

The UN suspends Spain on equality policies

Spain, a European country, member of the EU, and in the middle of the 21st century, is not able to pass the equality exam of the United Nations. The [CEDAW \(the Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women\)](#) has just reviewed in its convention this year, the essential parameters in wage equity and equal education.

Added to this is *“the culture of machismo and the social influence of patriarchal religious institutions”* and this ends up dilapidating the progress made in recent years which are, says the UN, in *“risk of regression”*.

The final report – dated July 24 and distributed now – confirms this first reading. The word *“concern”* is repeated insistently and, although the committee recognizes some steps taken by Spain, the atmosphere is distressing.

Austerity has had a *“serious and disproportionate impact on women”*, with such debilitating elements as unemployment, reduction in social benefits, and wage freezes. Thus, the wage gap remains at 17.8%, above the European average, with barely 18.2% of women holding management positions in companies.

What should Spain do to plug this hole in its policies? Carry out specific analyses on how the crisis affects women, prioritize *“measures to support equality”* in the public and private sectors, expand social investments and social protection, and *“prioritize”* women in vulnerable situations. There is concern that women and girls continue to choose traditionally female-dominated fields: only 26.4% of students enrolled in engineering and architecture, for example, are women.

The COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating gender inequality and increasing levels of discrimination, insecurity, and violence for women in Europe, [warned Women’s Link Worldwide, Amnesty International, and the International Planned Parenthood Federation-European Network](#).

“This public health crisis has shown us how inequality and structural discrimination impact the lives of women and girls differently. We must now work to put women and girls at the center of the solution”, said Viviana Waisman,

President, and CEO of Women's Link Worldwide.

[Sexual and gender-based violence](#); Before the COVID-19 crisis, one in five women suffered violence from an intimate partner in Europe. Confinement and quarantine measures to contain the spread of the virus have exposed women and girls to higher levels of abuse and violence at the hands of their partners, ex-partners, or other family members, and in many cases have made it difficult for them to access much-needed institutional support and help.

The data show that reports of violence against women, particularly domestic violence, have increased alarmingly in many countries. According to recent data from the WHO, in many European countries, emergency calls have increased by 60% compared to last year.

"Europe will not be the same after COVID-19. The pandemic is an unprecedented crisis with very serious consequences for the rights of women and girls. Paradoxically, these dark times allow us to overcome discrimination and inequality," said Marie Struthers, Amnesty International's Regional Director for Europe.

Since the coronavirus crisis began, there have been attempts to use the pandemic as another argument for attacking feminism. The celebration of the massive demonstrations of March 8th 2020 has been pointed out as a focus of contagion. However, in the days before the state of alarm decree, many massive events were held without being alluded to as sources of the spread of the virus to the same extent, nor was the Government criticized in the same way for allowing the celebration.

From legal equality to real equality: the gender equality law. Equality is necessary because it is a human right. Equality is a basic human right, recognized as such in international texts, and a central element of democratic societies.

In December 1979, the UN General Assembly approved [the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#), a text that was ratified by Spain in 1983, in which it legally established the need for equality between men and women (and the elimination of gender-based inequalities) to be integrated as an objective to be achieved in all strategic plans and social policies of the European Union and its member countries.

The so-called Gender Equality Act, which will soon be 11 years old, was a significant step forward in the fight for equality since it meant transferring European and international regulations into Spain, assuming its principles which are based on human rights. An equality law offers legal security to women, as it opens up the possibility of reporting situations of violence, discrimination, and abuse to the courts.

The gender equality law has meant legal recognition of a basic fact in a democratic society. Without this law, the road to real equality would undoubtedly be much longer. There is no doubt that there are still many obstacles for women and that equality does not exist in all areas of society. However, one thing that the women's movement has managed to achieve, through the adoption of the equality law, is that society itself has become more gender-sensitive. Little by little, slowly but surely, the social conscience is finally understanding that men and women have the same rights.

It is therefore vital for us to reflect and start making small changes for an equal future between men and women. For more information on what we can improve in this regard, visit [THRIVE Project](#).

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