



ORIGINAL ARTICLE



Dossier "Women's rights: advances, setbacks, and current debates"

<https://doi.org/10.30545/academo.2026.n1.1464>

The challenge of gender mainstreaming in a male-dominated state-owned enterprise

El desafío de la transversalización de género en una empresa pública masculinizada

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyze the implementation of gender equality policy actions within Argentine public companies, based on a case study of the Argentine Air Navigation Company (EANA) during the period 2020-2023. A case study approach based on primary and secondary sources is proposed, including interviews with key informants and company and sector documents and reports. The starting point is the consideration that gender inequalities and the actions that seek to address them in public companies share some aspects, but may also differ in others, from what happens in private companies in general, particularly in heavily masculinized industries. Some relevant characteristics of the EANA case and the gender actions undertaken are identified, as well as the obstacles and challenges to their implementation, within the framework of what is highlighted as an objective of mainstreaming the gender perspective in the organization. Finally, it is noted that the public enterprise environment may present some favorable aspects for the development of gender actions, without ignoring the existence of persistent inequalities, as expressed in the case of EANA.

Keywords: Public enterprises, gender, public policies.

Resumen

Este trabajo se propone analizar la implementación de las acciones de políticas de igualdad de género en el marco de las empresas públicas argentinas a partir de la consideración del caso de la Empresa Argentina de Navegación Aérea (EANA) durante el período 2020-2023. Se plantea un abordaje de estudio de caso basado en fuentes primarias y secundarias, incluyendo entrevistas a informantes clave y documentos e informes empresariales y sectoriales. Como punto de partida, se considera que las desigualdades de género y las acciones que buscan enfrentarlas en las empresas públicas comparten algunos aspectos, pero también pueden diferir en otros, respecto a lo que sucede en las empresas privadas en general, en particular en industrias fuertemente masculinizadas. Así, se identifican algunas características relevantes del caso de EANA y las acciones de género emprendidas, así como los obstáculos y desafíos para su implementación, en el marco de lo que se resalta como un objetivo de transversalización de la perspectiva de género en la organización. Finalmente, se destaca que el ámbito de una empresa pública puede presentar algunos aspectos favorables para el desarrollo de acciones de género, sin desconocer la existencia de desigualdades persistentes, tal como se expresa en el caso de EANA.


Palabras clave: Empresas públicas, género, políticas públicas.


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Article received: December 15, 2025. Accepted for publication: April 12, 2026. Published: May 22, 2026.

Conflicts of Interest: There are no conflicts of interest.

Funding Source: This work is part of the research project "Gender and Diversity Policies: Obstacles and Challenges for Their Implementation in Argentine Public Companies" at the Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento.

Responsible Editors: Shirley Diana Franco Mancuello , Universidad Nacional de Canindeyú, Facultad de Ciencias Jurídicas y Sociales, Sede Curuguaty, Paraguay.

Paula Emilia Gamarra Ruíz , Universidad Católica "Nuestra Señora de la Asunción". Asunción, Paraguay.

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Introduction

Women's participation in the labor market and occupational structure represents one of the areas in which the traditional patterns reproduced at the social level in relation to masculine and feminine roles, as well as the associated power asymmetries and inequalities, are most clearly expressed (Actis Di Pasquale & Savino, 2023; Fernández Hasan, 2007; Paz, 2023). These patterns refer to the sexual division of labor within capitalism, in which masculine roles are linked to productive participation in the public sphere, whereas feminine roles are associated with tasks related to the domestic sphere (Vázquez & Urbiola, 2014). Consequently, a series of stereotypes emerge regarding "men's jobs," traditionally occupied by men and to which women face greater difficulties in gaining access.

The persistence of gender stereotypes is expressed in different ways in the workplace. Some studies have focused, for example, on individuals' reactions to the success of women in occupations stereotypically considered masculine, demonstrating more negative reactions and less appreciation compared to men achieving similar success. This reveals that gender stereotypes may generate biases in evaluative judgments about women, even when they have demonstrated success and competence (Heilman et al., 2004). Other studies have highlighted a less favorable perception of women compared to men as potential occupants of leadership roles, as well as a less favorable evaluation of their behavior in such functions (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

In relation to gender inequalities and gaps in the labor market, two phenomena emerge. On the one hand, horizontal segregation, related to the unequal distribution of genders across certain professions and industries: some masculinized (predominantly male participation) and others feminized (greater female presence). On the other hand, vertical segregation, which implies an unequal distribution across organizational hierarchical levels, with women having a lower presence in the highest managerial positions.

Gender inequalities are present in organizations, for example, through different barriers to women's professional development (Gaba, 2010; Heller, 2012)

and obstacles embedded in their trajectories in the form of labyrinths and glass ceilings (Eagly & Carli, 2007; García Beaudoux, 2018). Ultimately, analyses of gender inequalities within organizations place particular emphasis on the institutional mechanisms that originate and perpetuate them. In this regard, Acker (1990) highlights the ways in which gender inequalities become institutionalized within organizations through processes of gender construction. According to the author, these processes are imperceptible and are seldom directly linked to gender, yet they express assumptions about women and men, femininities and masculinities. Thus, the supposedly gender-neutral processes displayed by organizations are in fact permeated by gender.

In Argentina, these phenomena manifest themselves in different ways. According to data from the Center for Production Studies of the Ministry of Productive Development⁽¹⁾, women's labor participation accounted for 33% in 2021 (CEP XXI, 2021). Female labor force participation reached a historic high during the first quarter; however, the informality rate stood at 39.3% for women and 34.6% for men, representing a gap of 4.7 percentage points, and only 5.4% of employed women held managerial or supervisory positions. Women's presence in salaried employment is linked to feminized activities, such as care work and domestic employment, which account for nearly 9% of the economically active population, in addition to traditional service activities.

The most feminized sectors of the economy are textiles and clothing manufacturing (with a feminization rate of 37%), the pharmaceutical sector (34%), and the chemical and petrochemical industries (24%). Conversely, sectors with the lowest female participation, with rates around 10–11%, include the automotive industry, machinery and equipment manufacturing, and steel and metallurgy. Nevertheless, despite the increase in women's labor participation, occupational segregation⁽²⁾ persists, and the gender pay gap becomes more visible, since masculinized sectors tend to offer higher wages and enjoy greater social prestige. Moreover, strategic sectors are usually associated with men, as reflected in their majority presence in mining, construction, and transportation.

Gender inequalities identified in organizations in general, and particularly in the private labor sphere, have also been the subject of analysis in the field of public administration (Alfama Guillén, 2015; Canelo & Duarte Ávalos, 2023; Castellani, 2025). Thus, public organizations are likewise permeated by gender, expressing inequalities between men and women and generally reproducing patterns of vertical and horizontal segregation.

Within this framework, Connell (2006) focuses on the inclusion of a gender perspective in public sector organizations and on the weakening of the legitimacy of negative stereotypes concerning women's labor roles and certain forms of sexual harassment. However, the author also emphasizes the persistence of these forms of inequality and the metamorphosis they undergo. Likewise, it is argued that the greater social scrutiny faced by public organizations and the relevance of political authorities' willingness to implement state reform programs centered on gender equality constitute a significant difference compared to the private sector.

Accordingly, gender equality public policies may be defined, following Bustelo Ruesta (2001), as "the set of intentions and decisions, objectives and measures adopted by public authorities regarding the promotion of women's status and gender equality between women and men" (p. 478). This refers to the entirety of actions undertaken by the public sector aimed at achieving greater gender equality by addressing the socioeconomic and cultural conditions that restrict it. Ultimately, it concerns the State's capacity to incorporate into the public agenda those demands promoted socially, largely led by the feminist movement.

Likewise, Rodríguez Gustá (2008) identifies four categories related to gender policies, each with different perspectives, scopes, and limitations: a) affirmative action policies; b) policies for women; c) gender perspective policies; and d) gender mainstreaming policies. The latter approach assumes that gender policies are systemic and therefore, to be effective, must be present throughout the entire institutional structure of the State⁽³⁾. At the same time, the manner in which gender policies are implemented

depends on the political context, state capacities, and existing participation processes, among other aspects (Rodríguez Gustá et al., 2017).

Within this context, a relatively unexplored specific issue emerges concerning a particular type of entity within the public sector: public enterprises. These entities are characterized by operating under a specific legal framework as business organizations that provide goods and services within a given market, while ownership and control remain under governmental administration (Bernier et al., 2020). Exceptions include studies focused on the evolution of the Argentine public business sector and aimed at analyzing issues such as women's participation in managerial positions and their greater presence in areas traditionally considered feminine (García de Fanelli, 1988; Núñez & Aruano, 2020; Valsangiácomo, 2021).

Within the broader novelty implied by the emphasis on gender issues in the public agenda, the specific case of public enterprises—and particularly the effort to implement gender and diversity policies in this sphere—appears as a recent phenomenon (González, 2023; González & Yáñez, 2022). This intention has materialized through various actions and programs that, in recent years, have increasingly emphasized addressing gender inequalities within public administration itself⁽⁴⁾. One institutional outcome of these changes was the creation in 2019 of the Ministerio de Mujeres, Géneros y Diversidad de la Nación (MMGyD), the agency responsible for coordinating and implementing policies aimed at addressing these issues nationwide, seeking to mitigate their most adverse effects.

Parallel to the implementation of policies aimed at transforming situations of inequality at both the social and organizational levels, a series of gender and diversity policies have also been deployed with the objective of progressively transforming the state apparatus itself. In particular, in the case of public enterprises under the authority of the national government, one of the main regulatory instruments is Administrative Decision No. 1744 of the Cabinet of Ministers' Office [JGM] (2020), enacted in September 2020, entitled *Lineamientos para la igualdad de*

género en las Empresas y Sociedades del Estado. These Guidelines are presented as a set of good practices intended for the management of state-owned companies, with the primary objective of compiling the expectations the State holds regarding the organization and functioning of these entities in order to promote the mainstreaming of the gender perspective.

After some time has passed since the incorporation into the public and governmental agenda of issues arising from gender inequalities, it appears pertinent to inquire into the characteristics these inequalities assume in the specific case of public enterprises as a particular type of organization. Likewise, it becomes timely to analyze the recent implementation of gender and diversity policies within public enterprises, as well as to identify obstacles to their implementation.

The objective of this paper is to analyze the main gender-related issues and the implementation of equality policies in public enterprises in Argentina in recent years through the examination of a specific case: the Empresa Argentina de Navegación Aérea Sociedad del Estado (EANA). The working hypothesis holds that issues related to gender inequalities and, particularly, the equality policies designed to address them, assume certain specific characteristics within the framework of public enterprises that must be taken into consideration when designing and implementing actions in the sector. To this end, the study adopts a case study approach focused on EANA, the entity responsible for air traffic control services in Argentina. This is a strategic organization within the sector, engaged in highly specialized activities and subject to high technical standards, which, in principle, reproduces dynamics similar to those of private companies in the sector, while also displaying distinctive characteristics due to its connection with the State and sectoral policies.

The study seeks to address the following questions: What specific characteristics emerge regarding gender inequality issues within the public enterprise EANA? What types of gender equality policies have been implemented? Which specific actions are particularly relevant? How have these actions been received, and what have been their main

consequences? Are there aspects that could be applied to other public enterprises or to organizations in general?

Methodology

The approach proposed in this study involves an in-depth analysis selected for its nature as a paradigmatic case (Flyvbjerg, 2004). This makes it possible to address, in a more comprehensive manner, the complex dynamics among actors, as well as the multiple intervening variables, with the aim of drawing broader conclusions regarding their impact on gender-related issues. Case study research is a methodology characteristic of the social sciences that contributes to theory-building from practice. Case studies constitute a delimitation carried out by the researcher and are constructed through a set of facts and/or situations (Eisenhardt, 1989; Neiman & Quaranta, 2006).

According to Stake (2005), the case would be classified as intrinsic, insofar as it describes the specificities and particularities of the case itself. Thus, this is a descriptive case study based on in-depth semi-structured interviews complemented by secondary information. Studying a phenomenon within its context requires the use of multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2014).

Regarding primary sources, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants who held high-ranking hierarchical positions within the company during the period under study and were selected on the basis of their involvement in the development of gender-related actions at the organizational level. In this regard, the research was conducted in accordance with ethical principles, guaranteeing the informed consent of interviewees, as well as their confidentiality and anonymity, in compliance with the standards governing scientific research. Secondary information was collected from multiple publicly accessible documentary sources, both institutional and sectoral.

With respect to case selection, on the one hand, it is noteworthy that Empresa Argentina de Navegación Aérea Sociedad del Estado (EANA) operates within the aviation sector, which forms part of a highly

masculinized industry⁽⁵⁾. On the other hand, EANA is a recently created entity in its corporate format; therefore, its institutionalization and the development of its organizational structure were contextualized by the debates and initiatives related to gender issues that characterized the period analyzed in Argentina. Ultimately, the case was considered to constitute a potentially fruitful setting for analyzing the nature of gender-related actions within a public enterprise, as well as for identifying obstacles and challenges in their implementation.

Results

The Empresa Argentina de Navegación Aérea Sociedad del Estado (EANA)⁽⁶⁾ was created through Law No. 27,161 of 2015 with the purpose of becoming the provider of public air navigation services within Argentine territory and its jurisdictional waters. EANA is presented as the authority responsible for planning, directing, coordinating, and managing air traffic, aeronautical telecommunications and information services, as well as the facilities, infrastructure, and communication networks of the air navigation system. The company is owned by the national State: 80% through the Ministry of Economy, under the authority of the National Secretariat of Transportation, while the remaining 20% belongs to the Ministry of Defense. Its operational structure comprises 54 aerodromes and airports and 5 regional Area Control Centers (ACC) (Empresa Argentina de Navegación Aérea Sociedad del Estado [EANA], 2023).

Throughout much of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, air traffic control functions had been under the authority of the Comando de Regiones Aéreas (CRA) of the Argentine Air Force, giving this function—and, more generally, the control of the sector as a whole—a military character. This situation conflicted with the recommendations issued by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the body responsible for establishing international aeronautical standards, which indicated the advisability of assigning such tasks to a civilian organization (Mutti, 2017).

The first major change in the sector's structure occurred in 2007 with the creation, through Decree No. 239/2007, of the Administración Nacional de

Aviación Civil (ANAC) as a decentralized body of the National Public Administration, with the purpose of integrating the air traffic control functions and personnel previously under the CRA, as well as other responsibilities of the Undersecretariat of Commercial Air Transportation. It is worth noting that ANAC subsequently concentrated the tasks of provision, oversight, and regulation of air navigation services, which contradicted another ICAO recommendation regarding the convenience of separating these functions among different bodies. To address this issue, in 2011 the air traffic control functions were once again transferred to the Air Force, specifically to a newly created Dirección General de Control del Tráfico Aéreo. In any case, the perspective persisted that such tasks should be provided by a specific hierarchical civilian organization with a professional orientation (EANA, 2023).

Likewise, ICAO also recommended that, whenever economically feasible, air traffic control should be placed under the responsibility of an autonomous entity. Thus, following the enactment of Law 27,161, EANA assumed responsibility for the provision of air navigation services, while ANAC remained in charge of regulating and supervising the service, thereby separating operational and supervisory functions into two distinct entities (Vergara, 2018). As expressed in the company's technical reports and according to the company's providers and international aviation organizations (ICAO and International Air Transport Association [IATA]), the centralization of air traffic control has led to improvements in both operational efficiency and operational safety (EANA, 2023).

EANA: The Organization and the Treatment of Gender Issues

EANA's organizational trajectory reveals a new stage beginning in 2019, marked by a profound paradigm shift in addressing gender inequalities following the inauguration of the new national government headed by Alberto Fernández (2019–2023), elected that same year. This shift was oriented toward recognizing the relevance of incorporating a gender perspective into the organization, as well as assuming responsibility for implementing actions aimed at that purpose.

A highly masculinized environment and the predominance of a military logic are among the first characterizations emerging from the interviews. As previously noted, the creation of EANA completed the transfer of air navigation services—formerly under the authority of the Armed Forces—to the civilian sphere, thereby fully assuming air traffic management. Thus, it is emphasized that these antecedents are not innocuous but persist within the organization through an organizational model conceived as a machine, characterized by rigid hierarchies, centralized decision-making concentrated at upper levels, and a unidirectional communication style (Morgan, 1986).

The military logic is accompanied by another key element within the organization: a strong generational transmission of the profession and the presence of workers with extensive experience and seniority. As in other labor environments, EANA exhibits a process of social reproduction of work within families linked to the sector. And, as occurs in other masculinized occupations⁽⁷⁾, this reproduction primarily takes place among male family members.

The operational area, because this is also related to the fact that it is a historically masculinized sector, women's access has been more recent, so to speak; they are not there, they are not there. (Personal communication, EANA managerial staff, 2022).

The rigid structure combines with gender barriers, facilitating a double exclusion resulting from generational continuity and the lack of openness toward a gender perspective. On the one hand, both organizational and sociocultural traditions reinforce the line of masculine domination within the occupation, expressed through the reproduction of societal role stereotypes within the company itself, sustained by a “deeply rooted culture.” On the other hand, the maintenance of stereotypes within the company results in inequality within the hierarchical structure, with men concentrated in operational and technical areas. Consequently, in addition to the occupational segregation characteristic of the activity

itself, both horizontal and vertical segregation become visible.

The emerging challenge involved overcoming the inertia of role stereotypes and segregation, an issue addressed by EANA's leadership from different angles, such as organizational restructuring and encouraging women's access to coordination and management positions. Additionally, the possibility of incorporating members of the transgender community into the company was considered. From an intersectional perspective, EANA succeeded in taking the step of hiring a transgender employee, although it was mentioned that budgetary constraints and the COVID-19 pandemic emerged as major limitations preventing further progress along these lines. Nevertheless, later on, and together with the Ministry of Transportation and the Ministerio de Mujeres, Géneros y Diversidad de la Nación (MMGyD), a series of workshops aimed at providing employability tools for transgender individuals were developed⁽⁸⁾.

Regarding the levels of the organizational structure, EANA initially lacked a formal space dedicated to addressing gender-related issues.

There was no such thing as a Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities Management Office [...] There was, in fact, no type of initiative, policy, project, etc., linked to diversity, inclusion, or gender issues. Keep in mind that the Empresa Argentina de Navegación Aérea has a prior military trajectory. There is a deeply entrenched military logic within the company because previously it belonged to the Air Force. (Personal communication, head of management at EANA, 2022).

Once the gender area was formally established as a management office within the company's organizational chart, a process of functional restructuring began, along with a comprehensive diagnosis of gender-related issues. As a result of the first process, women were appointed to relevant managerial positions, and, in response to the second, the design of a strategic plan was initiated.

In 2020, EANA created the Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities Management Office, as established in Board Resolution No. 24, with the objective of designing and implementing policies and actions aimed at institutionalizing a gender perspective within EANA. To this end, the office sought to promote respect for diversity, equal opportunities and treatment, effective gender equity, and the creation of a workplace free from violence.

During the interviews, the importance of designing a plan that combined both a long-term perspective and a high degree of institutionalization through a formalized and legitimized document was emphasized. These two aspects implied the possibility of transforming the gender perspective into an organizational policy and even integrating it into the values of organizational culture, thereby fostering a trend capable of transcending the temporal and circumstantial dimension of whoever happened to be managing the company at a given time. This objective is also visible in other public enterprises, with varying degrees of institutionalization, ranging from working groups or committees to fully established units within organizational charts (González & Yáñez, 2022). Previously, among the antecedents related to gender policies at EANA was EANA Resolution No. 16/2018, which approved the Inclusion and Diversity Policy applicable throughout the company and aimed to guarantee diversity and inclusion during recruitment and personnel selection processes, as well as the use of inclusive language and communication. From an intersectional perspective, EANA established specific objectives and acknowledged that gender inequalities may intersect with other dimensions of exclusion.

Finally, in 2021, the EANA 2030 Equality Plan was approved under the regulatory framework⁽⁹⁾ established by the Ley Micaela No. 27,499, which mandates compulsory gender training for all individuals serving in the three branches of the national State. The Plan was intended to apply to the entire company, throughout Argentine territory, and to all personnel.

Although the Plan was drafted by the Equality Actions Area of EANA's Gender Equality and Equal

Opportunities Management Office, its proposals were the result of dialogues established with other actors, including the Ministry of Transportation, which owned the company at that time, the MMGyD, EANA's management and staff, the labor union Asociación de Técnicos y Empleados de Protección y Seguridad a la Aeronavegación (ATEPSA), and its National Women's Network.

The stated purpose behind the development of the Plan was to reduce gender gaps and guarantee equal opportunities within the company. In this regard, the objectives established included guaranteeing equal opportunities and treatment, ensuring an environment free from gender violence, workplace violence, and harassment, and promoting the mainstreaming of the gender perspective throughout the company. To achieve these objectives, the Plan was structured around a set of guiding principles and six lines of action, each of which included specific objectives, measures, actions to be carried out, and impact indicators (a summary of the Plan is presented in table 1).

Furthermore, parallel to the development of the Equality Plan, progress was made in designing and implementing various strategies to ensure its effective implementation. In this regard, as a tool for monitoring compliance with the Plan, a system of indicators was established in order to track its progress and implementation.

From Gender Actions to Mainstreaming

The actions implemented sought to address different lines of action within the framework developed in the Equality Plan and with the aim of ensuring its effective implementation. First, regarding intra- and interorganizational relationships, both formal and informal initiatives may be mentioned. Within the first group, a community of women occupying middle- and intermediate-level positions within the company itself was created with the purpose of fostering dialogue and sharing concerns, problems, and critical issues related to gender at EANA.

Table 1. Main Elements of the EANA 2030 Equality Plan.

Axis	Objective	Main Measures and Actions
1. Information	Generate statistics and useful information for addressing inequalities and violence.	Develop diagnoses and studies on: the situation of women, men, and gender-diverse individuals; violence and harassment; wage gaps; and career development. Design the monitoring and evaluation system for the Plan.
2. Support and Assistance	Guarantee a reporting, support, and comprehensive assistance system for individuals experiencing violence inside and outside the company.	Establish an interdisciplinary support and assistance team within the company's Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities Management Office. Develop a Protocol for Prevention and Action in cases of workplace violence and gender-based violence. Incorporate complementary measures for women workers experiencing domestic gender violence. Promote a safe and confidential reporting environment.
3. Prevention	Prevent any form of violence or harassment that may arise in the workplace.	Involve the company's highest authorities in the commitment to equality and the elimination of workplace harassment. Consolidate commitments regarding gender, diversity, and violence prevention through the Code of Ethics. Develop an internal awareness-raising plan. Promote the implementation of a comprehensive training program on gender and diversity in compliance with the Ley Micaela. Ensure awareness of the EANA 2030 Equality Plan among new personnel joining the company through the Induction Program. Strengthen and increase the visibility of the Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities Management Office.
4. Promotion and Development	Generate promotion and development policies for women, men, and gender-diverse individuals within the company, based on the principle of equal opportunities, internal equity, and transparency in recruitment and mobility processes.	Promote and strengthen women's leadership within the company through a specific program. Promote inclusion and respect for diversity within EANA through scholarships for entry into the profession, promotion of the transgender employment quota, and employment quotas for persons with disabilities. Review recruitment and competition documents to incorporate a gender perspective. Encourage internal career development based on equal opportunities with the participation of an observer. Promote the design of a gender-sensitive recruitment and selection system, including affirmative action measures. Prioritize hiring under equivalent conditions and assess knowledge of gender policies. Ensure gender equality and equal opportunity training for the Recruitment team.
5. Work–Family Balance	Promote work–family reconciliation policies that encourage co-parenting and adaptability to different family structures. Guarantee the right to care and to be cared for, as well as gender equity.	Promote the creation of Breastfeeding-Friendly Spaces in all EANA operational units. Modify shift systems taking specific needs into account. Promote reform of the leave system in favor of co-parenting and the inclusion of diverse family structures. Encourage flexible work options that facilitate reconciliation between productive and reproductive activities for central staff.
6. Mainstreaming	Promote the construction of a gender-sensitive company through the axes of the EANA 2030 Equality Plan.	Participate in permanent gender working groups within the aviation sector and EANA. Promote inclusive and non-sexist communication. Include results and procedures in management reports. Create an accessible website using inclusive language. Incorporate affirmative action policies into procurement and contracting processes.

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the EANA 2030 Equality Plan.

At the same time, at the interorganizational level, a network of women from companies within the sector was established in order to share common concerns, initiatives, and approaches to addressing shared

problematic issues. In order to strengthen interorganizational ties, at the end of 2022 an agreement was reached among a group of state-owned companies and agencies in the same sector to

create the Aeronautical Gender and Diversity Board. The Board was composed of Empresa Argentina de Navegación Aérea Sociedad del Estado (EANA), Administración Nacional de Aviación Civil (ANAC), Aerolíneas Argentinas —the state-owned airline company—, Intercargo —the public ground handling services company—, the Organismo Regulador del Sistema Nacional de Aeropuertos (ORSNA), and the Junta de Seguridad en el Transporte (JST). Additionally, strategic support was provided by the Policía de Seguridad Aeroportuaria (PSA) and Aeropuertos Argentina 2000 —the private concessionaire responsible for the vast majority of the country's airports— for the development of specific actions. These interorganizational mechanisms succeeded in consolidating synergies among the entities and in establishing the gender perspective not only as a shared problem, but also as a strategically important issue beyond EANA's organizational boundaries.

At the same time, these interorganizational measures formed part of the formalization efforts initiated with the aim of mainstreaming the gender perspective throughout the sector. In this regard, both the Ministry of Transportation and the Ministry of Defense, upon which EANA formally depended at that time, had their own plans focused on gender issues, which were also taken into consideration.

A second line of action that emerged concerned the various measures aimed at addressing issues related to gender-based violence and training on the subject. As a guiding principle for their approach, the treatment of these situations involved distinguishing whether such incidents arose within the company environment or within the domestic sphere of company personnel.

First of all, the very first thing we did at the time was approve a protocol for prevention and action in cases of violence, both workplace violence and gender-based violence. Specifically, because nothing of the sort existed before, not even in that protocol [...] What we did was incorporate different strategies for dealing with situations of workplace and/or gender-based

violence, precisely because up to that point the only mechanism that existed was disciplinary proceedings. (Personal communication, EANA management official, 2022).

The importance that these issues acquired at the societal level, together with the support provided by feminist movements to labor unions and women workers, served as a fundamental basis for demanding this type of action. In addition to the development of a specific protocol for such situations, a telephone hotline for reporting complaints was also implemented. During the interviews, it was mentioned that the COVID-19 pandemic became a period of exacerbation of domestic violence, during which cases arose in which female EANA employees turned to the company in order to seek support for the situations they were experiencing. This phenomenon was not exceptional, as both national and international organizations highlighted during the 2020 and 2021 lockdowns the increase in reports and cases of domestic violence and violence against women throughout Latin America, resulting from the impossibility of escaping aggressors as well as the breakdown of support and protection networks (Programa de Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo [PNUD], 2021).

Additionally, within the framework of the guidelines established by the Ley Micaela, the company initiated a series of training sessions aimed at raising awareness and educating all personnel from a gender perspective. Two important dimensions were described during the interviews. On the one hand, there was a certain resistance among male staff due to a sense of "discomfort" regarding how to behave in the daily work environment. On the other hand, there was the difficulty of advancing toward the mainstreaming of the gender perspective, in the sense that such actions should not remain confined solely to the management office that originated them. Indeed, one of the major challenges of mainstreaming was ensuring that the gender dimension would be taken into account across all areas of the company.

A very significant challenge, one that is permanent and ongoing, and that we

have managed in some cases better than in others, is interdisciplinary work, interdepartmental work [...] From the Gender Management Office, for example, I can work on these issues, but in many cases I need to work with operational staff, I need the Operations Management Office to be aligned with us. (Personal communication, EANA management official, 2022).

For this reason, with the objective of strengthening both institutionalization and mainstreaming, a system of indicators was created and reflected in a control dashboard —through a Microsoft Power BI application⁽¹⁰⁾— in which the progress of the Plan was periodically measured. In this way, efforts were made to ensure transparency and accountability, as well as concrete monitoring through relevant metrics and the development of learning processes regarding the work itself that would allow corrective measures to be implemented.

It seemed important to us to be able to carry out concrete monitoring and learn from our own work. Evaluation serves precisely that purpose. So, it seemed important to us to leave everything documented and, moreover, also because [...] of professional biases, in this case even my own professional bias. But yes, very often everything related to the equality agenda, gender policies, and similar issues is regarded as softer, less rigorous matters. (Personal communication, head of EANA's gender area, 2022).

A third line of work involved dismantling certain discriminatory workplace dynamics that promoted inequality within the labor environment and created obstacles in professional trajectories, with the ultimate aim of achieving a more harmonious reconciliation between work life and personal life. To this end, specific regulations and actions were approved, such as voluntary exemption from night shifts for breastfeeding mothers, the possibility of taking time for preventive medical checkups, the establishment of

lactation spaces, and the maintenance of physical fitness certification.

Everyone works night shifts; in the case, for example, of breastfeeding mothers, we created an internal regulation exempting them from working night shifts, unless they themselves wish to do so. In other words, it is a right: they may choose not to work night shifts until the child reaches one year of age. (Personal communication, EANA management official, 2022).

Additionally, along these same lines, a highly significant advancement was the regulatory change establishing that pregnant workers would not lose the physical fitness certification required to perform their duties during pregnancy. Traditionally, prior to this regulatory modification, operational female workers performing tasks such as air traffic controllers or flight plan operators automatically lost authorization to carry out such functions upon becoming pregnant.

When a woman becomes pregnant, she loses her physical certification; it is almost as if pregnancy were considered an illness, so to speak. That is to say, once you become pregnant, you are removed from the control tower. (Personal communication, EANA management official, 2022).

The disqualification from performing their duties also implied an interruption in their professional trajectory and career development, considering the duration of maternity leave and the inability to work during pregnancy.

These and other actions may be summarized in the major challenge identified in one of the interviews concerning what it means to “transform a ravioli into concrete policies [...] at least that is what we are doing here”⁽¹¹⁾ (Personal communication, EANA management official, 2022). The interviewees agreed in emphasizing the need to empower gender areas: not merely to establish a management office or department within the organizational structure in a

limited manner, but rather to ensure that, beyond institutional recognition, such offices are also operationally empowered. Furthermore, they stressed that leadership positions should be occupied by women, both within that managerial office and in others, and that these women should be recognized and legitimized by their peers from other management offices and departments.

Discussion

As emerges from the survey and analysis conducted, Empresa Argentina de Navegación Aérea Sociedad del Estado (EANA) promoted a gender-perspective program that achieved significant progress, although certain emerging obstacles to its development also became evident. In any case, it should not be overlooked that the period analyzed took place within an ideological and political context supported by the national government administration, which was favorable to the development of gender policies. Likewise, Argentina has experienced more than a decade of constant feminist movements promoting the gender agenda.

The challenge undertaken at EANA was addressed through a commitment to the institutionalization and mainstreaming of gender-related actions. This implied, on the one hand, the creation of a specific management office devoted to addressing the issue and encouraging the involvement of all company areas within this perspective. On the other hand, it involved the drafting and implementation of a long-term Equality Plan.

The characteristics of EANA's workplace environment are strongly masculinized, which required attempting to overcome difficulties arising from the persistence of gender stereotypes and prejudices associated both with women's performance in organizations and with historically masculinized occupations. From this derive a set of problems commonly found in such environments, such as horizontal and vertical segregation and their consequences for the gender gap in the labor sphere. Within this framework, the proposed actions addressed the different types of gender equality policies identified in the literature (Rodríguez Gustá, 2008): although the particular emphasis was placed on advancing toward the

mainstreaming of gender policies, the actions undertaken did not escape the tension between addressing "women's problems" and adopting a broader gender perspective (Gaba, 2025).

In this sense, various actions were implemented, such as those related to affirmative action and those explicitly incorporating the gender perspective, which within EANA found what may be characterized, at least tentatively, as some relatively positive differentiating factors compared to other types of business entities. Specifically, in line with what has been pointed out in the literature concerning public organizations in general (Connell, 2006), as well as public enterprises in particular (González, 2023; González & Yáñez, 2022), the relationship with the public sphere appears to constitute a relevant factor for sustaining gender-related actions despite existing obstacles. Likewise, the political context and state capacities influenced the predominance of such a perspective, highlighting the importance of these conditions for the successful development of equality policies, as previous studies have demonstrated (Rodríguez Gustá et al., 2017). In this regard, coordination with other organizations (state-owned companies and agencies) around gender policies emerges as a relevant aspect, serving as a means of broadening their viability through a support base extending beyond the company itself and encompassing the entire sector involved. Likewise, the existence of legal and programmatic frameworks applicable more broadly to public administration (such as the Ley Micaela) and to public enterprises (the Guidelines) appears to have contributed to legitimizing the proposed actions and, together with the aforementioned elements, to fostering a tendency toward policy mainstreaming⁽¹²⁾.

However, it is equally important to emphasize that the emerging obstacles to the development of gender-related actions were also significant. An important part of these may be associated with the perspective of role incongruity identified by Eagly and Karau (2002), insofar as reactions to the gender-related actions undertaken generated certain forms of resistance among male personnel. In particular, the emphasis on the need to broaden the approach through different areas of the company—not solely through those

specifically devoted to gender issues—in order to grant legitimacy and recognition to both the actions and the leadership of women occupying management positions appears aimed at confronting persistent prejudices regarding women’s ability to perform such roles. The emerging risk lies in configuring certain tokenistic practices⁽¹³⁾ that address gender issues in a superficial manner (González et al., 2024). Paradoxically, this may result in assigning additional tasks to women employees within gender-related areas or facilitating women’s access to managerial positions only within gender offices or departments (González, 2023; González, 2025).

In any case, the objective of mainstreaming encompassed not only a set of gender equality actions but also the pursuit of their sustainability, which led to relatively significant progress regarding the issue. This appears to have been the case at EANA, constituting a relevant—although limited—point of support for deepening the analysis of this type of policy within Argentine public enterprises. A better understanding of the phenomenon would require expanding the analysis to other companies in order to consolidate a comprehensive analysis of the issue, which is expected to be undertaken in future studies.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the interviewees, without whose contribution this work would not have been possible. This study is part of the research project “Gender and Diversity Policies: Obstacles and Challenges for Their Implementation in Argentine Public Enterprises” conducted at the Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento.

Article Notes

1. The Ministry of Productive Development, responsible for developing plans and implementing actions aimed at promoting the country’s industrial production, was dissolved in August 2022, and its areas were transferred to the Ministry of Economy.
2. Occupational gender segregation refers to “the phenomenon whereby workers access the labor market in differentiated ways, tending to concentrate in different sectors or occupations

according to their sex” (Ibáñez et al., 2022). As previously suggested, this phenomenon constitutes one of the principal foundations underlying the gender wage gap.

3. In turn, gender is considered a multilevel system intersecting with issues of race and class, while also seeking to ensure that the gender perspective is present across all public policies rather than being confined to a single area or sector.
4. For example, from a general perspective, the Ministerio de Mujeres, Géneros y Diversidad de la Nación (MMGyD) promoted the National Equality in Diversity Plan 2021–2023 (Administrative Decision JGM 1745/2020) and, among other related actions, the National Program for Gender Equality in Work, Employment, and Production “Igualar” (Resolution 220/2020). For an overview of the actions recently undertaken by this body, see, for example, the 2021 Management Report (Ministry of Women, Gender and Diversity of the Nation, 2021).
5. In this regard, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) launched in 2019 the “25by2025” initiative, which seeks to incorporate best practices regarding gender issues within the industry and aims to achieve a minimum of 25% female representation in sector employment.
6. During 2025, progress was made toward transforming EANA from a State-Owned Enterprise into a Corporation (Sociedad Anónima), in compliance with the provisions of Decree No. 70/2023. This change implies certain modifications to its legal framework, making it, to a large extent—and at least formally in terms of operation—similar to private commercial corporations.
7. Another example within the sector is the railway industry, particularly train driving, as visible in the public company Trenes Argentinos Operaciones. Currently, only a few women operate subway trains.
8. Additionally, in 2021, Law No. 27,636 on the Promotion of Access to Formal Employment for

Transvestite, Transsexual, and Transgender Persons “Diana Sacayán – Lohana Berkins” was enacted. This law establishes affirmative action measures for the labor inclusion of transgender individuals, including the establishment of a quota of no less than 1% of all personnel for transvestite, transsexual, and transgender persons across all areas of the national State, including state-owned enterprises.

9. It should be noted that the Plan is also attached to national and international regulatory frameworks and is organized around five guiding principles: equal opportunities and treatment, a violence-free environment, gender mainstreaming, diversity and inclusion, comprehensiveness, sustainability, and transparency.
10. Microsoft Power BI is a data analytics service developed by Microsoft that provides interactive visualizations and business intelligence capabilities and is widely used in corporate management.
11. Informally, the term *raviol* is used to designate a position and its related functions within an organization’s structure.
12. It is worth noting that a political context favorable to the development of gender policies within public organizations may simultaneously be highly unstable and dependent on changes in governmental political-ideological orientation. In the case of EANA, following the governmental change resulting from the 2023 elections and the inauguration of President Javier Milei, whose administration adopted a strong stance against gender policies, the Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities Management Office was dissolved and references to gender were practically eliminated from the company’s plans.
13. Tokenism derives from the English word *token* (symbol) and is often translated as *florerismo*, referring to an inclusion strategy that makes only minimal concessions to minority groups.

Author contributions

All authors contributed equally to the completion of all tasks that resulted in the present work.

Research data availability

The data generated and analyzed in this research that are not subject to confidentiality regulations and agreements are available upon request from the corresponding author at manuelyanez@economicas.uba.ar

Review comments

This article underwent an anonymous peer-review evaluation process in accordance with the journal’s editorial transparency policy. The reviewers, who participated anonymously in this process, consented to the publication of the comments issued during the review.

Review Comment 1: The article addresses a relevant and current topic for gender studies and public policy, focusing on a relatively unexplored field such as public enterprises within masculinized sectors. The theoretical framework is appropriate and up to date, although the intersections among gender, organizational hierarchy, technical qualification, and sex-gender diversity are not explicitly developed from an intersectional perspective. The qualitative methodology based on a case study is consistent with the objectives of the paper; however, it is suggested that the criteria for selecting informants and the ethical considerations, particularly informed consent, be explained more clearly. The empirical analysis is consistent and provides relevant information, although in some passages institutional description predominates, making it advisable to deepen the critical analysis (that is, to provide a more critical interpretation of the institutional description). The writing is clear, although some orthographic corrections remain pending.

Review Comment 2: The article makes a relevant contribution to the analysis of gender policy mainstreaming in public enterprises by addressing a significant empirical case within a highly masculinized sector. Its strength lies in the articulation between organizational theory and empirical evidence, as well

as in the identification of tensions between institutionalization and cultural resistance. Nevertheless, substantial adjustments are required in order to meet indexed-publication standards, particularly regarding the incorporation of a conclusions section, the strengthening of critical analysis, and the inclusion of an explicit ethical statement.

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