

INSTITUTIONAL DECLARATION FOR MARCH 8th, 2015

The Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia affirms that **gender equality** is a central value for Catalan society. According to the Statute's framework, public authorities ought to enact proactive policies to acknowledge women as social and political subjects; break away from androcentrism; recognize female expertise; and applaud women's contributions in political, social, economic, and cultural spheres.

Equitat, the Catalan word for equality, was first used in Catalan in 1696¹. This grammatically feminine noun with Latin etymological roots designates a natural law that necessarily fluctuates on a case-by-case basis to avoid overly rigid interpretations. The complex concept Catalans call *equitat* weaves together cooperation and development policies, which inherently affect human rights and social justice. Gender equality essentially recognizes that to this date, men and women do not start out on equal footing, meaning that their needs inevitably differ. Gender inequality can only be fixed if we identify and address these needs. Thus, we need to recognize the differences in men and women's realities in order to guarantee equal treatment and opportunity for everyone.

In this sense, recognizing that men and women have traditionally been assigned different public and private roles and responsibilities is a first step in the Government's plan of action to change the way each gender is treated and perceived. Men and women's respective experiences, which have traditionally responded to gender roles, need to be given equivalent degrees of social value.

Gender equality requires society to acknowledge that domestic and family-oriented work is not expendable: as humans, our quality of life greatly depends on it. Continuing to ignore this truth will only hamper our ability to compensate our citizens' time and dedication in a way that guarantees well-being.

The policies Catalonia has enacted to balance opportunities across genders have historically focused on paid employment, and Catalonia has made notable progress in this respect. Nevertheless, Catalan society should look beyond the job market and prioritize quality of life, because any society that puts the job market before well-being will inherently lack a solid foundation.

Indeed, social progress is inconceivable without women, meaning that gender equality is critical if female experts are to be incorporated in the realm of public administration.

¹ Source: *Gran Diccionari de la llengua Catalana*

This is a crucial matter, not just for women, but also for Catalonia's political, social, and cultural future.

Individual transformations need to take on a collective character to advance the personal, social, and political spheres that propel western society. To uphold gender equality's intrinsic value in Catalan society we need to rethink and restructure organizations according to men and women's specific experiences—the public sphere should be accessed under equal conditions and should never compromise quality of life: women are simply unwilling to give it up.

The Catalan feminist and poet Mari Chordà's verses (1976) put it well: *We won't trade in our thread and needle/ for agonistic tools./ We do not want equality./ Give us, without scandal,/ a chance to open our eyes/ and doors and windows./ Then our hands/ will come to grip/ what appears most convenient/ so we can go on, naturally,/ toward the miracle.*

This year, the Catalan Women's Institute campaign, "Tu mous fitxa" ("Your Move"), invites each and every member of society to join us in letting our individual subjective perspectives play a part in revolutionizing our people's collective imagination.

Barcelona, March 8th, 2015