

Study Visit Report

Equality Mainstreaming Emakunde

22-23 June 2023, Bilbao, Basque Country, Spain



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In June 2023 the Equinet Equality Mainstreaming Cluster participated in a study visit hosted in collaboration with [Emakunde](#), the Basque Institute for Women. Emakunde was created in 1989 to promote gender equality and women's rights in the Basque Country, and it works on various fronts, including policy-making, awareness-raising, and training, to ensure gender equality in all aspects of life. The study visit focused on how Emakunde has implemented gender equality systems, which includes, having gender mainstreaming specialists in all levels of administration and areas, requesting private entities to implement equality plans, a Master's degree designed for Equality experts, and the use of public procurement clauses among others.

What follows is a summary of the main points discussed during the study visit. A copy of the visit's program is included at the end of this document. Click on the links on the following section titles for the slides with more information.

[Gender mainstreaming strategies by Emakunde](#)

Gender identity: Intersectional approach and understanding of gender.

Gender budgeting: 1% budget must be destined to gender equality policies (law amended in 2022 to include this)

Collaboration with CSOs and grassroots organisations: For instance, regarding health inequalities they are working with associations of women with disabilities.

[Gender mainstreaming in the government \(slides in Spanish\)](#)

Formation: Basic, progressive, permanent and mandatory formation for all public servants on equality between women and men.

Gender Specialists: 28 gender equality specialist posts accredited through a master's degree co-designed with the Basque Public University (150 hours formation)¹. 200 workers in all municipalities.

¹ There are two Master degrees to accredit Equality officers: [Igualdad de Mujeres y Hombres. Agentes de Igualdad - Títulos Propios - UPV/EHU](#) and [Intervention in Cases of Violence Against Women | Deusto](#)

This is the key to work from a mainstreaming perspective – that each department and institution take on the task.

Gender equality index: measured by the Basque statistical institute started in 2015. The Basque Country was the first European region to calculate it. A gender equality officer in the statistical institution was essential to make it possible.

Gender mainstreaming in education (slides in Spanish)

Gender violence in schools: Protocols on violence against women not only in schools, but also domestic violence suffered by workers or mothers. For episodes in schools, an assessment by social workers is first deployed to determine the presence of gender violence, which then triggers protocols.

Gender mainstreaming in teacher formation: Currently there is no gender equality topics in the formation of teachers, but it is an objective. There are plans being developed at the moment with the Basque public university. Sex education should be included, but teachers don't always feel comfortable with the issue and it is an objective to be worked on. Normally sex education is dealt with outside the schools, not by teachers. There are courses on sex education and pornography for school workers.

Informal education: Many 3rd section organizations bring informal education in their activities. Basque youth plan, social sector agents implement those through their activities.

Self-assessment for schools: It is still being developed, for each school, to assess what other initiatives they can include in the education plan. Available for next school year, currently under testing with a few schools.

Equality in private companies and organizations

Incentives: Emakunde promotes grants for companies and private organizations to work on gender equality (diagnostic included).

Network of companies to advance equality: 75 entities (half of the certified companies).

Sustainability: not only making companies free of sexism and closing the pay gap, but work on fidelisation of workers.

Certification program: Based on presenting an equality plan and demonstrating other competencies on gender equality. This certification allows the administration to easily recognize companies engaged on the issue.

Equality plans: Businesses with +50 people are obliged. Emakunde supports voluntary planning rather than those businesses that actually were obliged to. Emakunde has not sanctioning power, and therefore it is Labour inspectorates job that monitor and require businesses to implement such plans.

The Basque Network of municipalities in favour of gender equality²

Smaller municipalities: It is a challenge to reach smaller municipalities, who have less human and financial resources. Some municipalities have found a way around by grouping themselves to hire a gender equality specialist. *Ad hoc* support to smaller towns. Though this is less efficient since when the support leaves, you risk the policies dwindling.

Assessment: Ongoing assessment of equality standards in municipalities has had as a consequence an “activation” of the towns as they compete and compare their results with neighboring towns.

Local government autonomy: Gender equality is one of their powers. Local administrations need to have enough funds to exercise these powers, but that might not always be the case. While municipal autonomy is essential, collaboration with the regional administration is also needed.

Collaboration with local politicians: EUDEL has collaborated with local politicians since 2017. While at times their involvement responds to a public image issue given the strength of the social grassroots movement the Basque Country, they’ve observed significant progress. Online courses of maximum 60-90 min around lunch time works best, on topics that they consider important and relate to their daily work.

Database for data on citizens’ attitudes towards equality issues: The Basque Government has a team that specifically analyses citizens’ attitudes, among others, to gender equality. At national level there has been a drop in the interest on this topic, but will see what is the data in the Basque Country.

Gender responsive public procurement (GRPP)

Key elements: Legislation, GRPP in equality plans, Administrative Service Orders; Specific coordination body; Support materials ; Awareness and training; Advice; Verification, monitoring and evaluation

Legal framework: A strong legal framework is fundamental. EU law provides for it, and therefore there only needs to be strong willingness and collaboration from the public authorities. There has to be an understanding that any obligation has a cost as officers need to be trained, as well as companies, public sector leadership, monitoring officers etc. The Basque Country has recently adopted a new law, therefore on some areas they are still waiting to see how it plays out. The city of Vienna has also established public procurement clauses in their public procurement in this regard.

Public procurement clauses: They can be of different nature and related for instance to establishing the need to have/ adopt a equality plan; including ag gender perspective into the tender proposal, having a gender specialist in the team, when hiring new employees, at least 50% of those have to be women etc.

² [Area - Equality \(eudel.eus\)](https://eudel.eus)

Keys: Quality over quantity of gender clauses. Search for transformative clauses that will have a durable impact. Sharing practices between municipalities is useful in order to build in each other's work. The measures need to be proportional and take into account the capacities of SME's and self-employed people.

Steps: The public procurement conditions can be established in the call for tenders, the contract or any of the public procurement steps.

Control: The control of whatever the conditions established in any the public procurement steps can be done ex ante, during or ex post. There have not been any judgements in this area yet, most cases are solved at the administrative level.

Challenges: Convincing public organisations and bodies and gender equality officers that public procurement is an effective tool to achieve equality. They are usually reluctant as they feel this isn't an appropriate tool to progress equality.

Gender responsive budgeting

Framework: All departments of the Basque Government are supposed to present budgets with a gender perspective. **Full details are provided in the ppts shared after the Study Visit.**

Intersectional approach: In all gender mainstreaming that Emakunde performs, gender is understood as intersectional and not gender excluding.

Gender Equality Plan: The Gender Equality Plan is always included in the analysis of the budgeting plan which provides the basis, alongside the legal framework. If there is a deviation, there needs to be a justification.

Resistance: **At first glance there may be some resistance in the implementation. It happened in the Basque Government, in fact, one of the** departments didn't even fill the form in the first year. It was a long process of convincing and working it out. A lot depends on the individuals: if they are good professionals, well trained and they believe in gender equality, it becomes easier. This commitment has to be clear from the government programme, it needs to be clear that there is political support and clear guidelines. Public officials require training, until the majority of them are on board. Reluctancy often comes not from not having a willingness but from a mix of shortage of time, knowledge, political support. It is the question of setting up a full ecosystem supportive of equality. It's trial and error, it's fine to make mistakes, as long as we learn from them and find the right solutions.

Main lessons learned by participants

- **Strong model of government** with clear commitment with gender equality and real substantive equality through mainstreaming, with an impressive structure and scope
- Clear, complex, and stable **structure**, which involves close collaboration with different stakeholders, from municipalities to citizens.
- Comprehensive **policies and actions**. Strong connection with **civil society and private actors**- even the male politicians gender equality
- A strong and comprehensive **legislation**, which leaves little space for interpretation.

Study Visit Agenda

Day 1 – Thursday, 22 June

Institutional welcome

- **Nerea Melgosa**, Basque Minister for Equality, Justice, and Social Policies

Equality policies in the Basque Country: Overall picture

- **Miren Elgarresta**, Director, Emakunde
- **Ander Bergara**, Head of Institutional Cooperation Area, Emakunde
- **Maria Sierra**, Gender officer at the Institutional Cooperation Area, Emakunde

Session 1: The structure of the equality policies in the Basque Government

- **Amaia Uribe**, Gender Officer, Department of the Presidency
- **Haizea Kareaga**, Gender Officer, Department of Education
- Moderator: **Maria Sierra**, Gender Officer

Session 2: Equality in private companies and organizations

- **Ane Miren Fernandez**, Gender Officer at Programmes and Training Area, Emakunde

Session 3: Berdinsarea – The Basque Network of municipalities in favour of gender equality

- **Eukene de Miguel**, Gender Officer, EUDEL.
- **Amagoia Arrieta**, Gender Officer at the Institutional Cooperation Area, Emakunde

Day 2 – Friday, 23 June

Gender-responsive public procurement (GRPP)

Ander Bergara, Head of Institutional Cooperation Area, Emakunde

Gender responsive budgeting in the Basque government and other mainstreaming initiatives

- **Zaloa Urbizu**, Gender Officer at the Department of Economy and Finance
- **Maria Sierra**, Gender Officer at the Institutional Cooperation Area

Closing of the session. Evaluation of the study visit, main findings and lessons learned