

MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN'S ISSUES

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Re: Beijing questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE ON IMPLEMENTATION IN THE CRITICAL AREAS
OF CONCERN OF THE PLATFORM FOR ACTION

Part one: Overview of trends in achieving gender equality
and women's advancement

The Third Plan of Action for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, adopted by the Spanish Government on 7 March 1997 for the period 1997-2000, is aimed at promoting policies on equal opportunities for the social advancement of women on the basis of commitments set forth in the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, and the guidelines of the European Union's Fourth Action Programme on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women.

These documents establish very clear guidelines for government action: the introduction of a gender equality perspective in all policies and the promotion of women's participation in all spheres of social life, particularly in the productive segment of the economy, as full partners in decision-making, since, without the active participation of women and the mainstreaming of their points of view at all levels of the decision-making processes, the objectives of equality and development will be unattainable.

This Plan is the continuation of previous equality plans. The First Plan covered the period 1988-1990 and the Second Plan, the period 1993-1995.

While the First Plan promoted the establishment of legal equality and the Second Plan, the launching and implementation of special measures to ensure equal opportunities, the Third Plan represents a first attempt to focus on all general policies and measures with the decisive aim of achieving equality.

The challenge facing this Plan is to enhance the participation of men and women in all areas on an equal footing.

In this respect, the three central themes of the Plan are:

- The development of specific measures to combat gender-based discrimination and to increase women's participation in all aspects of society.
- The development of the principle of cross-cutting, which ensures that every activity involves the protection and guarantee of the principle of equal treatment, both in Spain and in comprehensive activities of cooperation with other Governments.

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- Incorporation of a social perspective into government policies.

These goals are pursued in the context of a changing society and of developments in Europe, bearing in mind Spain's commitment to all the women in other parts of the world who face threats and who do not enjoy the same rights or status as women in our own society.

On the basis of these assumptions, numerous legislative reforms and policies have been introduced during the period since the Beijing Conference in order to promote equality of opportunity between men and women; there has been a major effort to incorporate a cross-cutting gender perspective into all government activities during this period.

The most significant results of the commitments undertaken were achieved in the following areas:

Taking into account the importance of education as a basic tool for women's self-reliance - in order to enable them to make choices consistent with their own views and to exercise the rights to which they are entitled - a significant change has taken place in our country in recent years with regard to the education of women. It is reflected in the total number of girls enrolled in non-compulsory primary and secondary schools and in the fact that the majority of university students are women.

Despite this progress, greater efforts are still necessary in this area.

The female illiteracy rate remains higher than the male rate, 15.39 per cent compared to 2.32 per cent. Women are also in the minority in enrolment in scientific and technological courses (they account for 22.66 per cent of the students in such courses, compared to 66.98 per cent in the humanities), and, while a growing number of women are employed as teachers, they are seriously under-represented in the most prestigious areas and at the highest levels. Therefore, the activities contemplated in the Third Plan are aimed primarily at improving this situation through the promotion of women's equal access to all educational processes by developing models that promote equality.

In the field of employment, it should be stressed that women's situation in the labour market has significantly improved in recent years. However, while an increasing number of women are being incorporated into the working world, the rate of female employment is 37.2 per cent - 26.18 percentage points below that of men; this reality demonstrates that women lag far behind men with regard to the full enjoyment of all their social and economic rights.

Therefore, in addition to improving women's employability, it is necessary to increase the numbers of women in managerial posts, boost their entrepreneurial activity and revalue their household work.

The Third Plan contemplates measures aimed at strengthening structures which, in their present state, prevent women from entering and remaining in the labour market, and from being promoted.

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These structural changes must necessarily be based on the equitable division of family and work responsibilities between men and women. In the interest of reconciling family and professional life, amendments to the labour code and improvements in the system of social services that promote flexible assignments and working hours in the productive world should enable women and men to reconcile work and family responsibilities on an equal footing.

In this connection, we should also highlight the Employment Action Plan, submitted by Spain to the European Union in June 1998, in accordance with the guidelines of the Luxembourg Summit Meeting, which includes specific activities for the sole purpose of creating stable, high-quality employment in order to ensure that Spain is genuinely on the same level as the rest of Europe, particularly as regards women. The Plan contains specific measures to promote equal opportunities and encourage women's participation in society by eliminating obstacles to their entry into the labour market.

The changes in organizational and productive structures that have taken place in our country have not yet resulted in balanced participation by both sexes in power and decision-making.

Although women's participation in political life has progressively increased, there is an obvious qualitative and quantitative imbalance in this regard. Women hold 25.1 per cent of the seats in the Congress of Deputies, 14.9 per cent of the Senate seats and 19.05 per cent of the seats in the autonomous parliaments; they account for 32.8 per cent of Spanish representation in the European Parliament, which is higher than the Parliament's average of 27.6 per cent.

Hence, of the 15 States members of the European Union, Spain ranks seventh in terms of degree of political participation.

As for the Government, women account for 44.45 per cent of the civil service but only 29.48 per cent of the high-level posts; similarly, they hold 10.57 per cent of the high-level government posts and represent 11.41 per cent of the councillors of the autonomous governments and 6.53 per cent of municipal employees.

Accordingly, the measures in this section of the Third Plan are designed to promote women's participation in all decision-making processes, which requires that they be present in all spheres of social life.

In the area of poverty and social exclusion in general, the strategies and policies implemented in our country have, in recent years, been aimed primarily at combating the growing feminization of poverty.

Female immigrants, gypsies, prostitutes (some of them drug addicts or AIDS victims), prisoners and single heads of household suffer from various degrees and forms of social exclusion, which have been a prime focus of attention within the framework of the activities contemplated under the Third Plan of Action, through the implementation of specific programmes to support the groups in question, adapted to the special characteristics of each; financing for such programmes has increased significantly.

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Special mention should be made of the policies developed for the benefit of rural women, whose situation has changed considerably in recent years.

Activities to strengthen the role of rural women have intensified, as demonstrated by the adoption of the Third Plan, which introduced a specific section on meeting the needs of these women - not only those living in rural areas but also those living in urban areas who work in the rural areas.

As women are increasingly subjected to physical, psychological and sexual abuse which prevents them from enjoying their human rights and fundamental freedoms, the theme of violence is one of the areas to which our Government is devoting special attention.

Over the years, there has been a considerable increase in complaints of violations of sexual freedom, suggesting that women are more aware of the need to report such incidents, which affect all of society and are not only an individual problem.

In order to deal with both the causes and consequences of domestic violence, in 1998 the Spanish Government adopted the Plan of Action against Domestic Violence 1998-2000, which has six main parts: awareness-building and prevention; education and training; social resources; health; legislation and judicial practice; and investigation, with a total budget of 9 billion pesetas (approximately US\$ 57 million).

With regard to health, in recent years there have been major improvements in women's access to health services and health care programmes; our Plan, however, contemplates various activities aimed at preventive health care for women throughout their life cycle.

The principal measures are aimed at establishing programmes for the preventive diagnosis of disease, providing adequate information to women, conducting studies and collecting gender- and age-disaggregated data for further analysis, while devoting the necessary attention to elderly women who require special care and to young women through campaigns for the adoption of a healthier lifestyle.

In this connection, we should highlight the elaboration by the Ministry of Health, with the cooperation of the Institute for Women's Issues, of the Comprehensive Women's Health Care Plan, adopted in 1999 and aimed at strengthening and broadening women-specific services.

The mass media and the multimedia systems are among the basic vehicles of socialization in contemporary society.

In addition to implementing various measures contemplated in the Third Plan, and with a view to creating a clear social awareness of the role which women play and the way that they are often portrayed in advertising, which is based on stereotypes rooted in the past, the Institute for Women's Issues created the Advertising Monitoring Unit, which has two basic mechanisms: a toll-free telephone number for reporting offending advertisements and an Image Evaluation Council to deal with the image of women in the media, with a view to

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eradicating discriminatory advertisements and preventing, as far as possible, sexist distinctions between men and women.

Among the measures summarized above, we can highlight, with regard to the mainstreaming of the gender perspective, the progress achieved as a result of the implementation of the Third Plan for Equal Opportunities in such areas as employment, where great efforts have been made in view of the difficulties women encounter in that area; violence, because of the seriousness and magnitude of the problem; increased investment in activities to provide social services to women; and, lastly, an increase in budgetary, human and material resources to ensure equality of opportunity between men and women.

Other topics, such as the environment, which was introduced in the Third Plan, and power and decision-making, have witnessed major progress and remain areas of concern for our Government; thus, strong impetus must be given to promoting measures in both spheres.

The implementation of the activities included in the Third Plan is monitored in the first quarter of every year.

According to the review of the implementation of the Third Plan on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, during the first year it was in effect 146 of the 192 activities it contained were launched; this means that 75 per cent of those activities were carried out or initiated, although they are all in different phases of execution. Some activities can be regarded as completed; others, by contrast, are in the process of being implemented.

In nine of the ten areas covered by the Third Plan, the degree of implementation in the first year was equal to or greater than 50 per cent.

Part two: Financial and institutional measures

During the time period covered by this questionnaire, there was a major increase in the budgetary, human and material resources devoted to ensuring equality of opportunity between men and women.

The Government's priority interest in policies to promote equality is reflected in the most recent budgets adopted, which were elaborated as austerity budgets but allocated more resources to the Institute for Women's Issues; this Institute, particularly in recent years, has assisted non-governmental organizations in carrying out programmes for the social integration of women, literacy and education, comprehensive care for female victims of violence, disease prevention and improving women's health, as well as information on and dissemination and protection of women's human rights. In this same time period, approximately 354 non-governmental organizations received funding to carry out 604 programmes for the full integration of women in the social fabric.

In 1996, 111 entities received support to carry out 211 programmes, and, in 1995, 136 non-governmental organizations or entities carried out 215 programmes. This represented an increase of nearly 500 million pesetas over 1995.

These programmes have been implemented through two mechanisms:

1. Through general programme grants whose purpose is to support the women's association movement and the social participation of women, especially with respect to the labour market, education and decision-making;
2. Through programmes designed to promote equal opportunities for men and women, giving priority through the allocation of 0.52 per cent of the individual income tax to literacy and education programmes intended to enhance women's skills and promote their access to the various educational levels. Priority is also given to programmes intended to promote the employment and self-employment of women in order to ensure equal opportunities for women in the labour market. It is also interesting to note the consolidation during this time period of the Comprehensive Plan of Basic Social Services Benefits, which includes projects for, inter alia, the provision of equipment to social services centres, shelters, hostels and information and other services, on the basis of the agreements concluded between the Ministry of Social Affairs, the autonomous communities and local communities.

In 1996, 987 projects were financed through the Plan, compared to 1,024 projects in 1997, as funding for that purpose has increased in recent years.

The autonomous communities have their own equal opportunity mechanisms which are represented through the channels established to strengthen cooperation among government services.

The Sectoral Women's Conference of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, to which the Institute for Women's Issues is answerable, is the engine and coordinator of the equal opportunity policies outlined by the autonomous communities it represents and by the national Government, to which end plenary meetings are periodically held.

Among the objectives of the Sectoral Conference are the evaluation and implementation of the commitments of the Fourth World Conference on Women and other global conferences relating to the ministerial departments' responsibilities.

The Institute for Women's Issues also has a governing body composed of the ministerial departments, women's associations and social agents.

Among the duties of the governing body is the implementation of policies to ensure coordination among, inter alia, the various ministerial departments.

The autonomous communities, through the Sectoral Conference, and non-governmental organizations and social interlocutors participated in the elaboration of the Third Plan for Equal Opportunities, in accordance with the guidelines established by the Fourth World Conference on Women. Thus, the Plan has won the basic consensus of the institutions and of most of these social agents, which makes it possible to mainstream the dimension of equal opportunities in the corresponding policies and activities.

Similarly, the shared responsibility of the Government, non-governmental organizations and social interlocutors is established in the implementation, follow-up and evaluation of the measures carried out during the period the Plan has been in effect.
