*Female labour force participation in Spain after WWII***.**

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**Abstract**: The 20th century has witnessed an increase in the female participation force in most of Western countries, especially since 1940s. Explanations behind the more intensive use of female labour are of different nature: Globalization forces (Camps et al., 2007), the relative female/male wage linked to an increase in education and productivity (Blau et al., 2001), the tertiarization of the economy, and other institutional and cultural factors such as divorce laws and contraception that allow women to control fertility, invest in assets other than the family ones and alter female bargaining power (Iversen and Rosenbluth, 2010). However, the most recent historiographical research shows how women have entered the local and regional labour markets when they have had opportunities to do so, even if this participation have been poorly recorded in official statistics (Borderías, 2013; Humphries & Sarasúa, 2012). These phenomena are complex and might respond to specific reasons and timing in different countries –and even regions-, so why it is important to advance on country case studies in a comparative basis, having in mind the problems derived from under-registration of female participation rates in the official statistics. While in other Western countries the increase in female labour participation started to be significant in the 1960s and 1970s, Spanish female activity rates started to rise dramatically since the 1980s, concurrently with the deep integration of Spain in international markets, especially through the entry in the EU in 1986. However, other factors were also at work, such as female education attainment, decline in fertility rates, tertiarization of the Spanish economy and the building of its welfare state, and specifically, aspects related to institutional factors linked to the return to democracy in the late 1970s which brought some important changes for women such as the Divorce law, and the constitutional principle of gender equality since 1978 modifying the discriminatory Franco’s legislation. Female right to vote was crucial for such policy changes. In this paper, we will analyze the reasons behind the *décalage* in female labour force participation in Spain after WWII compared with other Western countries, and the subsequent catching up from the 1980s.