



CYPRUS WOMEN'S **LOBBY**  
ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΟ **ΛΟΜΠΥ** ΓΥΝΑΙΚΩΝ

## **CONVENTION FOR THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN 70th Session**

### **CYPRUS SHADOW REPORT**

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## **Article 1: Interpretation of Discrimination**

The Republic of Cyprus ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1985. The Optional Protocol of the Convention was ratified in 2002 and recognizes the authority of the CEDAW Committee as the monitoring body to receive and consider complaints from individuals or groups within its jurisdiction. Since the ratification of the Optional Protocol, the RoC has provided 8 periodic reports including the one submitted in 2017.

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.

However, it should be noted that according to a unanimous decision of the Supreme Court (No. 2/ 2016) the Constitution does not allow for the introduction of positive action measures as foreseen in Article 4 of the Convention, as such measures violate the principle of equality as defined by article 140 of the Constitution (see Article 4 below).

## **Article 2: Elimination of Legal and Real Discrimination**

The legal framework on gender equality in Cyprus has further improved since the previous period under review, with the adoption of new legislation especially in the areas of protection of the rights of the child, and amendments to existing legislation in relation to the maternity, trafficking in human beings, abortion rights, family law, rights of victims of crime, as well as with the recent ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention).

Despite Cyprus's seemingly impressive legislative framework on equality between women and men, the fulfilment 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. 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.

Recent efforts have been made to include gender mainstreaming in the political agenda through the development of guidelines and trainings of public sector professionals, as currently the concept of gender mainstreaming is neither fully understood nor implemented at any level. However, the challenge remains on how gender mainstreaming will be adopted as a horizontal and mandatory strategy across the public sector in the absence of a decision by the Council of Ministers and/or legislation to this effect.

The Strategic Action Plan on Gender Equality foresees concrete actions to address various gender equality issues such as employment, equality in decision making, violence against women, poverty and social exclusion, and so on. However, these are not accompanied by the sufficient political will and sufficient resources for their full and effective implementation.

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. However, robust data collection and research on issues such as violence against women are still weak. It is unclear how data actually informs policy formulation. Research and awareness-raising has also been developed on gender equality issues by academic institutions, NGOs, and women's organisations, and the NMWR has supported these efforts to some degree.

### *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.

### *Access to Justice*

Although extra-judicial mechanisms have been set up to investigate complaints, it should be stressed that such mechanisms investigate complaints **ONLY**. They do not have the mechanisms

in place or the mandate to investigate incidents based on anonymous reports or reports made by a third party. Furthermore, extra-judicial mechanisms do not have adequate resources or sufficient training to support and carry out their mandate. Finally, no measures have been taken to inform women of their rights, particularly migrant women who face additional barriers in accessing justice.

Systematic training is needed, particularly among prosecutors and the judiciary on the CEDAW Convention and gender equality legislation more generally in order to carry out their mandate and facilitate access to justice for women.

### **Recommendations**

- The Government to develop of a holistic and integrated gender equality 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 Government should engage in systematic awareness-raising among women, including migrant women and women living in rural areas, on their rights and on extra-judicial mechanisms;
- The Government should implement mandatory training programmes for prosecutors, judges and lawyers, to establish a legal culture supportive of gender equality.

## **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 2013. Although the structure has changed somewhat with the appointment of a Commissioner for Gender Equality, we feel this development to be inadequate as the Commissioner does not have a clear mandate with executive powers, or sufficient human and financial resources.

### **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 Government should reconsider the establishment of a unified governmental body for the promotion of women's rights, 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.

## **Article 4 - Special temporary measures**

The Cyprus Government, as well as political parties, have failed to promote and 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 measures described in the government report do not fulfil the spirit and scope of the Convention and have not shown to promote substantive equality in Cyprus.

For example, the Cyprus Government does not support the adoption of quotas to address the gender imbalance in politics or on the boards of publicly listed companies, despite European level initiatives toward this end. In 2016, a bill was enacted introducing quotas for the participation of women on the boards of semi-government organizations, to ensure that 30% of either sex will be represented on the Board of Directors, [an amendment of the Certain Legal Entities of Public Law (Appointment of the Board of Directors) Law, 1988 (L. 149/1988)]. The President of the Republic referred it to the Supreme Court on grounds of unconstitutionality and the Court unanimously ruled that the law violated the principle of equality as foreseen in the Constitution.

### **Recommendations:**

- The Government should consider introducing legislative measures for the introduction of positive action measures for the advancement of de facto gender equality in Cyprus;
- The House of Representatives should follow up on the Supreme Court decision on the introduction of quotas for gender balance on the boards of semi-government organisations, and make the necessary amendments to ensure its constitutionality.

## **Article 5 - Changes in Social Attitudes- Violence against Women**

The Republic of Cyprus has signed and as of 14th July 2017 ratified the Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. The government proceeded with preparing a new bill entitled The Protection from Harassment and Stalking and other related Issues Law, and enactment of other related laws. However, some forms of violence against women still remain un-penalized and unmonitored (e.g. economic violence).

Cyprus has transposed Directive 2012/29/EU establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, implementing national legislation in April 2016 (19), which ensures that women victims of gender-based violence, among others, receive specialized

support services. However, there is no evidence that the law is being implemented or that front line services have the knowledge and resources to meet their obligations under the law.

Lawyers, prosecutors and judges lack the necessary training and knowledge on violence against women, the needs and rights of victims, and the legal framework on violence against women in Cyprus. Thus, women are often re-victimised through the criminal justice process. Legal sanctions against perpetrators are inadequate, particularly in cases of rape, and do not reflect the seriousness of the crime. There is currently no data available on women's access to protection orders and other protection measures.

Moreover, although free legal aid is available in Cyprus, the process for accessing this aid is time-consuming and not facilitated by the government service. Women are often faced with court delays, as well as stereotypical attitudes by prosecutors and the judiciary. A high number of reported domestic violence cases never reach the court and are either suspended or dropped. Cyprus has one of the lowest conviction rates in Europe and the penalties imposed on the perpetrators are minimal and non-deterrent.

A National Action Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Violence in the Family was implemented during the period 2010-2013 and a new one has been prepared for the period 2017-2019 by the Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Violence in the Family (approved on 25th May 2017). Violence against women is also included in the current National Action Plan on Equality between Men and Women (2014-2017), including domestic violence, sexual harassment, and trafficking in women. However, the NAP lacks specific indicators, as well as timelines and dedicated budgets.

Some efforts have been made to train front line professionals on violence against women. However, front line professionals (Police, Social Welfare Services, and Health Services) often lack the ability (human resources, lack of direction from senior government officials) to offer adequate support and protection. Often professionals have stereotypical attitudes towards the victims hence often leading to a secondary victimisation of the victims. Training is offered by NGOs, but not systematically. It is vital to have an ongoing systematic training and training on VAW should be integrated in their professional training.

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 as foreseen by the Istanbul Convention and the Victims' Rights Directive. The Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Violence in the Family has formally submitted to the Ministry of Justice a proposal for a unified and centralised data collection mechanism and processing administrative data on domestic violence. The development of a national database would help in recording domestic violence incidents and improving our insight to the phenomenon, as well as the identification of high risk groups, the development of intervention programmes as well as enabling the monitoring and evaluation of

the effectiveness of preventive and intervention measures. To date, no action has been taken in this area.

Island wide specialized services for victims of all forms of violence against women are lacking. Domestic violence services are offered by one NGO, the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family (SPAVO) with government support. SPAVO runs the national domestic violence helpline 1440, two women's shelters and counselling services in Nicosia and Paphos. Services should be available in other parts of Cyprus, and be accessible also to women living in rural areas. The Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Violence in the Family in 2017 formally submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Labour, Welfare, and Social Insurance for the establishment of a Women's Support Unit that would serve as a one-stop shop for women victims of intimate partner violence. The unit would provide all front-line multi-disciplinary support to women victims of violence and their children in order to reduce the burden of reporting, to receive all necessary information and support under one roof, as well as to prevent re-victimisation. The Government has included the provision of this service under its Grants in Aid Scheme, a mechanism of the Cyprus' social welfare system that aims to encourage and support the involvement of voluntary organisations in the field of social welfare and to satisfy the local social care needs that are not met by the State. Not only do the specifications for the services to be provided in the Women's Support Centre fall short of those envisioned in the initial proposal made by the Advisory Committee, but the scheme covers 50% of the programme to be funded. Thus, the burden for the provision of specialised support services to victims of violence as well as for securing the financial resources to ensure such services are sustainable falls to NGOs and volunteer organisations.

Cyprus lacks rape crisis centres or specialized services for victims of rape and sexual assault. Sexual violence is mentioned in the Government report 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. In an environment

Migrant women often do not have access to services or lack adequate specialised support due to cultural, economic and other barriers. It is essential to organize awareness campaigns specifically designed to target groups of migrant women and women with different ethnicities and ensure that they have access to information and culturally sensitive victim support services. It should be noted that the Cyprus government placed a reservation on Article 59 of the Istanbul Convention on Residence Status, which states that survivors whose residence status depends on

that of a violent spouse or partner have the right to apply for a separate residence permit. According to the Ministry of Interior, the reason behind this reservation is a 'fear' on behalf of the government that migrant women will claim being victims of violence in order access residence permits. Cyprus. This is rooted in racist and sexist attitudes towards migrant women.

Primary prevention of violence against women has been a neglected policy area in Cyprus, in favour of secondary prevention. Primary prevention should be targeted through the educational system, since it is one of the primary transmitters of traditional cultural and social norms that are conducive to violence against women.

### **Recommendations**

- Monitoring of the implementation of the Directive 2012/29/EU is needed and the associated services (governmental and NGOs) should be informed of the directive and the public should have knowledge of and access to their rights.
- Ensure immediate access to free legal aid and the issue of protection measures.
- Strengthen and support multi-agency and multidisciplinary co-operation involving all relevant stakeholders including women's organizations and NGOs.
- Ensure appropriate and sustainable funding for the implementation of policies against gender-based violence and the operation of services.
- Systematic training of the professionals is necessary and VAW should be integrated in both initial training as well as continuous vocational training.
- The government should ensure both general and specialist victims support services are available to meet the needs and provide better support of all groups of women.
- The Government should push forward the proposal of the Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Violence in the family to establish a unified and central data collection system on violence against women.
- Secure the rights of migrant women and immediate lift the reservation of Article 59 of the Istanbul Convention.

## **Article 6: Trafficking in Women, Exploitation and Prostitution**

An overarching and critical issue when talking about trafficking in persons in Cyprus is the lack of strategic planning from the government. Since 2005, to date, several National Action Plans (NAPs) have been drafted and implemented, to limited success, as these were not based on a solid strategic framework. Amongst the many key benchmarks which Cyprus currently lacks, are a) timelines after which NAPs should be reviewed, revised and evaluated, b) implementation steps as well as c) a clear delineation of responsibilities and tasks amongst governmental bodies / departments. Despite positive moves forward in combating trafficking in persons, the first step should be the evaluation of these to properly assess the status quo.

### *Prevention*

More actions should be designed in relation to prevention, especially regarding demand and supply. These could take the form of educational or awareness-raising activities in Cyprus but also in the countries of origin of the trafficked persons. This could be done through bilateral agreements between Cyprus and the countries of origin. At the same time front-line officers (entry points) should receive better training on the issue so they can be proactive in recognising and dealing appropriately with the victims. With regards the demand side of trafficking and more specifically with the demand side of trafficking (the users/clients), although Cyprus has criminalized the use of any serviced from victims of trafficking provided that the user can reasonably assume that s(he) is using victims of trafficking, the CWL is calling for the amendment of the specific article since the reasonable assumption cannot be prove in court. It is with no surprise that since 2014, the specific article was never been activated. Currently such amendment is on hold with the Human Rights Committee of House of Parliament.

### *Protection*

Although positive steps have been taken throughout the years, the protection of the victims remains a weak area in combating trafficking in persons in Cyprus. The adoption of the referral mechanism has meant that victims are more easily referred across the services that exercise competence on this issue. Although, trainings on the implementation of the referral mechanism are currently taking place with front line officers, however, there is no evidence that the process uses a holistic, victim-centred approach, rendering the victims vulnerable and disempowered. Taking a holistic approach in protecting the victims of trafficking also helps in the prosecution of traffickers or employers as well as the final users of victims of trafficking (the demand side).

### *Prosecution*

This aspect is highlighted in a number of reports such as the Trafficking in Persons Report of the US State Department or the Report drafted by the Group of Experts of Trafficking in Human Beings of the Council of Europe. The main issue in terms of prosecution of THB is the need for judges and prosecutors to receive training on the issue of trafficking in persons, as well as reducing overall delays in the justice system.

### *Partnership*

Prior to addressing the partnership pillar, the CWL strongly recommends that primary responsibility for the coordination of anti-trafficking actions be transferred from the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Justice and Public Order. 10 years ago, there was an understandable misattribution of responsibility regarding trafficking, as the latter was considered to be a migration issue. However, given our subsequent accumulation of experience and expertise in this matter, we can assert that the issue is deeply gendered and has far more to do with justice and human rights, and should therefore be rightfully brought under the remit of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order.

Protocols of collaboration between NGOs and the state have yet to be drafted. This is an urgent issue that needs to be addressed so that there is clarity in the roles and responsibilities

facilitating both state and civil society to more adequately offer support to the victims. As an illustration of the limited effectiveness of NAPs that lack a foundation of strategic thinking, we draw attention to the fact that 3 out of the 4 NGOs tasked with collaborating on the appointed multidisciplinary group (including MIGS) quit before making any discernible impact. The set up was simply unsustainable due to the power imbalance experienced among the partners. MIGS recommends that, in order to stay on a path fostering positive outcomes in combating trafficking in persons, the relationship between the government and the NGOs should be placed on an equal footing, all the while crucially prioritizing and strengthening the position of the victims of trafficking.

### *Domestic Workers*

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**

- The development of a national strategic framework on trafficking in human beings based on robust evaluation of previous NAPs and the drafting of new targeted NAP based on the vision of the strategic framework;
- The House Committee on Human Rights of the Cyprus Parliament to move forward the legislative amendment of the paragraph related to the criminalization of the demand side of trafficking;
- The actual implementation and evaluation of the National Referral Mechanisms in order to identify its strengths and weaknesses;
- Introduce systematic mandatory training of judges and prosecutors on the issue of trafficking in human rights and gender equality;
- The immediate ratification of the ILO Convention on Domestic Work.

## Article 7 – Political and Public Life

Despite Cyprus's legislative framework on equality between women and men, the fulfilment 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.

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. If we are to consider the figures reported in the Government report:

The reason why in Cyprus there is a considerably high number of women in the position of judges and civil servants is because governmental positions provide favourable working hours and better working terms compared to the private sector which assist women to balance work and family life (unlike the private sector). Indicatively in the Cyprus government sector the working hours are 7:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. or 8:30 – 4:00 p.m. Despite the above, the senior positions in the civil servants' sector are still predominantly dominated by men with a much lower percentage figure for women.

In the private sector in Cyprus women hold only 22% of senior managerial positions in the business sector. Furthermore, their salaries are much lower compared to those of men in similar positions. The various measures that have been taken to improve the balance of women and men in decision making positions in public and political life were mainly actions of NGOs. There is an urgent need for an amendment to the Cyprus Constitution for enabling the passing of the law for implementing quotas for women participation in politics and in decision and policy making positions. As mentioned above, a recent decision of the Supreme Court of Cyprus found the enactment of such a law as unconstitutional (see Article 4).

Cyprus is among the bottom three European Union countries when it comes to representation of women in politics. According to the latest Gender Equality Index published by EIGE, Cyprus has a score of only 24.7 points (out of 100) in the domain of power compared to the EU average of 48.5 points. Although the proportion of women in parliament increased from 12.5% to 17.9% in 2016, the rate of progress remains glacial. In 2017, the proportion of women senior ministers was the second lowest in the EU at 8.3%. The incremental increases in the rates of female

participation in decision-making cannot be defined as an upward trend because the difference in real numbers is so small. There is currently only one Cypriot woman MEP out of 6 members (16.6%), and only 4 mayors out of 39 (10%).

Efforts by the political parties to increase the number of women involved in politics have been superficial and have offered no real qualitative influence or decision-making powers. Political parties generally do not promote women as candidates for election in representative bodies or for propose women as candidates for appointment to top decision-making positions.

### **Recommendations**

- The adoption of a national strategy for the promotion of equal representation of women and men in decision-making with the participation of all relevant stakeholders including NGOs and women’s organisations, youth organisations, political parties, and the media. All measures require regular monitoring and intermediary targets.
- The introduction of legislative measures to allow for positive action measures, including quotas, to promote gender balance in decision-making at all levels and sectors.
- Systematic awareness campaigns targeting the public on the importance of the participation of women in politics and in decision and policymaking systems, and to encourage public dialogue and debate on the issue.

## **Article 8 – Representation at the International Level**

The process for a National Action Plan for Women Peace and Security began in October 2017 with the Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality sending an invitation to tender for drafting the relevant National Action Plan to 5 relevant parties with an exceptionally tight time-frame. The final draft of the WPS NAP was submitted to the Commissioner’s office early in 2018 but throughout the process there has been no transparency nor has there been any civic engagement or talk of substantial civic engagement; a prerequisite for a successful sustainable NAP.

### **Recommendations**

- Fully implement UNSCR 1325 through the adoption of a national action plan in consultation and cooperation with all relevant stakeholders and particularly women’s organisations and NGOs.
- Encourage and provide support, including financial support, for peace-building efforts of civil society, and particularly women’s organisations.

## **Article 10 - Education**

Research shows (MIGS 2018) that gender stereotypes can be witnessed in everyday settings, including the school environment. They can be projected by teachers and school peers, reinforced by curricula and even come across in the way that information about study fields and occupations is presented to boys and girls.

Parents and teachers are more likely to expect boys, rather than girls, to pursue paths in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects, regardless of their level of academic performance. Conversely, girls are expected to follow paths that focus on care-giving and are people-oriented. Gender stereotypes also impact choices in education with boys more likely to pursue degrees in technology, engineering and construction, while girls focus more on fields involving people and care, such as education, health, and social sciences. Society encourages boys to pursue professional success, advancement and economic strength. Girls are instead expected to balance work and family life, a struggle which often means that a girl's academic success does not translate to a high level of professional achievement.

In a recent study aiming to determine the extent to which gender stereotypes and beliefs are linked to educational choices, researchers surveyed 644 secondary-school students in Cyprus on subject choice and motivating factors, including information/advice received. The six most popular areas of study for boys were mathematics, physics, keyboard typing, computer science and biology. The six most popular subjects for girls were keyboard typing, mathematics, biology, graphic arts and languages. Particularly gendered differences were found in subjects such as technology (selected by 3.7% of girls compared to 16.5% boys) and history (21.4% girls compared to 6% boys). Furthermore, despite mathematics being one of the more popular subjects among girls, researchers nonetheless found a significant gender gap of 25 ppt.

The survey included a number of questions aimed at determining the extent to which girls and boys hold stereotypical attitudes and beliefs in relation to gender and work. For example, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they believed particular professions to be more or less suitable for girls/boys, on a scale of 1 to 5. The results found a continued prevalence of traditional gender stereotypes, with education and childcare deemed more suitable for women and construction, business and law more suitable for men.

In tertiary education, the educational choices of men and women continue to be highly segregated. Women opt for the fields of education, health and welfare, humanities and arts, while men dominate in engineering, manufacturing and construction. The fields of science, mathematics and computing show more of a gender balance with 53.6% women and 46.4% men.

Parents and teachers are more likely to expect boys, rather than girls, to pursue paths in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects, regardless of their level of academic performance. Conversely, girls are expected to follow paths that focus on care-giving and are people-oriented. A qualitative research with Cypriot parents indicated that the degree

to which families are influenced by cultural and ideological perspectives on gender equality affects their willingness to support their children's educational options. Moreover, the stereotypical perception of the 'male-breadwinner' is still maintained as a core component of masculinity.

Women are still severely underrepresented in scientific research centres 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. The issue of gender balance in decision-making in education, is not explicitly addressed by the MoEC's Strategic Action Plan on Gender Equality.

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.

Sexuality education is not regulated by law in Cyprus however, the Republic of Cyprus has signed and ratified a number of international and European conventions, agreements and treaties which promote and secure the right of children to sexuality education. In addition to the above, in national laws general references are made to the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Culture for the provision of information on sexuality education to children and provision of trainings to educators.

Sexuality Education is included in the Health Education curriculum as a thematic area frame "Family Planning - Sexual and Reproductive Health". Sexuality education is mandatory since September 2011 when it was incorporated in the health education curriculum, however, there is no monitoring and evaluation system in place and as a result, there is no evidence that this is applied in practice. The content of sexuality education consists of issues related to gender and gender equality however there are still substantial gaps in the inclusion of these issues in the curriculum at all levels of education. Sexuality education should be gender sensitive, with educational material integrating an understanding of the importance of gender equality.

There is lack of systematic scientific research on the issue, compulsory training and active support for teachers in the provision of sexuality education, including the provision of appropriate educational material. The Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus – Ministry of Education and Culture occasionally offers optional trainings to teachers at all levels of education on sexuality education, sexual violence, gender based violence and other issues, usually in collaboration with Non-Governmental Organizations.

Although the Ministry of Education and Culture has also a Policy on Sexuality Education, and the Health Education Program is considered to be an outstanding program in theory, sexuality education is insufficiently and inadequately implemented.

Taking into consideration also that Cypriot society remains highly patriarchal and conservative we believe that the implementation of sexuality education is left to the will, skills and sensitivity of each educator separately. Finally, there is no meaningful involvement of children and young people in the design, implementation and evaluation of sexuality education programs and activities.

### **Recommendations**

- Targeted measures to promote a gender balance in decision-making in education at all levels;
- The monitoring and evaluation of recent educational reforms and policies in the area of education should be a priority, in order to assess whether challenges are indeed being effectively addressed;
- More funding for research in the field of gender and education to enhance our understanding of gender-related challenges and feed into policy formulation and implementation;
- Systematic teacher education on gender equality and gender mainstreaming should be mandatory for teachers at all levels. Training on gender equality should be included in basic teacher-training at all levels and in all subject specialisations, as well as further training, incorporating experiential learning methods.

## **Article 11- Employment**

As a consequence of gender segregation in subject choices, gender segregation is well entrenched in the Cypriot labour market. The fields of education, health, social welfare, administrative services are highly ‘feminized’, respectively with 75.6%, 70.5% and 62.4% of female employees. Men tend to concentrate in water supply and waste management (94.7%) and construction (92.3%).

There is also a striking concentration of women in professions which require little or no expertise. About 2/3 (64.4%) of working women are employed in elementary professions (i.e. cleaners, helpers, support personnel) clerical and administrative positions or sales jobs.

Women are also underrepresented in decision-making positions in all sectors, including those in which employees are predominantly female (such as education and health). Cypriot women are underrepresented on the boards of listed companies (11% of members and 5% of chairpersons) as well as in management positions within public administration (27% of level-1 administrators and 36% of level-2 administrators).

Gender segregation in the labour market is the result of gendered choices in education, which are influenced by traditional social expectations and gender stereotypes. Gender segregation in choices of study at secondary-school level mirrors that in tertiary education and employment, and has a negative impact on the employment status of each gender.

Despite the high levels of educational attainment among women in, this has not translated into increased upward mobility of women in the labour market. Only 22% of managerial positions in Cyprus are held by women compared to the EU-28 average of 35%, and 16% of employed women work part-time.

In the higher levels of administration and representation of the local trade unions sector there are almost no women. Thus, issues of women rights and gender equality are not represented and are not on the agendas of the trade unions.

The application of the relevant law on maternity leave in Cyprus have a negative impact on the development of women's careers, and women are often penalised and discriminated against due to pregnancy and maternity, particularly in the private sector. Measures to reconcile work and family life are insufficient and services for childcare and care of other dependents are costly and non-accessible.

The new legislation that has been passed by the House of Representatives on 14 July 2017, consists of the Protection of the Paternity Act of 2017 and the Protection of Maternity Law of 2017. In particular, the Parental Protection Act provides for working fathers of new-borns to be able to file for 15 days of paid paternity leave. However, paternity leave is a new concept with a very limited application due to lack of awareness and enduring stereotypes in the work place.

The inspection mechanisms for the enforcement of the equal pay for equal work and equal treatment lacks the pursuance of ad hoc investigations without the filing of any complaint. Currently for an inspection to be triggered a specific complaint must be submitted. This imposes on the complainant three important burdens:

- a) to be able to know that she was the victim of inequality,
- b) to be able to know where and how to file a complaint and

c) to run the risk of being “mirrored” by her employer that she has triggered the inspection (especially in a small private business).

### **Recommendations**

- The state needs to support to families with the development of public/community childcare facilities and develop satisfactory programs and infrastructures for the caring of children and other dependents.
- Measures need to be taken to deal effectively with the *causes of wage gap*, such as gender segregation in academic and career choices, the exploitation of female labour as cheap labour by employers, and the promotion of ‘flexible forms of employment’ as a solution to lack of social protection systems;
- Adopt robust monitoring and implementation mechanisms of relevant legislation as well as indicators (of impact) following the implementation of measures to eliminate the wage gap and provisions related to maternity and pregnancy.

## **Article 12 - Health and HIV/AIDs**

### *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 family planning, sexual protection and contraception is likely to affect the prevention of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and unwanted pregnancy, and have adverse effects on quality of life for many women and girls. Teenage girls do not have access to contraceptive methods beside condoms or any medical and counselling services without the consent of their parents. Furthermore, there are no youth friendly SRHR services available for young people.

### *Abortion*

After many attempts, discussions and lobbying by a number of NGO’s and members of the Cyprus Women’s Lobby, on March 30th, 2018 the Cyprus Parliament passed with an overwhelming majority, a new law consisting of amendments of the existing law for the termination of pregnancy within the penal code. This was voted in with 33 votes in favour, 8 against and 5 abstentions. It gives women the right to terminate a pregnancy before week 12 of gestation under certain conditions, which are described below.

Abortion in Cyprus is regulated under the Penal Code (Article 169A). Despite the regulations of previous articles (prohibiting abortions, attempts of abortion, and supply of medicines for abortion) no person shall be considered guilty of those offences when the pregnancy is terminated, with the consent of the pregnant woman, by a medical doctor, gynaecologist-obstetrician, and an anaesthesiologist, both registered as medical practitioners, at a registered medical unit :

- Before week 12
- If the pregnancy was a result of rape or incest and the pregnancy before week 19 and the woman declares in writing to the doctor that the pregnancy was a result of rape or incest. In cases of minors (under 18) and women with mental disabilities written consent is needed from one of the parents or her legal guardian.
- If there is evidence suggesting abnormalities of the foetus that would lead to the birth of a pathological new-born.
- If there is an unavoidable risk to the life of the pregnant woman, or a serious risk to her physical and mental health. In cases of minors [under 18] and women with mental disabilities written consent is needed from one of the parents or her legal guardian.

The Parliamentary Committee of Human Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women are working for the development of a comprehensive legislation for the termination of pregnancy.

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.

No statistical data is available in Cyprus regarding a series of issues related to Sexual Reproductive Health and rights including abortion, unwanted pregnancies, STIs, contraception and others for women and girls.

Until 2017, there were no formal strategies or policies with regard to Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights. In 2017, a National Strategy for the Children's Rights in Health (2017 - 2015) has been developed by the Ministry of Health, and approved by the Cabinet. However, like many National Action Plans in place and strategies, it lacks specific indicators, an appropriate monitor and evaluation system for its implementation, timelines and mostly dedicated budgets for its implementation.

There are no protocols on family planning and modern contraceptive services currently available, although the Ministry of Health declared plans to develop them in the near future as part of a wider reform of the healthcare sector. There is no evidence whether trainings are provided to health care professionals on SRHR issues.

### *HIV/AIDS*

With regard to HIV/AIDS there was a National Aids Program 2011-2015 but, there is no information as what activities have been implemented and no evidence whether they have been evaluated. Moreover, no discussion has been made yet for the development of a new National Aids Program or Strategy since 2015.

A welcome development, was the re activation of the National AIDS Committee (consisting of stakeholders from governmental and nongovernmental sector), after being inactive for some years. However, it needs to review its roles and responsibilities since they are not clear. HIV care and treatment in Cyprus is provided by only one facility, the Gregorios clinic in Larnaca, which has been operating since 1996. This inevitably is a barrier for access to HIV care and treatment for women who live in different parts of Cyprus.

According to the Mission Report – Technical Mission HIV in Cyprus of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) published in 2015: There are no specific HIV programmes targeted to migrants and women in prostitution. Foreign nationals can access HIV treatment and care. However, the Ombudswoman raised concerns because foreign nationals had been threatened with deportation on grounds of being HIV-infected, particularly where they had committed an offence.

In Cyprus, condoms are not available in prisons. There are reportedly no HIV-related services for imprisoned women. All new prisoners and detainees are reportedly tested for HIV and other infectious diseases. Treatment for HIV is reportedly provided.

There is no system of second generation bio-behavioural surveillance among key populations in Cyprus. A few isolated studies were conducted, e.g. on MSM and perhaps on people who inject drugs. These studies were conducted by independent groups of academics and poorly coordinated with the National AIDS Committee. More accurate data on people who inject drugs is needed, especially on injecting behaviour and access to injection equipment. Apparently, no surveillance studies have been conducted on prisoners, women in prostitution, or foreign nationals, and information about HIV in these groups is very limited. There are no estimates about the number of members of key populations with undiagnosed HIV infection. There is only limited data on HIV testing practices. No data is available on the number of HIV tests conducted in the private sector, and there is no breakdown available for the rationale behind HIV testing in the state-run sector. For example, it is reported that HIV testing is standard procedure in pre-operative settings and part of pre-employment health screening for some occupations. However, the number of HIV tests conducted for these reasons compared to the number of tests conducted among key populations is unknown.

The state does not provide to women living with HIV, any support services beyond healthcare, neglecting as a result their needs and difficulties faced related to their chronic health condition

and the social stigma associated with HIV in all aspects of their lives (social, economic etc.) as women and HIV positive people.

Very recently on May 30th the cabinet has decided to grant HIV positive individuals a monthly allowance of €300 from July 1, 2018. The aim of the scheme is to provide HIV positive individuals and incentive to comply with their treatment schedule. The money will only be given to those who fully comply. The allowance does not depend on any other income received by HIV positive persons. The cabinet approval comes following a series of hard-hitting articles by a daily Newspaper "Politis".

### **Recommendations**

- Ensure women's access to information about contraception and family planning as well as access to good quality contraception methods and family planning goods and services;
- Ensure reproductive health care services, goods and facilities that are: (a) available in adequate numbers; (b) accessible physically and economically; (c) accessible without discrimination; and (d) of good quality;
- Support the efforts of the Cyprus Family Planning Association in providing essential information and advice on family planning and sexuality education;
- Develop comprehensive legislation for the termination of pregnancy in line with the standards of the CEDAW Convention that will include access to information, access to free counselling services, and access to safe and accessible abortion services;
- Ensure the development and provision of support services targeted to women living with HIV.

## **Article 13 - Economic and Social Life**

During 2014 the Government undertook the task and made a complete transformation of the social security system and welfare policy by introducing a General Minimum Income Scheme (GMI). Although by many in Cyprus and in EU is consider a best practice model and without eliminating the effort and or diminishing the outcome, we have to stress out that the fundamental structure of it is unequal since the basis of it is a family with paternal characteristics and taking into consideration first the male component of the family. The GMI is not easily accessible to all people in need, in some situations is not adequate for the beneficiary to live in dignity, and is not enabling. From a gender equality perspective, the fact that the eligibility to income support schemes depends on the household's structure and income rather than on individual entitlements is problematic. It tends to deny many women in couples access to income guarantees and does not take into account gender inequalities in the household.

Women by far represent the majority of those receiving minimum pension with 98% of recipients of the social pension (non-contributory scheme to address those over the age of 65 with no pension income from any the source) being women. This points to the disadvantaged position of women in employment including interrupted careers, lower wages, among others. Figures also show that social transfers such as pensions and other benefits do not protect those most at risk from poverty, particularly elderly women.

Access to quality low cost child care is still limited resulting in those needed care opting for informal care arrangements or for private care which is cost prohibitive to low income groups. They also lack tremendously in helping women to balance work and family life, especially those working in the private sector and those working irregular hours. Funding for local authorities to create and offer such programmes is very limited.

### *Migrant women*

Most migrant workers are employed in private households as domestic workers, almost all of which are women. In fact, according to national social insurance statistics, in 2018 18,522 documented female migrant domestic workers 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). Further, migrant women are at a high risk of social exclusion and poverty as women working in domestic care is approx. €315 are paid far below the minimum wage in Cyprus (which is currently €870), even when accounting for housing and accommodation. Although they pay contributions to the social insurance scheme, they are excluded from the most important benefits of the social insurance scheme, including unemployment benefit and pensions.

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. Female migrant domestic workers are also a high risk of sexual harassment and abuse.

### **Recommendations**

- The state to develop a long-term strategy for the development of an effective social protection system based on in-depth needs analysis of women and other vulnerable populations groups;
- The government to introduce legislative measures for mandatory gender budgeting processes across government policy and programming;
- Migrant women must be allowed to transfer their social insurance contributions to another country if they wish so. The state should conclude bilateral agreements with the sending countries of female migrant domestic workers in order for them to benefit from their social insurance contributions.

- The government to the wages of domestic workers raising them at least to the same level as minimum wage.

## **Article 14- Rural Women**

Currently there are no specific government programs for assisting rural women and especially those who work. At the same time, there is little focus on health issues of rural women including prevention programmes including health screening.

### **Recommendations**

- Tax incentives to be given for establishment of businesses in rural areas giving employment opportunities for the women living in these areas;
- Technology programs should be promoted for rural areas and technology resources should be made available or being friendly to obtain for those living in the rural areas enabling women to be able to use technology for their education (including having the chance for attending distant learning courses), promoting and trading their products.