SECTION I.
Media Policy, Structures and Employment

1. The Challenge of Mainstreaming Gender Through Media and ICT Policy and Regulation

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INTRODUCTION

Many initiatives and advocacy interventions have been implemented over the years to address gender inequalities in the media, but unless those efforts are properly embedded within policy frameworks and agreements, their effects are likely to be scattered and their impact is likely to be weakened.

Developing gender aware policies for the media has been indicated since the UN Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) as one of the steps to be taken to meet the goals of Section J of the Beijing Platform for Action those of promoting equal access to the media and decision-making (J1), and eliminating gender stereotypes in media content (J2). Section J clearly stated that governments and other actors are called upon to promote 'an active policy of mainstreaming of a gender perspective in (media) policies and programs' (par. 237) and should support research that reviews existing media policies (par. 239.b). The document

also encouraged 'the participation of women in the development of professional guidelines and codes of conduct or other appropriate self-regulatory mechanisms to promote a balanced and non-stereotypical portrayals of women by the media' (par. 241.d), while also calling for media organizations themselves to 'elaborate and strengthen self-regulatory mechanisms and codes of conduct' to comply with the objectives in Section J (par. 236 and 244.a/b).

During the 2003 Commission on the Status of Women, participants highlighted that the lack of, or insufficient attention to gender perspectives in media and communication policies needed to be addressed. The Commission indicated, as a very first recommendation for action, that of ensuring "women's early and full participation in the development and implementation of national policies, legislation, … strategies and regulatory and technical instruments in the field of information and communication technologies (ICT) and media and communications". It also urged stakeholders to create adequate "monitoring and accountability mechanisms to ensure implementation of gender-sensitive policies and regulations as well as to analyse the gender impact of such policies" (par. 4a). Furthermore, the Commission recommended the constitution of partnerships, to develop 'self-regulatory gender sensitive guidelines for media coverage and representation, for public and community media to work in support of gender equality' with a specific reference to the need to provide financial resources and other support measures to this end (per. 4e), including resources to support research to 'review existing media and ICT policies' (par. 4f).

More recently, the centrality of codes, policies and governing arrangements in combating persisting inequalities has been reaffirmed in international initiatives, including the Global Alliance for Media and Gender (GAMAG) and its Research and Policy Committee; the UN Women Global Compact 'Step it up for gender equality in the media'; the UNITWIN University Network for Gender Media and ICT, as well as by a number of advocacy and scholarly contributions to the debate (UNESCO/IAMCR, 2014).

At the same time, attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 5 – Gender Equality – but more broadly the comprehensive set of

SDGs, requires serious consideration of the necessary normative frameworks to be put in place, at all levels, from the local to the global in order to make gender mainstreaming a reality in the media and ICT sector.

Evidence shows that, as of today, these recommendations have not been prioritised in practice by governments, international and regional organizations, and media companies as well. Thereby, scrutiny of the interplay between gender, politics, and media policies remains crucial: (a) to develop necessary knowledge on the contradictions and structural problems that prevent gender equality from becoming a reality in the sector, and (b) to elaborate sound policy proposals that are needed to foster actions aimed at redressing persisting inequalities.

Therefore, the GAMAG calls for multi-stakeholder efforts to elaborate, adopt, foster and monitor gender-aware media and ICT policies and normative frameworks at organizational, national and international levels.

EVIDENCE

Feminist researchers have engaged with supranational fora - such as UNESCO and the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), the Internet Governance Forum and others - denouncing the low level of attention for gender concerns in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of international normative frameworks for the media and ICT, as well as in policy venues where relevant debates took place (Gallagher, 2008, 2011; Jensen, 2008, 2010; Droussu and Jensen, 2005; McLaughlin and Pickard, 2005; Gurumurthy and Chami, 2014).

A number of policy-related studies of media gender inequalities with a regional focus – from North America (Beale, 2002; Shade, 2014) to Europe (Sarikakis and Nguyen, 2009; Padovani, 2016; Ostling and Nenadich, 2017) and Latin America (Chaher, 2014) – highlighted very limited commitments towards the Beijing Platform for Action policy recommendations. In the European Union, the European Commission, the Council and the European Parliament have often addressed these

problems on the basis of contrasting priorities (Ross and Padovani, 2017); while 'soft policies' – essentially non-binding, self-regulatory measures – e have mostly been adopted at the level of media organizations (Sarikakis and Nguyen, 2009; EIGE, 2013). In the Southern African Development Community (SADC), consistent regulatory mechanisms have been put in place, but this has only been possible thanks to sustained nongovernmental advocacy (GenderLinks, 2017).

Looking at the national level, what emerges from the preliminary findings of a UNESCO Global Survey on Gender and Media (2016) is that only 35% of world governments have mainstreamed gender issues by integrating them in national cultural policies; while in 37% of cases, gender equality strategies do not even mention the role and accountabilities of the media in fostering change. Some positive developments have characterised recent Latin American communication laws - particularly in Argentina (Chaher, 2014; Justo, 2017) and Mexico (Vega Montiel, 2014) - and yet sustainability of the adopted measures over time is recognized as a major issue.

Shortcomings in gender mainstreaming have also been highlighted in relation to ICT policies: 'digital agendas' in Canada, India, the MENA region, Europe and Australia are all characterized by limited inclusion of gender concerns (Padovani and Shade, 2016); while Internet Governance as a space of policy discourse has been criticised for the limited degree of women's participation, the marginality of substantive women's issues addressed and the rhetorical nature of gender-relevant statements in formal provisions (Association for Progressive Communications, 2012; Doria, 2015).

Two major international projects have included a systematic focus on media organizations' internal policies and support mechanisms. The International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF) Global Report on the Status of Women in the Media (IWMF, 2012) showed that slightly more than half of the (500) companies surveyed have an established company-wide policy on gender equity. These ranged from 16% in Eastern European to 69% in both Sub-Saharan Africa and Western Europe (IWMF, 2012, p. 34). According to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) Report

on Advancing Gender Equality in Decision Making, only one quarter of the major (99) media organizations across 28 EU countries have a gender equality policy or code of conduct, and only one fifth have adopted an equality of opportunities or diversity policy (EIGE, 2013, p. 37; see also Ostling and Nenadich, 2017). Moreover, wide variations in the adoption of gender-related policies can be found both between and within the different regions.

Overall, the low level of adoption of media and communication policies and regulatory frameworks is highly problematic, especially if we consider the diverse functions these measures play. They are, in fact, crucial to expose and address inequalities in as much as they define principles and goals, and provide benchmarks to assess progress and change (Gallagher, 2011; 2017). At the same time, they contribute to the profound cultural transformation that is needed to achieve a redistribution of symbolic and material resources necessary overcome gendered inequalities (Chaher, 2014). Such measures can also contribute to guarantee sustainability over time of positive changes towards gender equality (Gallagher, 2011; 2017) when it is clear that progress is not a given and step-backs are always a possibility (WACC, 2015; Ross and Padovani, 2017).

Examples of good practice in the adoption of gender equality policies and support mechanisms, particularly by public service television, can be found in countries like Sweden, the UK, Spain, Austria and South Africa; and measures to enforce gender-equality in the audio-visual media have been adopted by independent regulatory authorities in countries like France and Morocco. However, even when media internal policies and national regulatory frameworks are in place, this is not a sufficient condition to produce better gender-responsive media outputs in terms of content, access and participation. Issues of implementation and sustained commitment, also through adequate funding and support mechanisms, remain challenges to make media and ICT gender equality a reality.

In this context, scrutiny of the interplay between gender, media and ICTs policies remains crucial to develop necessary knowledge on the contradictions

that prevent gender equality from becoming a reality in this sector. Structural and cultural barriers to equality need to be fully appreciated in their interaction with communication and ICT policy developments. Hence, more research that is focused, intersectional, transnational, and comparative is needed to gain a comprehensive understanding of how governing arrangements relate to gender equality in practice, and in different geo-cultural and socio-economic contexts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goal states that "providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large". What needs highlight is the centrality of gender-aware and gender-responsive media and ICT policies to the attainment of such goal; also in view of its crucial interplay with all other SDGs. In fact, the intersection of various dimensions of gender inequality have implications for the promotion of better educational, health and living conditions for women and men across societies; and this calls for the development of consistent norms, institutions, and governing arrangements that contribute to reducing gender inequalities, as well as ending other forms of exclusion and discrimination in contemporary knowledge societies.

Building on the above, the authors' **Recommendations** are :

GOVERNMENTS SHOULD:

• Ensure the full realization of gender mainstreaming in national communication governance. This implies a commitment to mainstream gender equality in national media policies and digital strategies, and also an explicit acknowledgement of the role and relevance of media and ICTs within gender equality strategies.

• Include in national media and ICT policy initiatives reference to fundamental principles, as well as indicate concrete and sustained measures to foster media

gender equality, through the involvement of gender expertise, organizing transformative gender training activities and developing monitoring and assessment mechanisms. Adequate resources should be made available for the implementation of such strategies.

• Promote a better understanding of the difficulties, challenges and opportunities of including gender equality principles and support measures in the media and ICT sector and its governance at the national level. This should be done through the conduct of comprehensive studies and analyses.

• Avail adequate resources for the conduct of research activities – at the national level and cross-national – to produce methodologically sound reviews of existing policy measures, and to elaborate evidence-based proposals for future policy interventions.

UN AGENCIES SHOULD:

• Make media and ICT gender equality a priority in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, also through networking and strengthening existing international normative frameworks - from CEDAW to the Beijing Platform for Action to the final documents adopted at the 62nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

• In view of elaborating sound and sustainable programs to foster media gender equality at national and regional level, commit towards a global research plan, focused on media and ICT governing structures and arrangements across the world's regions. This would aim at better understanding to what extent and under what conditions public policy and regulatory interventions may produce/facilitate/ support the necessary change towards making the media and ICTs more gender equal. This research activity may be conducted in close collaboration with the GAMAG's Policy and Research Committee.

- In particular, UN Women and UNESCO should promote interdisciplinary and inter-sectorial policy-focused, multi-stakeholder encounters, aimed at exchanging information, knowledge and good practice. These should be organized on a regular basis and be institutionally supported, to create the conditions for an on-going dialogue between gender and media scholars, professionals and actors involved in the governance of communications, so as to develop the capacity to address the challenges deriving from future digital communication developments through adequate policy interventions, with a forward-looking gender mainstreaming perspective.

MEDIA INDUSTRY ORGANIZATIONS AND PROFESSIONALS SHOULD:

- Take steps to address the lack of formal adoption of gender equality policies, gender-related normative frameworks and support mechanisms.

- Integrate equality strategies (such as equality or diversity policies, parental leave policies, policies for return to job after maternal leave), including within self-regulatory measures (such as codes of conducts and guidelines).

- Accompany these measures with support mechanisms for monitoring (observatories and ad hoc units), evaluation (regular gender-assessment plans) and implementation. These measures are important for an equality ethos to be firmly embedded in each organization's operations, to favour gender-sensitive transformation in the organizational culture, and to give a clear signal that equality issues are taken seriously, thus fostering sustainability of gender-equal transformations over time.

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD:

- Continue promoting awareness and disseminating knowledge – transnationally and through collaborative initiatives – about the challenges and opportunity of gender equal media and ICTs, with a specific goal to foster the adoption of relevant

policies and mechanisms to address structural and cultural unequal power relations in the sector.

• Provide expert and diverse knowledge towards the formulation, adoption and implementation of policy measures – at the organizational, national and international levels – that will inform gender-aware media and future technological developments.

RESEARCHERS SHOULD:

• Further map out, critically investigate and analyse media and ICT policy measures and governing arrangements from a gender equality perspective. They have a crucial role to play in better understanding policy challenges in national contexts. Furthermore, they can harness the potential of existing international networks – like the GAMAG's Policy and Research Committee, the UNITWIN Network on Gender Media and ICT or the International Association for Media and Communication – to participate in transnational comparative projects.

• Should adequate resources be made available by governments and international agencies – as per the above recommendations – elaborate coordinated research plans for policy oriented investigation on media gender equality, including analytical frameworks, adequate multi-method approaches, and multi-level perspectives. These investigations may focus on the various aspects of policy-making processes, including: policy process and involvement of different stakeholders, discursive approaches to gender equality framing in media policy arrangements, the use and implication of digital technologies in policy development, and analyses of the implementation of gender equality policies.

RESOURCES AND GOOD PRACTICE

A collection of good practice related to media policies and normative frameworks for gender equality in the media is being created as part of an EU funded project:

Advancing Gender Equality in Media Industries (AGEMI).

The project is supported by the 'Rights, Equality and Citizenship/Justice' programme of the European Union and coordinated by Karen Ross (University of Newcastle, UK) and Claudia Padovani (University of Padova, Italy). The Resources Bank will feature good practice derived from a global survey and informed collection. It will be online by late 2018.

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• Further relevant resources concerning good practice gender-aware national policies, media organization's codes of conduct, and journalist unions' guidelines, can be found in the following collections:

• International/European Federation of Journalists (2012). *A Handbook on Gender Equality Best Practices in European Journalists' Unions.* Brussels: International Federation of Journalists (IFJ).

• WACC/IFJ (2012). *Resource kit for Gender-Ethical Journalism and Media House Policy.* Toronto/Brussels: WACC and IFJ.

• UNESCO (2012). *Gender-sensitive Indicators for the Media. Framework of indicators to gauge gender sensitivity in media operations and content.* Paris: UNESCO.

• European Parliament (2013). *Study on Women and Girls as subjects of Media's Attention and Advertisement Campaign: The Situation in Europe, Best Practices and Legislations.* Brussels: EP.

• EIGE (2014). *Women and the Media: Methods, Tool and Good Practices in the field of Women and Media. Policy review in EU Member States.* Vilnius: EIGE.

- Council of Europe. Gender Equality Commission (2014). *Gender equality and media at national level: compilation of good practices from Member States.* Brussels: Council of Europe.

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- Council of Europe (2015). *Handbook on the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2013)1 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on gender equality and media.* Brussels: Council of Europe.

- Council of Europe (2017). *Media, Election and Gender. Study on media coverage of election with a specific focus on gender equality.* Prepared by the committee of experts on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership (MSI-MED).

- Hertie School of Governance (2017). *Women in culture and media: A European comparison.*

- European Parliament (2018). *Gender Equality in the Media Sector. Study for the FEMM Committee.*

- Also relevant is the experience of GenderLinks in the Southern African region. Policy focus on gender and media, and examples of good practices available here: http://genderlinks.org.za/what-we-do/media/policy/

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