



## **PROPOSALS OF THE EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY IN SPAIN TO ERADICATE SEXISM FROM THE SPANISH MEDIA**

The Recommendations drawn up by the Council of Europe in March 2019 are the result of reflection on and implementation of the right to gender equality on the continent. Within this historical text, the organisation has outlined the keys that involve sexist manifestations in very different spheres of society. The objective was clear: to combat and eradicate this form of discrimination based on sex in all sectors.

The European Women's Lobby in Spain (EWL Spain), as one of the nine countries participating in the campaign *Mobilízate Contra el Sexismo* (Mobilise Against Sexism) whose objective has been to disseminate these Recommendations, has been responsible for analysing the situation of sexism in two main sectors: the media and the justice system. In this document we set out the main proposals to be implemented in order to make progress in the eradication of sexism in the Spanish media. In a similar text we find the proposals regarding the judicial system.

In the current context of the pandemic, where the information space has been taken over by the health situation for months, there is a risk of reversing the progress made in gender equality in the communication sector. Information on issues that particularly affect women may be displaced and the particular effects on them minimised in the flood of news on the COVID. At the same time, the human resources available to newsrooms are diminished, making this work even more difficult. For all these reasons, this is a particularly sensitive time for the return of stereotyped and biased communications, as journalism that lacks a gender perspective leaves women, half the population, out of the picture. Thus, the situation resulting from the COVID carries the risk, in addition to the loss of information, of the loss of information where women are.

Even in these exceptional times, gender-sensitive journalism should not be neglected. Only by taking into account the 51% of the population that we women represent can we begin to consider that journalism is being practised professionally.

The following measures are the result of the debate. Last Thursday 29 October, as part of the work that LEM Spain is carrying out in the framework of the campaign, we organised a web seminar with recognised professionals from the sector. A total of five speakers took part. They are as follows: Pilar Álvarez Melero, who has more than 20 years' experience and has been the gender correspondent for the newspaper El País since 2018; Macarena Baena Garrido, director of Efeminista, the equality website of the public news agency EFE; Yanna Gutiérrez Franco, Director of the scientific journal Comunicación y Género, Professor of Applied Economics in the Faculty of Information Sciences at the Complutense University of Madrid and Academic Secretary of the University Institute for Feminist Research; Carolina Pecharromán, Equality Editor for TVE, and Ana Requena, Editor-in-Chief of Gender for the digital newspaper Eldiario.is in whose foundation she participated in 2012. The event was moderated by Marta Ortiz Díaz, president of the Spanish Association of Women in the Media and treasurer of LEM Spain.

During their speeches, the speakers agreed on several fundamental aspects for making progress in eradicating sexism in the media.

First of all, they bet on **mainstreaming the application of the gender perspective to information**. This proposal has a double aspect. On the one hand, they propose as an unavoidable demand that the non-stereotyped and non-discriminatory treatment of women is not limited only to the usual sections (they pointed out especially in this sense Society). On the contrary, it should be applied to less usual sections such as Economy, Sports and even in the information about the Royal House.

On the other hand, **transversality must also be applied to journalistic formats**. Care must be taken not only with the content of the news but also with the content. The infotainment spaces, the websites and the bulletins must all work towards non-sexist communication. In the specific case of television, images, even resource images, also communicate and can transfer stereotypes, especially with regard to the assimilation of roles. In the media, the use of images should encourage, as far as possible, the diversity of bodies and ages among the people they present. The disappearance of women above a certain age and of those whose bodies do not respond to certain standards is evident.

To ensure non-sexist information in the media, professionals have to **avoid clichés in language**. Some examples of these, when talking about "black widows" (one never hears black widowers) or taking for granted in women, in interviews, care roles and not men (how do you manage to take care of your family and be on a film set?) contribute to the reinforcement of patriarchy. Eliminating these connotations of sexist communication would avoid supporting and spreading an environment in which machismo is tolerated and trivialised by the media. With a **greater diffusion of non-sexist communication manuals**, which some media already have and their practical application, progress can be made in this direction.

In addition, **the information must be disaggregated by sex**. In other words, in order to understand the scope of a news item where quantitative results are provided, it is imperative to make this breakdown. For example, as Pilar Álvarez Melero said during the meeting, male and female unemployment are not the same thing.

Secondly, **there was a unanimous call to strengthen gender-sensitive education in communication degrees in Spanish faculties** by making it a compulsory subject. So far it has been limited to an optional subject in some Faculties. Similarly, all degrees, regardless of their branch of knowledge, should include gender perspective modules. Such an implementation of the feminist perspective in universities can only be possible if more attention is paid to and gender studies are strengthened. It is the media themselves who have the duty to give greater visibility to this field of study and thus achieve greater knowledge.

But the speakers went further and pointed out that this education with feminist values was instilled from the earliest stages of our education system: **infant and primary education**. Thus, from the age of 0, children in our country will begin to be educated with this perspective and this will not be a task only for the universities. Of course, this proposal must be accompanied by training work for teachers at all stages of education.

And let us not forget that education and awareness is not exclusive to the formal education system. **Advertising and the media, especially campaigns directed from the public sector, have a lot of responsibility** in educating and raising awareness among the public and audiences. In this sense, they must be directed especially at men in order to make them participants in the fight for equality. Only by including the entire population can we move closer to the goal of a more inclusive society.

On the other hand, **special emphasis was placed on the need to have expert agendas in all editorial offices**. On many occasions, information and programmes of a discussion or debate type suffer from the lack of female voices. To this end, it would be useful to have databases of female experts who can be consulted according to their area of knowledge. In this way, women will be made visible at the debate tables, promoting references and a plurality of voices. The Council of Europe has reported that at least 75% of the sources and subjects of information in the news are men. Men are the experts who are used to expand and contextualise information and it is mainly men who sit at the round tables. Women are still being penalised for speaking in public, especially in the case of women journalists or politicians.

Finally, during the meeting there was also agreement on the **need to involve those responsible for the media in practice in** order to promote the internal dissemination of the gender perspective. The influence that a journalist has within his or her editorial office to disseminate work along these lines is limited. Only by having these managers will it be possible to implement this women-sensitive journalistic culture.

Finally, it was proposed that meetings be held between journalists and decision-makers to discuss the measures needed to advance equality.

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