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INFORME

WOMEN, WORK AND CARE: PROPOSALS AND PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS



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FINAL CONSIDERATION

CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS

1. Slow progress on equality: need to step up efforts

Despite the undeniable progress made in recent decades, it is necessary to continue to make visible the on-going inequality between women and men, both in the field of paid work and in the distribution of care work, as well as in other dimensions of economic and social organisation. Furthermore, it is essential to note the severe impact of the pandemic on the reality of women, since pre-existing inequalities have been amplified and the imminence of a new crisis with unknown consequences makes it advisable to take advantage of the lessons learned from previous experiences. It is also necessary to capitalise on the opportunity offered by the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan scenario (Plan de Recuperación, Transformación y Resiliencia / PRTR), which envisages the powerful impact that closing the gender gap would have on growth by harnessing the talent of society as a whole.

Progress on gender equality in the European Union has been too slow, non-linear and, in some areas, regressive. According to the European Institute for Gender Equality (IGE 2021), at the current rate, equality between men and women will not be achieved for three generations, and this is without taking into account the impact of COVID-19. Just before the pandemic, in 2019, Spain ranked sixth in the European Union, although there had been some stagnation since 2010. Spain stood out for its favourable position in health, education and political participation. The main disadvantages of women in Spain were the greater time spent on care-related activities and the scant progress in the field of employment, ranking 12th, and especially in the subfield of labour participation, where it was 22nd, according to the EIGE.

The most recent crises have had a profound gender impact. Moreover, uncertainty about the impact of the Ukrainian invasion on the recovery process may pose a new challenge to advances on equality. It is precisely in the face of such disruptions that it becomes particularly important to accelerate and intensify efforts in the field of gender equality policies.

2. Knowing, diagnosing and making visible in order to act against inequalities

The pandemic has further highlighted the existing information gaps, as indicators included in official data sources do not always disaggregate by sex, nor do they usually record

issues, incorporating qualitative analyses that would be relevant for their interpretation from a gender perspective. Therefore, despite improvements in statistical information systems, it is still difficult to make an accurate diagnosis of the situation of women in different areas. Making women's specific problems visible is a precondition for designing solutions to them.

As an example, the SARS-Cov-2 health crisis has exposed the complex reality of health inequalities, due to biological as well as environmental and social factors, which is reflected both in the available epidemiological indicators and in the absence of information on relevant aspects of the evolution of the pandemic and its impact on women.

This problem is not limited to Spain. The European Parliament has in fact made a general request to all Member States and European institutions to improve the production of regular data on the impact of COVID-19 disaggregated by sex, in order to be able to know more accurately the impact on gender equality and to ensure better-tailored policy responses.

It is therefore necessary for statistical bodies to reinforce the production and updating of data disaggregated by sex which, in addition to complying with the relevant regulations, will improve knowledge of the reality of women in different areas (time use, income, Social Security affiliation, health and access to healthcare, entrepreneurship, digitalisation, science and technology, social protection, among others) in order to identify the obstacles to effective equality.

Furthermore, and beyond data, it would be important to promote the inclusion of a gender perspective in studies and research of all kinds, which also implies a qualitative analysis considering their distinct position and the incidence of gender roles in different areas, in order to understand the specific reality of women in all its dimensions and to detect persistent inequalities.

The improvement of information is also a necessary requirement for the evaluation of measures to advance effective equality, assessing their adequacy and effectiveness as well as the efficiency of the use of public resources allocated to them.

It is essential to put in place systems for permanent monitoring and evaluation of the measures and strategies adopted in favour of equality.

In any case, it would be advisable to improve the mandatory gender impact assessment in the process of approving regulations and, in general, to incorporate this vision into the design, monitoring and evaluation of all public policies, thereby effectively complying with legal provisions.

3. Equitable sharing of time, work and care

The lack of appreciation of the unpaid work that women have traditionally carried out within the family is at the root of many situations of inequality in the labour market,

which also discourage or devalue women's participation in the labour market, and which is reflected in the care work sectors, mostly occupied by women. The unequal opportunities for women that this attachment to family care implies must be redressed and these cultural biases must not be carried over by inertia into the post-pandemic scenario.

As we have seen throughout this report, the pandemic has brought with it a clear shift in people's lives towards the home and the private sphere, which carries with it clear risks of reversing the progress made in recent decades in terms of equality between women and men. Thus, while according to the limited empirical evidence available, men have also increased

*Increasing
co-responsibility,
essential for
equality*

the time spent on unpaid work since March 2020, this has by no means closed the gender gap in this area. As women are the majority carers of children and dependent adults, they have had to make up for the partial or total limitation of access to care services or informal help.

With regard to women's paid work, a twofold trend in terms of the impact of the pandemic can be highlighted, depending mainly on the sectors and occupations in which they are located. On the one hand, women form the majority in sectors involving a greater degree of physical proximity, those sectors that were initially more affected by the sharp drop in employment (such as hotels and catering, tourism) or by their exposure to the virus and work overload (such as health and care for dependent persons). On the other hand, in other sectors, a trend towards more home-based work has started, which has allowed them to maintain their activity. However, this has entailed some risks both from a strictly work-related point of view (potential isolation of the worker, stress, increased occupational risks, accumulation of working hours, etc.) and in terms of the difficulty of establishing boundaries between work and personal life, as both are carried out in the same space.

The pandemic has clearly disrupted personal and collective life and gender equality, highlighting a phenomenon that was already there, namely that women are mostly responsible for unpaid care work and that this results in a weaker link to the labour market, which puts them at a disadvantage in the face of adverse social or individual circumstances.

To achieve an inclusive labour market that does not discriminate against women or waste a crucial part of their human capital, in a context of, moreover, transforming labour demand, particular attention will need to be paid to:

- *The strategic role of active policies to promote full equality of women and men in the labour market and to respond to their problems and needs, ensuring a gender mainstreaming approach with specific measures that address the different circumstances of women.*

- *Compliance with regulations on equal pay plans and measures in companies and public administrations.*
- *The diversity of women and the specific problems of certain vulnerable groups due to their age, educational level, origin, single parenthood, gender-based violence or other factors. By way of example, it would be necessary to make progress on formulas that also enable reconciliation for women in self-employment and care work.*
- *Active promotion of the presence of women in certain sectors and occupations with growing demand, such as those fields of STEM where they are under-represented, so that their educational achievements are consistently reflected in the labour market and in their professional careers.*
- *The need for families with dependents to have access to professional services and affordable care infrastructures to facilitate the labour participation of all people, which necessarily entails a sufficient provision of public resources.*
- *The design and evaluation of public policies (especially work-life balance policies) which should avoid gender bias in their implementation, and, in general, raise collective awareness of the need to achieve co-responsibility between men and women in unpaid care in order to achieve real equality.*
- *The need, in short, to strengthen co-responsibility beyond the individual sphere, that is, by involving public administrations, companies and society as a whole in order to create more favourable environments for a fairer distribution of time, work and care from a gender perspective.*

4. Further advancing women's economic autonomy

In recent years there have been positive developments through measures that have a direct impact on women's income and economic situation, such as the increase in the minimum wage, the bonus against the gender gap in pensions or measures related to equal pay and equality plans in companies.

It is necessary to further promote the implementation, development and effective application of measures aimed at reducing the pay and pension gap in order to achieve effective equality between women and men.

The economic effects of the pandemic have not been neutral from a gender perspective. The existing information on its most immediate impact shows that it has had a somewhat greater impact on the economic and financial situation of women, although, unlike in previous crises, it has been considerably alleviated by the social policies approved during the crisis, through the temporary lay-offs (ERTE), the special allowance for termination of activity, the minimum living income (IMV) and other measures.

The relevance of social policies in cushioning the social impact of the crisis has been highlighted, and further progress is needed from a more long-term gender perspective to address effective gender equality through economic and social protection measures aimed at overcoming economic gender inequalities.

In addition, the increase in demand for help from third sector organisations has partly reflected problems of access to social benefits and subsidies, which largely affect vulnerable women, with a significant representation of households with dependent children, especially single-parent households and women with an immigrant background.

Thus, in relation to the most vulnerable situations, it is important that public administrations fill the gaps in protection and rectify the bureaucratic, technological or other difficulties that prevent many women from accessing aid.

Specifically, the impact of the IMV in reducing economic gender inequality hinges on its ability to adequately combine the economic benefit with training and labour activation programmes that help to incorporate the greatest possible number of female beneficiaries into the labour market. Only in this way will it be possible to combat the poverty trap that many women find themselves in.

Special attention must also be paid to the management problems that have arisen in its processing and that have undermined its coverage and effectiveness at a time of social emergency, such as that experienced during the pandemic, aggravated by the existing digital gaps in the public administration and among the most vulnerable population.

Beyond the verification of the requirements, public administrations must guarantee information on the existence of the IVM and the availability of the necessary resources to apply for it, as many households living in poverty lack the necessary information and resources to do so.

5. Knowledge, education and science: the drivers of equality

The pandemic has highlighted the enormous transformation experienced by the knowledge system, in the face of an accelerated development of processes that were already underway, such as digitalisation, the massive use of the Internet, social networks, artificial intelligence and big data. This has shaped access to information and acquisition of knowledge and has also highlighted the persistence of some imbalances whose origin lies in gender inequalities, such as the low participation of women in education and employment linked to STEM disciplines, limitations to research careers and the consequent existence of a glass ceiling, digital gender gaps or bias in algorithms.

As a matter of fact, gender mainstreaming in this area is essential to achieve the goal of equality. This implies involving the whole educational community in changing students' attitudes and values regarding equality from the earliest stages, as well as acting on the intrinsic and extrinsic factors linked to the insufficient number of women in some STEM fields (since they are strongly involved in others) or those related to the digital divide.

In this sense, the PRTR offers the opportunity to carry out decisive actions in the knowledge system as a whole, both in the formal education system and in the science, technology and innovation system, assuming greater commitments and developing new initiatives and measures that enable the principle of equality between women and men to be effectively applied. For this reason, in the development of the Plan it will be necessary to dedicate greater resources and make more effective use of them, so that initiatives such as the plan for the modernisation and digitalisation of the education system and the promotion of vocational training accelerate progress in gender equality in this area.

Although the gender gap is present in all stages of education and then extends to the productive system, with segmentation in the occupational structure of women and men, it is particularly worrying in relation to the STEM and ICT fields. The lower presence and participation of women in these fields has among its causes the persistence of gender stereotypes, by internalising a series of patterns about suitability in these subjects that shape not only abilities and skills, but also educational and professional preferences and expectations from the earliest stages, which continue into adolescence and youth and ultimately hinder the full professional inclusion of many women.

Banish STEM stereotypes and encourage greater participation in Science and ICT

Therefore, it is necessary to act from an early age (fostering girls' interest in science and technology from childhood) by promoting an effective model for teaching and learning these disciplines at all stages of education through curricular changes. Initiatives linked to the formal education system must include actions concerning curricular content, educational methodologies, teacher training and programming in schools from the outset and at all stages.

In addition, there is still a significant under-representation in academic and scientific careers, which creates a glass ceiling for young women researchers, who often see their possibilities for professional development limited.

In this respect, although the regulations have long included measures to attract and retain female research talent and to develop women's scientific careers, their effective application should be monitored and the causes preventing progress in this area should be examined in greater depth.

The aim would be to attract more young women to science, showing all the possibilities offered by a research career and correcting the inequalities that occur in the processes of recruitment and selection of research talent or in the leadership and management of projects, but also ensuring an equitable, diverse and inclusive working environment, and effectively promoting work-life balance for research staff through institutional co-responsibility.

Furthermore, it is necessary to promote the role of women in the scientific and technological fields by constructing a new narrative of science and technology that makes visible the decisive participation of women in the science ecosystem. In this respect, although campaigns to promote scientific and technological vocations in girls and young women have succeeded in bringing this reality closer to schools, greater efforts could still be made to make female role models and references more visible.

On the other hand, greater efforts are also needed to raise awareness of the professional development possibilities offered by ICTs and to promote the incorporation of women into the sector and, at the same time, to make progress in detecting imbalances that indicate on-going discrimination and correct them by means of plans and other equality measures, in accordance with the relevant regulations. Digital entrepreneurship by women should also be encouraged, and their participation in the design, creation and production of digital tools, content or services should be promoted.

There is a significant gender digital divide, mainly in terms of access (14% of women are not digitally integrated), which is aggravated in the case of older women, but also in terms of advanced use, as differences persist when it comes to the updating of technological devices, new applications and advanced programmes, which imply inequalities in terms of potential and limits of use.

Achieving gap-free digitalisation and equal participation of women in AI

This is compounded by the existence of a gap in relation to more specialised digital skills which are, in turn, relevant for employability, as digitalisation permeates all sectors of economic activity.

The PRTR has digitalisation as one of its central axes of action which, with a gender perspective, is materialised in ensuring equal access to infrastructures and tools, providing the necessary digital skills and promoting the different uses, basic and advanced, that allow progress towards a greater digital equality of society as a whole, from the youngest ages to the oldest population.

Therefore, part of the actions envisaged in the National Digital Skills Plan (“Plan Nacional de Competencias Digitales”) should aim to provide the necessary digital skills and contribute to overcoming the gender digital divide.

It is necessary to act from the earliest ages, promoting curricular changes from early childhood education and providing didactic and methodological resources that foster the

development of thinking skills and digital competences that equalise opportunities for girls and boys, without any kind of discrimination.

In any case, there is a need to promote lifelong learning in ICT skills, both in advanced skills for women coming from non-technological disciplines, as well as in programmes for professional re-qualification and retraining of skills to adapt to the changes brought about by digitalisation. Moreover, in the case of digital literacy policies, the overlap of gender with age, educational attainment and rurality should be particularly taken into account.

The benefits of AI systems and technology are undeniable, but so are the associated risks, as it has been found that algorithms can include elements of discrimination and risk further perpetuating gender stereotypes. However, if properly designed, AI systems should contribute to reducing existing prejudices and structural discrimination.

The use of artificial intelligence should avoid any gender bias in algorithms, which should be designed avoiding stereotypes and discriminatory practices. This would undoubtedly be helped by greater involvement of women in the process of creating the technology (programming and coding) and by mainstreaming gender equality at all stages of the process.

6. Women, agents of change towards ecological transition

There is a certain lack of coherence between the importance of the role of women in effectively addressing the sustainability agenda and their yet low representation in leading sectors, as well as in decision-making positions in both the public and private sectors. The importance of women's contribution to the urban and rural ecosystem, in the form of paid work, care and social participation, contrasts with the scant attention paid to their needs in terms of infrastructure design, urban planning and housing policies or access to measures to promote environmental sustainability. In addition to being unfair, this situation is inefficient for the productive system itself.

Full incorporation of women into the country transformation implied by the ecological and energy transition promoted by the PRTR represents a challenge full of opportunities to make the most of their talent and implement a new urban and rural agenda that is more inclusive and that provides the backbone of social and territorial cohesion.

In a scenario where much of the activity recovery in the coming years relies on the buoyancy of this axis, it is essential to strengthen the participation and leadership of women in all dimensions of the ecological transition, favouring their access to studies, employment, entrepreneurship and decision-making positions in sectors associated with climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Most of the initiatives adopted in recent years assume the need to incorporate a gender perspective in the fight against the climate emergency and the ecological transition,

especially in those sectors where they are traditionally under-represented, such as energy or water resource management.

In order to consolidate the role of women as agents of change at all levels of the ecological transition, it is important that this commitment is translated into concrete actions, empowering women's participation and effectively incorporating a gender perspective in the implementation and evaluation methodology of the different actions.

Construction, infrastructure and service projects are of great interest from a gender perspective, in areas such as the location of facilities, housing, accessibility, mobility, the perception of safety and the visibility or urban representation of women. In addition, women are more likely to use public transport and less likely to use private vehicles, and they are more likely to make complex journeys related to domestic and care work. They are also exposed more often than men to the risk of violence when walking in certain places and are often, in fact, victims of violence.

The new urban agenda: sustainable and inclusive cities for all people

These differences should be contemplated in a more inclusive design of mobility and urban planning, analysing the experiences of "smart cities" already implemented in many cities, with the participation of women themselves.

Likewise, the role of women as users of the transport system needs to be promoted, taking into account their different needs and habits in terms of travel and traffic patterns.

Moreover, the under-representation of women in the sector should be corrected by implementing equality plans and measures in companies and public administrations and by rolling out specific equal opportunities plans in transport and mobility.

Women's participation in the process of "greening" the economy must be improved, taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the PRTR, especially some of its axes more directly related to the ecological transition, rethinking urban planning and cities to make them more inclusive. It is essential as well to promote employability, entrepreneurship and women's access to jobs and decision-making positions linked to this transformation, with ad hoc policies, programmes and resources.

Sustainable land management is a key element of the ecological transition, on which the quality of food, the production of renewable energies, the conservation of forests, biodiversity and the management of the water cycle depend. The pandemic brought stark evidence of the structural imbalances in the Spanish territorial model, revealing the obstacles and shortcomings in the provision of basic services in many

Women are decisive in the rural agenda and the fight against depopulation

municipalities. Moreover, as highlighted in the CES Report 2/2021 *A living and sustainable rural environment*, many of these imbalances are related to the gender issue.

All of this represents a major obstacle to territorial cohesion, which is why it is necessary to promote the empowerment of women in rural areas and to develop objective conditions for improving their employability, labour participation and promoting entrepreneurship on an equal footing with men; to make progress in improving education, vocational training and digital skills; to adapt policies to ensure equity in equality policies in rural areas, such as reconciliation and co-responsibility; to improve the provision of infrastructures and ensure access to quality public services (such as health, education, social services, care for dependency, mobility, etc.) as well as to guarantee maximum security and care for victims of violence against women, while at the same time promoting generational change.

In line with these needs, the PRTR places territorial cohesion among its main cross-cutting axes and thus links up with the Plan of Measures to Meet the Demographic Challenge (Plan de Medidas ante el Reto Demográfico). The gender perspective should be particularly taken into account in its implementation.

Many women, because of their more unfavourable socio-economic circumstances, may be particularly affected by the costs of the energy transition. A comprehensive vision of fair transition refers to the need to leave nobody behind in this transformation process.

Fair energy transition, with and for women

It should be borne in mind that energy poverty particularly affects single-parent households, which find it more difficult both to meet their bills and to undertake energy efficiency improvements in their homes. Apart from the measures for vulnerable groups included in the Energy Poverty Strategy, there is a risk that women do not have access to other types of aid and incentives that require a significant investment, even though this is reduced by aid (subsidies for energy rehabilitation of buildings and access to renewable energies; aid for sustainable mobility and electric cars, etc.).

It is necessary to strengthen the gender perspective in the Energy Poverty Strategy. At the same time, preventive measures against energy poverty should be promoted for different population groups that are particularly exposed, with special relevance in the case of elderly women living alone.

In addition, there is a need to promote gender-equal access to energy transition assistance.

7. Towards a new care economy: a comprehensive vision

The incorporation of women into the labour market and their access to higher levels of education (redefining their work and personal expectations) has changed work, family and gender structures, posing a challenge in the provision of care, historically carried out by women at the household level due to the unfair distribution of the burden of domes-

tic and care responsibilities between women and men. The shortcomings in the area of co-responsibility, together with the advance of demographic ageing, place the so-called “care crisis” among the most important social and economic challenges, with an obvious gender dimension.

The PRTR and, more specifically, the “Co-Responsible Plan” (*Corresponsables*) already point towards this new productive model. In relation to the latter, although it is a positive initiative in the direction of creating “integrated care systems”, facilitating families’ access to professionalised care services, it remains to be seen how effectively it is implemented by the different Autonomous Communities.

Sectors and occupations linked to care deserve special mention in the current context, not only because of their crucial importance in the pandemic situation, but also because of their potential to create and improve the quality of this type of jobs traditionally performed by women.

The strengthening of these sectors and the consolidation of a new care economy proposed by the PRTR is an opportunity to achieve equality between women and men through a more equitable distribution of care.

Increasing female labour participation and quality female employment requires promoting the availability and affordability of professional care infrastructures and services, as well as ensuring universal access to the right to be cared for. This will alleviate the unpaid workload of women but also professionalise particularly feminised occupations, such as domestic and/or care work, in the context of an increasingly ageing Europe.

Dignifying and improving the social value of care professions and, at the same time, promoting the incorporation of men into these sectors, breaking stereotypes, should be priority objectives on the horizon of the new care economy.

Women health professionals, with their clear majority, form the backbone of the health and social care system. The professional base of this system needs to be strengthened in order to deal with the health care of the entire population, as well as its capacity to deal with health crises, such as that of COVID-19, with a high destabilising potential. Furthermore, given the strong feminisation of the health and social care sectors, strengthening their professional dimension through improvements in professional training and working conditions would translate into progress in terms of gender equality. For this reason, the PRTR (which in its item 18 addresses the strengthening of the capacities of the NHS) is a good opportunity for this.

Care for dependent adults, as one aspect of formal care, should be strengthened as care needs increase in the context of progressive demographic ageing. In this regard, the improvements in the SAAD addressed in item 22 of the PRTR should translate into improvements in the quality of care, by increasing the professionalisation of care and the favourable development of working conditions in a highly feminised sector with a large

incidence of job insecurity. It is also important to ensure coverage in care from public infrastructures and services, given the deficits detected.

The effects of the pandemic on the elderly population receiving this type of care have led to a shift towards family care, away from the objective of professional and quality care, which will have to be taken into account for the proper development of the system in the coming years. In this respect, consideration should be given to the increase in work overload that this may entail for women and the consequent worsening of their health conditions and their employment and wage opportunities.

Other aspects of care for the most vulnerable people in social services, such as the system for the reception of applicants for international protection, the system for the protection of minors or for victims of trafficking, are also of great importance from a gender perspective, both from the point of view of the provision and the reception of care.

The effective development of a new care economy requires harnessing the resources foreseen in the PRTR to strengthen the capacities of the health, care and social services sectors in order to improve gender equality, as well as to consolidate an accessible, universal and quality public care system.

The outsourcing of a large part of the tasks in households means that domestic workers make a particularly significant contribution in our country, which is why any progress in the recognition of the social and economic contribution of this type of occupation is so important.

The necessary modifications should be addressed to make further progress in the equality of rights of these workers, in particular with regard to the convergence of benefits of the specific Domestic Work Scheme with the General Social Security Scheme, within the framework of social dialogue on this matter.

8. Building a future free of gender-based violence

The persistence and severity of violence against women has been particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This increases the need to continue to deepen, through a comprehensive approach, the means for the prevention and eradication of all its expressions, as well as to act on its causes and provide protection to the victims.

The recently approved list of urgent measures in the Plan for Improvement and Modernisation against Gender Violence entails progress in the main areas of action, such as the involvement of the victim's environment and society as a whole; early detection in local public services; support for the autonomy of women to break with violence; protection of

children from vicarious violence; reinforcement of the protection and safety of victims, and improvement of inter-institutional coordination protocols. Resources linked to the PRTR and the Spain Protects You Plan included in the former can contribute to implementing improvements in protection.

Full compliance with these measures needs to be promoted. It is also necessary to continue to intensify efforts to combat sexual harassment and harassment on grounds of sex in the workplace, and it is necessary to promote compliance with the obligation to have protocols on sexual harassment and harassment on grounds of sex in all companies and public administrations.

On the other hand, the fight against trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and children as well as the protection of women and girls must be strengthened.

The persistence of a such a social problem requires a continuous evaluation of the effectiveness of existing protection mechanisms as well as a permanent reflection on the potential contribution of society as a whole to its eradication and, in particular, of the educational community and its environment.

It is necessary, in any case, to increase public resources both to guarantee the sufficiency of the means of protection and to prevent gender violence and avoid the propagation of gender-based violence denialist discourses.

Of particular concern is the growing use of ICTs, social networks and virtual environments as a channel for violence against women in various forms, such as cyber-bullying, which is particularly frequent among young people. It should be recalled that protocols on sexual and gender-based harassment are mandatory, and also include cyber-bullying as a way of engaging in this type of conduct.

This requires new responses in terms of prevention, identification of this type of behaviour, protection of victims and sanctions. Education and dissemination of information on how to interact safely in virtual spaces and how to use social networks responsibly should be promoted.

It is also necessary to promote collaboration with the media and advertising, in all its formats, in order to avoid the dissemination of sexist stereotypes and to contribute to raising social awareness of gender inequality and violence.

9. Ensuring the balanced participation of women and men in all spheres

One aspect of great importance in advancing towards equality is to achieve greater participation of women not only in the labour sphere, but in all social, political and economic spheres. Spain has taken important steps in this area due to the initiatives adopted in recent years, especially since the LOI, and performance in terms of women's social participation in the existing indices is good.

Despite progress, efforts are still needed to achieve more balanced gender participation in the political, economic and social spheres, and there is significant room for improvement in women's access to positions of responsibility in all types of economic, social, political, scientific, academic and interest representation organisations.

New channels of participation through the internet or social media also deserve special attention, as they play an important role in the generation of gender stereotypes. The participation of women in these new channels has favoured their empowerment in various fields but also reflects many of the persistent gender problems.

Increasing women's participation in these areas is necessary and must be accompanied by measures to reduce existing prejudices and structural discrimination.

10. Looking to the future: transformation with equality

Equality between women and men, and consequently closing the gender gap, is one of the four key vectors on which the actions of the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan (PRTR) pivot. This is reflected in an integral perspective, both in its incorporation at the level of the different measures and in a cross-cutting manner, defining common guidelines for action in the design and deployment of the Plan as a whole.

In practice, the incorporation of equality between women and men throughout the Plan has not been uniform nor has it been carried out in a comprehensive manner. The Plan itself states that only a quarter of it includes specific actions with a direct impact on the reduction of the gender gap, to which we could add the impact derived from the transformation of the productive sectors covered by the plan, which reaches more than half of the measures, as well as other indirect impacts.

In this sense, the PRTR can be the instrument to fully incorporate women in the transformation of the productive model with greater female participation in all activities, a presence that would complement the role that women are already playing as agents of change and transformation in many relevant areas and which are decisive for economic recovery, contributing to achieving effective equality. The objective would be not only to make women's needs visible in terms of equality, but also to establish strategic lines with measures that imply the real possibilities of achieving it.

Similarly, throughout its development, it will be necessary to include provisions to guarantee and make visible the fulfilment of this priority, with monitoring indicators and objectives broken down by sex. With a view to future revisions of the Plan, the definition of a principle of guarantees of equality in all the proposed actions, similar to the principle of "no significant harm" to the environment, could contribute to reflecting this perspective in an integral manner in the implementation of the Plan.

All of this should culminate, within the framework of the PRTR evaluation process, in the carrying out of a gender impact assessment of the Plan. However, so far, the definition of an “ad hoc” evaluation system for the PRTR, apart from monitoring the pace of implementation, has proved to be one of its main shortcomings.

In any case, in line with what has already been said about the need to improve information from a gender perspective, the approach to the gender impact of the Plan would require the definition of objectives of the investments contemplated, broken down by sex in the different areas (university, training, R&D system), which would have made it possible to approximate the gender impact of the Plan.

On the other hand, the cross-cutting gender perspective also extends to the administrative procedures necessary to materialise reforms and investments (definition and design of projects and selection, monitoring and evaluation procedures). In this sense, although the Plan includes a sectoral analysis of the measures that contribute to gender equality and opportunities and suggests guidelines for incorporating this perspective, some difficulties are noted in projects that are not specifically aimed at reducing the gender gap. The problem lies not so much in a lack of transformative will as in a lack of knowledge about how to implement equality solutions, which sometimes only require a change of approach.

For this reason, greater attention should be paid to the guidelines issued by the Women’s Institute of the Ministry of Equality and other similar instruments to contribute to this objective and to guide the incorporation of the gender perspective in the regular practices, both of the bodies of the corresponding administration and of the private entities participating in the projects.

The PRTR is also an ideal opportunity to incorporate intersectionality as a horizontal principle for the application of the gender perspective in the design and implementation of public policies so that interventions also take into account the different realities experienced by women.

FINAL CONSIDERATION

In short, as we have seen throughout the report, even before the pandemic, equality between women and men needed to accelerate and intensify efforts to advance. The COVID-19 crisis has caused a high gender impact and new risks of setbacks in several areas crucial to equality, especially in the field of the unequal distribution of the burden of work and care, highlighting the need for a change of model. Against a backdrop of uncertainty in the face of the serious consequences of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, it is more important than ever to reinforce the objectives of effective equality between women and men in the roadmap for the coming years. In this context, the PRTR continues to represent a great opportunity to effectively apply the principle of gender mainstreaming, reconsidering areas of public policies in which inequalities between women and men had gone unnoticed or had not been considered relevant until now. The confluence of its application in the coming years with the new Strategic Plan for effective equality between men and women should nurture synergies between the different areas of public policies so that this new impetus permeates all of them and favours visible and assessable results, for which the active participation of the social partners is essential.