EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Study. 'International comparison of policies on masculinity' 2022

The study **"INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON OF POLICIES ON MASCULINITY"** has been promoted and financed by the Government Delegation against Gender-Based Violence and carried out by the Cepaim Foundation.

Based on the recommendations of different international and national entities, and attending to the growing demand for innovative strategies to deal with the persistence of violence against women, the Government Delegation Against Gender Violence recognises the need to make men visible as a target of public policy that aims to prevent and eradicate violence against women, and to develop projects that promote alternative non-violent masculinities.

The general aim of the present study has been to **identify success stories and gather proposals enabling the design of public policies suitable for the Spanish context.** More specifically, this study has aimed to:

- **Deepen** studies of the existing **correlation** between **models of masculinity and violence against women.**
- Make **successful models** available as well as identifying possible obstacles when implementing these programmes.
- Carry out an **analysis of the international normative framework** with a view to learning about the recommendations of international bodies for the introduction of equality policies aimed at engaging men in preventing and counteracting gender violence.
- Present a **situational analysis** of the relationship between public policies on equality and those addressing men.
- Analyse the **place of men in equality policies** to date in Spain.
- **Revise** existing programmes and policies on masculinities developed on international and national levels, preferably by Public Administrations.
- **Identify the priority arenas and themes for intervention** in the field of prevention of violence with men.
- Present **recommendations for the development of programmes and policies** for alternative masculinities in the Spanish context.
- **Put forward the principle debates around the issue and discern future areas for research.**

In order to achieve the aims of the study several qualitative techniques for social research have been used: the **semi-structured interview,**

triangular groups, and discussion groups. 16 men and 14 women experts from different parts of the world have participated.

What follows is a summary of the main conclusions, but first some key ideas are presented that encompass the fundamental messages of the study's findings:

> The meaning of masculinity and the role of men change over time. An analysis of these changes, which must occur on both individual and structural levels, is based on a broad diversity of men's realities. Equality policies seek social transformation and they face the major challenge of promoting change in men and in the social meaning of masculinity. It is time for action and for transferring international learning and recommendations to Spain. There is extensive evidence that violence against women can be prevented and for this to occur, an equality strategy must be consolidated that puts a spotlight on men, and assigns technical and economic resources to achieve its

PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

1. **Persistent inequality and violence against women.** Even though Spain is at the forefront of policy development to promote the eradication of violence against women because of their gender, there are numerous indicators and works of analysis speak of other aspects not addressed yet in terms of the causes and consequences of persistent structural inequalities between women and men. It is men who provoke such widespread damage, something that justifies a focus on them when designing strategies for the prevention of male supremacist or machista violence. At the same time, there is another aspect to should be considered when designing strategies to prevent violence against women: **many men can play an important role if they are involved in preventing this violence.**

2. **Reactions to men and change.** As the situation of women changes and advances, it always arouses a a wide variety of reactions. Men take on very different positions faced with these changes: from those who support changes without any rifts and become involved in social movements for equality, all the way to those who interpret women advances towards equality as a threat. The so-called "crisis of masculinity" can be channelled towards equality and feminism or towards further violence and male supremacy or machismo. Hence, it is vital that the much needed change among men is not merely left up to their personal good will or other stances, because the privileges men hold are structural in society. Although it is true that the majority of changes produced in men have been achieved through feminist movement and through changes in women themselves, more needs to be done. Public Administrations leaders need to homogenise their approaches, terminology and methodologies used in work on men and masculinities, and this also means a more adequate investment of public funds. Similarly, this study affirms that, just as it is difficult to free oneself from gender violence without help, it is equally important to state that masculine privileges will not be given up through a mere act of personal good will.

This leads us to the conclusion that the strategies for change in men and masculinities cannot focus only on changes on an individual level and/or on decisions by men themselves, but also require a process of political transformation in the social and institutional structures that make it possible for men to maintain these privileges.

3. **There are previous experiences with programmes on men and masculinities in public administration in Spain.** Although in general terms Spanish equality policies have not made explicit mention of interventions with/towards men, this has not impeded the development of some initiatives and programmes, principally in local and regional contexts. A varied range of initiatives has focused on men and on the transformation of ideas and practices related to hegemonic masculinity, although not all have been continuous and very few have managed to become consolidated within equality strategies. No doubt all of them constitute a starting point that can help in the development of other initiatives in the immediate future. This requires organising public investment and dedicating adequate resources to guarantee efficacy and ensure they have a clear feminist approach to transformation.

4. **Patriarchal masculinity and violence as a social problem.** Many different studies have revealed that current multi-causal explanations of violence against women demonstrate that the notion of masculinity (specifically the traditional masculine mandate that makes up hegemonic masculinity) is a key element in generating this violence. There is increasing evidence and analysis to suggest that most violence is rooted in the way men are socialised. However, the direct connection between masculinity and violence is not only revealed in the violence that women experience, but also in violence between men. Masculine violence can be thought of as a continuum, and part of a complex mesh of patriarchal relations. Because of this, it must be addressed on all fronts at once.

5. **Applying an intersectional lens.** Intersectionality is based on the premise that social inequalities cannot be understood from a single analytical standpoint (gender, race, class) but must be considered in the interrelation between social classifications in order to understand how inequalities are configured in specific ways. Although intersectionality as a concept and analytical tool was initially used to refer to women's experiences, it is also useful in explaining the diversity of experiences and concrete situations of men, and makes evident how not all men are located in the same position of power within social structures. This lens can help explain, for example, why men from cultures outside the mainstream (i.e. non-majority or non-hegemonic) do not obtain the same benefits nor hold the same privileges as white men under patriarchy. Hence it is vital to capture social complexity from a multidisciplinary perspective, identifying plural positions of power, positions of oppression as well as privilege within social structures. This analysis enables us to consider distinct subject positions of men within gender hierarchies, something that has a major impact at the moment when interventions and policies are designed.

6. **The costs of masculinity for men.** There is a statistical over-representation of men in many

areas[1] demonstrating the negative impact of a social construction of gender that promotes high-risk behaviours for men, endangering their physical and mental health. These costs of masculinity can be seen as a kind of flipside to the privileges men hold, and must be addressed by public policy as part of working towards equality, when this is the latter is the stated objective and it is done using a feminist approach.

7. **International policy agendas.** A range of different top level international bodies such as the United Nations or European institutions have been pointing out consistently over years that the role of men in ensuring equality needs to be taken into account and addressed in concrete ways, along with their specific needs and responsibilities. The most recent European equality strategies place particular emphasis on the work with men and boys in preventing gender violence. However, this global agenda on men and boys is being applied in a partial and limited way: in some cases the lens on masculinities has begun to be incorporated into nation state agendas, in the form of plans and equality strategies for the prevention of male supremacist (machista) violence, whereas in other places it tends to be more limited to provincial or local levels.

8. **The responsibility of men.** The dimension of social change being proposed and promoted by feminism requires everyone's involvement. Because of this it is vital to engage men's interest in the values and practices of the feminist movement that has accumulated experience over more than three centuries of history. In order to do this, men's life cycles and experiences, circumstances and vulnerabilities must be understood from a gender perspective, while calling on their responsibility as human beings in the construction of a better society. Men must no longer be seen only as the cause of the problem but also as part of the solution.

9. **The state of affairs of public policies and masculinities.** In the literature of experts there is a clear consensus about how public policies focused on men should be designed. The first step requires the stakeholders to be identified, and awareness of the problem and the political will to act on these should be shared and developed. Equality policies aimed at men should be relational and inclusive, intersectional, capable of linking the personal to the political, adaptable and flexible over the long term, with enough continuous funding and centred on men's responsibility. In terms of the specific strategies to prevent gender violence involving men it is vital to maintain a feminist agenda, work in alliance with women's organisations, connect gender justice with other forms of justice and politicise men and masculinities. It is also necessary to increase masculine participation in debates on equality policies, and to find a balance in prioritising actions targeting men and an approach that addresses the problems affecting them.

10. **Men and masculinity in equality policies in Spain.** Although historically there aren't many concrete measures designed specifically for equality policies to promote change in men, some changes are beginning to be made, since the idea is increasingly visible that without a change in men, equality between men and women will not be possible. To date, the few measures that have been taken up in equality plans have centred on areas related to violence prevention

[1] Traffic accident, high risk sports, homicides, drug consumption, work accidents etc.

and the promotion of co-responsibility. However, according to the international literature this is insufficient, given the absence of a discourse relating the costs of masculinity for men to their privileges as a social group, in addition the need for a homogenization of terminology, discourse and approaches.

11. **International experiences.** One of the conclusions of this study is that there is an enormous body of information, experiences and proposals that already exists about this subject. Its exponential growth in the last few years demonstrates an increasing societal interest about the topic, as well as a certain consensus between people and with the documentation consulted, about how to proceed in the area of public policy. At the same time, it is an emerging theoretical and academic topic, based on a barely crystallised discourse in which the great diversity of concepts, contexts and criteria makes it difficult to achieve the standardisation and comparisons needed to establish a complete systematic vision. The study's revision of existing policies and programmes on an international level has revealed a broad range of experiences that, to a greater or lesser extent, address masculinities based on a transformational approach that seeks to involve men and boys in equality strategies, in work to eradicate violence or in attention to their specific needs especially in the area of health. The initiatives and experiences presented in this study are of diverse kinds, with differing institutional frameworks and very different and varied types of laws, plans, programmes, initiatives and campaigns. Across all continents there are initiatives and programmes under development with a spotlight placed on boys and men in preventing violence against women, and these can be used as interesting references that could be adapted to the reality in Spain.

12. **Social intervention with men using a gender approach** The specialised literature that was reviewed indicates that the strategies for preventing gender violence that include men (in their roles both as perpetrators and as complicitous) and also aim for the eradication of violence, are using a cross-cutting approach and are integrating a gender lens on other general and sectorial policies. There is consensus around the fact that gender prevention work with women requires work on equality and this is understood as not being confined to the specific work done by equality organisations or specialised institutions only. This same approach should apply to work with men, which must also have a dual strategy, that is, both specific and cross-cutting.

13.**Cross-cutting approach to gender.** A cross-cutting gender approach is not easy to apply and it has hardly been done in work on men and masculinities, in spite of the fact that deep structural transformations require changes in laws, institutions and social norms, alongside personal interrelationships and internal individual transformation. All these dimensions need to be addressed and at all scales. Even when the definition of gender mainstreaming includes the

application of gender to men, it seems this has not materialised in equality policies in Spain, either as something specific to them or as a cross-cutting strategy. However, it is also true that there are signs over the last years of a change in tendencies: several laws and equality plans in some Autonomous Communities are beginning to name men specifically and to assign public resources to the development of programmes and other initiatives.

14. **Institutional framework for policies on masculinities.** The existence of a legal and judicial framework is a necessary condition for the development of a policy that is systematic, general, cross-cutting and with the continuity needed to guarantee its social relevance. With respect to this, it's worth pointing out that one of the opinions of a majority of experts and of the literature consulted, is that while policies on men and masculinities need to be specific to have the level of visibility and speciality required, they also need to form part of the normative, institutional and programmatic framework that has been designed for equality policies. In the study's analysis of the different international experiences, one can observe a wide variety in the level of institutionalisation of the policies and public initiatives involving men and masculinities. In countries with a constitutionalist culture similar to Spain, the existence of a legal and judicial framework is a necessary condition for the development of a policy that is systematic, general, cross-cutting and with the continuity needed to guarantee its social relevance. If the country truly aims to incorporate the application of a gender perspective to interventions with men for the transformation of masculinities, it needs to end up being (or begin to be) taken on board on a nation state level with the inclusion of specific measures for reforming laws on equality and on male supremacist (machista) violence, as well as in state plans and strategies thereafter.

15. **Primary and secondary prevention of violence by men against women.** Violence can be prevented. The model presented in this study considers a process of intervention that includes the promotion of equality, primary prevention aimed at avoiding and detecting the beginning of violence, secondary prevention understood as the response directed towards dealing with immediate risk or the escalation of violence and tertiary prevention as a response to the consequences produced by the violence and avoiding their reproduction. Beyond primary prevention, the level of intervention with men which is most needed is, without doubt, in secondary prevention, that is, the work carried out with men after violence has begun. In situations where there is no sentencing yet (and many times when there is no report to the police), there is ractically no institutional response. Despite these circumstances, the situation usually comes to light via the victims, because they either ask for help for themselves or their partners, or because –in rarer cases- the perpetrator asks for help upon becoming sincerely aware of his problem, or most often due to the threat of his partner leaving him, and/or pressure from his social circle. The situation of violence also becomes known thanks to service professionals working in the systems for protection and social advocacy (Health, Education, Social Services). These professionals are aware and adequately trained to detect the need and

translate it into a demand. In addition to the universal measures for primary prevention based on promoting equality -such as co-education and education about values of equality among children, teenagers and young people, and/or sex education- it is vital to develop specific primary prevention measures for male supremacist (machista) violence. These measures should selectively target men and situations in which there is a particular risk, such as men with addiction or mental health issues, those in conflictive separations, those using networks of personal contacts, consumers of pornography or prostitution, grassroots sports, videogames, etc. The study brings together several examples of campaigns, programmes and initiatives addressing this.

16. **Work with violent men.** Work with men who are perpetrators is one of the traditional fields of intervention with men involving gender violence. This work is done as much by public administrations as by NGOs. Nevertheless, the efficacy of these programmes has always been called into question. Given that all men participate in a male supremacist or machista culture that reproduces and justifies violence against women, serious effort must be given to primary and secondary prevention. At the same time, programmes with perpetrators should obey at least some minimum standards: ensuring the safety and risk assessment for the victims as a fundamental priority; adequate training for the facilitators; an adequate evaluation of the perpetrators at the moment of the first involvement; and an emphasis on group work. There are some resources in Spain that have been functioning for a long while in areas between violence prevention and interventions involving male perpetrators, and it would be opportune for them to be strengthened, since they propose interventions in the initial phases of the violence (or even when the violence has not erupted but the signs are there). In most cases, the professionals working in the social services sector say that they don't have anywhere to which they can refer men, especially those with profiles that might enable them to be recoverable with an intervention at the right moment.

17. **Priority arenas and topics for intervention.** Given that gender permeates almost all dimensions of the subject, there are mutliple spaces and arenas from which it is possible to work on equality and the prevention of violence with men themselves. The first premise here, related to these arenas and the topics that should be addressed, is that from the moment violence prevention strategies are designed they must take into account men's attitudes around equality and violence as the target population. Intervening with openly male supremacist and anti-feminist men is not the same as working with those who have doubts or curiosity about feminism. In fact, in relation to awareness campaigns, the study takes up the idea of adjusting messages and strategies to particular profiles of men and to avoid speaking of "men in general", as the latter doesn't seem to be an effective strategy. On the other hand, it is fundamental to take into account men's moments of life crisis as an opportunity for change.

The priority arenas are: education (formal and informal); sports; political parties; workplaces; armies and security forces; the judiciary; and virtual spaces. In terms of topics, the experiences captured here are connected to: sexuality and the emotional world; prostitution and pornography; education in equality; care; health and high risk behaviour; violence; feminism; research.

18. **Methodological approach based on costs and privileges.** Some consider that to attract men to engage in egalitarian practices and an appreciation of feminism, it's important to demonstrate the way in which the patriarchal system, as a structure of social organisation, is also harmful for them. In this type of strategy the focus is placed on explaining the costs of their patriarchal privileges or dividends and how this limits them (while producing benefits for them). Others argue that men should join the struggle for equality based on their own convictions, the awakening of their awareness and their empathy for women. The experts in this matter indicate a need to work on the costs alongside reflections that question privilege. In fact work on the costs of masculinity for men tends to be seen as a possible gateway to talk about equality and privileges, although one must remain alert, because one thing does not necessarily lead to the other. It must be made explicit. If the strategies are to work from the costs-based approach (for example the high involvement in traffic accidents) these must be related to the benefits men obtain from the system for behaving in a certain way. To begin from one place (costs) or from the other (privileges) will depend on many factors: the profile of the men, that of the trainers or facilitators, the space, the type of resources, the initial type of demand etc.

19. **Evaluation and accountability.** All of the expert literature analysed insists on the need for policies and programmes on men and masculinities to be rigorously evaluated. Nevertheless, the task of evaluating is never easy. In order to be successful a fundamental prerequisite is to ensure clarity from the very beginning about the aim of the intervention or policy that has been designed. The available evidence from this study is inconclusive in terms of the changes achieved in men's behaviour. These changes are often more complex to produce and measure. There is a consensus about the need to carry out further studies based on experimental designs with long-term follow-up as well as longitudinal studies. It will also be pertinent to evaluate possible unexpected and/or undesired results of the actions, and the evaluation would need to measure not only the magnitude of change in men but also the impact of the work on women. Accountability –as a key principle of governance in democratic systems- should also be a habitual practice in all policies and investments in men and masculinities.

Another important aspect is to ensure that men are accountable for their complicity (explicit or implicit) in the systems and practices of gender inequality. This demands the creation of spaces and capacities for reflection as much about personal attitudes and behaviour as about the policies and institutional processes being revised, in order to recognise the way in which all these elements come into play to disempower women

20. **Obstacles, resistance and opportunities.** The main obstacle to the success of masculinities policies is the lack of interest among men in making this change. There are sectors of the feminist

movement who express their mistrust in certain types of policies on masculinities, suspecting, for example, the efficacy of programmes for masculine participation when there is no demand and the evidence of their success has not been demonstrated. They also don't look kindly on some of the policies and programmes supported by men that don't promote women's leadership and, on occasions, even divert resources and priorities into attending to men (and not to women).

In addition a clear fear of many women is that men aren't truly willing to renounce their masculine privileges. These logical concerns are focused on who does what and how it is done, who leads the movement of men for equality, or the work with men, who are these men, and with what kind of assessment/supervision are they intervening, and/or what is the aim they are pursuing, among other questions.

There is a contradiction, difficult to resolve, between trying to reach more men and at the same time not giving too much visibility and prominence to the work they are doing. It seems that the midway mark would be between centring their focus while being discreet. That said, in spite of resistances and difficulties, we're experiencing a moment which presents opportunities: there is a whole generation of men connected as young people to those involved in fourth wave of feminism, and this of course brings them to question themselves. In fact we are seeing an increased interest in participating in men's groups, in attending conferences and/or buying books on the topic.

Finally, the study offers a series of **recommendations and proposals** that can be applied to policy and programme design:

- Establish an appropriate body that, in the framework of equality policies, can coordinate and guarantee compliance with the basic principles indicated here and that will integrate them into a strategy against male supremacist violence and for the promotion of equality with a focus on men.
- Ensure the participation of feminist women in the formulation, implementation, follow-up and evaluation of policies involving men and masculinities.
- Guarantee accountability to the feminist movement and civil society in which the aims and methodologies proposed for the work on men and masculinities are made explicit.
- Recognise the importance of the role of academia in developing critical studies of masculinity from a feminist perspective so that this is integrated into diagnostic (or baseline) studies and research that forms the basis for designing public policy. Diagnostic (or baseline) studies are needed along with data that informs in a detailed way about the costs of violent masculinity and the privileges that men derive from the patriarchal system. Policies on masculinity and the programmes and projects derived from these must be rigorously evaluated, and must have adequate and specific budget resources.
- Train key stakeholders and frontline professionals in gender, equality and masculinity, in particular social services and the health and education systems.

- Support NGOs and civil society organisations working for change in men that incorporate a gender perspective and a critical analysis of patriarchal masculinity, drawing on the expertise developed in the field so as to evolve and transfer good practices.
- In the workplace, develop equality plans as an appropriate space to incorporate measures aimed specifically at men, especially in issues such as the prevention of sexual harassment and risks. Alliances with the private sector and the business world are necessary as a way to ensure their participation in the dimension of change being proposed.
- All regulated education systems, along with informal spaces for education and sports, are optimum spaces for reachinyounger populations and for encouraging equal relations and the values of community, care and collaboration.
- Incorporate reflection about men and masculinities in all education and training spaces that are slowly introducing contents on gender perspective (e.g. judiciary, security forces etc.), but tends to avoid analysing and intervening with men.
- The methodological approaches or intervening with men must combine work on privileges with the costs of masculinity for men themselves, The strategies designed should take into account that not all men are equal or the same, nor are they beginning from the same place in terms of equality and violence.
- Support and strengthen community movements that, from a critical perspective, promote the reformulation of masculinities and the involvement of men in the eradication of violence against women.

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