



Equality of Public Services Access Among Women and Men

*by Claudia Pascual**

President Michelle Bachelet's second term in office has allowed for several policies regarding gender equality between men and women to be made. One significant accomplishment is the creation of the Ministry of Women and Gender Equality. Consequently, there is an explicit conviction in Chile that in order to have a more just, equitable, inclusive, and participatory society, the country must embrace an institutionalism that generates and promotes public policies dedicated to eradicating discrimination and the inequality that many women experience.

In order to advance in the topic of the physical autonomy of women, a bill, currently being discussed in Parliament, has been introduced that regulates the decriminalisation of voluntary interruption of pregnancy in three instances: when the woman's life is at risk, when there is a deadly foetal abnormality, or when the pregnancy is a result of rape. Furthermore, a National Action Plan was created which seeks to guarantee a violence-free life for women.

On the matter of women in the Armed Forces, during President Bachelet's first term, Chile adopted a primary National Action Plan in order to implement the United Nations Security Council Resolution No. 1325 "Women, Peace and Security". It is currently a pioneer in the region for adopting a second National Action Plan where three Secretaries of State (Foreign Affairs, Defence, Women) participate. Through an inter-ministerial dialogue, they work together to promote the participation of women in Peace Operations, to protect them from armed conflict situations and post-conflict scenarios.

In terms of economic autonomy, to support the incorporation of female heads of household into the labour world, the program "+ Capaz" was created, which provides training in several occupations in order to improve the employability of 300,000 women for the 2014 – 2018 period. In addition, there have been advancements in the removal of the barriers to credit access, such as Banco Estado's initiative to help female entrepreneurs.

With regards to political autonomy, in order to increase the incidence of women in the National Congress, the 60-40 gender equality criterion was incorporated in the Electoral System reform. This will allow for at least 40% of the candidates for congress to be women. At the same time, economic incentives for the different political parties will be considered whenever a woman is elected. In addition, the leaders of the political parties



must respect the 60-40 proportions of their members in order to increment the participation of women in decision-making positions from within the parties.

Notwithstanding, there is still much to do in order to achieve a greater participation of women in both public and private spheres. For this reason, and since the first EU-CELAC Summit, our country has propositioned the idea to include a chapter destined to the promotion of gender equality. Now, and after the second EU-CELAC Summit (June 2014) we have introduced Chapter 7 of the Action Plan where we define the priorities in this area. We firmly believe in the exchange of experience of good public policy practices with a gender perspective between Latin America and the European Union.

A concrete example of bilateral work between Chile and the EU is the implementation of the “Gender Dialogue” which is part of the modernisation process of the Agreement of Association Chile-EU. Through this initiative, the program EuroSocial II will develop a capacitation project with a focus on gender for public administration officials this year. The purpose of the Chile-EU initiative is to promote policies and good practices for women to access professional positions of medium and high responsibility in the State’s public administration. This will be done through the implementation of strategies that orient public management through a gender perspective, with the purpose of shattering the glass ceiling and promoting the reinforcement of managerial skills for women.

We believe that these types of initiatives can and should replicate themselves across the region upon a CELAC-EU framework of bi-regional dialogue. This can be done through the implementation of Chapter 7 of the Action Plan on Gender which is an excellent platform to promote shared good practices and projects with the objective of reducing the gender gap in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In this context, the role of the EU-LAC Foundation is fundamental in encouraging dialogue and reflection between both regions on a key topic on our foreign policy agenda with the purpose of promoting just, equitable, and inclusive societies.

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This is a translation of the responsibility of the EU-LAC Foundation; to read the original version in Spanish please follow the link:

https://eulacfoundation.org/es/system/files/Gender_Pascual_ES_1.pdf