

## **CONCEPT NOTE**

### **EXPERTS' MEETING** **"Equality and The Media"**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The first decree to proclaim the abolition of censorship and introduce the freedom of the press in Spanish history celebrates its bicentenary anniversary this year. This Decree continued the legacy of the principles laid down in the Virginia Declaration of Rights in 1776 and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, signed in France in 1789. Democratic constitutions and citizen's political and individual rights have thus enshrined the right to inform and to be informed, to freely communicate news and opinions - in short, the freedom of thought and expression - for over two centuries.

Women did not take part in the agreements that recognised these rights two hundred years' ago. At that time, the citizens' rights of women had yet to be recognised, but nor did women play a part in subsequent declarations of so-called "human" rights.

Intense efforts have since been made to encourage equality between men and women, to recognise women's human rights and their entitlement to full citizenship. This has ensured that equality has been formally incorporated into the legislations of democratic countries worldwide, as one of their basic principles; it has even become one of the fundamental principles and pillars of the European Union.

However the legal recognition of equality, or the "formal equality" of women and men in the eyes of the Law, has not resulted in "real equality". In other words, the customs, practices and inertia that have been used to discriminate against women, by prioritising or privileging the viewpoints, acts and representation of men, remain unchanged.

The exclusion of women from original human rights agreements has still not been totally rectified in many aspects of our society, such as the media.

From the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on, we have been living in fundamentally media societies. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we live in a knowledge society, where information and communication are key.

The media's importance in achieving real equality provides the basis for this meeting. The media's importance is two-fold. Firstly, regarding the representation and role of women in the structural composition of media companies themselves, in their very essence, their production model, their vision of themselves and the events that unfold,

their staff distribution, their hierarchical organisation and their distribution of power. Secondly, and none the less important, is the media's role in achieving real equality between men and women - a basic underlying tenet of fully-democratic societies. Or to look at the question from another angle: what is the media's role in the current paradigmatic shift? Our reality has substantially changed, in terms of both its legal framework and the everyday lives of women and men in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, so traditional criteria and values no longer serve to analyse it. To what extent does the media play an active part in changing the roles and stereotypes witnessed in our societies?

The social and cultural change we face is such that it will herald new values and attitudes, and will demand new behavioural guidelines. Media companies are essentially opinion-makers, that are able to catalyse a shift in mindsets. The field of media communication is a productive area to discuss governance of the shared public domain. In this sense, we must understand media communication in its widest sense, reflecting the fact that the media does not just convey news but also provides a vehicle for opinion, advertising and the propagation of all kinds of content.

## ISSUES TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT

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- **IV World Conference on Women**

Section J of the Platform for Action of the IV World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) set the objective of promoting the balanced and active participation of women in the media, both as the central figures of content and at all levels of the media's in-house structures and operations.

The document recommends that national and international institutions take action in order to reach these objectives, and furthermore encourages the media themselves to implement mechanisms to promote a worthy and balanced representation of women, eliminating discriminatory and degrading stereotypes.

- **Actions implemented in European Union countries**

Bearing in mind the need to bolster the media's gender perspective, member countries have in recent years taken a series of steps to fulfil the objectives laid down in Section J of the Platform for Action better.

Amongst the most widely-adopted measures, mention should be made of the following:

- Codes of conduct to encourage self-regulation in the media and advertising have been drawn up in almost all Member States.

- Various prizes and awards have been created for journalists, publicists and/or film-makers, to recognise work that favours equality between women and men, for instance in Greece, Portugal and Spain.
- Training and awareness-raising activities have been organised for industry professionals in almost all countries, including Estonia and Latvia, or training materials developed such as *Screen Gender*, a joint project between Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Germany.
- Research has been carried out into the presence of women in radio, television and print media, and how their image is portrayed in the public eye.
- Observatories have been put in place to monitor and control sexism, such as the Observatory of the Image of Women in Spain, or Commissions created, as has been the case in France and Hungary.
- Media collaboration has been sought to raise awareness of equality issues or to combat gender violence, for instance in the Czech Republic, Italy, Slovakia, and Spain.

- **Actions undertaken in Spain**

For its part, Spain has taken important strides in equality and media regulation, to ensure that discriminatory content is eradicated and to encourage the advancement of women to positions of responsibility in publicly-owned media. Similarly, institutional advertising rules and recent audiovisual communication regulations have been revised to incorporate the gender perspective. In parallel, collaboration agreements have been reached with publicly-owned media to produce content that promotes equality and breaks with gender stereotypes.

- Organic Act 1/2004, of 28 December, on Integral Protection Measures against Gender-based Violence.  
Chapter II. The advertising and media domain.  
Art. 10. Unlawful advertising.  
Art. 12. Authorities entitled to withdraw and modify advertising.  
Art. 13. The media.
- Organic Act 3/2007, of 22 March, for Effective Equality between Women and Men.  
Title II. Equality and the Media.  
Art. 36. Equality in publicly-owned social media.  
Art. 37. RTVE Corporation.  
Art. 38. Agencia EFE.  
Art. 39. Equality in privately-owned social media.  
Art. 40. Audiovisual authority.  
Art. 41. Equality and advertising.
- Law 7/2010, of 31 March, General Audiovisual Communication Legislation.

## OBJECTIVE OF THE MEETING

To open a specific debate on gender equality in the media and the role the media has to play in achieving real equality.

To generate considerations and ideas to improve any actions the European Union institutions and its member countries carry out in the future, in relation to the role of the media in gender equality.

## SUBJECTS TO DISCUSS AND WORK METHODOLOGY

The meeting will address the following subjects:

### 1. Equality in the media agenda.

Reflections on equality in the structural composition of media companies themselves, and in the content the media generates (information, opinion columns, fiction, advertising etc.).

#### QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE:

- How can the equal advancement of women and men to positions of responsibility in the media be achieved?
- How can we encourage the media to represent women in a way that suitably reflects women's social reality?
- How can we ensure that equality policies are addressed with the same due diligence as other public policies?

### 2. New communication models.

New realities demand new communication models. Women's lives have changed dramatically in the last 20 years; however, this progress has not been accompanied by equally dramatic change in the media.

#### QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE:

- Non-sexist communication: a factor for quality, innovation and respect for the fundamental rights of women.

- The influence of modern digital communication forums and the online media, on the survival / eradication of gender-based discrimination.
- The influence of TV series and new reality TV formats on the way equality is perceived.
- Professionalism and professional ethics versus the use of sexist stereotypes.

### 3. Good practice for promoting the gender perspective in the media.

Various actions and projects have been undertaken to achieve the objectives of Section J of the Beijing Platform for Action, in the different European countries. The meeting offers us the chance to exchange experiences and analyse their impact.

- Is media self-regulation viable?
- Are professional training schemes and codes of conduct enough?
- What role can Audiovisual Councils play in defending equality? How can Observatories control and engage citizen participation?

### 4. Proposal for equality indicators in the media.

During the Beijing+15 Forum in Cadiz, it became apparent that despite the efforts made by the European institutions, we currently lack the indicators we need to carry out wide-spread, standardised research into the behaviour of the European media with regards to equality.

The Conclusions of the Beijing+15 Report, adopted by the Council in November 2009, recommended that Member States develop indicators in areas which the Beijing Platform for Action earmarked but which have as yet not been addressed - such as the issue of Women and the Media. Equally, they charged the Commission with the task of drawing up a Plan for monitoring said indicators, using all resources at its disposal, including calling on the experience of the High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming and the expertise of the European Institute for Gender Equality.

Cyprus will begin work to develop indicators on the issue of Women and the Media in the second semester of 2012, and Ireland, in collaboration with the European Institute for Gender Equality, will present a report and propose Conclusions to the Council during the first semester of 2013.

These indicators will provide us with fresh data and enable us to ascertain to what extent equality exists in the media. This in turn will allow us to design more effective strategies to achieve full equality.

Work undertaken to date will be presented in this round table, and its possible application in the different Member States considered.

#### QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE:

- The specificity of indicators for media analysis.
- Potential objects of analysis and different types of indicators.
- Analysis of written and audiovisual content: differences and similarities.