutions and IBEX-35 companies based in the Basque Autonomous Community.
- Around 4,000 women each year report being victims of partner, domestic or sexual violence.

Equality policies in our country were first introduced in 1988, when the Basque Institute for Women, better known as Emakunde, was created by law, in response to the demands of the women's movements and the international commitments closely related to matter.

Emakunde is an autonomous body attached to the office of the President of the Basque Government, who is also the head of the Board of Directors of Emakunde. The Board of Directors is made up of representatives of the Basque Government departments, the Basque Parliament, provincial and local authorities, women's organizations and 6 individuals appointed by the Basque Parliament, after having taken into consideration their career in the field of equality between women and men.

The staff of Emakunde is made up of 37 people.

The purpose of the Institute is to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and achieve real and effective equality between women and men in the Basque Country. Emakunde is the organization responsible for regulating, promoting, advising, planning and assessing equality policies in the Basque Autonomous Country.

Since the creation of Emakunde, there have been great advances with regard to gender equality policies in our country. Below is a brief summary of the 17 most outstanding aspects of these policies.

## 1. A solid legal framework.

The equality policies of our country are based on two laws. Firstly, Law 2/1998 through which Emakunde was created and which lay the foundation for the equality policies in the Basque Country. Among the virtues of the adoption of this law was that of placing Emakunde in a central and strategic position in the government, attached to the presidency. This has facilitated the promotion of equality policies in each of the areas of public intervention, in a decentralized manner and in accordance with a gender mainstreaming approach. Being regulated by an act has also enabled Emakunde to carry out stable, systematic and continuous work, and has shielded it largely from possible political vicissitudes and severe budget cuts.

The second legal landmark was the 4/2005 Equal Opportunity Between Women and Men Act. This marked a turning point in the history of equality policies in the Basque Country. Among other many mandates, this law obliges all Basque public authorities to:

- have gender-equality bodies 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.
- incorporate the gender perspective in sectoral policies, with special emphasis on education, the workplace and on basic social rights.

The assessments carried out show that the 4/2005 Act has enabled significant advances in the building of capacity to incorporate the gender perspective into the activity of Basque public administrations. In this regard, we have to mention the first *United Nations Public Service Award* obtained in 2015, which recognised Emakunde for the excellence shown in the implementation of the Basque Gender

Equality Act in the *Promoting Gender Responsible Delivery of Public Services* category.

## **2. Equality bodies and units in Basque public administrations.**

Prior to the approval of the 4/2005 Act, Emakunde was the only body working in the promotion of gender equality at regional level in the Basque Country. Today, together with Emakunde, there is a specialized equality unit in all of the departments of the Basque Government, as well as in the Basque Employment Service, the Basque Agency for Development Cooperation, the Basque Health Service, the Basque Institute for the Basque Occupational Health & Safety Institute, the Basque Institute of Statistics, Institute for Adult Literacy Work and Learning of the Basque Language and the Basque public media group Euskal Irrati Telebista. Thus, the number of gender experts working at the Basque Government has increased by 400% since 2005.

At provincial and local level, the three provincial governments, 50 local councils and 8 associations of local councils have an equality body or unit.

## **3. A pioneering structure within the state to promote equal treatment and the protection of citizens against discrimination on grounds of sex.**

In compliance with Article 8 of Directive 2002/73/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, Law 4/2005 created for the first time within the state an independent body formally attached to Emakunde but with no hierarchical link to it, to promote equal treatment and protection of citizens against discrimination on grounds of sex within the private sector. The functions of the body involved the handling of complaints and assistance to victims and the conducting of research and preparation of reports and recommendations, and its creation meant the complementing the work that the *Ararteko*, or Ombudsman, had been doing in this regard in the public sector. In 2012, the Equality Act was modified to make the Ombudsman into a service attached to Emakunde, in terms of both organization and function.

## **4. A large number of coordination organizations and inter-institutional collaboration networks.**

The most important coordination organizations and collaboration networks are:

- *The Interdepartmental Commission for the Equality of Women and Men.* This commission was created in 1993 to coordinate the equality policies within the Basque Government. It is headed by the president of the Basque Government and made up of representatives of all departments.
- *The Inter-institutional Commission for the Equality of Women and Men.* This was created in 2007 and is presided over by the director of Emakunde. Within it, the three levels of Basque public administration (regional, provincial and local) are represented, with the aim of coordinating their equality policies.
- *The Inter-institutional Commission to coordinate the assistance of the victims of domestic and sexual violence against women.* This was created in 2001 and is chaired by the director of Emakunde. It is made up of representatives of all public institutions involved in the assistance of those victims: the judiciary, the Prosecutor's office, the Ombudsman, the Basque Medical Association, the Basque Bar Association, provincial and local authorities and the Basque Government; and within the Basque Government: the departments of justice, security, social affairs, employment, healthcare, housing and education.
- *The Network of Public Institutions for the Equality of Women and Men.* This is a network instigated in 2014 by Emakunde, which is made up of around 20 public bodies attached or linked to the Basque Government, and aims to advance the implementation of equality measures and policies in public sector organizations, by the optimization of existing resources and the collective use of the experience and work carried out by each of them.
- *The Network of Collaborative Entities for the Equality of Women and Men.* This network was promoted by Emakunde in 2016 to promote the cooperation and mutual learning of those collaborative entities, and to help them to understand why equality should be a core value for their enterprises and for the whole society.
- *The Network of Basque Municipalities for equality and against violence towards women (Berdinsarea).* This network was created in 2005 between Emakunde and Eudel, the association of Basque municipalities, and now comprises 69 municipalities that bring together around 79% of the population of the Community. To become a member of this network, the following conditions are

required: to have an equality action plan, at least one gender officer in the staff, a specific budget to carry out equality policies and a local council for the participation of women and women's association.

- *The service to advise and support local councils that have a smaller population (Berdinbidean).* This service was created in 2010, as a result of the collaboration between the provincial governments, Eudel and Emakunde, and aims to promote and support the development of equality policies in the smallest local councils in a coordinated manner.

Within the framework of these coordinating bodies and collaboration networks, a large number of working groups have been created to deal with different issues regarding gender equality policies. An example of this collaboration is the *Gender Based Impact Assessment Guide* devised for local bodies.

## **5. Increasing collaboration with European and international institutions and organizations.**

Emakunde keeps collaborating with diverse international organizations, its cooperation with the European Institute for Gender Equality and UN being among the most important.

A recent example of this kind of collaborations is the participation of Emakunde in the United Nations Joint Global Programme<sup>1</sup> on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence. The aim of this programme is to provide greater access to a coordinated set of essential and quality multi-sectoral services for all women and girls who have experienced gender based violence.

## **6. A broad culture of planning and evaluation.**

At the regional level, the first equality plan was adopted in 1991 and the latest in December 2013, each of these prepared by Emakunde and approved by the Basque Government. The VII Plan for Equality between Women and Men in the Basque Autonomous Community, currently in force, establishes that the main

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.irekia.euskadi.eus/en/news/35176-lehendakari-participa-junto-con-emakunde-unas-jornadas-que-analizan-los-estandares-internacionales-para-atender-las-victimas-violencia-contra-las-mujeres>

areas of intervention of the Basque authorities in this field are: the promotion of good governance; women empowerment; transforming economies and social organization to ensure the rights; and lives free of violence against women.

Nowadays, all the departments of the Basque Government and the three provincial governments have an equality plan, as do 42% of the local councils which make up almost 90% of the population of the Community.

All of the equality plans approved by the Basque Government and the equality act itself are evaluated annually, and the Basque Government is accountable to the Basque Parliament for the carrying out of this task. Since 2010, the collection of data for the monitoring and evaluating of the equality plan is achieved by means of a computer application and via Internet. The participative and qualitative assessment of the Law 4/2005 carried out in 2015, where more than a 165 people and organizations took part, is a representative example of this broad culture of evaluation.

**7. Specific and ongoing training on equality for the Basque Government staff.**

The staff of the Basque public administration have been provided with equality training for many years; but it is only since the approval of the law and, particularly in relation to the Basque Government, since the approval of the Plan for equality training 2008-2018, that this training has been provided in a systematic, ongoing and coordinated way by the Basque Institute of Public Administration, in collaboration with Emakunde.

**8. A consolidated procedure to assess the gender impact of Basque Government regulations.**

Preliminary gender impact assessments were carried out for the first time in 2007, when the Basque Government approved a number of directives and initiated other measures for their general implementation, such as providing advice, training, guidance materials, working groups, etc. Since then, more than 1.300 standards have been evaluated and preliminary impact assessment has been established as a consolidated and generalized practice within the Basque Government, and has even been recognized as good practice by the European Institute for Gender Equality.

## **9. Gender-based analysis of budgets.**

The first exercise in this field was carried out in the period 1999-2000 and the second between 2010 and 2012. In both cases, it basically consisted in analysing the expenditure in specific items and sections of the budget of various departments of the Basque Government, in order to study the extent to which women and men were beneficiaries of that expense.

In addition, since 2009 a report has been produced annually to assess the gender impact of the overall budget of the Basque Autonomous Community. Besides this annual report, since 2015 all the technical rules that regulate budgeting establish that all the budget programs should fill out a form that analyzes the gender impact and includes measures to correct the inequalities between women and men and to promote the equality.

## **10. Balanced representation of women and men in executive and legislative bodies.**

Thanks to the 4/2005 Act, there is a balanced representation of both sexes (40-60%) in the Basque Parliament, the Basque Government, the three provincial governments and among the counsellors of the local authorities. On the other hand, only 25% of mayors are women.

## **11. Increasing inclusion of equality clauses in contracts and subsidies.**

Above all since 2005, many measures have been taken (such as directives, training, advice, guidance materials, working groups etc.) to promote the inclusion of equality clauses in the contracts and subsidies of Basque public institutions. In 2015, in the Basque Government, 67% of the contracts and 48% of the subsidies included equality clauses.

In 2016, this process was selected by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) as one of the best practices for gender equality in Europe.

## **12. Program for the empowerment of women politicians.**

Virginia Woolf Basqueskola is a program that was launched in 2012, in collaboration with Emakunde and Eudel, the association of Basque



municipalities, with the aim of empowering women politicians and promoting networking. It consists of a process of ongoing training and, in addition, it offers a specific space for reflection, the sharing of experiences, the carrying out of joint collaboration and mutual support.

This programme was selected also by the IDB as one of the best practices for gender equality in Europe.

### **13. Working continuously for the promotion and strengthening of associative movements of women.**

The work to strengthen women's associative networks is carried out by the Institute through two main initiatives. Firstly, through the subsidizing of women's associations and, secondly, through the Advisory Commission, a body for participation formally created in 1998 and attached to Emakunde, which is intended to be a channel of communication between the women's associations and the Institute to allow the creation of a common space to make proposals, carry out reviews and provide contributions to the equality policies developed within the Community, as well as being a tool to promote and stimulate the associative movement in this sector. There are currently 12 women's associations participating in this commission.

### **14. Extensive experience promoting equality in private companies.**

Since its creation, Emakunde has worked to promote the equality of women and men in private companies and organizations through different means, such as granting subsidies, offering advice, providing training, elaborating guidance material and recognizing companies as "collaborating entities for equality of women and men". The objective is to achieve an improvement in the working conditions of women and a change of organizational culture, through the assessment of the equality of women and men in the company and through the implementation of specific measures (non-discriminatory selection procedures, the promotion of equality, the application of measures to counter sexual and sexist harassment, reconciliation measures, measures favouring equal pay...). Currently, 97 companies and organizations have received this recognition and they have their own network as we have mentioned previously. To support these processes of working with businesses, Emakunde approves consultants who

meet a set of criteria involving quality and equality training to carry out the counselling while meeting minimum standards. At present, there are 19 approved consultants.

### **15. Innovative programs to prevent violence against women.**

Nahiko is a program launched by Emakunde in 2003 to prevent violence against women and to develop a model of relationships based on respect, non-violence and equality. It is implemented in the school environment and essentially involves the implementation of a classroom-based program using educational materials (games and stories), the training of teachers, and raising the awareness of students and families. Since its creation, more than 160 centres and over 12000 students between the ages of 6 and 12 have participated. It has been externally evaluated by the University of the Basque Country, which has found significant changes, with increased levels of self-concept and self-esteem in girls and decreased aggression and increased empathy in boys participating in the program.

Beldur Barik is a pioneering program launched by Emakunde in 2009 in collaboration with Emakunde and Eudel, the association of Basque municipalities, to prevent violence against women among young people. It is an inter-institutional program which, in addition to Emakunde, involves the participation of the Department of Education, Language Policy and Culture of the Basque Government, the three provincial councils and numerous municipal councils, and the University of the Basque Country. The program stands out, above all, for having been developed using a bottom-up approach, taking into account the opinions, demands, needs, interests and ways of communicating of young people.

Jabetuz is an online training programme for professionals who take care of women victims of gender violence. The aim of this programme is to standardize the different approaches of the all the professionals involve in the attention to women victims of violence against women, besides the fact that the programme by itself facilitates an effective inter-institutional coordination and contributes to develop a better response to those women. Since its creation in 2015, there have been 8 editions and over 800 people have participated.

## **16. Inter-institutional mechanisms to promote equality in the media and advertising.**

1998 saw the creation of the Advisory Commission for non-sexist advertising and communication – Begira. This commission is presided over by Emakunde and is composed of representatives from the office of the President of the Basque Government and the relevant departments in the areas of culture, education and tourism, Basque Radio and Television, the University of the Basque Country, women's associations and consumers, and also experts in equality, advertising and communication. It is an advisory body and a meeting place, dedicated to providing advice and to analysing the advertising material that is broadcast through the media and other means of advertising in the Basque Country, in order to eradicate all forms of discrimination against people on the grounds of sex in the fields of advertising and communication. It also ensures the existence of ethical codes relating to the contents broadcast by public media, in addition to promoting agreements with private media that contribute to changing communication to comply with the principle of equality. Begira handles complaints, prepares reports, conducts studies and provides awareness-raising activities and training to the media. In 2016, more than 50 media and advertising agencies adhered to the Code of Ethics to promote non-sexist advertising and communication elaborated by Begira.

## **17. Specific initiatives to engage men in pro-equality activities.**

In 2007, Gizonduz was launched, a program promoted by Emakunde to involve men in the promotion of equality and action to counter violence against women. Since then, some 6,500 men have participated in the training program; more than 10,000 men have signed the Charter of the Basque men for equality and against violence towards women; around 30,000 backpacks with awareness-raising materials have been distributed to parents to foster equal and shared parenting; the number of pro-equality groups of men has increased significantly in the Basque Country; a video game has been designed to discourage sexist and violent behaviour among young people; a significant presence on the internet and in the social media has been achieved and more than 5,000 people like the Facebook

page. Furthermore, there have also been numerous awareness-raising activities, publications, etc.

Further information: [www.emakunde.euskadi.eus](http://www.emakunde.euskadi.eus)

Contact persons:

Ander Bergara Sautua  
Head of Institutional Cooperation  
Emakunde-The Basque Institute for Women  
[emakunde.cooperacion@euskadi.eus](mailto:emakunde.cooperacion@euskadi.eus)

Karmele Jaio Eiguren  
Communication Manager  
Emakunde-The Basque Institute for Women  
[emakunde.prensa@euskadi.eus](mailto:emakunde.prensa@euskadi.eus)