

Gizonduz initiative, actions taken in the period 2007-2009 and future challenges

In November of 2007 Emakunde (The Basque Women's Institute) presented "Gizonduz" a pioneering and innovative initiative aimed at promoting the involvement of men in the process of achieving greater equality between women and men. Two years have now passed since Gizonduz was launched during which time many activities have been undertaken.

Activities began with the International Congress on masculinity and everyday life celebrated in Donostia / San Sebastian on 5, 6 November 2007. The congress was attended by around four hundred people and brought together a great number of experts from many different countries. In that same month an awareness campaign entitled "Equality will make a man of you" was launched. This campaign was actively promoted by Basque Public Television (ETB-1 and ETB-2).

In April 2008, the president of the Basque autonomous region, Juan José Ibarretxe publicly presented the Charter of the Basque men in favour of equality and against violence towards women. The charter has been further endorsed by men representing the world of politics, culture, sport and the media. By this means men have in the last few years, developed study groups and have worked in our community to promote equality and new masculinities.

Since its public presentation awareness of this initiative has been promoted via press release and advertisements in newspapers and on radio, poster campaigns, information points and the collection of signatures.

The Basque Parliament, local authorities and other public and private institutions have collaborated in the promotion of the charter and the collection of signatures. Thanks to all of this effort more than 10,000 Basque men have lent their support to the Charter thereby fulfilling one of the primary aims of the Gizonduz initiative.

In April of 2008 a web page dedicated to Gizonduz was created inside the web page of the Basque Government (www.euskadi.net/gizonduz). This web page provides more

detailed information relating to this initiative and includes feedback sections, documentation, bibliography, interesting links, etc.

Since July 2008 it has been possible to access the Gizonduz blog. This is where members of society are free to comment and express their opinions and reflections relating to their real life experience of equality and the new masculinity. Since December 2009 Gizonduz also has a presence on facebook and youtube.

In September 2008 the Gizonduz pack was presented to new parents. 12.000 packs have been distributed through midwives and by institutions concerned with adoption to men who will be biological or adoptive parents. It includes a set of awareness raising materials aimed at giving guidance on issues related to care and parenting, and encourages the reader to reflect on the influence of the father figure in the transmission of non-sexist values. In particular the materials include: the documentary "Dads" the story "The Secret Dad," the guide "Fathers on Equality" the guide "Men, Equality and New Masculinities" the game "Berdinometroa", the newspaper Gizonduz and a bumper sticker for the car.

On the occasion of the commemoration of 25 November, an event entitled "Basque Men Against Violence Towards Women" was held on 24 November 2008 at the Museum of Fine Arts in Bilbao. The event was chaired by Juan José Ibarretxe and attended by more than 200 people, mostly men, from different fields of Basque society, politics, culture, sports, media, the world of economics, social movements, etc.

In March 2009 the Gizonduz awareness and training program was launched. This is a set of free courses, available via the Internet or face to face. The courses were developed through 2009 and cover a broad range of topics and are characteristically flexible and adaptable.

There are two types of course, those in which the main aspects of the course are predetermined (content, features, timing, location, language of implementation, etc.). and non predetermined or "a la cart", which are made to measure in terms of length and content, as well as regarding the place of execution and the persons to whom they are destined. Although women can also attend these are courses specifically dedicated

to men who individually or collectively, either from a professional or personal perspective, want to achieve a deeper understanding of equality between men and women and how this can work for them. In this sense the courses cover issues related to men, equality, masculinity and deal with materials as diverse as health care, parenting, sexuality, road safety, prevention of drug addiction, crime, etc.

In the first nine months of the training programme (March-December 2009) there have been 55 courses involving 955 people (670 men and 285 women), and having delivered nearly 400 hours of training.

In addition, the degree of satisfaction has been very high. 97% of the participants have considered the courses useful for their personal life and 84% for their professional life.

On June 2 2009 the director of Emakunde -The Basque Women's Institute published the Resolution of 21 April 2009 in the Official Gazette of the Basque Country which regulates the awarding of grants to associations of men who work for equality between women and men in the Basque Autonomous Region. The sum total of grants awarded in that financial year was in the region of 18,000€ and has funded six projects presented by various groups of men working for equality in Alava, Bilbao, Ermua and by the male peer network of Euskadi "Gizon Sarea Elkartea" addressing activities for equality and against violence towards women, such as awareness campaigns, training programs, conferences, meetings, etc.

Finally it should be stressed that since Gizonduz was launched in order to publicize the initiative, Emakunde has participated in numerous awareness activities (conferences, congresses, workshops, etc.) and has been well represented in the media.

Thus, the evaluation of these two years in which Gizonduz has been in operation are extremely positive and encourages us to face the challenges of the future with even more enthusiasm and energy. In 2010 the Institute will focus on assessing what has been done to date and to continue to strengthen the dissemination activities of the Charter of the Basque men, the delivery of backpacks for new parents, Web Gizonduz and the awareness and training program.

With all this work we want to go on shaping our community and creating a critical mass of men committed to an equality which challenges traditional masculinity and invests in more egalitarian models which provide a reference for other men and, especially, for subsequent generations. So in the near future the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country will be a benchmark at the state and international level in terms of time spent by men on domestic work and care giving, as well as on the number of men who have publicly committed to promote equality and to have participated in awareness and specific training in this area.

Vitoria-Gasteiz, December 22nd, 2009.