

Gender equality, a challenge for Cooperatives

The ñatiarras Cristina Madina and Maixel Madinagoitia have worked for about 40 years at ULMA. In the 1970s, married women were forced to leave their jobs in cooperatives. At ULMA, these two women were the first to fight to get back to work after marriage.



MAIXEL MADINAGOITIA

“The best decision of our life was to make the request to continue working after marriage”



CRISTINA MADINA

« How did you start working at ULMA?

There was a lot of work in the 60s and 70s, and many women came to ULMA to work. We started at the Otadui office with the hope of becoming partners. At that time, women who married often stayed at home. We did not want to limit ourselves to housework and looking after our families. We really liked working at ULMA and we were part of the cooperative. We looked for other ways to organize housework and childcare and we presented a request to the cooperative bodies to continue working after marriage.

« How did that work? What did you do?

We were both going to get married in 1974. We were very clear that we wanted to return to work, and by then the Social Council had already made some comment about it. We wrote a letter to the Governing

Council, asking for married woman to be allowed continue as members of the Company. It was the best decision we ever made.

« It was a big change from previous customs. What did they say to you at home and at work?

At home we had no problems with that decision. Within ULMA, there were all sorts of reactions, but it was generally accepted. Of course, the mentality was that woman didn't return to work and, as with any change, we had to put up with comments from some partners such as "what, married women are also working now?", or, "are you really going to return to work? Two household salaries? Why do you need that then? Is not it enough for the husband to work?"

In any case, it was clear to us and we carried on. After us, most women did the same. Now, it seems like a mere anecdote,

but back then, it was a big change.

« Since then until retirement, have you seen any change in women entering the working world?

We have had many experiences as working women. Things have changed a lot, but it is clear that there is still much to be done. Also at ULMA, women need more impetus to work in positions of responsibility. In the same way, there are also more men working at home or in childcare, but women still bear the biggest burden in the home. And that doesn't facilitate proper development of women's professional and productive work. It is important that, like men, we are taken into account for the different positions depending on our abilities.



gender equality in cooperatives and at ULMA

Equality and non-discrimination underlie the Cooperative's own idiosyncrasy, but situations of discrimination found in society and in the employment market are also reflected in cooperatives.

Although about five decades have passed since the start of cooperatives, the situation between men and women is still not fair. The participation of women is lower than that of men, and the presence of women is more frequent in activities with lower social prestige and lower wages. In addition, in general, most cooperatives are managed and run by men, and the presence of women in the representation bodies is not proportional.

The first approaches at ULMA companies also reflect that reality: in our cooperatives there are departments of women or men and types of work distributed according to gender. If we address the managerial fields, these positions are mainly occupied by men, and although in the other areas and departments the presence of women has increased, in higher-level positions this progress has not taken place.

The Equality Plans launched within the ULMA Group and its different Businesses will give us the opportunity to raise awareness, and to train and bring improvements in these areas. We are on the way to providing value to all the potential we have in the ULMA Group. We have a lot to do in that direction and the promotion of gender equality is one of its challenges.



Some facts about >> equality assessment at ULMA Construction (2017-18)

