



## Fighting sexism in the media

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# The EU Mutual Learning Programme in Gender Equality

## Women and the media

France, 12-13 November 2018

### Discussion Paper – France



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# Fighting sexism in the media: French experience

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## 1. Description of the national policy context

### 1.1. Background and general policy

The issue of gender equality in France is shaped by the ideal of “French Universalism” which states as the root of equality among citizens that all men are born naturally equal. This principle of equality is encapsulated in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizens (1789), especially its first article stipulating that “Men are born and remain free and equal in rights”. But this ideal has remained unachieved since the French Revolution as it forgot women, hence laying the grounds for an “exclusive” democracy<sup>1</sup>. Consequently, women did not gain their full citizenship until they were given the right to vote as late as 1944.

Since then, France has implemented a broad legal framework to achieve gender equality. The gender parity laws adopted in 2000 after a wide national debate stand as a milestone for gender equality. Indeed, implementing a dualistic gendered order implied a symbolic rupture with the republican tradition. Ever since, policies fighting gender inequalities and sexism in the media thrive on the notion of parity in order to provide equal opportunities within the media sector as well as fighting against gender stereotypes. The media are indeed fully concerned by republican universalism and patriarchal traditions<sup>2</sup>. To put it in a nutshell, media industries, like most of the labour market, are characterised by inequalities between female and male professionals. Besides, as a “technology of gender”<sup>3</sup>, media contribute to the reproduction of gender stereotypes and flawed visibility for women (see section 2).

For almost 20 years, there has been political will to fight against sexism in the media. First at international level with the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the UN Fourth World Conference, then in Europe with a specific focus on advertising<sup>4</sup> and eventually in France where a 2001 report on women in advertising<sup>5</sup> tackled the issue. France has henceforth deployed a legal framework. Gender equality in the work place falls under the labour code and organisations above 50 employees must set up a gender equality agreement.

<sup>1</sup> G. Fraisse (1989), *Muse de la raison. Démocratie et exclusion des femmes en France*. Paris: Gallimard.

<sup>2</sup> L. Biscarrat, M. Coulomb-Gully & C. Méadel (2017), “One is not born a female CEO but... won't become one”. In: K. Ross & C. Padovani (eds.), *Gender Equality and the Media. A challenge for Europe*. London: Routledge, p.113-125.

<sup>3</sup> T. de Lauretis (1987), *Technologies of gender*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

<sup>4</sup> *Resolution on discrimination against women in advertising*, European Parliament, 25th of July 1997.

<sup>5</sup> B. Grésy (2001), *L'Image des femmes dans la publicité*, Secrétariat d'État aux droits des femmes et à la formation professionnelle.

## 1.2. Provisions to implement good practices

The women and the media issue is part of the global fight against gender inequalities.

### 1.2.1. A transversal action

Because gender equality concerns both human resources and content production, it is important for different public authorities in the media field to be involved. Ministries are urged to consider gender equality in their policy and actions. As far as the women and the media issue is concerned, the Ministry of Education as well as the Ministry of Culture and Communication play a part in the combat against sexism.

The Ministry of Education deals with courses and actions on media and information. For more than 30 years, the Centre for Education on Media and Information – CLEMI – has been promoting both the media as pedagogical tools and the development of children’s critical understanding of the media and its contents. It created the “*Zéro cliché*” competition, in partnership with the Secretary of state for women’s rights. 4000 pupils participated to its 6<sup>th</sup> edition in 2018. This educational competition invites children and teenagers to identify, analyse and deconstruct sexist stereotypes in media contents.

The Ministry of Culture and Communication intends to act in an exemplary way, as it was the first Ministry to obtain the Equality Label in 2017. The Equality Label is a certification awarded by AFNOR (the French national organisation for standardisation) in recognition of an organisation’s policy on promoting gender equality. By means of its Gender Equality Observatory, the Ministry of Culture and Communication provides data about women’s functions and wages in the public audiovisual sector since 2013. Moreover, the Ministry’s roadmap 2018-2022 fosters reflections to promote a gender equality culture, reach equality in the work place and fight against sexist and sexual violence. It intends to collaborate with the High Audiovisual Council (CSA)<sup>6</sup> and the Secretary of state for women’s rights to take measures promoting gender equality in the fields of media and advertising or with the Ministry of Education to combat gender stereotypes.

### 1.2.2. Fighting against “sexist abuse” in the work place: the law of the 17<sup>th</sup> of August 2015

The law of the 17<sup>th</sup> of August 2015, known as the Rebsamen law, is related to “social dialogue and employment”. It provides various changes in companies’ operating rules and organisation. Regarding gender equality in the work place, the law introduced the notion of “*agissement sexiste*” (sexist abuse) in the Labour Code.

Sexist abuse is different from sexual harassment, which falls under the 2012 law. The 2012 article 222-33 of the Penal Code and its reinforcement by the law n° 2018-703 of the 3 of August 2018 defines sexual harassment as a criminal offense. Sexist abuse refers to “any act linked to the sex of a person, with the purpose or the effect of violating dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating and offensive environment”. To put it in a nutshell, the Rebsamen law tackles sexism in the workplace while the 2012 law defines sexual harassment as the act of (i) imposing

<sup>6</sup> The High Audiovisual Council is an independent institution that plays an active part in the fight against sexism in the media.

on a person, in a repetitive fashion or statement or (ii) a unique but aggravated coercion or behaviour of a sexual connotation which violates a person's dignity by virtue of their degrading or humiliating character or (iii) creating as concerns this person an intimidating, hostile or offensive situation.

### **1.2.3. Extending the regulatory powers of the CSA: the law of the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 2014**

The law of the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 2014 aims at reaching out “real equality between women and men” in all its dimensions, be it protection of women from violence, professional equality, women's poverty, parity or the image of women in the media. The law was introduced by the Minister of Women's Rights, Najat Vallaud-Belkacem. It's a framework law to address inequalities between women and men. The law presents practical measures (for instance protecting single parents from losing child maintenance) as well as broader measures aiming at changing social attitudes towards gender roles.

Concerning women's misrepresentation in the media, the law on “real equality” extends the High Audiovisual Council's (CSA) regulatory powers. The CSA acts as an independent authority regulating the audiovisual sector. It has first tackled the issue of gender equality through the “Observatory of Diversity” whose barometers produce data about the presence of men and women on television. Following the 2008 report on the image of women in the media, a specific CSA task force on the “Rights of Women” was launched in 2013.

The law on “real equality” strengthened its regulatory power. It entrusted the CSA with ensuring a fair representation of women and men as well as fighting against stereotypes, sexism and violence against women in radio and television contents. National television and radio services are compelled to provide the CSA with qualitative and quantitative figures about gender representation in their programmes. The CSA publishes an annual report on gender representation in audiovisual contents. Besides, the CSA is now also in charge of controlling women's portrayal in advertising, as it is stipulated in the law of the 27<sup>th</sup> of January 2017 related to “equality and citizenship”.

## **1.3. Other tools, target groups and stakeholders**

- The High Steering Committee for Gender Equality

The High Steering Committee for Gender Equality (Haut Conseil à l'Égalité Femmes-Hommes) also plays a part in debunking sexism and stereotypes in the media. It was launched in 2013 in replacement of the “Observatory of parity” in order to ensure a dialogue with the civil society as well as discussing and evaluating public policies regarding gender equality. Its Commission on stereotypes and social roles has identified the media (along with public communication and education) as a priority sector for actions against stereotypes<sup>7</sup>. It has also sponsored an educational youth contest about sexism in the media<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Haut Conseil à l'Égalité Femmes-Hommes (2014), *Rapport relatif à la lutte contre les stéréotypes : Pour l'égalité femmes-hommes et contre les stéréotypes de sexe, conditionner les financements publics*.

<sup>8</sup> Mathilda Éducation, “Buzzons contre le sexisme”.

- The Professional Regulatory Authority for Advertising

In the sector, the Professional Regulatory Authority for Advertising (ARPP) acts as an independent authority for advertising. It has been collaborating with the High Audiovisual Council since 1992 but the increased responsibility on advertising entrusted to the CSA has triggered in 2018 the signature of an engagement against sexism in the media along with the “communication branch” and professional associations such as the “Union of Advertisers” (UDA) and the “Association of Communication Consultancies” (AACC). Besides, the French Press Agency (AFP) has recently committed itself to improve the image of women in the news reports for instance by increasing the number of female experts and feminising the language. It also aims at paying more attention and respect to female victims suffering gender violence worldwide.

- Civil society, scholars and feminist groups

In addition, civil society plays an important role in tackling the issue of women and the media. Every citizen can directly contact the ARPP or alert the High Audiovisual Council (CSA) about any radio or television content violating gender equality. Each request is taken into account and the CSA can condemn and penalise the media.

Some scholars – mostly women – are engaged in the fight against sexism in the media. In the wake of feminist media studies, they provide critical analysis of women’s portrayal in the media, be it in the news, in advertising, in fiction or entertainment. They also conduct academic research on the gender gap in media organisations. Feminist academics provide a valuable input as their contribution commonly embeds scientific investigation, expertise and activism.

Eventually, feminist groups and associations denounce gender inequality. The “pack of female watchdogs” (La meute des chiennes de garde) association denounces sexist ads while the Center Simone de Beauvoir provides educational tools on sexism in the media by means of its website Genrimages. The association of female journalists “Let’s take the front page” (Prenons la Une) makes a significant contribution to the fight for a fair representation of women in the media as well as gender equality in the newsroom, be it by producing data on the presence of women in the radio news programmes or providing a help-guide for female journalists to obtain gender equality in functions, responsibilities and salaries. Let’s not forget the feminist group “La barbe!” (“The beard!”) which tackles the issue of professional inequalities by intruding male areas of power. For instance, in 2012 female militants wearing false beards stepped into the male-dominated autumn press conferences of the public media groups Radio France and France Télévisions to denounce their male-dominated organisation charts.

## 2. Policy results in terms of gender equality

### 2.1. Key results of good practice initiatives

#### 2.1.1. A better knowledge of the situation

The issue of women in the media is now quite well documented, at least regarding media contents. Public authorities have provided an increasing amount of data. The 2008 report on Women in the media and the 2011 report dedicated to female experts

constitute landmarks in the fight against sexism in the media. Besides, the High Audiovisual Council (CSA) furnishes figures since 2009 on the presence of men and women on television. The law of the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 2014 has triggered an annual evaluation of the representation of women and men. It relies on data provided by radio stations and TV channels. In the wake of the 2017 law, it has also produced a report on women in advertising.

Nevertheless, we still lack a better understanding of the situation for female professionals in media industries. The research remains mostly limited to female journalists and data are sparse. Information is also partially available through the Press Observatory, the Gender Equality Observatory of the Ministry of Culture and Communication or in Corporate Social Responsibility (RSE) reporting. In such a context, the European report on gender equality in decision-making in media organisations<sup>9</sup> is a valuable initiative.

### 2.1.2. Inputs to female expertise

The media sector in France lacks a shared willingness to develop good practices on gender equality. Yet, punctual efforts have already been made. Concerning media contents, there have been partial improvements on the presence of female experts, though strong discrepancies remain. The 2011 report on female experts in the media<sup>10</sup> stated that, despite media organisations' engagement to self-regulation, women represented only 18% of experts invited in the news (press, radio and television) in 2010. Since then, the public broadcast group France Télévisions has improved its rate of female experts, above all on France 3 where female experts are more numerous than men (55%). On the radio, the public service reaches slightly better rates than private radios, mostly thanks to the French International Radio (RFI) that complied with its 2015 engagement of attaining 31% of female experts.

### 2.1.3. Sanctions against sexism

The High Audiovisual Council runs an alert system for the public to denounce TV or radio programmes. Reporting has increased considerably between 2016 and 2017 and the High Audiovisual Council eventually applied economic sanctions against sexist and sexual abuses to the private TV channel C8. In 2016, C8 received a notice letter because a journalist kissed the chest of a female guest while she had clearly stated her refusal. The same TV show was eventually condemned to economic sanctions in 2017 after a homophobic hoax. Sanctions against sexist and sexual abuses send a powerful message to the media sector. Yet, the major drawback is the publicity stunt it represents for the show.

## 2.2. A media sphere still shaped by gender inequalities

In France, there is a high awareness of the fact that the media is a crucial sphere to address gender equality work. However, challenges to achieving gender equality in the media still persist.

<sup>9</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality (2013), *Women and the Media — Advancing gender equality in decision-making in media organisations*.

<sup>10</sup> M. Reiser & B. Grésy (2011), *Les expertes: bilan d'une année d'autorégulation*, Commission sur l'image des femmes dans les médias.



### 2.2.1. Challenges in the media sector

Female professionals suffer from unequal opportunities within the media sector. Though monitoring and collection of data can still be improved, the current state of art reveals the persistence of a glass ceiling for women. Interestingly, no media possess the AFNOR - Association française de normalisation - Certification "Equality Label".

#### *Low wages and precarity*

Journalism has turned into a highly feminised profession. Women are more numerous than men in schools of journalism<sup>11</sup>. In 2016, they represented 46,7% of journalists<sup>12</sup>. Yet, female journalists still suffer from unequal opportunities. First, they earn in France on average wages around 12% lower than men<sup>13</sup>. There are some discrepancies according to the type of media and statuses. When occupying permanent positions, women's salaries remain 9% lower than men's<sup>14</sup>. The growing precariousness and diversification of statuses in the field leads to a more difficult identification of freelance workers' wages. Indeed, precarity implies a wide range of statutes, from fixed-term contracts to freelancers including part-time jobs, apprenticeship and training contracts, audiovisual journalists paid under the status of intermittent artists, editors paid in copyrights, etc. Besides, freelance journalists tend to multiply their activities to make a living: apart from journalism, they make a living in editing, commercial communication or even in casual jobs. This constellation of professionals is difficult to identify as they do not appear in official data<sup>15</sup>.

For freelance journalists with a professional identity card<sup>16</sup>, wages tend to be the same but this does not mean that women and men are treated equally. On the contrary, it highlights structural inequalities since female journalists are in fact more educated than male journalists, but this is not valued or reflected in wages<sup>17</sup>. They have studied longer in better schools, whereas there is a tradition of men entering the profession without such qualifications. Besides, there are important discrepancies within the wide category of freelance journalists. Men are more numerous both at the bottom of the freelance ladder and at the most stable and networked part of freelancing, where they earn more money than women<sup>18</sup>. The gender pay gap can be explained by differences in professional trajectories: men tend to accept more precarious conditions at the beginning of their career until they reach a more secure, permanent position, while women tend rather to specialise in lower paid areas of journalism or leave journalism to find economic stability. Besides, motherhood, especially with young children, tends to restrain women's professional mobility<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> G. Lafarge & D. Marchetti (2008), "Enquête sur la provenance des étudiants en journalisme". *Médiamorphoses*, 24, p. 66-70.

<sup>12</sup> Commission of journalist professionals' identity cards (CCIJP), 2016.

<sup>13</sup> Association "Let's take the frontpage" (Prenons la Une), 2014.

<sup>14</sup> Commission of journalist professionals' identity cards (CCIJP), 2016.

<sup>15</sup> C. Frisque (2014), "Précarisation du journalisme et porosité croissante avec la communication". *Les cahiers du journalisme*, 26, p.94-115.

<sup>16</sup> Professional Identity cards are delivered by the CCIJP. In 2017 the commission delivered 35.047 professional ID cards.

<sup>17</sup> B. Damian-Gaillard, C. Frisque & E. Saitta (2009), "Le journalisme au prisme du genre: une problématique féconde". *Questions de communication*, 15, p.175-201.

<sup>18</sup> C. Frisque (2014). Op. cit.

<sup>19</sup> According to the Observatoire des inégalités. See also B. Damian-Gaillard & E. Saitta (2011). Le processus de féminisation du journalisme politique et les réorganisations professionnelles dans les quotidiens nationaux français, *Communication*, 28/2 and C. Frisque (2014). "Précarisation du journalisme et porosité croissante avec la communication". *Les cahiers du journalisme*, 26, p.94-115.

### *Vertical and horizontal segregation*

Women in media organisations experience both vertical and horizontal professional segregation. Horizontal segregation refers, for instance, to the gender-based organisation of newspapers' editorial boards. Women mostly work in areas considered as extensions of their domestic responsibilities and supposed abilities, in other words care and education. They are also over-represented in supporting functions such as designers and editorial secretaries. On the contrary, prestigious fields, such as national politics in the daily national newspapers and magazines, still remain mostly masculine strongholds. There, gender stereotypes work as a subtle mechanism of selection and also self-selection<sup>20</sup>.

Women in media industries also suffer from vertical segregation. They represent only 36,3% of editors-in-chief and 26,2% of managing editors<sup>21</sup>. The 2013 EIGE report<sup>22</sup> highlights that women occupy less than 25% of senior management positions in the four organisations surveyed: the private TV channel TF1, the public broadcaster France Télévisions, the public radio group Radio France and the private newspaper *Aujourd'hui – Le Parisien*. Generally speaking, managers' positions remain mostly occupied by men, even if there have been improvements in the public sector. Senior management committees remain male-dominated at Radio France with 35% of women<sup>23</sup>. Between 2012 and 2018, there was a development from one local public radio station (France Bleu) managed by a woman to five local stations. Yet, these figures are far from showing the end of the glass ceiling for women as it refers to 5 out of 40+ local public radio stations!

### *Sexist and sexual harassment*

Women in the media suffer from sexist and sexual harassment, both in their workplace and on social media. Sexist and sexual harassment means inflicting remarks or behaviours, once or repeatedly, which attend to a person's dignity because they are humiliating, degrading, offensive or hostile. 64% of French people consider that sexual jokes are frequently made at work and 20% of working women declare they have been sexually harassed during their professional life<sup>24</sup>. Besides, working in a male-dominated environment, such as media organisations, exposes for sexual harassment.

Though there is a lack of specific data about the media sector, the growing awareness of sexism has driven female journalists either to denounce a culture of sexual harassment in the media<sup>25</sup> or to testify personally. For instance, the #metoo campaign brought to light concrete cases of the female journalists' harassment and thus contributed to awareness-raising. Furthermore, female journalists can suffer from cyberbullying, as the recent trial against the French journalist Nadia Daam's stalkers reminds us. She was bullied on social media with rape and death threats against her

<sup>20</sup> B. Damian-Gaillard, C. Frisque & E. Saitta (2009), op.cit.

<sup>21</sup> Commission of journalist professionals' identity cards (CCIJP), 2014.

<sup>22</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality (2013), *Advancing gender equality in decision-making in media organisations*.

<sup>23</sup> Ministère de la Culture, DEPS (2018), *Observatoire de l'égalité entre femmes et hommes dans la culture et la communication*.

<sup>24</sup> Défenseur des droits/IFOP, *Enquête sur le harcèlement sexuel au travail* (2014).

<sup>25</sup> Association "Let's take the frontpage" (Prenons la Une), Le 'Baupingate' n'est pas 'une affaire de bonnes femmes', *Le Monde*, 19 may 2016.

and her daughter. Confronted to such an awakening of consciousness, the argument of a specific French “culture of seduction” can only be perceived at best as fraudulent.

### 2.2.2. Challenges related to the media contents

The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action set as a strategic objective to promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media. In France, it has triggered a set of quantitative and qualitative studies of the image of women in the media. Their results underline the permanence of gender stereotypes and invisibility of women in media contents.

#### *Underrepresentation of women*

Generally, women in France are underrepresented in the news (press, radio, television), be it as journalists or in news contents. They constitute 24,1% of the subject and source of the news<sup>26</sup>. Taking a closer look at television and radio, only 38% of the people heard and seen are women<sup>27</sup>.

There is a trend on television: the more important is the audience, the less visible are women. Women form only one out of four persons in the programmes broadcasted between 6 and 8 PM, though strong discrepancies appear between channels. Indeed, women are more numerous on public channels, from 36% on France 5 to 56% on France Ô. As for private channels, there are important differences according to editorial lines: Chérie 25, whose policy aims at ensuring a majority of women on screen, features in its programmes 85% of women and engages only female journalists. On the contrary, the sports channel L'équipe conveys only 14% of women and exclusively male journalists. 24/7 news channels (BFM TV, I Télé, LCI, France Info, France 24) reach out a 40% rate of women, mostly thanks to anchorwomen (55%).

There are 36% of women on generalist radio stations. They are mostly present as anchorwomen and presenters (47%). But there is no female journalist acting as main radio presenter among the six most listened morning news programmes (RTL, RMC, Europe 1, France Inter, France Culture and France Info). As for the 44 regular commentators, they are mostly men<sup>28</sup> (30). Finally, the absence of women is also a feature of social media and advertising. Less than a third (31%) of news timelines on Twitter deals with a woman and only 9% takes a woman as the main subject<sup>29</sup>. Even in televised advertising men outnumber women by 54% to 46%<sup>30</sup>.

#### *Lack of visibility of women's skills and expertise*

According to the High Audiovisual Council, women represent 30% of experts and 32% of politicians. The figures of the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) are even lower: women represent only 20% of politicians, 15% of economic actors and 17% of

<sup>26</sup> Global Media Monitoring Project (2015).

<sup>27</sup> Barometer of the CSA - High Audiovisual Council (2017).

<sup>28</sup> Association “Let's take the frontpage” (Prenons la Une), 2017.

<sup>29</sup> Global Media Monitoring Project (2015).

<sup>30</sup> CSA - High Audiovisual Council (2017), *Représentation des femmes dans les publicités télévisées*.

experts in the news<sup>31</sup> (press, radio and television). On the contrary, the GMMP highlights that they form the biggest part of the *vox populi*, that is to say anonymous citizens whose abilities and working skills aren't specified nor needed. In other words, female professionals lack visibility in the media. The old stereotype of male politicians and female housekeepers is still alive.

The low percentage of female experts indicates the permanence of inequalities. Indeed, the 2011 report on female experts in the media<sup>32</sup> stated that, despite media organisations' engagement to self-regulation, women represented only 18% of experts invited in the news (press, radio and television) in 2010. Since then, there have been some improvements. Still, on television women are less often invited as experts than men on the main generalist private channels TF1 (20%), M6 (17%) and Canal Plus (28%). On the radio things aren't really better as the rate of female experts reaches out 29%.

### *Age discrimination*

Women on television suffer from age discrimination. As Delphine Ernotte declared as the newly-appointed president of the public television group France Télévisions: "We have a television of white-over-50-years-old men and it has to change"<sup>33</sup>. Indeed, 61% of anchormen presenting the TV news are over 50, while no woman managed to cross this threshold<sup>34</sup>. In TV series, women also suffer from a revolving doors effect. Actresses are younger than their counterparts, and much younger than their partners when involved in a televised relationship. Furthermore, female characters have a shorter life on screen. The presence of women over 50 is particularly sparse in TV series<sup>35</sup>. Be it on television or in advertising, women undergo the "tunnel of the 50-year-old actress"<sup>36</sup>, meaning that actresses after 50 aren't offered roles anymore.

### *Stereotypical representations*

Not only are women discriminated by age, but they also suffer from stereotypical representations far from contemporary reality of women's lives. In advertising, women are mostly assigned to advertisements for body hygiene (63%), perfume and clothes (57%), leisure (56%) and medical or paramedical goods (55%). On the contrary, men are associated to gambling (78%), cars (64%), insurance/banks/health (59%), technology and digital tools (58%). Besides, women are more likely to appear naked than men in advertising (by 54% to 46%)<sup>37</sup>.

Stereotypes aren't limited to advertising. Women in the media are still both underrepresented and "badly" represented. They are portrayed in positions inferior to men's and they are persistently associated to the domestic sphere. If we take a look

<sup>31</sup> Global Media Monitoring Project (2015).

<sup>32</sup> M. Reiser & B. Grézy (2011), *Les expertes: bilan d'une année d'autorégulation*, Commission sur l'image des femmes dans les médias.

<sup>33</sup> Radio *Europe 1*, 23 september 2015.

<sup>34</sup> Global Media Monitoring Project (2015).

<sup>35</sup> M. Arbogast (2015), "De si jeunes femmes... Analyse longitudinale des écarts d'âges et des inégalités de genre dans les séries policières", *Genre en séries*, 1.

<sup>36</sup> Association AAFA.

<sup>37</sup> CSA - High Audiovisual Council (2017), *Représentation des femmes dans les publicités télévisées*.

at women's magazines, they convey a stereotypical image of female bodies: women in magazines are young (85,75%), blonde (50%), slim (92,75%) and white (92,65%)<sup>38</sup>.

TV fiction (series) also relies on "traditional" stereotypes. Women are less likely to occupy a director/manager position (39%). As a protagonist, they look more attractive than men (70% to 30%). While male protagonists are always dressed up, 9% of female protagonists are shown naked. In addition, they are less likely to be active seductress (22%) than men (40%)<sup>39</sup>. As for reality television, it conveys highly stereotyped representation of women as "bimbo": they are young (85%), attractive or sexualised (85%) and they appear submitted to a man's will according to aesthetics and obedience criteria<sup>40</sup>. Lastly, the issue of murders of women by their husbands/partners remains mostly treated in the news without taking into account the gender violence perspective.

### 3. Assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the policy

There have been real improvements in the fight against sexism in the media. Nevertheless, issues still need to be addressed to achieve effective gender equality in the media.

#### 3.1. Effective elements

- A wake-up call

"The issue of the portrayal of women is not a major question, as there are no regressive images of women on television" - declared in 2008 the president of the private TV channel M6. The increasing production of indicators, above all with quantitative data, has strongly contributed to raising awareness on the issue of gender equality. Indeed, media professionals and the public tend to believe that gender equality is achieved as they feel surrounded by women, be it in their organisations or in media contents. People tend to believe that gender equality is achieved. Implementing reports and barometers answers to that "privilege of ignorance". Besides, the law of the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 2014 ensures sustainability to monitoring while the law of the 27<sup>th</sup> of January 2017 broadens its scope to advertising (see section 1.2 "Provisions to implement good practices").

- Cooperation with citizens

Civil society plays a watchdog role as every citizen can alert the High Audiovisual Council (CSA) on any content violating women's rights on TV or radio programmes. It is a good strategy to involve civil society in the fight for gender equality as sexist

<sup>38</sup> M. Reiser & B. Grésy (2008), *Rapport sur l'image des femmes dans les médias*, Commission sur l'image des femmes dans les médias.

<sup>39</sup> CSA - High Audiovisual Council (2014), *Étude sur les stéréotypes féminins pouvant être véhiculés dans les séries de fiction*.

<sup>40</sup> CSA - High Audiovisual Council (2014), *Étude sur les stéréotypes féminins pouvant être véhiculés dans les émissions de divertissement*.

and sexual abuses are nowadays a controversial public matter that many citizens denounce, for instance through social media.

### 3.2. Weaknesses and limitations

Despite its strength, the current policy must be improved in order to achieve effective gender equality in the media. Indeed, in the national context of pervasive sexism, several weaknesses stand out.

- Conditionality of public funding

Achieving gender equality in the media relies mostly on individuals' good will and good practices. Consequently, things are moving slowly with patchy results. It is highly relevant that, since 2005, no media outlet has been awarded the AFNOR certification "Equality Label". As the High Steering Committee for Gender Equality suggested in 2014<sup>41</sup>, turning gender equality into a mandatory condition for public funding would be a strong incentive measure, as public broadcasting is largely state-funded (3,93 Bn€ in 2017<sup>42</sup>). Newspapers also benefit from direct and indirect public funding<sup>43</sup>.

- Education

Concerning the ability to debunk stereotypes, elementary school students are taught basic skills in critical media analysis while competitions on the Women and the Media issue are organised by the Centre for Education on Media and Information (CLEMI) or Mathilda Education. A few media schools and university courses also tackle the issue. Yet, courses on gender and the media remain too few up to now. The issue could also be specifically addressed at least in journalism and communication schools, for instance through the national pedagogical programmes of the technological university diploma (DUT).

Besides, professionals sometimes can't tackle properly gender equality issues because they lack a specific training. Dedicated training and tools such as the guide of female experts or the one that the female journalists' association "Let's take the front page" provided on violence against women can benefit women's portrayal in the media. Those tools would prove more efficient if journalists would question their professional routines. This could be encouraged by lifelong training.

- Empowering women

Women occupying leadership positions can be used as shooting stars to give a positive image in terms of gender equality. In such a case, they sometimes lack an effective power and their careers are shorter or it is more difficult for them to find another same-level leadership position. The balance of power still remains on the side

<sup>41</sup> Haut Conseil à l'Égalité Femmes-Hommes (2014), *Rapport relatif à la lutte contre les stéréotypes : Pour l'égalité femmes-hommes et contre les stéréotypes de sexe, conditionner les financements publics*.

<sup>42</sup> Cour des comptes (2017), *Analyse de l'exécution du budget de l'État par mission et par programme. Mission Avances à l'audiovisuel public, exercice 2017*.

<sup>43</sup> The "Court of Audit" considers that public funding to the press swings between 580 M€ and 1,8 Bn€, including around 130 M€ of direct funding.



of men. Women can suffer from an excluding male collusion as power relies on masculine networked sociability. Even if women have the same qualifications as men, they often think that they are less able and/or are perceived as less competent.

Preparing women to power is an important stake to achieve equality. Here, female sponsoring can provide an answer. Besides, it is necessary to support initiatives for women to organise, for example associations such as “Les femmes s’animent” (female professionals of cartoons) or “Prenons la une” (female journalists) which provides a guide for negotiating a fair gender equality agreement. Lastly, family care limits women’s career development. Women can’t reach out professional equality with men without tackling the issue of child care.

- Monitoring media industries

Monitoring the media has strongly contributed to raise awareness of the issue of gender equality. Yet, specific data on women in media organisations remain partially unknown or unseen. Communicating on organisational charts and the gender pay gap in the media sector could be a useful incentive to improve professional gender equality. As for sexual harassment, we lack specific data on the media sector and many women who have been sexually harassed won’t comment on that. Monitoring sexual harassment could be a wake-up call for civil society and professionals.

## 4. Questions for debate

There are several questions to consider in not just the French scenario.

- Is making public funding conditional on gender equality requirements a relevant policy?
- How can other forbidden grounds of discrimination, such as class, sexuality, race and age be integrated in gender equality policies?
- How to ensure that fighting against sexism in the media doesn’t increase other inequalities for minorities, such as for transgender people or women of different ethnic origins or from different societal classes?
- How to ensure that women in the media have effective power? How to ensure that they benefit from equal employment conditions?
- How to fight female stereotypes in media contents, especially fiction, without interfering with the freedom of creative activities?
- Are large-scale information campaigns on gender equality and sexual harassment relevant? What are the most efficient ways to change perceptions of and raise awareness on sexism?