

15 West 38<sup>th</sup> Street, 11<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, N.Y. 10018



Tel. (212) 481-6023  
e-mail: [mission@cyprusun.org](mailto:mission@cyprusun.org)

**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

Ref.: 24.11.03.06.04

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cyprus to the United Nations presents its compliments to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and with regard to the Secretary-General's Note UNW/2019/004 dated 15 April 2019, requesting thereto information pertinent to GA resolution A/RES/72/234 on "Women in development", has the honour to attach herewith the update on Cyprus' report on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cyprus to the United Nations avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) the assurances of its highest consideration.

UN Women  
220 East 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, 18<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, N.Y. 10017

Attachments: as stated

Via e-mail: [joselyn.chu@unwomen.org](mailto:joselyn.chu@unwomen.org)



2

«The Gender Equality Committee in Employment and Vocational Training, within the framework of its competencies, has implemented the following actions related to Resolution A / RES72 / 234 entitled "Women in Development":

**A. Integrating a gender perspective in national sustainable development policies and strategies**

The Gender Equality Committee in Employment and Vocational Training, since 2012 worked to promote the gender mainstreaming in Cyprus Republic. The target included in national action plans of last years and a Commission was set up with representatives of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order, the Gender Equality Committee, the Cyprus Academy of Public Administration, the Office of the Ombudsman and the Office of the Gender Equality Commissioner.

We have already the Action Plan of the Educational Program and is noted that the team to be trained will be responsible officers who shape and implement the state budget and strategic development plans on gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting. These people will also be responsible for the practical implementation of the above Action Plan.

This is an innovative effort for Cyprus, the main goal of which is to begin immediately after the completion of the training. The training is expected to start on September 2019.

This effort as a whole can be extended in the future to local authorities, independent authorities and ministerial organizations.

**B. Promoting active labour market policies on full and productive employment and decent work for the women, elimination gender based discrimination in labor market and enacting and enforcing minimum wages**

The Gender Equality Committee in order to sensitize trade unions and workers organizations on eliminate the gender pay gap and any discriminatory wage practices, organized a Forum on Equal pay (7/2/2019), in cooperation with the Labour Department of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurances and the Ombudsman Office. The Forum conclusions will promote to the Minister of Labour and they will be exploited by the Gender Equality Committee. People who participate informed about the Law on equal pay for equal or similar job, on the useful criteria for the job evaluation but also on EU Court's Decisions. We also organized many seminars on gender equality laws in large companies.

**C. Eliminating gender based occupational segregation and gender wages gap, and improving recruitment, retention and promotion policies for women**

The Gender Equality Committee has established painting competition for the last six years in primary and secondary schools aimed at reducing gender-based occupational segregation and gender stereotypes, in cooperation with the Pedagogical Institute of

Cyprus. Teachers and children has the chance to study this phenomenon and to prepare their projects. Teachers and students are concerned about the phenomenon and, through their projects, present the reality of gender occupational segregation or they go one step forward and present an image where women and men can do any profession.

We organized also a Forum in 2018, on sexism in employment, where we presented different kinds of gender stereotypes in employment and in society in general. The Forum had extensively publicity by the Media.

#### **D. Preventing and eliminating all forms of violence and sexual harassment at work and providing remedies, support and services for victims and survivors and harassment**

The Gender Equality Committee organized on 30/6/2017 a forum on sexual harassment, where the workers and employers organizations and other NGO's participated. During the Forum took place a presentation of Cyprus legislation and Cypriot jurisprudence. We also organized three workshops where they were presented and discussed three court cases. The discussion was very useful because was revealed gaps and weaknesses of the law and the participants realized how the court understands and explained law provisions. At the same time the Gender Equality Committee issued a study with the Cyprus legislation and jurisprudence in cases of sexual harassment and protection of maternity. The Committee also prepared a standard code of sexual harassment and bookmarks as well as a short film in Greek and English, which distributed in seminars and other activities.

The Gender Equality Committee had an active role in promoting sexual harassment Code in Public sector, which in July of 2018 was approved by the Cabinet the Code promoted to the Ministries and the Cyprus Academy of Public Administration started training to the public employees.

The Gender Equality Committee has the competence to provide legal aid to the gender discriminated victims in employment, free of charge. The legal aid includes counseling and all the expenses for the Labour Court procedures. This competence started to be implanted in 2012 and till now we served more than 120 people to proceed to the court. Also many thousands (workers or employers) apply to the Committee for counseling or informing about the gender equality laws and their rights».

## Women in Development

Until 2008, Cyprus was enjoying conditions of almost full employment and demonstrated a low unemployment rate. **Specifically, the unemployment rate<sup>1</sup> stood at 3.7% in 2008, while from 2009 onwards, as a result of the global economic crisis, the unemployment rate increased, reaching 16.1% in 2014. Since then, it started to decrease reaching 11% in 2017 and currently stands at 8,6%.** Throughout this period, an increase of unemployment has been observed for both men and women; however, for the first time, the number of unemployed men demonstrated a larger increase than that of unemployed women. More specifically, the number of unemployed men reached 38,045 persons in 2014 compared to 31,501 unemployed women in the same year. **In 2017, the gender gap in unemployment decreased considerably as the number of unemployed men decreased to 23,973 while the number of unemployed women to 23,033.** The large increase in unemployment among men was attributed to the fact that the financial crisis had a stronger diverse effect on sectors which traditionally employed more men than women (e.g. the construction sector). On the other hand, women are concentrated mostly in the services sector, which is traditionally less cyclical and had fewer job losses during the crisis.

Even though in the last 3 years the effects of the economic crisis have been receding, unemployment levels for both men and women are still higher than pre-crisis levels and employment rates have not reached satisfactory levels yet.

In 2017, the unemployment rate of women was 5.7 pp higher than that of 2009 (11,2% in 2017 compared to 5.5% in 2009). The unemployment rate of men was also 5.5 pp higher in 2017 than in 2009 (10.9% in 2017 compared to 5.3% in 2009). The employment rate<sup>2</sup> of women in 2017 was lower by 1.0 pp reaching 61.3% from 62.3% in 2009. The employment rate of men in 2017 was lower by 6.5 pp reaching 69.8% from 76.3% in 2009.

**According to the above developments, a convergence occurred in the employment rates of both sexes as the female employment rate was 61.3% which was still lower than that of the male employment rate which was 69.8%.** More specifically, **the gender gap in the employment rate shrank to 8.5 pp in 2017 from 14 pp in 2009** (the female employment rate was 62.3% and the male employment rate was 76.3%). This is mainly due to the larger decrease in male employment.

**The difference between male and female employment rate appeared to be much smaller among the younger age group of 15-24 years in 2017, at 5.9 pp favoring women (mainly due to the mandatory military service for men at that age).** For the age group of 55-64 years the gap was very high at 18.9 pp favoring men and for the age group 25-54 years, it was lower at 10.2 pp, again favoring men.

### Sectors

---

<sup>1</sup> Source Labour Force Survey

<sup>2</sup> Measured here as employment of people aged 15-64 as a proportion of the population aged 15-64, according to the Labour Force Survey

In 2017 the services sector absorbed 91.8% of the female employment and 69.9% of the male employment, while the corresponding percentages for 2009 were 87.3% for women and 62.9% for men. The industry sector absorbed 7.1% of female employment and 26.3% of male employment, while the agriculture sector 1.1% of female employment and 3.8% of male employment (2017). In the same year, almost 56% of employed women were concentrated in the sectors of trade, education, accommodation & food service activities, professional, scientific & technical activities and in human health and social care activities, while almost 59% of employed men were concentrated in the sectors of construction, manufacturing, public administration & military (compulsory social security), trade and accommodation & food service activities.

**The continuous increase of the educational level of both male and female workers resulted to a rising share of employment in higher skilled occupations, such as managers, professionals and technicians, in total employment. In 2017, the employment share in these occupations increased to 35.3% of total employment (35% for men and 35.7% for women). In 2009, employment in these occupations accounted for 31.2% of total employment (32.4% for men and 29.9% for women).**

**Female employment in higher skilled occupations accounted for 48.5% of total employment in these occupations in 2017, as compared to 44.5% in 2009.**

The educational level of the workforce has been rising considerably during the last years with the share of workers with tertiary education reaching 45.4% of employment in 2017 from 36.5% in 2009. The number of employed women with tertiary education as percentage of total female employment reached a level of 52.2% in 2017 from 42.1% in 2009.

Temporary work increased in recent years. From 13.7% of the total number of employees in 2009, it reached 15.3% in 2017 (18.3% in 2015). Temporary employment was higher among the female employed population where, in 2017, 18.7% of female employees were working on a temporary basis, compared to 11.9% of male employees.

Flexible forms of employment also increased in recent years. In particular, part-time employment accounted to 13% of total employment in 2017, compared to 8.6% in 2009. Part-time employment was more attractive to women, reaching 16.1% in 2017 (12.4% in 2009), while the respective percentage for men was 10.1% (5.3% in 2009).

In 2017, self-employment decreased considerably constituting 10.3% of total employment. Self-employment appeared to be more popular among men as it accounted for 12% of total male employment compared to 8.5% which is the corresponding proportion for women. In 2009, self-employment accounted for 12.3% of total employment (15.1% for men and 9% for women).



YEAR	Total number	Total percentage	Men number	Men percentage	Women number	Women percentage
2008	14,523	3.7%	6,966	3.2%	7,557	4.2%
2009	21,704	5.4%	11,387	5.3%	10,316	5.5%
2010	26,406	6.3%	13,624	6.1%	12,782	6.4%
2011	33,951	7.9%	18,302	8.1%	15,649	7.6%
2012	51,515	11.8%	28,687	12.5%	22,828	11.1%
2013	68,871	15.9%	37,622	16.5%	31,249	15.2%
2014	69,547	16.1%	38,045	17.0%	31,501	15.1%
2015	62,758	14.9%	32,505	15.0%	30,254	14.8%
2016	54,010	12.9%	27,179	12.6%	26,831	13.3%
2017	47,006	11.0%	23,973	10.9%	23,033	11.2%

## Measures to increase employment and women employment

### A. Entrepreneurship –Women and the Youth:

Women and the youth remain two very important target groups which the Government supports through two Grant Schemes (Scheme for the enhancement of Youth Entrepreneurship and Scheme for the enhancement of Female Entrepreneurship) specially designed to encourage business development. The aim is to develop, support and encourage the entrepreneurship of women between the ages of 18-55 and young people between the ages of 20-40 who wish to establish an enterprise in any economic activity.

- B. The Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus HRDA co-funded ESF projects during the 2014-2020 programming period
- Scheme for Job Placement of Unemployed Young Tertiary Education Graduates less than 35 years old with limited work experience for the Acquisition of Work Experience in Enterprises/Organisations (2015).
  - Scheme for Job Placement of Young Unemployed Graduates less than 25 years old of Lower Secondary, Upper Secondary and Post Secondary Education for the Acquisition of Work Experience in Enterprises/Organisations of up to 2 years

Cyprus has overachieved the fiscal targets set during the three year period of the Macroeconomic Adjustment Programme, setting its public finances on a sound footing. The frontloading of fiscal consolidation at the beginning of the programme, allowed the authorities to regain confidence and avoid the need for additional fiscal measures during the subsequent years. Notwithstanding the still high debt to GDP ratio, a neutral fiscal stance has been adopted in 2016, in line with the euro area recommendation, allowing automatic stabilizers to operate freely.

In the labour market, even though the unemployment rate has increased to unprecedented levels, reflecting the effect of a protracted slowdown in economic activity, it fell from a peak of 16.1% in 2014, to 14,1% in 2016 and currently to 8,2%.

In its efforts to tackle unemployment, Cyprus has put emphasis on improving its Active Labour Market Policies as well as to modernising and enhancing its Public Employment Services (PES).

### Gender Equality at the workplace in General

#### Legal Provisions & Effectiveness of Implementation

Article 28 of the Cyprus constitution, provides that every person shall enjoy all the rights and liberties provided for in this Constitution without any direct or indirect discrimination against any person on the ground of his community, race, religion, language, sex, political or other convictions, national or social descent, birth, colour, wealth, social class, or on any ground whatsoever, unless there is an express provision to the contrary in this Constitution. The Constitution is the supreme Law and has superior force to any other law enacted by the House of Representatives. The principle of equal treatment is safeguarded under the Constitution for every person.

The national legislation in force protects all women against gender inequality, whether they work in full-time or part-time work, permanent work placement or on contract, low skilled or high skilled work. Furthermore, the Maternity Protection Legislation was amended to ensure the strictest possible protection against dismissal of pregnant workers and/or any conduct that can be considered as treating this group of workers less favourably than other colleagues that are not in the same position.

One of Cyprus' achievements in the promotion of gender equality has been the implementation of a strong legislative framework that promotes gender equality in the workplace and a special emphasis on the protection of maternity. **The relevant laws are the Equal Treatment of Men and Women in Employment and Vocational Training Law (Law 205(I)/2002) and the Maternity Protection Law (Law 100(I)/1997).** This legislation has set a high level of protection from discrimination with regards to sex for women, but also for men, as regards their access to employment and at all stages of a work relationship.

For the better harmonization with European Directives 76/207/EEC, 2002/73/EC and 2006/54/EC, the national Law 205(I)/2002 was amended in 2004, 2006, 2007 and 2009, with amending Laws 191(I)/2004, 40(I)/2006, 176(I)/2007 and 39(I)/2009 respectively. With the latest amendment, the Equal Treatment of Men and Women in Employment and Vocational Training (Amendment) Law of 2009 (39(I)/2009) provides for the following, among others:

- It revises the definition of "sex discrimination", "direct discrimination" and "indirect discrimination" in such a way as to strengthen the protection afforded to victims of discrimination.
- It ensures equal treatment for both sexes as regards their membership of, and involvement in, an organisation of workers or employers or any organisation whose

members carry on a particular profession, including the benefits provided for by such organisations.

- It clarifies the burden of proof rule and ensures that complainants can submit their complaints even if the employment relationship has ended.
- It strengthens the Gender Equality Committee in Employment and Vocational Training's independence and improves its structural characteristics and functionality, by allowing the Committee to buy the services of experts to assist it with its duties and goals, including the provision of independent assistance to victims of discrimination. **The Gender Equality Committee** was established in 2002, by the Equal Treatment of Women and Men in Employment and Vocational Training Law (Law 205(I)/2002). The Committee is responsible for promoting social dialogue between the representatives of employers and the representatives of employees, as well as with non-governmental organisations that have a legitimate interest in promoting equality between men and women. Furthermore, it can review the laws and regulations that govern labour relations in relation to matters of equality between men and women and suggest their re-examination.

It can suggest projects, carry out research or collect statistical data regarding equality between men and women in employment. It can also submit or **accept complaints that relate to the violation of the provisions of the abovementioned legislation, which it then forwards to the Inspectors who are responsible for carrying out the relevant research.** It has also been appointed as the competent body for providing victims of discrimination with independent assistance, including legal representation in Court. The Gender Equality Committee's mandate has greatly empowered efforts to promote gender equality in the workplace through a significant number of publications and information dissemination through radio and tv spots on the subject.

One of the main goals of the Gender Equality Committee in Employment and Vocational is information dissemination to employers and employees and awareness raising on the legislation provisions. Some measures to achieve this were:

#### **Practical measures**

1. Writing and publishing of an informative triptych (2011).
2. A sexual harassment code (2012).
3. Production of informative TV and radio spots on all kinds of discriminations (two on unequal pay, two on sexual harassment, two on maternity protection, four on equal treatment at work (illegal advertisements, equal treatment in access, training and promotion at work, occupational gender segregation), one on parental leave. The spots were widely broadcast on radio and TV channels.
4. Creation of eleven bookmarks with the same content of the above spots.
5. Production of videos on gender equality in employment and vocational training, presented in various seminars.
6. Videos on sexual harassment (2015).
7. Short film (3 minutes) on sexual harassment (2016).
8. Film on Sexism at work.



9. Preparation and publication of a study titled "Cyprus Law and Jurisprudence: The Offence of Sexual Harassment and the Maternity Protection", which presents 14 law cases on sexual harassment and twelve law cases on maternity protection (2018).
10. One hundred twenty four seminars at work places since 2011 in which more than 4500 people participated (men and women).
11. Organisation of a sexual harassment forum, in which all employers and workers organizations participated.
12. A basic responsibility of the Gender Equality Committee in Employment and Vocational Training (EIF), under the Equal Treatment of Men and Women in Employment and Vocational Training Law (Law 205 (I) / 2002), is to provide **independent assistance to victims of discrimination**. The Committee provides free advice to individuals or employers who apply for it, as well as legal assistance to victims of gender discrimination, inter alia, in court proceedings.  
**There are no socio-economic criteria for providing legal assistance, in an attempt to encourage victims of gender discrimination come forward and claim their rights.**  
 (The nature, type, content and procedure for the provision of independent assistance is determined by the Codes of Civil Procedure 176/2009, issued on the basis of Article 34 of Law 205 (I) / 2002. Since 2011, the EIF provided aid to 150 cases (130 women and 22 men), who submitted complains. The complaints, included sexual harassment, maternity or pregnancy dismissal, discrimination in access to employment.

## HARASSMENT

The Equal Treatment for Men and Women in Employment and Vocational Training Law No.205(I)/2002 as has been amended provides the rights of workers who face sexual harassment in the workplace.

Section 27 of the above Law, provides the way/**procedure** of investigation a complaint by the Gender Equality Inspectors of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance. Specifically the inspector will proceed with mediation between the complainer and the employer in order to resolve the issue. If an agreement is reached the inspector will write a report and both parties will then sign it. If an agreement is not reached a report will be drafted and it can be presented before a court.

The Gender Equality Committee, is active in advising and enlightening organizations and the public on the issue of sexual harassment, organizing seminars in collaboration with the Academy of Public Administration and Personnel.

There is close cooperation of the Department of Labour with other Authorities, such as the Equality Commissioner.

Although Cyprus legislation prohibits sexual harassment in the workplace, there is evidence that sexual harassment at work is still a widespread problem. The Gender Equality Committee in Employment and Vocational Training organizes informative seminars at workplaces, and prepares informative guides. A book on Cyprus case law on sexual harassment at work was published in 2017 and a Code on Preventing and Dealing with

Sexual Harassment, which will be incorporated in collective agreements, is currently being prepared by social partners. A Code for the Public Sector was also prepared by the Ombudswoman, in cooperation with the Gender Equality Committee in Employment and Vocational Training and another one is in preparation for the private sector, in cooperation with one of our social partners.

## **WORK-LIFE BALANCE**

**The Maternity Protection Law (Law 100(I)/1997)** provides for maternity leave of a total of 18 weeks and ensures protection from dismissal for pregnant workers, provided that they have notified their employer in writing of their pregnancy.

### **2011 and 2015 amendments**

Following these amendments, the following improvements to the level of protection were afforded to pregnant women:

- Dismissal of a pregnant worker is prohibited provided the worker has informed her employer of her pregnancy in writing. The term “in writing” is not limited to a doctor’s pregnancy notification, but can include a written letter, email, fax, sick leave or similar notification as well as a medical certificate, stating the fact of the pregnancy. The said prohibition starts with the written notification of pregnancy to the employer and is extended up to three (3) months after the end of maternity leave.
- During this time, the employer cannot dismiss or give notice for dismissal or go ahead with actions to ensure the permanent replacement of the pregnant worker. The employer may, if he/she judges necessary, request a medical certificate certifying the pregnancy of the worker and the worker must produce the said medical certificate.
- Furthermore, if the employer is informed of the workers pregnancy orally, either by the pregnant worker or through her colleagues or in any other way, or even if he/she did not know of the pregnancy and he/she proceeds with a dismissal, the pregnant worker is entitled, within 5 working days of receiving the dismissal or notice for dismissal, to notify her pregnancy to the employer by means of a valid medical certificate. Once she does this, then the employer must repeal the dismissal or notice for dismissal so as to ensure that she will be afforded the protection from dismissal under the law, as specified above.
- Dismissal or notice of dismissal to a working woman who intends to adopt a child is prohibited, provided that the said worker has notified her employer by a certification of the Department of Social Welfare Services that she intends to adopt a child. The said prohibition starts with the notification of intention to adopt and is extended up to 3 months after the end of maternity leave.
- In cases of multiple births (twins, triplets and so on), the mother is entitled to an additional four weeks of maternity leave for each child.
- In cases of premature labour or any other case where the infant is hospitalised right after birth for health reasons, the mother is entitled to additional maternity leave as follows:

For the first twenty one (21) days that the infant is hospitalised the worker is entitled to an extension of one additional week maternity leave. If the infant continues to be hospitalised the worker, for every additional 50% of the 21 days, is entitled to an additional week with a maximum of 6 weeks in total. The worker, in order to be granted the additional leave, must provide her employer with a written certification from the hospital and from a doctor of relevant specialty.

### 2017 amendment

Maternity leave of 14 weeks has been extended to surrogate mothers.

### 2018 amendment

- The **protection period against termination of employment** or from giving notice of termination, from the date of notification of the pregnancy in writing to the employer, increased from 3 to 5 months after the end of the maternity leave (applicable for all mothers).
- The employer must now provide the employee with **all necessary conveniences regarding breastfeeding.**
- The **penalties for offenses** almost doubled.

Equality Inspectors in all cities at the District Labour Offices provide information regarding the protection of maternity according to the relevant Law. Specifically, they inform of the rights and obligations according to the law and give guidance how to submit a complaint. Also there are number of informative leaflets on the website of the Department of Labour in English and Greek.

This month the Gender Equality Committee in Employment and Vocational Training is organizing a **forum on maternity** and the Cypriot jurisprudence with employers and workers organizations. The aim is the exchange of experiences and the identification of weaknesses of the Law through jurisprudence.

### Paternity leave

We introduced a new law on paternity leave, where fathers have the right for **2 consecutive weeks paid paternity leave**, within a period of 16 weeks from the week of birth / adoption of a child.

**According to the Parental Leave Legislation in Cyprus, any employed parent, man or woman, is entitled to take unpaid parental leave of a total duration of up to 18 weeks, by**

**reason of the birth or adoption of a child, for the purpose of taking care of and participating in the raising of a child (or up to 23 weeks in the case of widowed parents).**

### Parental leave

Parental leave is granted to both parents and is taken after the expiration of the maternity leave (or right after the birth or adoption of the child in the case of the father) and before the child reaches the age of eight. (In case of a child with disability, parental leave is taken until the child reaches the age of eighteen).

There is a limit in the duration of parental leave per year. An employee may take parental leave for a minimum period of one week and a maximum period of five weeks per year, in case of one or two children, and seven weeks in case of three or more children. (More favourable terms than the ones provided for by this Law may apply under any collective agreement or agreement between the employer and the employee).

(Details: The employee is obliged to notify his/her employer in writing of the commencement and termination dates of the parental leave, at least three weeks before the parental leave commences. The employer has the right to refuse the granting of parental leave in writing if he/she has reasonable cause to believe that the employee is not entitled to such leave. However, before refusing, he/she should inform the employee in writing of his/her intention to refuse the granting of parental leave and request that the employee presents the reasons which, in his/her opinion, make him/her eligible to parental leave, within seven days. The employer is obliged to take into consideration the reasons which, in the employee's opinion, make him/her eligible to parental leave, before deciding on the granting of such leave. In case of refusal, the employer has to specify the reasons of his/her decision. Moreover, the employer, following consultation with the employee, is allowed to postpone the granting of parental leave for justifiable reasons related to the operation of the undertaking. In such a case, the employer has to inform the employee, in writing, of the reasons for postponing the leave within two weeks of the submission of the employee's application for parental leave. The postponement may not exceed a period of six months, from the date that the postponement is notified to the employee.)

### Social care services

The provision of accessible, affordable and quality social care programmes at local level (i.e. child care services, long-term social care services to the elderly and persons with disabilities, counselling services) is a key priority of the Government. Regarding the reconciliation of work and family life, there is a number of **childcare facilities** and nursing homes in the community, **operating by NGO'S, local authorities and by the Government**. (There are Government-run Institutions providing low cost childcare services and there is also a provision in the Guaranteed Minimum Income law to subsidize childcare services to GMI families with children recipients.) Services of child care centers are extended as appropriate,

for example, extended hours of operation to facilitate parents working long hours, operation on Saturdays etc.

The **Grants-in-Aid Scheme for the Voluntary Welfare Organisations** (Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, Social Welfare Services), which is a mechanism of the Cypriot system of social protection, aims at the support and activation of the volunteer movement in the area of social welfare and the coverage of social needs at the local level.

In this context financial support is provided in the form of state aid for the establishment, operation or expansion of programs within the field of social care services and related programs such Homes for the elderly, Day Care Centers, Child Protection Centers, Home Care and Services for Seniors, Programs for People with Disabilities, and Psychosocial Support Programs.

### Gender pay gap

#### Gender pay gap:

During the last years, a significant progress has been made as regards the gender pay gap in Cyprus. The gap has decreased significantly since 2007 (22%) and keeps following a downward trend reaching a percentage as low as 13.9% in 2016 (according to the latest official data).

As a response to taking action for reducing the gender pay gap, the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance implemented during the period 2010-2015, the Project under the title "*Actions for Reducing the Gender Pay Gap*". The €2 million budget project was co-funded by the European Social Fund.

The successful implementation of the Project has contributed, amongst others, to the significant decrease of the gender pay gap. Since several of the measures are ongoing or expected to have long-term benefits, and due to the gradual but continuous advancement of women's position in the labour market, the downward trend of the gender pay gap in Cyprus is expected to continue.

The Project consisted of a broad mix of measures, aiming at eliminating the causes of the gap, and involved interventions in every relevant field, education and occupational counselling, labour law enforcement mechanisms, incentives for companies, exchange of best practise between Member States, training and guidance of social partners, raising public awareness. Some of the measures were the following:

- a. **Strengthening and upgrading of the inspection mechanism** for the enforcement of equality in employment and equal pay legislation: During 2013, officers and inspectors of the Ministry, along with officers from the Ombudsman's office, followed a detailed training programme of theoretical and practical content, aimed at enhancing their knowledge and skills when handling complaints or conducting inspections involving inequalities in employment and pay. Their training included job evaluation methods. Around 1.000



inspections on the enforcement of equal pay legislation were conducted, upon completion of the training programme, and an annual target for the inspection mechanism on inspections in this field has been in place since then. ***During 2016 148 inspections took place during 2017, the number of inspections went up to 197. (Contrary to what is mentioned in the shadow report, we must stress that the vast majority of these inspections are ad hoc and they are targeted towards vulnerable groups of employees.)***

***Impact: The training programme provided participants with the opportunity to better understand the issue of “work of equal value” and to be able to conduct job evaluations. Therefore, it helped improve their skills when inspecting in the framework of the relevant legislation and in dealing with unequal pay cases. As a result, around 1.000 inspections on the enforcement of equal pay legislation were conducted until 2015, upon completion of the training programme. Moreover, an annual target on inspections in this field has been in place since then.***

b. **Training programmes for careers advice professionals, teachers and parents:** During 2013-2015 specialised training programmes were held for almost all primary and secondary teachers, all educational counsellors providing occupational guidance in schools, and almost 3.500 parents of school-kids, with the aim of eliminating stereotypes in education and family life, which result in stereotypes as regards the choice of occupation and eventually leading to occupational segregation (both horizontal and vertical).

***Impact: Teachers and educational counsellors got acquainted with tools as well as teaching and counselling methods, respectively, which they now put in practice, preventing the creation of stereotypes in the minds of students with regard to the roles of both genders and their study and occupational choices. Also, parents were informed about the crucial role of creating and reproducing gender stereotypes in the family, in their children’s study and occupational choices***

c. **Tripartite Conference** for the exchange of good practices between the Member States of the EU: In October 2012, a Tripartite Conference was organised under the auspices of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the European Union titled “Tackling the gender pay gap: Best practices around four perspectives”. Government officials, trade union and employers’ associations members from all Member States of the EU participated, exchanging their experience on four dimensions, (a) occupational segregation, (b) job classification and pay systems, (c) enforcement and sanctions, (d) social dialogue

d. **Certification for promoting gender equality:** A national model for certifying enterprises which adopt policies promoting gender equality in the workplace has been developed, and a **National Certification Body** was established in April 2014 responsible for granting these certifications, by decision of the Council of Ministers. The National Body is chaired by the Ministry of Labour, while its members are the Gender Equality Commissioner

and representatives of the employers' and employees' associations. According to the model of certification, companies have the right to apply for two types of certification namely (a) "Best Practice" for individual practices applied, and (b) "Equality Employer" for adopting a comprehensive system of promoting gender equality in their workplace. 40 companies have been awarded a certification so far.

***Impact: The certification procedure has encouraged companies to review and assess their own policies in order to enhance the promotion of gender equality in their workplace. At the same time, the interest demonstrated by new companies each year to apply for certification, depicts that the employers recognise the value added of integrating the principle of gender equality in their policies, and can see the positive impact the certification process can have on promoting gender equality in practise, through measures and policies.***

e. **Reviewing of collective agreements:** In 2013, the text of all signed collective agreements was reviewed, including the original text and their renewals, with the aim of examining their provisions and identifying any direct or indirect discrimination on pay based on sex.

*Having in mind the above, the Ministry promotes the elimination of any provision of direct or indirect discrimination on pay based on gender, during the agreement or renewal of new collective agreements that take place in the framework of the mediation services provided by the Ministry. These actions are interconnected with the following one.*

f. **Training of social partners' representatives** and members of professional associations: Trade union members, employers associations' representatives, lawyers, accountants, human resource professionals and members of professional associations, participated in 2014 in training seminars aiming at improving the level of compliance of companies with the Equal Pay Legislation. A guide was also issued and disseminated, involving practical ways of promoting pay equality while engaging in collective bargaining.

***Impact: Through the training programs the participants had the opportunity to better understand the content of the legislation, to learn how to interpret various of its aspects through jurisprudence and examples, and thus to improve the implementation of the legislation. The guide that was issued and distributed will guide the social partners at all stages of the negotiations to ensure equal pay.***

g. **Equal Pay Day:** An "Equal Pay Day" event is organized every year, contributing to raising public awareness on the gender pay gap and its detrimental consequences on women's economic and social life.

h. **Consultation to employers:** A guide explaining in detail the provisions of the Equal Pay, and Protection of Wages Laws was issued and disseminated to nearly 1.500 companies

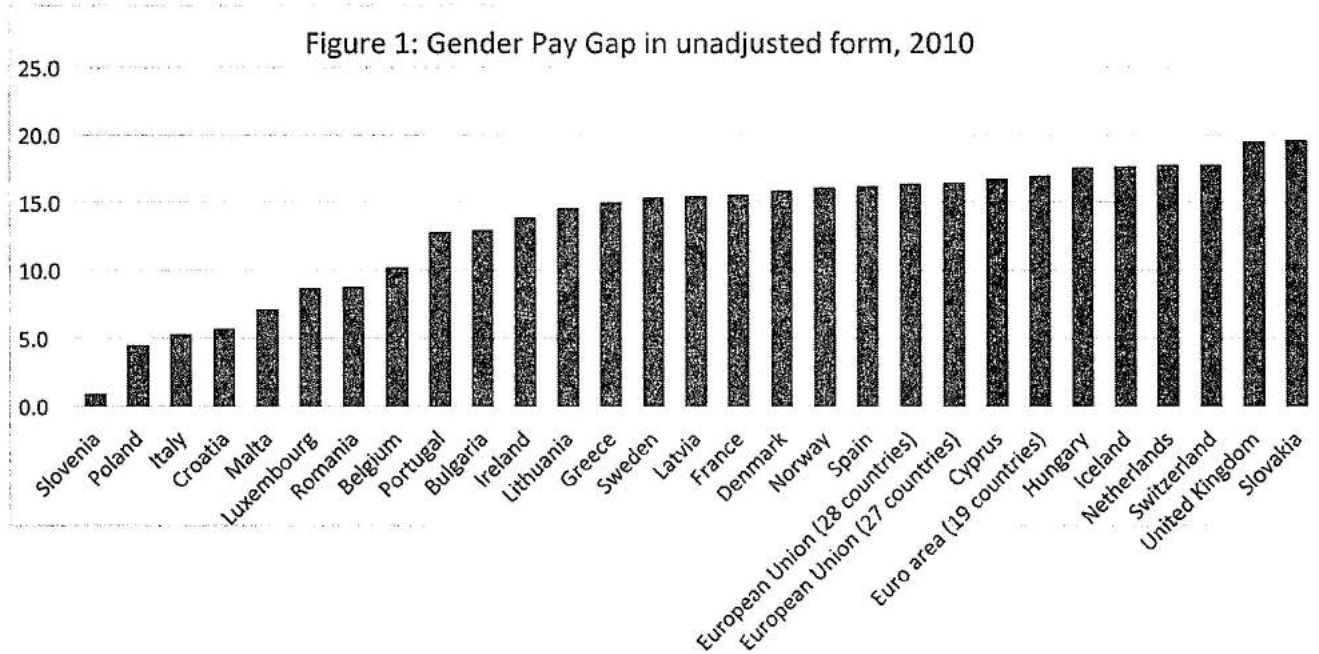
and associations. Moreover, counsellors visited 400 companies for a personalised presentation of the guide, aiming at strengthening the companies' commitment for compliance.

**General policy measure**

Another policy pursued concerns the extension of the scope of the **Minimum Wage Order**. In Cyprus, there is no national minimum wage that covers every occupational category. However, an Order is being issued annually and it provides for a minimum level of wage for specific occupations. These occupations are those of vulnerable groups of employees with little or no bargaining power. Currently these occupations are clerks, shop assistants, child-care assistants, nursing assistants, security guards and employees with sanitation and caring duties in clinics, private hospitals and elderly houses. Given the high concentration of women in these occupations, we consider this as an extra regulatory measure to combat exploitation of women.

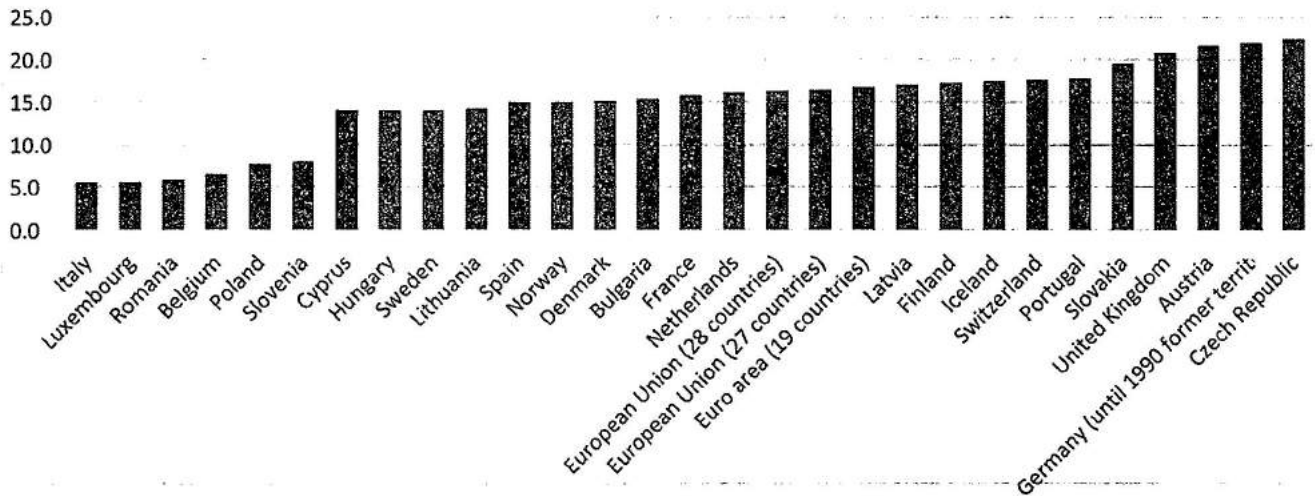
**Analysis**

Commencing by analysing the current situation and presenting Cyprus' performance as regards the gender pay gap per se, it is abundantly clear that significant progress has been made. The gap has decreased significantly since 2007 (22%) and keeps following a downward trend reaching a percentage as low as 13,5% in 2016. With a percentage higher than the EU average in 2010, Cyprus currently ranks 7<sup>th</sup> amongst the countries with the lowest rate, and has achieved a rate significantly below the EU average (16.4%) (Figures<sup>3</sup> 1 and 2).



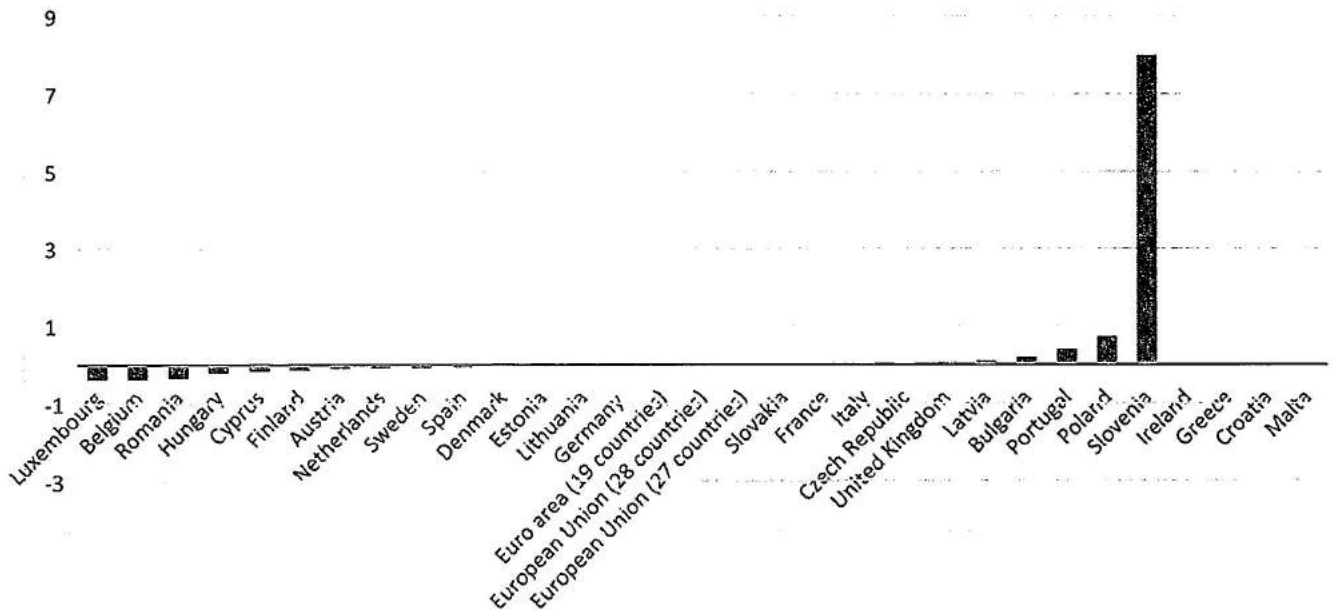
<sup>3</sup> Gender pay gap in unadjusted form, Eurostat, September 2017

Figure 2: Gender Pay Gap in unadjusted form, 2015



It should also be noted that Cyprus ranks 5<sup>th</sup> amongst the States having accomplished the highest percentage decrease in the gender pay gap during the period 2010-2015, despite the economic crisis and having to implement a strict economic adjustment programme during 2013-2016 (Figure 3).

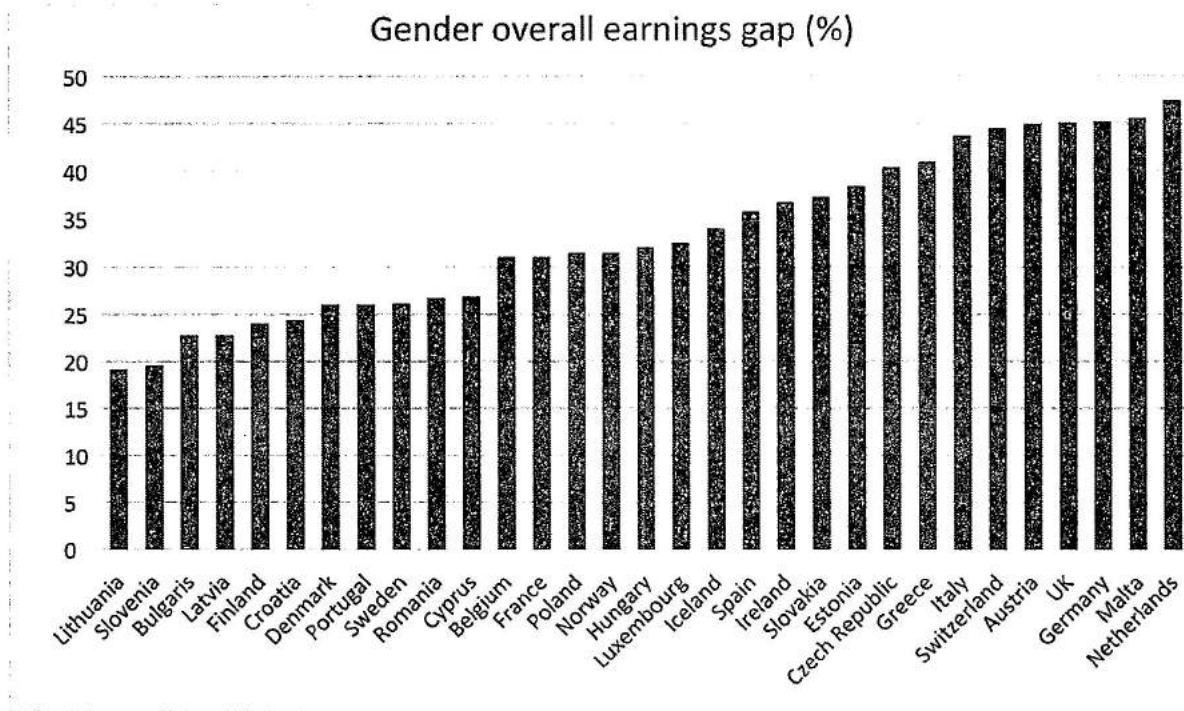
Figure 3: Percentage (%) change in Gender Pay Gap between the years 2010-2015



According to the latest (2016) data released from Eurostat, the gender pay gap in Cyprus has further decreased to 13.9%.

The unadjusted gender pay gap has been the headline indicator in the European Statistical System for a long time, to measure the average difference in hourly earnings between male employees and female employees. It is widely used in gender policy at the European and national level. The “gender overall earnings gap”, is not used between member states for comparison reasons, since it measures the average difference in earnings between men and women employed (working part-time or full-time) but also not employed. The gender overall

earnings gap in Cyprus (2014 figures) was 26.6%, which still places Cyprus amongst the best performing countries, ranking 11<sup>th</sup> as presented in the graph below.



As regards the causes of the gender overall earnings gap:

- The gender pay gap: 48.6%
- The gender hours gap: 13.5%
- The gender employment rate gap: 37.9%

In the case of Cyprus, the differences of working hours between men and women contributes the least to the pay gap (13.5%), differences in the employment rate contribute more (37.9%), while the differences in pay are the major contributor. Contrary to the argument that the Cyprus Government relies on the wrong indicator, ignoring “the fact that women are much more likely to be confined to part-time work”, the interpretation of figures actually proves that the pay gap in Cyprus is not mainly caused by great differences in the representation of women and men in part-time work.