

Women in rural areas

Creating conditions for equality between women and men in all spheres of public, economic and political life and **in all areas (urban and rural)**, guaranteeing equal treatment and non-discrimination are among the aims of **the Program for Governance of the Republic of Bulgaria in the period 2017 – 2021**.

The legislative and policy framework for guaranteeing equal treatment between women and men applies to all regions in the country and aims at ensuring non-discrimination and promoting women empowerment not only in urban but also in rural areas.

The Law on Protection against Discrimination regulates protection against all forms of discrimination and prevention of discrimination. The aim is to ensure that everyone has the right to equality before the law, equal treatment and opportunities for participation in public life, and effective protection against discrimination. The Law prohibits any direct or indirect discrimination on the basis of race, ethnic or social origin, disability, gender, etc.

Of particular importance is the **Law on Equality between women and men**. By the adoption of the Law was strengthened and regulated national institutional mechanism on equality between women and man, which consist by (i) National Council on Equality between Women and Men at the Council of Ministers and (ii) coordinators on equality between women and men on national and district levels.. Now central executive bodies and all 28 regional administrations have officers which are designated as coordinators on equality between women and men. The coordinators participate in developing and carrying out the state policy on equality between women and men; participate in the development of sectoral and local policies and programmes in view of equality between women and men; participate in the delivery of a gender-based impact assessment of legislative instruments and strategic documents which have been put forward by the executive bodies; participate in the devising and implementation of the National Strategy and the plans for its implementation, as well as in the reporting on them; coordinate the implementation of the measures falling within the competence of the executive body; coordinate the collection and dissemination of information and good practices and the provision of equality between woman and men data falling within the competence of the executive body concerned; participate in equality between woman and men training, as well as in organising such training; and etc. The National Council on Equality between Women and Men at the Council of Ministers is an advisory, coordination, consultation, and cooperation body which brings together government institutions and stakeholders.

A key element of the policy for equality between women and men is the adopted in 2016 **National Strategy for Promoting Equality between women and men with a time horizon up to 2020**. Its main objective is to create guarantees for equal treatment, equal access to the resources of society and equal participation of women and men in the decision-making process. The five priority areas for actions of the strategy are increasing female labour-market

participation and the equal economic independence of women and men, reducing the gender pay and earnings gap, promoting equality between women and men in decision-making, combating gender-based violence and supporting victims and changing the existing gender-based social stereotypes in different areas of social life.

The National Action Plan for Promoting Equality between women and men 2019-2020, that follows the principles and objectives of the aforementioned National Strategy, contains measures which is structured under 5 priority areas stated in the National strategy. The plan contains measures with a **special focus, given to women in rural areas**. It stipulates promotion of equality between women and men in policies and measure aimed at rural development through providing equal opportunities for receiving information at application with project proposals under the Rural regions development programme 2014 -2020.

The Plan includes also measure for providing of equal opportunities for training and consultation services to female and male beneficiaries in the field of agriculture.

Other measure, envisaged in the Plan, include **building a modern broadband infrastructure in rural regions**, incl. ensuring high-speed internet connectivity in rural areas, which is a prerequisite for implementation of new technologies and **change to stereotypes in these areas**.

The Government of Bulgaria pays special attention to the development of **measures for the equal participation of women and men in the labour market**, reconciliation of work and family life, equal pay for equal work. **Appropriate measures to improve female employment are being implemented**, as well as measures to develop opportunities for flexible employment; promote the role of fathers in sharing family responsibilities, including through legal incentives to take parental leave; expand the system of accessible and quality social services, including childcare and services for dependent family members, etc.