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Statement submitted by National Women’s Council of Catalonia — Consell Nacional de Dones de Catalunya, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being
circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council
resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Women's participation in, access to and representation in the media, and in information and communication technologies

The Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995 by the United Nations, highlights as a critical area of concern “stereotyping of women and inequality in women’s access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the media” and proposes the urgent measures set out in section J of the Platform, on women and the media. Not only does it diagnose the problem but it proposes strategic objectives and concrete actions that must be taken to achieve those objectives.

International monitoring

Every five years since 1995, the non-governmental organization World Association for Christian Communication has organized the Global Media Monitoring Project, which is the most extensive and oldest global research project into the impact on gender equality of the media. The results of the latest monitoring exercise, undertaken in 2015, which involved 114 countries, showed that progress worldwide was stagnating. According to the study, in traditional media (print, radio and television) women feature in 24 per cent of reports, a figure that rises to 26 per cent in new digital media (online news and Twitter).

Similarly, the percentage of news items produced by women has remained at 37 per cent since 2005, and there has been no change in the proportion of news items questioning gender stereotypes, which in 2015 represented an insignificant 4 per cent of all news analysed.

Elvira Altés, of the Association of Women Journalists of Catalonia, led the 2005 and 2010 monitoring exercises in Spain, with the support of the European Network of Women Journalists, and the last study, in 2015, was conducted by Núria Simelio, a lecturer in journalism at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. The results reflect the global average: women account for 28 per cent of the subjects and sources in press, radio and television news items, and 33 per cent in online newspapers and Twitter (rates slightly higher than the European averages of 26 per cent and 25 per cent, respectively). Regarding subject matter, women are a minority in all news items except for those related to crime and violence, where they account for 51 per cent of the total.

The latest research in Spain was based on an analysis of 452 items disseminated by 65 newspaper and radio outlets, 88 items on television, 61 in online publications and 173 in tweets.

Another important statistic from the study is linked to the age range; 100 per cent of women television news presenters are aged between 35 and 49, while 97 per cent of men are between 50 and 64 years of age.

Lastly, the report shows that women are still marginalized in the media agenda. As their normal environment is domestic and social, they continue to be portrayed in terms of their family relationships, and they rarely appear as experts. This allows the voice of authority to remain male.

Situation in Catalonia

In its preamble, Act No. 17/2015, of 21 July 2015, on effective equality for women and men, refers to the need to “eradicate the sexist, androcentric, patriarchal system”. To achieve that goal, administrations and public authorities must do everything in their power to “eliminate stereotypes and barriers underlying inequalities in the status and position of women leading to the uneven appreciation of the roles of women and men in political, economic, social and cultural spheres.”

The Catalan Act has three specific articles (25, 26 and 27) related to the media and information technologies. The articles have a range of provisions and, for cases of violations, the Act also has stipulated a system of penalties.

Recently, in October 2017, the Association of Women Journalists of Catalonia submitted its latest study, carried out by the journalist Mavi Carrasco, which analyses a broad sample of approximately one thousand headlines from print and online newspapers with a range of update frequencies. The results do not show a balanced representation between men and women. Of all the media outlets analysed, 64 per cent are headed by men, compared to 27 per cent by women, 1 per cent coordinated by two people (male/female) and 8 per cent made up of technical teams that, normally, represent very small media outlets.

If we examine the data from the viewpoint of media ownership, we find that 38 per cent of the sample are public, versus 62 per cent private. Authorship in public media is distributed as follows: 52 per cent male, 33 per cent female, 1 per cent joint and 14 per cent expert panels. For private media, authorship is 71 per cent male, 23 per cent female, 1 per cent joint and 4 per cent expert panels or editorial boards.

Thus, the highest percentage (33 per cent) is found in public media, but we are still far from a balanced composition where women and men should not account for less than 40 per cent or more than 60 per cent. The limited access of women to management positions could also indicate the type of content and treatment, although we lack supporting data. We still do not know if a greater number of women in media management would lead to a differentiated treatment of news, as well as the construction of their own or a differentiated agenda.

Another interesting fact is provided by the group #On són les dones, composed of some 50 women from different backgrounds devoted to counting the women who appear as panellists in the media. This group presented the results of a year spent counting and monitoring 21 media outlets and found that, according to the data, “women’s opinions are systematically ignored, undermined and undervalued by most media sources of everyday information, the media through which society shapes its views and interprets the world”.

The group showed that, taken as a whole, one year’s contributions by women columnists and studio guests fail to fill even one quarter of all spaces for opinion, and maintains that “discrimination is flagrant and constitutes another form of symbolic violence against women.” Seventy-seven per cent of the opinion articles published in the four national daily newspapers monitored are signed by men; 6 or 7 out of every 10 guests on public radio talk shows are men, with 3 out of 4 for private radio stations.

Proposals

The media has a huge social impact. Apart from interpreting “reality”, the media largely shapes public opinion. Therefore, it can either play a pivotal role in perpetuating and spreading the views of opinion makers or it can offer other voices

and values and support processes that would help to overcome and change inequalities in people's social and conceptual structures.

Therefore, the National Women's Council of Catalonia urges the Government and media companies to:

- Raise the visibility of women in their fullest diversity (age, ethnicity, belief, ideology, sexual orientation, and so on) making contributions in all areas, thereby breaking with the accepted view of women as victims.
- Show a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media by, inter alia, avoiding the use of the female body in advertising.
- Promote all current tools and best practices (such as the directory of women experts of the Catalan Institute for Women) to ensure an equal presence of women in the media.
- Promote access for women to positions in management bodies and ensure gender parity in professional teams.
- Provide proper training in gender mainstreaming and in the use of inclusive language.
- Review measures taken to assess their impact and, pursuant to Act No. 17/2015, withdraw any subsidies and assistance received by media outlets that are in breach of any of its provisions, as provided for in the penalties system.
- Offer support to networks of women journalists and communicators who strive for non-sexist communication.
