



# Violence against women and the political agenda in Spain

*The issue of violence against women has been pushed to the forefront of the political agenda in Spain by women's organizations and in response to the influence of the United Nations and the European Union.*

By Verónica Guardiola Corral

Domestic violence and violence against women have become relevant issues on the international agenda. Yet this was not always the case. Of late, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), official institutions such as the United Nations, the European Union and national governments from all over the world have demonstrated concern about this crucial social problem. By what processes has this translated to awareness of these problems in Spain? And additionally into actions taken by Spanish politicians and government agencies to alleviate and solve these problems? The hypothesis of this paper is that the issue of violence against women has been introduced onto the Spanish political agenda by women's organizations and by the influence of the United Nations and the European Union.

The following pages contain evidence in support of this hypothesis. These are organized into three sections: The first focuses on Spanish citizens, the Spanish Government and domestic violence. The second looks at the relationship between NGOs and the Spanish Government. Finally the third section concerns The Spanish Coordinating Group of the Women's Lobby of the European Union. In an additional section the paper then provides an in depth look at work that the Spanish Government has done recently in the area of promoting gender equality.

The agenda-setting process is an ongoing competition among issue proponents to gain the attention of media professionals, the public, and the policy elites. Agenda-setting offers an explanation of why information about certain issues, and not other issues, is available to the public in a democracy; how public opinion is shaped; and why certain issues are addressed through policy actions while other issues are not. The study of agenda setting is the study of social change and social stability. (Dearing & Roger, 1996: 1-2)

This theory proposes three different lines of inquiry for investigation. These include media agenda setting, public agenda setting, and policy agenda setting. The first area under discussion, *media agenda setting research*, would address the issues that compose the media agenda. It is a study of those issues selected by the media that will become news. The second type of research, *public agenda setting research*, contemplates the issues that compose the public agenda. It would also imply the study of their order of priority and further compare this with the one used by the media. The last point of focus, *policy agenda setting research*, explores the political actions developed as a consequence of the pressure of the media and/or the public agenda, in relation to particular issues. In addition, it examines how some issues have been transformed into problems to be solved by society and government as part of the political agenda. In this article the theory of policy agenda setting research is used to corroborate the hypothesis stated in the introduction.

CAUSES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACCORDING TO SPANISH CITIZENS <sup>1</sup>			
Alcoholism	98.6	Religious beliefs	74.5
Drug addition	98.3	Being genetically predisposed to violent behavior	66.8
Having oneself been a victim	82.7	Way power is shared between the sexes	66.6
Unemployment	82.2	Provocative behavior of women	57.5
Poverty and social exclusion	77.7	The media	49.9
Way women are viewed by men	75.6	Low level of education	35.8

## Agenda setting

The agenda setting theory, a theory generated by scholars of communication will be useful as a tool in support of the arguments presented in this paper. The following definition, -proposed by Dearing and Rogers, presents this theory succinctly. This definition will also be useful for the understanding of what follows.

## Spanish citizens, the Spanish Government and domestic violence

In Spain domestic violence was long considered a private matter. Until very recently it was not even a topic of public discussion. But now relevant media coverage and government actions have begun to change this. Still, false perceptions about the causes of domestic

<sup>1</sup> TABLE SELF – CONSTRUCTED with data from *the European and their views on domestic violence against women, Eurobarometer 51.0*, European Commission Directorate-General X "Informa-

tion, Communication, Culture and Audiovisual Media", 1999, pp.49,51,53,55,57,59,61,63,65, in [http://europa.eu.int/comm/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_127\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_127_en.pdf)



violence and lack of awareness concerning the importance of this problem on the part of the general public in Spain can explain the lack of social pressure to eradicate this problem. Unfortunately, in Spain public perceptions of domestic violence do not correspond with the existing reality.

As can be observed from the table above, Spanish citizens believe alcohol and drugs to be the main factors that trigger domestic violence. In Spain it is also additionally assumed that perpetrators of domestic violence are most likely survivors of such violence themselves. In addition unemployment is also seen as an important factor. The way in which power is shared between the sexes doesn't seem to be seen as a main argument to explain domestic violence (it comes up 9<sup>th</sup> out of a possible 12 indicators). Archaic assumptions about the "provocative behaviour of women" are still issues of concern for a significant 57.5% of those surveyed. It can therefore be concluded that Spanish citizens do not identify domestic violence and violence against women as problems related to gender inequality. Nor are they seen as social problems.

Thus in Spain it was action by the government, prodded along by the work of women's organizations on the one hand, and by the influence of the United Nations and the European Union (more detail in the next section) on the other, which has forced the public to deal with this grave problem. In the first phase of this process, the Spanish government focused all its efforts on creating awareness in Spain about the true nature of the problem. In order to achieve this goal three basic statements were disseminated. 1. Domestic violence is a social problem.

2. Zero tolerance is the appropriate response.
3. No one is exempt from the responsibility of working to resolve this issue.

#### **NGOs and the Spanish Government: The Spanish Coordinating Group of the European Women's Lobby**

The Spanish Government now works closely with Spain's most representative non-governmental organizations. In more than a few cases, the government has recognised the relevant work developed by these organisations in the area of domestic violence, as being directly relevant to public policy. Therefore, the law of global measurements against gender violence (Organic law 1/2004, 28th of December) contains a short reference in its preamble, acknowledging that advances achieved in this field are the fruits of the work of women's organisations. The text of this law also emphasises a consistent determination to involve citizens in the work of solving the problems which the legislation is itself an attempt to address.

Because of this and because they possess expertise and knowledge concerning issues relating to domestic violence and violence against women, NGOs in Spain doing work on women's issues, who have also demonstrated that they have support at the grass-roots level,

have become regular participants in the process of creating public policy and drafting new legislation together with the Spanish government. In general terms, their contribution consists of consulting, exchanging points of view, providing first hand information (from working daily with female victims of domestic violence) and help with the elaboration of text for official documents.

The Spanish Coordinating Group of the European Women's Lobby (CELEM) is a NGO that defends the interest of the women, promotes equality between women and men, and lobbies to influence policy at the European level. It was founded in 1993 as an Association and became the Coordinating Group for the European Lobby in 1995. Nowadays, it is an umbrella organisation for national women's associations and federations. CELEM is represented in every region (Comunidad Autónoma) of Spain.

This NGO is a key player on the Spanish national political scene. By looking at its structure, and at the work that this organisation does we can better come to understand how women's organizations determine what the important issues are, relating to women and gender equality. Of further interest is the way in which this organisation chooses to present these issues on the national and international agendas. Together with three other women's NGOs, representatives of the Spanish Coordinating Group of the European Women's Lobby sit on the board of the National Women's Institute<sup>2</sup>. This indicates sensitivity on the part of the government in Spain to the issues of concern to these particular NGOs. For the Spanish government today, domestic violence has become a priority area.

At the European level, the Spanish Coordinating Group is a member of the European Women's Lobby, commonly known as EWL. This NGO, located in Brussels, is the "largest umbrella organisation of women's associations in the European Union" (<http://www.Socialplatform.org/code/en/abou.asp?page=206> available on 10/08/2005). Its aim is to defend and promote equality between women and men in the European territory. Combatting violence against women is a component area of its work.

In relation to the thesis of this article, it should be mentioned that the links between the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the European Union and this NGO go further than the habitual meeting with its respective representatives, since EWL is a consulting organisation for the Council of Europe and the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Likewise, it participates as an observer in the Consulting Committee for Equality between Women and Men of the European Commission. In the same way, EWL works and maintains a

<sup>2</sup> The National Women's Institute is the main Spanish institution in charge of coordinating the policies on women and equality.



close relation with the European Parliament and the European Council of Ministers. All in all, it has close links to those institutions that hold legislative power and therefore influence the European Member States.

In order to ensure that European policies address the interests of women living in Europe, EWL undertakes a number of actions. These include lobbying legislators on behalf of draft equality legislation, overseeing the implementation of European directives and meeting with European politicians active in the decision making process concerning enactment of legislation of concern to women. Combatting violence against women constitutes one of the areas where EWL undertakes an active role. The "EWL charter of principles on violence against women" is a document, available through its web-site, where the organisation makes public its position on this issue. In addition EWL works actively to provide tools and resources in the community. For this purpose EWL has its own European Policy Action Centre on Violence against Women, an European Observatory on Violence Against Women, a Documentation Centre, a Database and an European web-site on Violence against Women (<http://www.Socialplatform.org/code/en/abou.asp?page=206>, available on 10/08/2005).

As the Spanish Coordinating body for the European Women's Lobby, CELEM is a partner of the European Women's Lobby (EWL), EWL is, in its turn, is member of the "Social Platform", a NGO which represents associations, federations and a network of NGOs from the social sector. The Social Platform "ensures a wide circulation of information on EU activities and policies to its members at the national level" because "NGOs must become legitimate partners in the public debate on the orientation of European society [...]. With this in mind, the Social Platform seeks to develop and strengthen a civil dialogue between European NGOs and the institutions of the European Union" (<http://www.Socialplatform.org/code/en/abou.asp?page=107>, available on 10/08/2005).

To sum up, the information shared in this section provides corroboration for the hypothesis. Women's groups in Spain with the support of European and International agencies have worked to create a public policy agenda which has alerted the Spanish government to the relevant problems. Women's organisations, which establish networks at national, European and international level to co-ordinate their efforts, have introduced the issue of combatting violence against women onto the national and international agendas and at the same time have worked to pressure politicians to enact legislation which addresses their concerns. Finally by acting in concert with legislators these organisations have worked to guarantee the appropriate design and implementation of the actions to be taken by the government at various levels.

### **The work of the Spanish Government in the area of gender**

#### *Institutions with responsibilities for implementation of gender equality legislation*

The Spanish State, both territorially and administratively, is composed of three autonomous levels. These consist of the national level (country), the "Autonómico" level (region) and the local level (cities and towns). The first level has its own national institutions to rule the country, the second one has its own governmental organs with regional dimensions and the third level is represented by the local institutions<sup>3</sup> such as the city administration. Each of these institutions - national, regional and local - have, according to the Constitution, their own responsibilities for carrying out the mandate provided by newly enacted political legislation intended to promote equal opportunities for women. These responsibilities vary in degree and take the form of official actions to be taken as described by documents (plan of equal opportunities) and laws. In addition, at each level of Spanish government there exists an Agency or Department for Equal Opportunity.

The Women's Institute (Instituto de la Mujer) is an autonomous institution, founded in 1983 (Law, 16/1983, of 24 of October) and reformed in May 1997, which is responsible for oversight and implementation of national policy enacted in support of equality between women and men. It is linked to the Ministry of Social Affairs and is a component of the central state administration. In addition, there are Women's Institutes at the regional level.

In general terms, the Women's Institute acts as a coordinating institution. Among other things it is responsible for organising regular meetings with public authorities at all three levels of government (national, regional and local). This is to ensure that each level of government carries out common policies as required by legislation pertaining to equality between women and men. Thus, the National Women's Institute contributes to the designing of state policies and controls the implementation of equality principles between the Ministries. At the "Conferencia Sectorial de Mujeres" (Conference of Woman from all sectors) the Women's Institute meets with the Regional Women's Institutes in order to oversee the implementation of the directives from international organizations and the European Union. Further, it is a participant in the establishment of regional and local policies respectively. Likewise, it forms collaborative agreements with regional and local authorities in order to foster actions for the promotion of women's rights (funding projects, courses, resources, etc).

<sup>3</sup>The seventeen Comunidades Autónomas (regions) that form the Spanish nation are guided by the Constitution of 1978 and by the State laws. The Comunidades Autónomas adapt the general national laws to their own circumstances, necessities and contexts. By no means, the regional laws (leyes autonómicas) and local authorities can act against the Constitution, neither against the state laws.



In the international sphere, the National Women's Institute represents the Spanish government in the gender equality area. It participates in international meetings and conferences and prepares Spanish reports for international organizations. For example, it participated in the creation of CEDAW reports for The United Nations and the editing of the reports for the European Union. Similarly, it is an important player in Spanish projects of international co-operation addressing the needs of women<sup>4</sup>.

In the social sphere, The National Women's Institute works regularly with NGOs. One of its missions consists of providing technical and economic support as well as infrastructure. Board members of the National Women's Institute include representatives from most of the popularly supported NGOs for women's issues in Spain. These include the Spanish Coordinating Group of the European Women's Lobby (CELEM), The Rural Women's Federation (FEMUR), The National Women's Federation for Democracy, and the Business Women and Active Management (OMEGA). The Ministries and the Women's Secretary of the two main trade unions are also members of the Board. This fact can be seen as indicative of the role The Women's Institute plays in Spain, as a link between government and civil society in its areas of concern.

The National Women's Institute and its regional equivalent, the Regional Women's Institute, covers a wide range of activities. These include writing reports, conducting investigations. In addition NWI oversees the purchase of material, the managing of public campaigns, and publication and distribution of materials about women to libraries. Further, the Institute supports the creation of audio-visual productions that promote a positive image of women in Spanish society. Finally NWI funds research projects about issues of concern to women at Spanish universities.

*The government's strategies on gender: Official document*

The strategies and actions of the Spanish government to promote equality between men and women are defined in the official documents entitled "Planes de Igualdad de Oportunidades de Mujeres (PIOM)". These written documents, covered several sets of plans, each expected to take several years to carry out. They were written in consultation with the National Women's Institute. Up to the present, the Spanish government has launched four action plans: *I Plan para la Igualdad de Oportunidades de las Mujeres (1988-1990)*, *II Plan para la Igualdad de Oportunidades de la Mujer (1993-1995)*, *III Plan para la Igualdad entre Hombre y Mujeres (1997-2000)* and *IV Plan para la Igualdad entre Hombres y Mujeres (2003-2006)*. Each of these plans represented a step forward in relation to the previous plan. The goal

of the first plan (1988-1990) was to dismantle pre-existing legislation that was seen to discriminate against women. The goal of the second plan (1993-1995) was to enforce pre-existing legislation and to educate the public about said legislation through educational activity, and support for non-discriminatory practices in job-training programs and the labour market. The third plan (1997-2000) based on the "4<sup>th</sup> International Women's Conference in Beijing" (1995) and on the "4<sup>th</sup> European Action Program" (1996-2000), and as is described in that same plan, focuses on the implementation of gender equality as a specific and universal goal of all government policies. The fourth plan (2003-2006), which is still in force, follows the guidelines of the European Framework for Strategy on Equality between Men and Women. Its main objectives (follow the principle of mainstreaming<sup>5</sup> and indicate a need for all of the agents involved in women's issues to co-operate as intensively as possible. These include workers in public administration, social agents, and employees of NGOs as well as the general public. All of these plans have been created in part with the theoretical support of guidelines generated by the United Nations and the European Union.

Solutions to the problem of gender violence, derived from the notion that said violence is a direct consequence of unequal power relationships between men and women, are an extensive component of "Planes para la Igualdad de Oportunidades entre hombre y mujeres" (Plan for Equal Opportunities for Women and men). Since the third plan, combatting gender violence has gained importance as an issue in Spanish politics. This becomes apparent in 1998, three years after the 4<sup>th</sup> International Women's Conference in Beijing, by the fact of the creation of a specific section containing the First Action Plan to Combat Domestic Violence (1998-2000). This plan which was created with the advocacy and support of the National Women's Institute focused specifically on this issue. This was immediately followed by a second plan, entitled "2<sup>nd</sup> Global Plan to Combat Domestic Violence (2001-2004)". Both plans elaborate upon strategies focused on at the Beijing conference in 1995. So that prior to this in Spain, domestic violence had been dealt with as part of a larger strategy of combatting inequality through the National Plan for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. But after Beijing, solving the problem of violence against women became sufficiently important in and of itself to warrant the preparation of an action plan focusing exclusively on this issue.

In conclusion it can be stated, that the actions taken by the Spanish Government in response to problems of inequality and gender violence are inspired by and developed along guidelines provided by The United Nations and The European Union.

<sup>4</sup> This and other activities of international nature are supervised by the International Department of The National Women's Institute. Among its competences are the programs of Latin-America, the Council of Europe, the United Nations and the European Union.

<sup>5</sup> Mainstreaming is a strategy to promote gender equality as a component of the work done by all bodies and /or Ministries of the government.





#### *Observatories and ongoing research and evaluation*

In 1999 the National Women's Institute conducted the first macro-survey in order to evaluate and quantify the existing levels of violence against women on Spanish territory. Two years later, the "2nd Global Plan against domestic violence (2001-2004)" defined the necessity of undertaking an additional macro-survey in order to monitor the impact of the actions taken in response to the initial study. As part of this plan three **Observatories** were established. These were the Observatory for the study of advertising practices (1999), the Observatory for Equality (2000) and the Observatory for the study and evaluation of practices introduced to eradicate violence against women (2004). The first Observatory studies and monitors the content of advertising in various media for presentations of images detrimental to the status of women in society. The other two observatories compile and analyse data in order to compare the current situation with previously analysed statistical evidence in order to determine the successes and failures of the most recent Government policies. As explained in the Real Decreto (Royal Decree) 1686/2000, 6th of October, these observatories were established as part of the process of Spain achieving full membership in the European Union, as well as of full Spanish participation in other international organizations. For in order to comply with currently accepted international standards of common practice regarding gender equality, the Spanish government has taken upon itself the task of evaluating over time, the progress of its female citizens towards full emancipation and equality under the law.

*The National Plan for Research and Development* of The National Women's Institute funds year by year investigative field based studies dealing with a variety of women's issues. A quick glance at the list of studies undertaken however indicates that there is a dearth of projects relating to the issue of violence against women. The list includes a wide variety of topics, such as women and education, women and health, female political representation, women in the labour market, the representation of women in language, etc. In total only four studies dealt with issues related to gender violence.<sup>6</sup> All of them are recent, dating from 2002 /2003 until 2005/2006, and all were studies emanating from and implemented by universities. Timewise they all coincide with "The 2nd Global Action Plan on Domestic Violence against Women".

<sup>6</sup> "Las raíces de la violencia familiar: desencuentro de géneros en Castilla y Cataluña en la modernidad"(Roots of familial violence: gender disagreement in Castilla and Cataluña), "La violencia de género en el mundo antiguo"(Gender violence in the old world), "Cambios de creencias en las mujeres maltratadas en su proceso de recuperación, perfil de potencialidad y agentes de cambio" (Changing beliefs of mistreated women during their recovering process, profiles and changing factors), "Violencia contra la mujer en las relaciones de noviazgo: causas, naturaleza y consecuencias"(Violence against women during relationships: causes, nature, and consequences).

In addition, in 2002 the results of a study were published entitled "Women, Violence and Communication Media." This was a joint project of the National Women's Institute and the Public Radio Television Group (State Media). Its most significant contribution was the dissemination and distribution of a "manual for media" explaining how to communicate appropriately about issues of violence against women within a public media context.

#### *Spanish legislation*

The status of women in a particular society can be deduced through a reading of the laws of said society (Alberdi & Rojas Marcos, 2005: 82). From this starting point we can deduce meaningful information from the study of the evolution of the Spanish legislation on domestic violence. The Spanish Constitution of 1978 draws a line between the past and the present concerning the issue of equality between women and men. Since this Constitution was enacted, the legal distinction between women and men in Spain has disappeared. Both sexes are treated equally under the law, and this principle is universal, within the Spanish context. Therefore, the Spanish law is neutral and thus doesn't distinguish between women and men. Because of this, violence against women is judged as a crime punishable by the law with equal punishments meted out to perpetrators of either sex. However, in accordance with the demands of the international community, recent articles (art. 39, for example) have been introduced in the Penal Code to provide support to specifically female crime victims<sup>7</sup>. These articles take the female gender of the victim and the male gender of the perpetrator into consideration. That is to say, they make visible the gender of the victim and perpetrator.

For this purpose modifications have been made to existing Spanish laws and additional new laws have been enacted. The most relevant ones in regard to the issue of combatting violence against women are: *Law 35/1995, 11 December* which is an attempt to provide assistance to victims of domestic violence, sexual harassment and gender discrimination, and *Law 27/2003, 31 July* which provides updated structure in the granting of orders of protection for victims of domestic violence. Other recently enacted laws relating to these issues include *Organic Law 11/2003, 29 September* which provides specific measures for the protection of citizens, against domestic violence and for the social integration of foreigners, and *Law 30/2003, 13 October* which is a directive to generate measurement instruments to evaluate the impact on

<sup>7</sup> In the Spanish language, the masculine gender is used to refer to groups including both women and men. For example, "perpetrators" (perpetradores) is a word in the masculine form which refers to men and women. Nowadays, there is a strong feminist movement in Spain which has obliged the official institutions to use both feminine and masculine plural words instead of just masculine plural words when they refer to women and men. Thus, politicians open their speeches with "EspañolES y EspañolAS" and not just with "EspañolEs" as in times before.



promotion of gender equality of previous government directives. Finally we can look at *Organic Law, 15/2003, 25 November* which modifies the Organic Law 10/1995, 23 November, of the Penal code which imposes harsher sentencing structures to be used in dealing with those found guilty of acts of domestic violence and the *Organic Law, 1/2004, 28 December* which provides an overview of global measures against gender violence. In the preamble to each and every one of these laws it is duly noted that discussions and resolutions from International Women's Conferences, various international treaties as well as decisions handed down by the European Council and the Commission of the European Union are essential components of both the impetus for and the content of these laws. One could thus say that this approach to legislating in support of victims of domestic violence has been thrust upon Spanish institutions and Spanish society by the assumptions and demands of these international institutions. (Finally one also should keep in mind that these institutions are also informed by and dependent upon the work of the NGO's working on behalf of women's rights.)

The *Organic Law of Global Measures against Gender Violence* has had widespread effect on the media and the general public in Spain. It will therefore be necessary to focus on this legislation in greater detail. This act was unanimously approved by Spain's National Congress (parliament). What distinguishes this law from previous legislation, lies in its application, a multidisciplinary perspective that provides fresh approaches to addressing the problems of gender violence. For this is a broad-based law which imposes new measures in a diversity of areas such as: education, public health, the criminal code, media and advertising. For each of these are elements which can play an important role in combatting cases of violence against women. In general terms, the aims of these laws can be summarised as follows: creation of public awareness through education, approving larger amounts of public health assistance for victims, controlling the messages projected by media, assuring a correct co-ordination of all the agents involved, overseeing the working conditions and protecting the economic rights of victims of gender violence, improving existing laws in order to give victims a higher level of protection, promoting participation of the civil society (which is represented by associations and organizations that fight to eradicate gender violence,) and finally, providing specialised education and training to those professionals who are involved in all of these processes. (These include doctors, judges, social workers and others).

The actions taken in support of each of these goals are numerous. Keeping in mind that the objective of this paper is not to analyse the Spanish law; we will only point out the most relevant ones. In the educational area for example, equality between men and woman and the issue of gender violence itself is now a universal component of high school curriculum in Spain. As a component of this a new television character has been introduced on the school channel. This character's main

responsibility is the promotion of educational initiatives in favour of gender equality and the fight against violence against women. In the advertising domain, all types of advertising that contain derogatory or discriminatory images of women are considered illegal after the enactment of this law. Finally, The National Health Plan will now contain a section titled: *Integral Prevention and Intervention in Gender Violence*.

Regarding the working conditions and economic situation of victims of domestic violence, the *Real Decreto Legislativo 1/1995 de 24 de marzo* modified the laws concerning rights of employees (*Ley del estatuto de los trabajadores*) to include victims of gender violence in the category of workers who's absence from the workplace is justifiable under the law. In addition this law makes it legally possible for an employee who is a victim of domestic violence to request and receive a transfer if the crime committed makes this necessary. Furthermore, victims of such crimes will be fully entitled to a temporary leave of absence, with full rights to return to work when the situation and conditions make that possible. The victim will be able to resign voluntary his/her contract without any penalty. Legally he/she will be unemployed during this period with the right of receiving full unemployment benefits. Those victims lacking in economic resources and education will be provided with access to education and job-training programs. According to the *Law 35/1995 of the 11<sup>th</sup> of December* these benefits and programs are available in addition to, rather than instead of welfare benefits and traditional forms of victims compensation previously established under criminal laws.

In the institutional sphere, two administrative bodies have been created. The first one, *The Special Body of the Government against Violence against Women (Delegación Especial del Gobierno contra la Violencia sobre la Mujer)*, is in charge of promoting the Government's policies relating to violence against women and the co-ordination of all actions designed in this area. The second body is *The National Observatory on Violence against Women (Observatorio estatal de violencia sobre la mujer)* whose duty is to observe, analyse and measure the situation and the progress of measures previously enacted to combat violence against women. Likewise, it provides advice and recommendations on the ongoing implementation and development of measures to eradicate this type of violence.

In the area of the criminal code this legislation also offers a number of new possibilities. These include the creation of specific courts for the hearing of cases of violence against women. In addition a new position has been created for this court, that of special prosecutor (*fiscal contra la violencia hacia la mujer*) for crimes against women. It should also be mentioned that the nature of the court ordered order of protection has been changed drastically in order to give a greater degree of protection and support to victims of these types of crimes. It is



now possible that a provisional judge<sup>8</sup> can provide an order of protection without first seeking approval from the regular criminal court system. This order of protection has a validation period of 30 days. Once the trial starts the order needs to be re-evaluated and possibly revised by the judge. The aim of this order of protection is to co-ordinate civil and penal measures as well as available social services. It attempts to create harmony among a variety of legal instruments and procedures, such as transferring the custody of the children to the mother, ensuring that the father continues to provide economic support, providing legal authorisation for the crime victim and her children to continue living in the family home, and ongoing attention to the fact that orders of protection remain in effect and are not violated.

### Violence against women

As can be inferred from the different sections of this essay, *violence against women*, in general terms, and *domestic violence*, in particular, have been introduced onto the Spanish political agenda by women's organisations. These women's organisations then use as reference the International political agenda formed mainly by the United Nations and the European Union. In their turn these international bodies are heavily influenced by NGOs such as the European Women's Lobby (EWL) and the Social Platform.

Thus returning to the third line of inquiry posed by the Agenda Setting Theory, it can be stated that the issue of violence against women has jumped from the agenda of women's organizations (which represent the interests of civil society) to the international political agenda and from there to Spain's national political agenda. In other words, women's organizations have generated visibility for the issue of combatting violence against women. Their achievement has been to place it at the forefront of Spanish politics as a relevant issue on the political agenda. As a consequence the European Institutions and the Spanish Government have addressed issues of domestic violence and violence against women through policy actions.

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<sup>8</sup> The demand and order of protection can be requested by the victim at the police station, court, offices for assistance to victims, social services and institutions that links to the Public Administration.

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