

**CONVENTION FOR THE ELIMINATION OF
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
54th SESSION – CYPRUS

SHADOW REPORT**

Submitted by:

**Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family
Cyprus Family Planning Association
Hands Across the Divide (HAD)
Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS)
Socialist Women's Movement
Women of Europe - AIPFE
Women's Movement Protoporia**

Nicosia, 15 January 2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ARTICLE 1: INTERPRETATION OF DISCRIMINATION	3
ARTICLE 2: ELIMINATION OF LEGAL AND REAL DISCRIMINATION	3
ARTICLE 3: NATIONAL MACHINERY FOR WOMEN’S RIGHTS	6
ARTICLE 4: SPECIAL TEMPORARY MEASURES - POSITIVE-ACTION PROGRAMMES	8
ARTICLE 5: CHANGES IN SOCIAL ATTITUDES - VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN	8
ARTICLE 6: TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN, EXPLOITATION AND PROSTITUTION OF WOMEN	12
ARTICLE 7: POLITICAL AND PUBLIC LIFE	14
ARTICLE 8: REPRESENTATION AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL	15
ARTICLE 10: EDUCATION	16
ARTICLE 11: EMPLOYMENT	18
ARTICLE 12: HEALTH AND HIV/AIDS	21
ARTICLE 13: ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL LIFE	23

Article 1: Interpretation of Discrimination

It is considered that the Constitution and Cyprus legislative framework adequately covers direct and indirect discrimination and extends to acts of discrimination by public and private actors, in line with Article 1 of the Convention.

Article 2: Elimination of Legal and Real Discrimination

Cyprus does not have a long tradition of, or commitment to, gender equality. Rather, gender policy is largely influenced by EU directives and Conventions for the promotion of gender equality such as the CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action. This lack of 'gender politics' can be attributed to a great degree to the identification of politics in Cyprus with the "National Problem" (the Turkish invasion and the de facto division of the island since 1974 between Turkish Cypriot north and Greek Cypriot south). The dominance of the national issue in the political agenda has also contributed to an environment that is not conducive to human rights activism, and thus the women's movement in Cyprus is weak and suffers from lack of funding and expertise.

Thus, mostly due to Cyprus's harmonization with the EU *aquis communautaire*, but also to bring legislation in line with relevant international instruments, an impressive number of legislative measures relating to gender equality have been passed including the Equal Treatment of Men and Women in Employment and Vocational Training Law, 2002, the Equal Pay Between Men and Women for the Same Work or for Work of Equal Value Law, 2002 the Maternity Protection (Amendment) Law, 2002, the Parental Leave and Leave on Grounds of Force Majeure Law, 2002, and The Equal Treatment of Men and Women in Professional Social Insurance Schemes Law, 2002 among others. Furthermore, all National Development Plans since 1979 have declared as part of their objectives the improvement of women in economic activity and society and the combating of discrimination against women.

Despite Cyprus's legislative framework on equality between women and men, **the fulfillment of women's rights requires more than the removal of formal barriers and there remain political, socio-economic, and cultural barriers to the advancement of women in Cyprus.** The most important barriers for the purposes of the incorporation of gender mainstreaming in policy processes are political. As mentioned above, Cyprus does not have a long history of gender equality and there is no broad political agreement on gender equality policy. There is a lack of gender balance in almost all walks of life and thus masculine models throughout decision-making in all social and political structures and processes including government and political parties, parliament, judiciary, economy, and mass media as well as weak implementation and monitoring mechanisms.

So although on paper Cyprus' gender policies seem relatively good, little [and often nothing] is done to actively promote/implement these policies and generate awareness such as disseminate information to citizens relating to this new legislation or provide information and

training to employers, policy makers, and decision makers to effectively implement these measures. So the problem we are identifying relates here and in the points that follow most often to implementation rather than the drafting of legislation.

Gender mainstreaming in Cyprus is neither fully understood nor implemented at any level.

Gender issues continue to be treated as 'women's issues', i.e. issues related to women only, and not as issues relating to society as a whole. A number of National Action Plans have been adopted foreseeing concrete actions to address various gender equality issues such as employment, family violence, trafficking in human beings, poverty and social exclusion, integration of third-country nationals and so on. However, these are not accompanied by the **sufficient political will and sufficient resources for their full and effective implementation**. More importantly, **gender analysis and gender mainstreaming are lacking** in all these policy documents despite the inclusion of gender-disaggregated data (particularly with reference to employment, violence, and poverty and social exclusion) and, in some cases, stated gender equality policy priorities.

The adoption of the National Action Plan for Equality between Men and Women was undoubtedly one of the most important political developments on gender equality in Cyprus. For the first time, at the initiative of the National Machinery for Women's Rights (NMWR) of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order, all stakeholders, including women's organizations and NGOs, worked together to develop a policy framework and adopt a strategy with specific targets and actions to promote the rights of women and gender equality. As a result, some important steps have been taken for the promotion of equality of women and men in recent years and a large number of actions have been implemented in all areas. However, according to a mid-term evaluation of the NAP carried out by the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS), **most progress seen in the field of promotion of women in the labour market and combating violence against women (mainly domestic violence)** as these two issues have generally received more political and financial support. Unfortunately, due to the lack of political will and corresponding lack of resources mentioned above, there has not been any significant progress in other areas, particularly those that directly affect attitudes and perceptions towards equality between women and men such as education, media, and the representation of women in decision-making.

Despite the above, some small yet important developments for the incorporation of gender mainstreaming in policy formulation are the development of gender-disaggregated statistics and more systematic data collection and in all areas, with the Cyprus Statistical Service playing a leading role in this effort. Despite this, **it is unclear how this data actually informs policy formulation**. Research has also been developed on gender equality issues by academic institutions, NGOs, and women's organisations, and the NMWR has actively supported these efforts. Again, it is not clear how this knowledge feeds into gender equality policy, if at all.

Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women's Rights

In relation to institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women's rights, a range of bodies/structures exist in the public sector, according to their specific sphere of competence. However, it is important to stress that **in the absence of national policy on gender equality**, such bodies work in a fragmented manner and with little if any coordination/communication among them. The development of a holistic and integrated gender policy in Cyprus which would provide the necessary impetus and direction that is currently lacking in the implementation of gender equality policy in each individual ministry and government department, but also within the public administration as a whole in Cyprus. At the moment each ministry and municipality, and often services within such bodies, implement gender equality initiatives with little if any consultation or coordination. This has resulted in a large 'catalogue' of initiatives and actions without any policy dialogue and/or deliberation and often with no involvement of women's organisations and NGOs. It is often unclear what the objectives of the policy initiatives or actions are, what their connection to gender equality is, and there is rarely any follow-up or evaluation.

According to the government report, a study was carried out by the Technical Committee on Gender Equality to explore the possibility of merging the existing gender equality bodies with a view to create a unified body on gender equality. The authors of this report question both the methodology used in the study as well as the outcomes themselves. That is, what were the objectives of the study? What was the methodology followed? How were the outcomes, as described in the *replies of Cyprus to the list of issues CEDAW/C/CYP/Q/6-7/Add.1*, generated?

A very positive step for the advancement of gender equality in the political agenda was the establishment of the Parliamentary Committee on Equal Opportunities between Men and Women by decision of the Selection Committee of the House of Representatives (after the parliamentary elections of May 2006). Among the objectives of the committee was the monitoring of government policy and action on the promotion of women's rights and gender equality. More specifically, it monitored and supported the implementation of the NAPGE (2007-2013), the NMWR and the efforts of governmental and non-governmental organizations which promote gender equality. This is done through its legislation work, as well as the exercise of parliamentary control on relevant issues. The establishment and work of the Committee not only strengthened political discourse on gender equality, it also served to make the public sector accountable in relation to the implementation of the NAPGE. The Committee also helped make public the actions of governmental and non-governmental organizations by giving access to the media to committee discussions.

Despite the above, following the parliamentary elections of 2011, whereby the number of women elected fell from 14% to 10%, **the dissolution of the Committee on Equal Opportunities between Men and Women was recommended**. Following the lobbying efforts of a number of women MPs however, the Committee rather being dissolved completely was merged with that

on Human Rights. This has resulted not only a loss of visibility and focus for gender equality issues but the institutional safeguard for women's rights and gender equality has been reduced significantly.

The above can be considered as symptomatic of the general erosion of gender equality institutional mechanisms in recent years. **Austerity has been used as an excuse for either drastically reducing funding or not increasing funding of the various bodies/structures put in place promoting gender equality in the public sector.** For example, the National Machinery for Women's Rights continues to be understaffed and underfunded. Furthermore, the NMWR budget for the funding of gender equality activities by women's organizations and NGOs has been drastically reduced. It is also currently unclear whether there will be any financial support for gender equality projects for 2013. Similarly, although the responsibilities of the Ombudsman / Anti-Discrimination Body and Equality Authority have expanded systematically, most recently with the National Institution for the Protection of Human Rights (NIPHR), this has not been accompanied with additional human and financial resources. Funding for the operation and activity of other committees such as the Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Violence in the Family have also been reduced both limiting their scope for action and ability to carry out their mandates. **Cuts in funding for gender equality bodies and projects indicate that supportive policies and funding from the national government have been linked to the down turn economic cycle.**

Recommendations:

- *The Government to develop of a holistic and integrated gender policy in Cyprus;*
- *The Government should reconsider the establishment of a unified governmental body on gender equality, with the allocation of adequate human and financial resources. Such a body should have executive powers and a clear mandate for the promotion of women's rights and gender equality policy in Cyprus;*
- *The Government should ensure NGOs working at the forefront of tackling discrimination against women are adequately supported and sustained;*
- *The reinstatement of the House Committee for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men.*

Article 3: National Machinery for Women's Rights

No steps have been taken to strengthen the NMWR in line with the Committee's concluding comments of 2006. While the budget of the national machinery for the advancement of women increased in the years 2006-2009, **in 2010 and 2011 the budget was cut by at least 50%.** More precisely, the budget was reduced from 980.000 Euros in 2008 to 435.000 Euros in 2010 and 450.000 Euros in 2012. However although the budget remained stable from 2010 – 2012, the drastic cut in funding from 2008-2010 was never fully justified. **It is expected, in light of the implementation of stringent austerity measures in late 2012 that the budget for 2013 will be reduced substantially. In fact, it is unclear whether there will be any financial support for**

gender equality projects for 2013. One of the limitations of the NMWRs is that it is not active in raising funds from the European Commission or other funders for the implementation of projects, and limits itself to its core budget provided state.

In terms of human resources, **the general secretariat of the NMWR consists of only three professionals**, two of whom do not have any specific expertise in gender equality and provide only administrative support. Thus, the team is often assisted by external experts to cope with the increasing workload and in order to provide specific expertise. **The need to seek external expertise also increases the financial burden of the NMWR.** The council of the NMWRs consists of 19 women's organizations, most of which are departments of, or otherwise linked to political parties and labour unions. The members of the NMWR consist of more than 60 organizations of which not all deal specifically with women's rights. The president of the NMWR is the Minister of Justice and Public Order and the Secretariat is staffed by civil servants. **It is evident that the very organizational structure of the NMWR creates a conflict of interest since the president of the council and the secretariat cannot in any way represent the women movement due to their very different agendas.**

Although the budget of the NMWR was substantially cut during the period under review it continued to fund projects and activities implemented by the civil society. However, **projects funded by the NMWR have been poorly publicized and their results poorly disseminated** due to the non existence of a strategic action on visibility of the Machinery and its work. For example, the English version of the link to the Gender Equality Unit and the NMWR webpages has never functioned. Furthermore, it is not clear how such research has been utilized to inform policy formulation and implementation. This lack of communication and dissemination of information does not contribute towards raising awareness to the public on issues affecting women in Cyprus, nor does it encourage further scientific research on gender issues demonstrating precisely that women's rights are not a priority. The training programmes/conferences/seminars organized by the NMWR are few and far between and no systematic campaign of action has been undertaken on any issue since the Parliamentary elections of 2006.

Lastly, although a number of sub committees have been created under the NMWR, of which the members are those under the national committee of the NMWRs, their scope for action and impact is very limited, with the exception of sporadic seminars and events, either due to **lack of funding and expertise or lack of sufficient political backing.**

Recommendations:

- *The Government should strengthen the National Machinery for Women's Rights with financial and human resources with expertise in gender equality and women's rights.*
- *The mandate of the National Machinery for Women's Rights should radically change in order to have more powers and not only advisory role. To succeed in this it is also important that the organizational structure of the NMWRs should change and be more independent.*

- *The NMWRs should adopt a strategic action on visibility of the Machinery and its work as well as a strategic plan on awareness raising to the public on women's rights and gender equality.*
- *The NMWRs to actively engage in European and other projects in order to raise funds for activities on women's rights and gender equality.*
- *The NMWR should actively promote the results of the research it funds in order to build upon new projects as well as to feed into policy formulation and implementation.*

Article 4: Special Temporary Measures - Positive-Action Programmes

Economic life

Although the Government has implemented schemes in order to promote gender equality in economic life including promoting female entrepreneurship, and promote flexible forms of employment. However, it is important to stress that, with the exception of the programme on female entrepreneurship and a training programme targeting inactive women, **programmes target 'vulnerable population groups' and not women specifically.** Furthermore, there is no information available with regard to the implementation or impact of the programmes so it is not known to what extent they have assisted in the social inclusion of vulnerable groups quantitatively or qualitatively. In some cases, only quantitative targets are given and no information is provided with regard to which positions/in which sectors of economy were acquired by the participants or how successfully they became integrated in the labour market in the long-term. For example, programmes may be further exacerbating occupational segregation and the gender pay gap.

Furthermore, **the Cyprus Government does not support the adoption of quotas** to address the gender imbalance on the boards of publicly listed companies, despite European level initiatives toward this end. **Women's representation on company boards in Cyprus is slightly over 4%.**

Political life (see Article 7 below)

Article 5: Changes in Social Attitudes - Violence against Women

Violence against Women

The statistics provided in the government report provide information only on incidences of domestic violence and of rape and sexual assault cases reported to the police. **Comprehensive data collection on all forms of violence against women disaggregated by sex and age of victim and perpetrator, type of violence, relationship between victim and perpetrator is urgently needed.** The government's apparent confusion on the scope and nature of VAW is indicative of a lack of awareness and action more generally on the issue.

Reported rates of all forms of violence against women including domestic violence, rape and sexual assault, have risen dramatically in the last decade. Although the police statistics have

been given in the Government Report, statistics collected by the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Domestic Violence (APHVF) are particularly revealing. The call centre of the APHVF has answered 10.076 incidents of domestic violence the years 2000-2011 of which 80% of the victims were women or 92.5% were women and children. **The rise of incidents on violence against women that the APHVF has recorded between these 11 years is 120%.**

Cyprus has a comprehensive legislative framework to combat family violence, and has adopted a National Action Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Violence in the Family (2010-2013). Although the National Action Plan recognizes that violence disproportionately affects women and is perpetrated by men, **it does not fully incorporate a gender perspective.** Furthermore, no specific budget has been allocated for the implementation of the NAP, nor have timelines been set for the actions foreseen. It is also worth noting **the absence of NGOs and women's organisations** as a stakeholder in the NAP.

One of the biggest challenges in combating violence against women in Cyprus is that the current legislative framework and policies are designed to combat 'family violence' only. **Violence in the family has dominated the political agenda on violence against women.** This has been detrimental because the definition of violence in the family is gender neutral and does not recognize that women are the primary victims of such violence, and men the perpetrators, disguising the gendered power relations at stake in violence against women. As all public services work within this framework, as defined by law, **there is a complete lack of a gender perspective in prevention and service provision.**

State services for the support and protection of victims of domestic violence are inadequate in responding to the victim's needs. There is a deep gap in experience, professional and specialized staff, and interagency cooperation is weak. This is mainly due to the **lack of systematic training**, as well as the high mobility rate among front line service providers. This is particularly true of the Social Welfare Services who are primarily responsible for all aspects of victim support and assistance. Procedures that are followed in the cases of abused women are exposing the victims and consequently discouraging them for making a statement or denouncing the incident. It is worth noting that the Manual of Interdepartmental Procedures, which provides a framework for the cooperation of relevant departments of family violence, is outdated and has allegedly been under review for over eight years following an evaluation that was carried out in 2004.

There is only one shelter for family violence in operation in Cyprus, run by the NGO Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family which operates almost entirely with state funding resulting in the organisation being poorly resourced and dependent on the state.

Cyprus also has one of the lowest conviction rates for domestic violence in Europe with high rates of victim attrition. Since 2005 the Cyprus Police track all registered incidents of domestic

violence from initial reporting to final adjudication in Court. According to a study by Veis¹ of the progression of all (941) incidents registered by the Police in 2005, revealed that 55% of the incidents do not lead to official criminal investigations. Furthermore, penalties for perpetrators are minimal further reducing women's confidence in the criminal justice system. According to the same study cited above, the majority of penalties imposed for domestic violence are fines (74%). **There is clearly a 'justice gap' in Cyprus in relation to successfully prosecuting domestic violence against women.**

Cyprus lacks a rape crisis centre or specialized services for victims of rape and sexual assault. According to the Council of Europe Recommendation Rec(2002)5 on the protection of women against violence in Council of Europe member States, specific services to meet the needs of victims of rape and sexual assault are needed. Both the traumatic nature of rape and the need for immediate forensic examination to collect the evidence necessary for prosecution require a rape crisis centre with specifically trained staff on call open on a 24-hour, 7-day basis. Again, the focus on family violence and the lack of a real gender perspective in service provision means that not only victims denied the support that they need but also the treatment given to rape victims during the investigative process is key to the prospects of securing a conviction and reducing the level of attrition. It is therefore not surprising that prosecuting rape cases is a particular challenge in Cyprus with limited evidence and burden of proof being cited as the main barriers.² **Sexual violence is mentioned in Cyprus only within the context of sexual abuse of children, or of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation.** Thus, it is not surprising that conviction rates in Cyprus are among the lowest in Europe, despite increasing reporting rates. Furthermore, awareness raising campaigns and/or other prevention programmes on sexual violence are not implemented at any level.

FGM and other harmful traditional practices such as honour related violence and forced marriage are not framed as issues in Cyprus, despite an increasing migrant population in Cyprus, and there is a lack of data on specific forms of harmful traditional practices.³ In an environment where cultural difference is stigmatised and patriarchal regimes still affect the everyday life of women and men, issues affecting primarily women and girls, such as HRV and FM, remain silenced by migrant women for fear of being further marginalized. In fact, **no research or data exists on gender based violence within ethnic minority and migrant communities in Cyprus** and thus it is not possible to make any assumptions as to its prevalence. It is also worth mentioning that, despite the significant migrant population in Cyprus, migrant and ethnic minority women are absent from the National Action Plan on Combating Violence in the Family (2010-2015), rendering them invisible on a policy level. **There is no evidence to suggest that services for victims of violence are culturally sensitive or able to assist women**

¹ Veis Costas M. (2010). *The criminal progression of domestic violence incidents: effects and issues raised. Analytical report.* Review of Cyprus and European Law, Issue 11, p. 102-126.

² Linda Regan and Liz Kelly (2003), *Rape: Still a forgotten issue. Briefing Document For Strengthening the Linkages – Consolidating the European Network Project*

³ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (2012), *Flying Team Against Violence: Combating Honour Related Violence and Forced Marriages*, Cyprus Report http://www.medinstgenderstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/HRV_Research_Report_Book2.pdf

with special needs or facing multiple discrimination. These are services that require specially trained personnel and centres that can ensure accessibility or any other needs.

Despite the importance of strategies to reach adolescents and young adults in prevention programmes to address violence against women, **primary prevention has largely been absent from policy and programmes**, which focus primarily on adult victims and their children. Indeed, the Ministry of Education does not implement any prevention programmes, training activities, or awareness raising actions on a systematic basis in schools at any level. In the absence of any real government action in the area of primary prevention, a number of NGOs such as the Cyprus Family Planning Association and the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies systematically work with young people with the education system to raise awareness and provide information on issues related to gender based violence.

Cyprus has yet to sign the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, citing that ratification and implementation of the Convention would be too costly in the current economic climate.

Recommendations:

- *Sign and ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence;*
- *Ensure appropriate and sustainable funding for the implementation of these policies and the operation of services;*
- *Improve the collection of reliable, regularly updated administrative and statistical data on victims and perpetrators of all forms of violence against women, disaggregated by sex, age and victim-perpetrator relationship;*
- *Provide systematic training for the relevant professionals dealing with victims and perpetrators of all acts of violence against women;*
- *Apply a gender equality perspective to all service provision with a view to protecting and empowering women and children;*
- *Strengthen and support multi-agency and multidisciplinary co-operation involving all relevant stakeholders including women's organizations and NGOs;*
- *Pay attention to primary prevention of violence against women by recognising the role of the educational system as one of the primary transmitters of traditional and cultural and social norms that are conducive to violence against women;*
- *Provide protection and support to all women and girls in vulnerable situations and facing multiple discrimination.*

Article 6: Trafficking in Women, Exploitation and Prostitution of Women

Indeed there have been increased efforts by the state to combat trafficking in human beings (THB) during the period under review. However, trafficking in women for the purpose of sexual exploitation still flourishes. The most recent development in Cyprus in its efforts to combat trafficking in persons was the abolition of the short term “artiste” visas. Until 2009 possible victims of trafficking were entering Cyprus on short term artiste visas. Artiste visas were subsequently replaced by the so called ‘performing artist’ and ‘creative artist’ visas allegedly putting an end to the identification of the artistic profession to prostitution. However it is not clear how the new terms combat trafficking in women for sexual exploitation. The new policy also revised the procedures for the issuing of temporary residence and employment permits for creative and/or performing artists. However, according to the Government report, the aim of the new procedures is to avoid ‘exploitation of the system’ by employers and not to combat trafficking as such. In fact, the new visas regime, the new procedures for entry and employment of artists, and the revision of employment contracts by the Ministry of Labour, does more to regulate migration from non-EU countries, rather than to combating trafficking and exploitation. Furthermore, such ‘regulation’ of the migration policy, risks rendering complaints by possible victims against their employers/traffickers as ‘labour disputes’ rather than possible cases of trafficking. Trafficking must not be viewed as a labour dispute issue but a violation of human rights.

From the available figures, one would deduce that since there are fewer identified victims, government efforts to combat trafficking in recent years are having some impact. However, the reduction in identified victims could mean fewer police raids and investigations, and the absence of formal procedures and guidelines for the identification of trafficking victims.

The establishment of the Multidisciplinary Committee Group for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (MCGCTHB) is a positive step and its composition includes four NGOs. However, **the work of the MCGCTHB is not monitored or evaluated adequately either internally or externally.** It is our view that a National Rapporteur on trafficking in human beings should be established as an independent body that will monitor and evaluate all actions, strategies, measures and activities of the MCG and of all governmental departments and agencies.

More needs to be done to ensure that criminal investigations result in convictions which continue to elude us despite our relatively strong legislative framework. The government has yet to successfully convict an individual under the Trafficking Law 87(I)/2007 despite an increasing number of prosecutions. Therefore **more training and awareness raising activities are needed, particularly among prosecutors and the judiciary.** Although, a number of trainings have been undertaken during the last two years for government officers on trafficking, such training is neither systematically offered nor is their impact evaluated. Governmental officers including police officers and social welfare officers are also often re-positioned within government services, thus expertise is difficult to accumulate.

With regard to prevention, although a number of awareness raising initiatives have been carried out, more needs to be done to address the root causes of trafficking including **gender inequality, gender based violence, and demand** for trafficking related services.

The Cyprus government runs a shelter for victims of sexual exploitation in Nicosia which is accessible to trafficking victims. However, **the shelter actually operates as a hostel rather than a shelter as in reality it only provides accommodation and board. There are no programmes for psychological support and social inclusion/re-integration, nor is there any vocational training or education programmes for victims.** The shelter has only two-full time member of staff per shift who have no special training or background in treating victims of violence and/or trafficking. Should a victim choose to leave the shelter, she is entitled to assistance under the Public Assistance Law of 2006 which includes a monthly allowance but only until she testifies in court. Following this, victims are usually deported to their country of origin. It should be noted that **there are currently no repatriation programmes in operation.**

Another issue of major concern would be that of **trafficking in women for the purpose of labour exploitation and particularly domestic work.** Although domestic workers play a crucial role in society, due to the isolated and unregulated setting of their work, they are especially vulnerable to abuse, violence and exploitation. **Migrant domestic workers mostly live in the private households of their employers and many report physical, psychological and sexual abuse and exploitative work conditions.** They are often overworked and underpaid, have their personal documents such as passports and travel documents confiscated, report restrictions in freedom of movement, and have their pay withheld in order to pay off "debts" related to their recruitment and transportation. Such exploitation is highly under-reported and authorities do not necessarily recognize and identify cases of trafficking. It also important to note that private households are protected by household asylum and labour inspectors are therefore not able to inspect the working conditions of domestic workers. Another major issue of concern is that private employment agencies, most often used by employers to employ domestic workers, are not regulated and are reportedly involved in trafficking networks.

The Cyprus Government responded positively to a joint call by the NGOs KISA and the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS) and did vote in favour of **the Convention on Domestic Work by the ILO.** However, this was not followed by ratification.

Recommendations:

- *Cyprus government to take measures to regulate and monitor the operation of private employment agencies;*
- *To take immediate measures to shut down 'high risk establishments' for potential women victims of THB such as cabaret, strip clubs, specific bars, and escort agencies, and massage parlours;*
- *To change the procedures in relation to the employment of female migrant domestic workers and sign the ILO convention;*

- *Systematic mandatory training to be provided to all relevant stakeholders, including prosecutors and the judiciary be adequately informed, trained and sensitized on the issue of THB;*
- *The government to take action to address the ‘justice gap’ in trafficking in human beings and to secure successful prosecutions.*
- *Address the root causes of trafficking including gender inequality and demand for services provided by victims of trafficking;*
- *Establish a national rapporteur on trafficking in human beings as an independent body that will monitor and evaluate the work multidisciplinary group and that of other government bodies and agencies.*

Article 7: Political and Public Life

There has been an increase in women actively involved in politics in Cyprus, but progress has been slow and **women are still severely underrepresented in Government**. In fact, the 2011 Parliamentary and Municipal elections resulted in a drastic decrease of women both as candidates as well as among those elected. What this indicates is that **Cypriot society, including the media, is not supportive and encouraging to women’s efforts to enter political life**. The issues faced by women who wish to participate in political and public life are broad and multifaceted. The absence of high quality and low cost child care and the unequal distribution of responsibility within the family are one important obstacle to women’s representation in politics. Other important issues include **gender discrimination in the media** that do not give equal coverage to women political candidates and continue to sustain negative gender stereotypes, **the inexorable patriarchal structure of political parties** in Cyprus, and the enduring conservative features of Cypriot society that still do not trust women to hold high office. All of the above result in a lack of confidence and support networks for women wishing to enter political life.

During the period under review, **that has been very limited action by the Cyprus Government to encourage women’s involvement in political and public life and the issue has received the least political and financial support**. The activities referred to in the government report were limited to sporadic seminars and press conferences, with poor attendance and visibility, rather than systematic action involving all relevant stakeholders with specific targets. In fact, since the parliamentary elections of 2006, the issue has all but disappeared from the political agenda.

Cyprus has been extremely reluctant to implement positive action measures such as quotas, even on a temporary basis as foreseen by the CEDAW Convention to accelerate de facto equality between women and men. The National Action Plan on Gender Equality, in its chapter on the “Balanced Participation of Women and Men in Political/Social and Economic Life”, foresees measures for the introduction of targets and quotas, such as the target of 40% for the participation of women in political life, quota of 30% for women in ballots in local, parliamentary and euro-parliamentary elections, and a quota of 30% for women in the appointments in all public committees and boards. Since the NAP’s adoption in 2007 no initiative has been

undertaken by the Government, nor has there been any public dialogue on the issue of quotas or other positive action measures to support the candidacy of women who are running for political and public office. The government consistently claims that quotas are not widely supported, even among women's organizations. However, there has never been any initiation of public debate on the issue, or of research to determine the suitability of quotas in the Cyprus context and the level of support among political parties, women's organizations, the media, and the general public. It is the opinion of the authors of this report that, in fact, only a minority of organizations hold a critical view of positive action measures.

As mentioned above, following the 2011 Parliamentary elections the House Committee for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men was merged with the House Committee on Human Rights. The House Committee on Equal Opportunities played a critical role in monitoring governmental policies and actions on the issue of gender equality between women and men and supported the implementation of the National Action Plan on Equality between Men and Women (2007-2013). The Committee also provided a forum for NGOs and women's organizations to present research and raise critical issues for discussion in relation to women's rights. This development puts at risk the extent to which gender equality issues are put on the political agenda and has reduced the level of political commitment to eliminating all forms of discrimination against women.

Recommendations:

- *The adoption of a national strategy for the promotion of parity democracy with the participation of all relevant stakeholders including NGOs and women's organisations, youth organisations, political parties, and the media.*
- *Systematic awareness campaigns targeting the public on the importance of the participation of women in politics and in decision and policy making systems, and to encourage the public dialogue and debate on the issue;*
- *The setting up of an observatory for the systematic collection of data, monitoring of progress, and publication and dissemination of information on issues related to women's access to decision making bodies and positions;*
- *The introduction of positive action measures including quotas and comprehensive empowerment and training programmes for women seeking to enter political and public life;*
- *Measures to encourage the media to give equal opportunities and coverage to women candidates for general and local elections.*

Article 8: Representation at the International Level

At the level of the peace process; there has been very little real progress in regard to representation of women on any official level. Presently women are completely absent from the peace negotiations, nor is gender part of their ongoing discourse that would ensure participation of women as envisaged by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.

Despite having ratified UNSCR 1325, Cyprus does not yet have a National Action Plan (NAP) for its implementation and because of the division of the island and the different statuses of the two parts; it would not be possible at this stage to have a NAP for the entire island. Gender has also not been part of the political and/or peace discourse as this has been dominated by purely ethnic concerns.

More recent efforts have been by the Gender Advisory Team (GAT), formed in October 2009 and comprised of women activists from the non-governmental sector as well as academia who continue to try and bridge this gap and ensure that gender equality is integrated into the peace negotiations in Cyprus as well as in all the peace-building processes post-conflict. GAT is striving to mainstream gender equality in the peace process, by ensuring women's active participation in all phases of the process and gender-proofing the content and basis of future peace agreements. It acknowledges the existing differences amongst the different Cypriot communities which should be noted in all relevant documents. However, to date these efforts have received minimal real backing or support from the Cyprus Government.

In their research, GAT identified a number of features that have contributed perhaps toward failure in the peace negotiations, namely:

- Cypriot women have never sat at the negotiating table;
- The context of the negotiations lacks a gender perspective and the interpretation of 'equality' has tended to focus exclusively on ethnic differences;
- There is very limited action by the women's organisations to address negotiators as decision-makers obligated to ensure gender equality; and
- Despite the attention to 'human rights' by negotiators, gender-based rights and the related social rights have fallen outside the scope of concern.

Recommendations:

- *Fully implement UNSCR 1325 with the participation of all relevant stakeholders and particularly women's organisations and NGOs;*
- *Provide full political backing and support to the work and efforts of the Gender Advisory Group (GAT);*
- *Encourage and provide support, including financial support, for peace-building efforts of civil society, and particularly women's organisations.*

Article 10: Education

Although equal access to education for boys and girls has largely been achieved in Cyprus, **women are still severely underrepresented in scientific research centers and educational decision-making.** This reveals the continuing need to combat gender stereotypes that still greatly influences women's access to decision-making. **While women represent the majority of teaching personnel in pre-primary, primary and secondary education, in tertiary education the**

majority of teaching personnel are men (59.1% men and 40.9% women). Furthermore, in all educational levels, in 2009/2010 the majority of headmaster/headmistress positions are held by men.

In scientific research, women are underrepresented in all fields and particularly in natural sciences, engineering and technology, the medical and agricultural sciences. While 51% of university degree holders and 40% of post-graduate degree holders are women, this number is reduced to 28% among PhD holders.

Research carried out by the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS) (2008, 2011) among adolescents showed that there is a high tolerance for gender based violence, and that this is directly linked to negative gender stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes towards women. Despite the importance of creating strategic approach to adolescents and young adults on the prevention of gender-based violence and the promotion of gender equality, this dimension has largely been ignored by those involved in policy formulation and implementation in relation to education.

The NAPGE places particular emphasis on education and the elimination of gender stereotypes through activities under the Chapter on Education and the Chapter on Mass Media, such as research on gender equality in these fields and the sensitization and training of teachers, parents and students, as well as journalists and policy-makers in the mass media. Despite this, however, gender equality in education and the elimination of gender stereotypes was identified as an area that has received little attention or support, according to the mid-term evaluation of the NAPGE.

Despite a major educational reform that included the revision of the school curricula at all levels, **there are still substantial gaps in the inclusion of issues such as sex education, gender roles, and gender relations.** This contributes to maintaining the patriarchal character of Cypriot society in which there is still prejudice against open discussion of issues concerning matters such as gender and sexual orientation. Although, some progress has been made in terms of eliminating gender stereotypes in the curricula and the inclusion of gender equality issues in health education, this fell short of the hopes of civil society activists that lobbied for the inclusion of **comprehensive sex education at all levels.** Furthermore, **the educational reform does not include awareness raising activities to combat gender stereotypes at all levels** of the educational system. Such activities are largely carried out by NGOs in a limited number of schools due to limited resources and funding.

There is evidence of increasing efforts to address gender segregation in educational choices as well as negative gender stereotypes through the provision of training workshops for teachers and the implementation of awareness raising activities for both teachers and students. However, **such workshops must be provided on a systematic basis and become mandatory for teachers at all educational levels.** Furthermore, **more human and financial resources are needed to fully implement awareness raising activities across the educational system and both in urban and rural areas.**

Recommendations:

- *The Government should strengthen cooperation with NGOs and grant full access to NGO professionals to conduct systematic awareness raising and training activities in schools at all educational level;*
- *The Ministry of Education to fully implement the action plan to promote gender equality and the elimination of gender stereotypes with sufficient resources, time bound targets, and evaluation mechanisms;*
- *The Ministry of Education must promote the development and implementation of a strategic plan addressing gender based violence and discrimination among young people in the school environment;*
- *The Government should promote positive action measures in order to address gender segregation in educational choices as well as the women's representation in decision making positions in the field.*

Article 11: Employment

According to national statistics for 2011, the Cypriot labour market is characterized by high employment rates and labour force participation. The labour participation rate for ages 15-64 years is 73.5% and the employment rate for 73,4%.The female employment rate rose to 63% in 2010, a rate considerably higher than that of the European Union and surpassing the Lisbon targets for 2010.

Despite relatively high employment rates in Cyprus and an increasing number of women participating in the labour market, if you take closer look at the *quality* of women's labour market participation you will see a tremendous gap between women and men. There is still a significant difference between the sexes in rates of labor force participation (81.7% men and 67.4% women). Also in all age categories, the employment rate of men is higher than women. These differences are even more pronounced at ages 50 and older. Over the years, the unemployment rate of women has always been higher than that of men, although during the last two years, rates have equalized somewhat due to the impact of the economic crisis. However, job losses have a differential impact on women and men, due to their different positions in the labour market and in society. First, unemployed women are often unaccounted for in unemployment data as they are less likely than men to register as unemployed. Many withdraw from the labour market to informal or unpaid work.

There is a high unemployment rate for women aged 35 to 44, which indicates that women face particular difficulties in trying to reintegrated into the workforce after a period of inactivity, usually because they have children.

Employment patterns held by women and men with children are also indicative of the inequalities that continue to exist in the labour market despite high employment rates for both women and men. According to Eurostat 2007 indicators the proportion of employed women with children 0-6 is 69% with the respective rates for men at 97%. A much higher percentage of women than men are in part-time employment (12.5% as compared to 5.2%). According to the

Labour Force Survey 2009, women that are employed part-time state that the main reasons for part-time employment include housework, looking after children and older persons (43%), and the inability to find a full-time job (20%). There is also a relatively high unemployment rate for women aged 35-44 suggesting that women face particular difficulties when trying to re-enter the labour force after a period of inactivity.

The employment rate for women aged 25 to 54 decreases when the number of children increases, while for men in this age group is just the opposite. According to the indicators of Eurostat 2009, the percentage of working women with children is 74.5%, while the corresponding percentage for men is 94% (i.e. have 20 points difference). Studies have also shown that women with young children work fewer hours than men, whereas, the working hours of men increase after having children. This reflects the traditional gendered division of roles in the Cypriot family where women are expected to spend more time with their children - while for men the opposite is true. This indicates the lack of adequate state measures, strategies, policies and programmes for accessible and affordable care for children, the elderly and other dependents which leads to fewer women in the workforce and full employment.

What is important and not reflected by statistics on employment and which has a direct effect on levels of poverty and social exclusion of women is the striking pay gap between men and women, which is now at 21% and is one of the widest in Europe. Given the high employment rates of men and women, high educational achievements of women, and the relatively low proportion of part-time work, the explanation for the wage gap lies with the continuing gender segregation in employment. The gendered division of employment in Cyprus is one of the largest in the EU and has important implications for the wage gap; with women predominating in the lower paid sectors of health and education, and home care services.

- Out of all employed women in Cyprus, the sectors of wholesale and retail concentrate the highest proportions with 18.4%, followed by education and health with 17.6%.
- In private households, the vast majority (97%) are women, while the construction sector 9 in 10 employees are men.
- In the areas of health and education, 3 out of 4 employed persons are women.
- In the industrial sector 7 out of 10 employed persons are men.

The gendered division of employment in Cyprus is largely due to gender stereotypes and traditional cultural expectations and educational choices, as well as the efforts of women to balance family and professional life.

With the greater participation of women in labour market and in education, one would expect a corresponding improvement in the representation of women in leadership positions. And yet only 8.4% of business leaders in Cyprus are women. The corresponding rate in the EU is 32.6%. The percentage of self-employed women has changed substantially in recent years. Specifically, the percentage of self-employed women is only 34%, while the percentage of women working in

family businesses without pay is as high as 64%. Among employers, the number of women has remained stable during 2007 - 2010 at only 13%.

Furthermore, changes in the occupational distribution of women have been limited over the last 4 years. The share of women in professional category of managers and senior administrative officers has remained considerably low compared to the share of men (less than 2 out of 15 managers /senior administrative officers are women).

Finally, despite a number of European and international studies demonstrating that there are strong economic arguments for more gender balanced corporate boards - including stronger stock market growth, higher returns on sales, and better management and control of risks the issue of equal participation of women in economic decision-making has received less attention to political equality in Cyprus.

All of the above indicate the marginalized position of women in employment and in economic life in Cyprus. These inequalities have a significant impact on the earnings of women during their lifetime, on their social protection benefits and pensions, resulting in women having higher poverty rates, particularly among the elderly (see Article 13).

A number of measures have been implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance to promote women's participation in the labour market including schemes for care services for children and other dependents, as well as training programmes. However, there is no information available with regard to the implementation or impact of the above mentioned programmes so it is not known to what extent they have assisted in the social inclusion of vulnerable groups quantitatively or qualitatively. Furthermore, the strategic plan for the implementation of measures to reconcile work and family life is not publicly available, and it is not clear what measures are foreseen and whether sufficient resources have been provided for its implementation.

Recommendations:

- *Immediate implementation of measures foreseen in the National Strategic Plan for the Reconciliation of Family and Professional Life with sufficient resources, time bound targets, and evaluation mechanisms;*
- *Systematic evaluation of the impact, both quantitatively and qualitatively, of programmes and projects aimed at promoting women's access to the labour market;*
- *Training programs aimed at the integration of vulnerable groups into work (e.g. unemployed, economically inactive) need to be supported by research assessing the specific needs of these groups, and women in particular;*
- *Systematic monitoring and evaluation of the impact and results of the project to address the gender pay gap implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance;*
- *Measures should be taken to address the gendered division of labour within the home, including the adoption of paid paternity leave provisions and measures to encourage men's active participation in family life.*

Article 12: Health and HIV/AIDS

According to the government report “health care in Cyprus is provided to all persons without discrimination on the basis of age, sex, religion, ethnicity or other attribute”. However, the report fails to mention any active steps that are taken to ensure that provision of services is not only equally made available, but also equally accessed by all persons. In reality, although equal provision might appear to be the case in principle, in practice **discrimination and differences in access to several health care services can be identified in various domains of health**. Perhaps the most striking gaps in the services offered in the public domain are found in the provision of services related to sexual and reproductive health. Severe gaps in these services inevitably affect the status of women.

Although the absence of a universal health system can be said to be the main cause of inequalities, it is evident that there are few programmes that address the specific health problems experienced by women including breast cancer, cervical cancer, sexual and reproductive health, and the health consequences of an aging female population that are more likely to face a poverty risk and need long term care.

The **lack of gender sensitive approaches to health leads to stark inequalities in provision as well as in access to health care**, with more vulnerable groups of women such as the **migrant women and the elderly at a particular disadvantage**. Sexual and reproductive health is a domain where women are disproportionately more vulnerable to the effects of the lack of a gender specific approach.

Women face significant financial, geographical and physical barriers to access to health service provisions. In the absence of universal care and the limited capacity of the existing public health system, the private sector has burgeoned and even those eligible for free care opt for private care. Within this context women are in a particular disadvantage having fewer financial resources, constituting the majority of single parent families, and elderly women facing an increased poverty risk. Costs for gender specific care including maternal and child care services and family planning services are particularly high leading to discrimination in access particularly to low income groups including migrant women, as well as women with disabilities that require specialized care.

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

In Cyprus there is a strong lack of choice, accessibility and affordability of contraception for all women, especially young girls and vulnerable groups, migrants and domestic workers. The contraceptive methods available in Cyprus are limited to the male condom, few brands of combined oral contraceptives, the Intra-Uterine Device (IUD), and hormonal Intra-Uterine Systems (IUS). **These are not available in state hospitals but only through private clinics, pharmacies at market prices.** Diaphragms, injectable hormonal contraception, mini-pills, femidoms, and other modern contraceptive options are not available in Cyprus. **This scarcity of**

options provided regarding sexual protection and contraception is likely to affect the prevention of sexually transmitted illness and unwanted pregnancy prevention, and have adverse effects on quality of life for many women and girls.

Women in Cyprus do not have access to safe and legal abortion services. The abortion law in Cyprus is permissive and restrictive at the same time, stating that abortion is prohibited except for cases in which at least two medical doctors agree that continuation of the pregnancy would constitute a serious physiological or emotional hazard to the mother or child, including fetal malformation. Thus **the law does not recognize women's right to free choice.** The law also permits abortion in cases of rape, provided that a certificate from the appropriate police authority is presented along with a medical report, stating that the pregnancy was a result of rape and its continuance would seriously harm the social status of the pregnant woman, or her family, or both. **Abortion services are not provided at the state hospitals.** The only viable option for obtaining abortion services is through the private sector at a relatively high market price. In addition **no proper pre- and post- abortion counselling services are currently available, either in the public or private sector.**

In Cyprus there are no formal strategies or policies with regard to sexual reproductive health and rights, and in addition to that no statistical data is available in relation to sexual reproductive health and rights issues.

HIV/AIDS

With regard to HIV/AIDS there is a National Aids Programme 2010-2014 but there is no information as what activities have been implemented to date, nor on the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Prevention of AIDS 2009-2012. Furthermore, it is not clear if there any monitoring and evaluation procedures in place for all the strategies referred to Article 12: Health and HIV/AIDS of the Government report.

Cancer

There is currently **no running population or non-population based public screening programme for cervical cancer in Cyprus.** HPV vaccination was recently made available in Cyprus, and the public health services publicized recommendation for this vaccination, for girls and women under the age of 26 (although additional research may indicate that vaccination at older ages may also be appropriate). However, **the State does not subsidize the HPV vaccination,** and the cost may be too high for many young women and girls (the total cost for a three-phase shot is €500-600).

Recommendations:

- *Recognise and guarantee sexual and reproductive health and rights, including safe abortion, and ensure access to free-of-charge, safe and reliable methods of contraception for all women.*

- *Develop and financially support educational programmes on sexual and reproductive rights and health including information on contraceptives in schools;*
- *Provide universal free access to sexual and reproductive health education and information, targeted to the different needs of women and men and also to various age categories.*
- *Develop and implement a nationwide population based public screening programme for cervical cancer;*
- *Subsidize HPV vaccination for young women and girls;*
- *Publish the results of the implementation of the Strategic plan for the Prevention of AIDS 2009-2012;*

Article 13: Economic and Social Life

Elderly Women

Indicators on pensions are interpretive of the gendered dimension of poverty risk in Cyprus. Pensioners in CY (65+) face the highest poverty risk in EU, with women facing higher risk than men (52.4% vs. 44.1%). For the age group 75+ the risk of poverty is even higher with women's rates at 66% and men's at 62.6%.

There is stark gender difference in employment rates between elderly women and men (55-64) of over 30 percentage points (male rate at 71.7% and the female rate 40.8% in 2009). This gender gap, according to available data, is linked to lower educational attainment among the elderly, and particularly elderly women, and less opportunities for vocational training and lifelong learning. The above-mentioned gender gap in employment has also shown to be a result of the gendered division of labour within the home, with elderly women providing care services which are linked to the generally weak provision of care by the state for children and other dependents.

Despite this, there are no specific measures foreseen to address this gap either in terms of labour inclusion policies or vocational training targeting elderly women. Furthermore, generic policy measures aiming at active inclusion of vulnerable groups do not sufficiently incorporate gender mainstreaming.

Women are more likely than men to live beyond their healthy life expectancy, and thus find themselves in need for long term care and welfare services. Indeed, according to data provided by the Social Welfare Services of the Republic of Cyprus, women are more likely to be recipients of financial support by the Welfare services at all ages, and the discrepancy is especially pronounced among the elderly.

The design of pension systems continues to be problematic from the perspective of gender equality: typical male working patterns are still the frame of reference for calculating pension entitlements, thereby overlooking the gender differences in employment patterns and

underestimating, or sometimes not valuing at all, caring duties within the family. Women are still the majority of the unemployed and the inactive, and dominate part-time employment. Also influencing pension entitlements is the wide gender pay gap in Cyprus of 21%.

Migrant Women

Most migrant workers are employed in private households as domestic servants, almost all of which are women. In fact, according to national social insurance statistics, in 2008 34.77 % of workers from third countries (almost all of them women) were employed in this sector (consequently, this figure does not represent the large number of undocumented workers who are informally employed without social insurance coverage). The staggering number of domestic workers in Cyprus attests to the resistance of Greek Cypriot society to changing traditional gender roles. It also demonstrates the need in Cyprus for more concrete measures and policies for the creation of quality and accessible child care and elderly care systems. Further, migrant women are at a high risk of social exclusion and poverty as women working in domestic care is approx. €325 are paid far below the minimum wage in Cyprus (which is currently €835) and lower than the public assistance allowance.

The Cyprus National Strategy for Social Inclusion for 2008-2010 outlines numerous policy measures, especially regarding the social inclusion of vulnerable groups, but fails to sufficiently mainstream gender in a holistic way. Furthermore, the National Action Plan on the Integration of Third Country Nationals Legally Residing in Cyprus 2010-2012 failed to integrate a gender perspective, despite concrete recommendations made by women's organizations and NGOs, and no specific measures were foreseen addressing migrant women. Finally, the NAP on Gender Equality does not take sufficient account of migrant women and no measures have been implemented addressing this population group under any priority area.

(Please also see shadow report submitted by KISA – Action for Support, Equality and Anti-Racism).