

**Information from Bulgaria on the progress made after the Global Leaders' Meeting on
Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls held in New York on 27
September 2015**

The Government of Bulgaria attaches great importance to gender equality and views it as an absolute necessity for the full realization of human rights and the functioning of democracy. Equality before the law is a fundamental principle enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria. Women and men in Bulgaria enjoy equal civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Gender-based discrimination is prohibited by law.

Bulgaria has long traditions in promoting gender equality and in the last more than 25 years has made substantial progress with regard to the empowerment of women. The Government is constantly upgrading the national legislation to integrate a gender perspective. A gender mainstreaming approach is applied in the development and implementation of all governmental policies and strategies.

In April 2016 a new *Law on Equality between Women and Men* was adopted which establishes the principle of equality as a coordinated state policy and designates specialized bodies and mechanisms for its implementation at all levels. The Law ensures better compliance of the national legislation with the EU standards and the international legal instruments related to gender equality.

The state policy on equality between women and men and non-discrimination by gender is a horizontal policy coordinated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and supervised at central level by the National Council on Equality between Women and Men which is a consultative body to the Council of Ministers of Bulgaria - established in 2004. The Minister of Labour and Social Policy is the Chairperson of the Council. The National Council on Equality between Women and Men ensures a sustainable model of cooperation among government institutions, social partners and the civil society on all aspects of gender equality.

In 2016 the position of a gender equality coordinator was created in every government institution with the aim to ensure at operational level the implementation of the state policy on equality between women and men. The gender equality coordinators report to the Secretariat of the National Council on Equality between Women and Men.

The EU norms in the field of gender equality and the provisions of international instruments, including the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action form part of the national legislation and are integrated in all strategic documents and policies.

Bulgaria is strongly committed to the implementation of CEDAW. The Bulgarian authorities have developed a special Plan of Action to implement the concluding recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

The Bulgarian Government is currently upgrading the National Strategy for the Promotion of Gender Equality for the period till 2020 with the aim to further strengthen the provisions related to equal treatment, equal access to resources and equal participation in decision-making, as well as ensuring gender equality in all spheres of the social, economic and political life of the country.

Special policies are enacted also for ensuring equal access of women and men to professional training, equal participation in the labour market and equal pay for equal work. The measures include introducing flexible working hours and professional mobility, providing opportunities to combine career and family life and promoting the role of the father in the family, ensuring special protection for working women and affirmative action for women's entrepreneurship when they are the less represented sex, etc. These measures are of particular importance not only for the economic empowerment of women but also for overcoming the stereotypes based on the perceived social roles of women and men.

In April 2016 Bulgaria signed the Convention of the Council of Europe on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) and is fully committed to its implementation through the adoption of special legislative measures and the development of relevant policies and programmes to prevent and combat violence against women and girls in all its forms. A special intergovernmental Working Group was created to elaborate the necessary legislative measures for the implementation of the Convention.

Bulgaria ranks 41 out of 144 countries in the 2016 Global Gender Gap Report of the World Economic Forum (43 in 2015).

Bulgaria ranks third in the EU in terms of women's participation in the executive boards of large companies.

Sofia, February 2017