

Gender Equality in Academia and Research

Spain

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN RESEARCH

Legal framework

In Spain, the legal framework concerning gender equality in higher education, science and research is thorough and precise.

The Organic Law for Effective Equality between Women and Men (3/2007) introduced gender equality as a basic principle for public action and made it compulsory for institutions and companies with more than 250 workers to adopt and implement gender equality plans. At the same time, Spanish Ministries each had to create a unit devoted to the promotion of equality between women and men in their respective fields of action. The Basic Statute of Public Employees (Law 7/2007) established the need to adopt equality plans in public administrations as well. Law 4/2007 on Universities (LOMLOU) made these mandates more explicit for universities, stating that "within their organisational structures, universities will feature equality units specifically for the promotion and implementation of tasks related to the principle of equality between women and men". The Science, Technology and Innovation Law (LCTI 14/2011) extended the adoption of gender equality plans beyond universities to also include Public Research Organisations (PROs)^[1].

In addition to equality units and plans, both LOMLU and LCTI place gender equality as an overall goal of the Spanish System of Science, Technology and Innovation, establishing a number of different requirements concerning recruitment, promotion and decision-making. Gender parity (40/60%) in the nomination to panels, advisory boards and committees is foreseen. The selection and evaluation procedures for recruitment and accreditation, as well as for awarding financial grants, are to be revised in order to eliminate gender bias, barriers and gaps. Provisions to achieve greater participation of women in research groups and to integrate gender issues in research are also considered. These laws also establish the units and tasks involved in monitoring the implementation of gender equality practices within the universities, pointing at the development of sex-disaggregated statistics (LOMLU and LCTI) and the involvement of key actors, such as the General Conference of University Policy (LOMLU).

[1]According to ERAWATCH, there are 540 public organisations performing research in Spain (data from 2012). They play an important role in Spanish research, representing a significant part of Spanish R&D expenditure. 69 of these RPO are nationally state-owned institutes, while other 73.7% are local and regional organisations or other entities. 8 of these national RPO are recognised as Big National Public Research Bodies (OPI; or, in English, PROs) according to the 2011 Law of Science, Technology and Innovation. They represent a significant 42.9% of total R&D expenditures. The following centres are OPIs: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas CSIC, Centro de Investigaciones Energéticas, Medioambientales y Tecnológicas CIEMAT, Instituto de Astrofísica de Canarias IAC, Instituto Geológico y Minero de España IGME, Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Aeroespacial INTA, Instituto Español de Oceanografía IEO, Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Agrarias INIA and Instituto de Salud Carlos III.

Policy framework

The main Research, Development & Innovation policy instruments in Spain are the Spanish Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation (EESTI) (2013-2020) and the Spanish State Plan for Scientific and Technical Research and Innovation (PECTI) (2013-2016). The former defines the general objectives and framework for the promotion and development of research, development and innovation in Spain on a multiannual scheme, while the latter sets its priorities, programmes and coordination and funding mechanisms. The Strategy 2013-2020 includes the mainstreaming of gender among its basic principles, pointing at the participation of women in all scientific fields and the incorporation of gender issues in research content and methodology.

The Support and Accreditation programmes 'Severo Ochoa Centres of Excellence' and 'María de Maeztu Units of Excellence' are promoted by the Secretary of State for Research, Development and Innovation. They seek to promote excellence in scientific research in Spain. Their aim is to recognise existing centres and units that perform cutting-edge research and are among the world's best in their respective areas. The selected centres receive accreditation for a period of four years and substantial financial aid. As a part of the assessment process, a strategic plan for the centre needs to be developed. In 2013 it was established that this plan needs to include actions aimed at correcting gender inequalities within the centre or unit, and at facilitating the recruitment and promotion of female researchers.

The Spanish Foundation for Science and Technology (FECYT) has further included gender issues in its 2015 Scientific, Technological and Innovation Culture Grants: in the event of a tie between applications, the one that better addresses gender equality concerns and measures will be prioritised. In addition, the equal presence of women and men on working teams is considered as one of the criteria used to judge organisational skills and capacities for undertaking the proposed activities.

Furthermore, the [Strategic Plan for Equal Opportunities 2014-2016](#), the Spanish government's overall policy framework for gender equality, includes 13 different measures addressing research-performing organisations and research policy. These measures aim at ensuring compliance with the legal and policy provisions already in place in relation to gender as a transversal concern in research, not only in terms of guaranteeing equal participation of women in the science system but also with respect to the promotion of gender-specific and gender-sensitive research.

The [Plan for Equal Opportunities in the Information Society 2014-2017](#) focuses on achieving gender equality in all sorts of scientific and technological fields. Consequently, it establishes some specific measures concerning certain research organisations.

The Public Administration Equality Plan 2011-2014 (which applies to all public institutions at national level) included provisions on public employment and career development, parity in decision-making committees and boards, gender training, work and family life reconciliation and gender-based violence, among other issues relevant for national research institutions. In addition to the continuity of these lines of action, the [plan covering the period of 2015-2016](#) also calls for several specific measures in research, most of them to be developed by Public Research Organisations.

Other stimulatory initiatives

The international programme 'For Women in Science', promoted by L'Oréal Foundation and UNESCO, is granting annual fellowships to young Spanish female researchers since 2000.

The first 'Editatón on the visibility of women researchers and scientists in Wikipedia' took place in April 2015. It was organised by a mix of private and public organisations (Wikimedia Spain, the Spanish Association of Women Scientists and Technologists AMIT, the programme "For Women in Science" of L'Oréal Foundation, the Women and Science Unit of the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness, and the Women & Science Commission of the CSIC). An "editatón" (edit-a-thon, as it is known in English) is a special type of meeting (face-to-face and virtual) held to improve Wikipedia. It usually focuses on a specific topic as a way to attract new Wikipedians and to improve the content of the popular online encyclopaedia. The meeting in question addressed the visibility of women scientists, seeking not only to overcome the lack of women in Wikipedia science and research articles (only 6.7% of those published in the Spanish version of Wikipedia focus on women scientists), but also to promote the involvement of women as editors (as women represent less than 13% of editors, according to Wikimedia). As a result, 68 articles on women scientists were added or improved (57% of them new articles), thanks to the work of 71 editors.

Key actors

Three Spanish Ministries have overlapping responsibilities in gender and science issues.

The Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality is responsible for general equality policies and for ensuring non-discrimination in the workplace. In particular, the Women's Institute (IM), an autonomous body funded by this ministry, holds competence for promoting women's participation and for elaborating the Strategic Plan for Equal Opportunities, to be implemented by all ministries and public organisations. Regarding gender and science, the Institute has funded research in this field of knowledge from the early 1980s until 2012, and it continues to support postgraduate degrees in this area of study. Furthermore, it has provided some financial aid and technical support to university equality units and commissions^[2].

For its part, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports holds competence over universities, whereas the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (MINECO) is in charge of science and innovation, and manages public research bodies. The Women and Science Unit (W&S unit) of the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness is the main organisation responsible for mainstreaming gender in the fields of science, technology and innovation on a national level. Created in 2005, this unit has been an important actor in promoting gender as a cross-cutting issue and fostering the presence of women in science by eliminating gender biases, gaps and barriers, and by supporting gender and women's studies. The W&S unit has actively participated in the drafting of key legal and policy documents: Law on Universities, Law on Science, R&D plans, and other equal opportunities plans mentioned before. It provides in-depth analysis, regular assessments and guidelines, and it promotes several awareness campaigns, maintaining a remarkable visibility in international networks and projects focused on these issues.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports also has an equality unit, although its activity in the realm of higher education has been less sustained. Recently, a coordination group on gender policies at universities has been formed by representatives from this unit, and from the Women's Institute, the Women and Science Unit and the General Secretary of Universities (2015).

The Equality Units of universities are responsible for elaborating and promoting the implementation of gender equality plans and measures at each institution. Since the Law 4/2007 on Universities was issued, 46 out of 50 public universities have set up an Equality Unit, Observatory, Office or similar body. Their features and resources are quite different from one unit to another though. As for other research institutions, until October 2015, none of the national public research organisations have established an equality unit yet^[3].

Most universities have also established Equality Commissions in which representatives of teaching staff, students, administration, trade unions and university managers usually participate. They are usually in charge of promoting gender equality and discussing gender issues, but in general they lack specific resources. The Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) is the largest public research institution in Spain and the third largest in Europe. It has a Women and Science Commission since 2002, which has been very active in elaborating sex-disaggregated data on women's participation in science, boosting a public debate on the issue and lobbying for the improvement of the legal and policy framework.

There is also a Network of Equality Units for Excellence in Universities (RUIGEU) that coordinates the equality units of different Spanish universities (until October 2015, 44 were participating in the network). They meet on an annual basis to share experiences, debate specific issues and discuss the advancements and shortcomings of the strategies put into practice. The topics addressed during recent meetings covered: reconciliation of work and family life, protocols against sex harassment, international networks on gender equality, gender budgeting, and monitoring and evaluation indicators and mechanisms. Likewise, the 'Xarxa Vives' network of universities – which comprises 21 Mediterranean universities sharing a Catalan-speaking territories – also has a section on gender equality.

The National Agency of Evaluation and Prospects (ANEP) is an independent institution under the competence of the MINECO and is responsible for the evaluation of scientific and technical research. It assesses R&D projects, contracts, grants and other activities. Recently, a working group on gender and evaluation has been created, with the participation of the ANEP, the Women and Science Unit and the Women's Institute.

Spain has a quasi-federal political system. As a consequence, regions have relevant social and Research & Development & Innovation-related policies. There are regional Women's Institutes dedicated to the promotion of equality policies, some of which have also developed significant measures in science (such as financial support for university Equality Units or for gender research). The Basque Country, Galicia, Canary Islands or Catalonia constitute examples of such regions.

The Association of Women Scientists and Technologists (AMIT) is an entity devoted to promoting the equal participation of women in science, research and technology, with more than 500 associates. They aim to foster debate and awareness and also lobby on the effective implementation of the legal and policy provisions on gender issues.

The University Association for Women's Studies (AUDEM) comprises and coordinates 20 research centres and institutes on women's and gender studies.

[2] However, recently this support has decreased. In 2013, eligible activities were restricted to specific topics (employment, work-life balance, gender violence, education and health) and specific kinds of actions (seminars, conferences, symposia, conferences and forums), making it more difficult for equality units to meet other needs (e.g. setting up a website, obtaining support for diagnosis).

[3] Only the National Institute for Aerospace Technology (INTA) is in the process of setting up a unit.

INITIATIVES FOR GENDER EQUALITY BY RESEARCH PERFORMING ORGANISATIONS

As a consequence of the mandate established by the aforementioned Equality Law and Law on Universities, the majority of public universities (40 out of 50) have established and developed equality plans from 2007 on. Some of them are currently developing a second or even third generation of plans. However, at present, only half of them (26) had a plan in force by October 2015, while the others seem to be in the process of planning or have extended the plan's timeframe.

In general terms, plans address different issues: identification of gender inequities (by defining and normalising sex-disaggregated indicators and organising awareness-raising activities, for instance); equality in work access, promotion and conditions for all groups (teachers, researchers and managers/administrators); work-life balance; incorporation of gender perspective and content in training, research and teaching; gender balance in decision-making, and actions against gender-based violence. Although these plans tend to include monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Most of evaluations focus on reporting in merely descriptive terms on the activities performed, and on updating statistical data on women and science; few reflect more deeply on the progress and shortcomings of the equality strategy and measures adopted.

With respect to other research organisations, according to the Law of Science, Technology and Innovation (2011), the big nationally-owned public research organisations were expected to develop their own plans no later than two years after the law was enacted. All but one^[4] have, at present, initiated a gender equality plan. Besides these, other research organisations have also developed equality plans and set up equality structures, but a systematic record of the advancements in this regard could not be found. The experience of CERCA serves as an example of this trend. In 2014, CERCA, the Catalan research centre system composed of 44 different research centres, adopted an Equal Opportunities and Diversity Management Plan to be implemented at all of its centres.

Four research organisations are part of consortia of EU-funded structural change projects, namely the Tecnalia Foundation Research & Innovation (GENDERTIME), the Polytechnic University of Madrid (TRIGGER), the Autonomous University of Barcelona (EGERA and DIVERSITY), and the Foundation Centre of Genomic Regulation (LIBRA). The Complutense University of Madrid is taking the role of evaluator for the project GENOVATE. The Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (Women & Science Unit) is a partner of the GENDER-NET ERA-Net.

[4] National Institute for Aerospace Technology (INTA).

RELEVANT EXAMPLES OF PRACTICES

Working group on staff responsible for equal opportunities (RIO)

This working group was created by the Polytechnic University of Catalonia (UPC). It is composed of personnel responsible for promoting equal opportunities at each UPC centre, both administrators and equality officers. It aims to promote a stronger relationship between the university equality office (Gabinet de Sostenibilitat i d'Igualtat d'Oportunitats, GSIO) and the different university centres and schools, in order to better identify the needs of schools and departments, to coordinate actions among them, to improve equality strategies, and to share relevant information, experiences and good practices. It was established in 2013 on the occasion of the reorganisation of the university's equality strategy and the approval of its second equal opportunities plan (2013-2015). To carry out its work, it hosts regular meetings (three or four times per year) and online communication. Of note, the UPC equal opportunities framework addresses not only gender inequities but also promotes disability rights; as a consequence, this group's work covers both issues. Since its creation, eight sessions have been held, covering several topics including: presentation of the new plan and its monitoring system; explanation of gender training available and other projects to be launched; presentation of survey or diagnosis results; discussion of procedures against harassment, the use of headscarves in class, and other topics.

Gender perspective award

This award is being promoted by the University of Santiago de Compostela. In September 2015, the sixth edition of the prize was celebrated, which is awarded to university's teaching staff to recognise and make visible existing research projects and teaching practices that stand out for their inclusion of the gender dimension. It was launched coinciding with the reorganisation of studies due to the implementation of the Bologna plan and in connection with the development of innovation and quality strategies. Six prizes are awarded annually: three for teaching experiences (excluding gender-specific courses) and three for research projects of any field (addressing the gender dimension in hypothesis formulation, research design, methodology, research process or the dissemination and publishing of results). Although the amount of the prize is quite modest (rewards varied from 750€ for the first prize to 300€ for the third position in 2015), it receives many applications each year. It has also had a remarkable impact on making gender issues more visible, as synergies were created with other parallel initiatives, such as conferences on gender research presented by award recipients. Furthermore, courses and workshops are conducted by award recipients, in order to share how they managed to introduce gender perspective in their work and how they faced and overcame problems that appeared.

Gender Balance Committee

The Genomic Regulation Centre's Committee (CRG) was established in 2013 with the mission of promoting equal opportunities for women and men at this centre of biomedical research. It also aimed at ensuring women's advancement in scientific careers. The Committee aims at eliminating gender bias from the CRG's recruitment process, attracting female scientists, and improving the work-family life balance for its employees. It is composed of members representing all areas of the institute and has regular meetings every two months. The practice is included in the previous CRG policy regarding gender equality. The centre, for instance, received the "HR Excellence in Research" honour from the European Commission in 2013 –a recognition which entails the development of a gender equality plan. Furthermore, in 2015, a support grant has been launched, which provides extra financial support to CRG's women scientists with family responsibilities (application deadline of the first call ends in December 2015).