

**National Report
on the Thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on
Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for
Action (1995)-Beijing+30**

31-May-24

Republic of Cyprus



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Abbreviations

ACPCDV	Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Domestic Violence
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CAPA	Cyprus Academy of Public Administration
CGE	Commissioner for Gender Equality
CGEO	Cyprus Gender Equality Observatory
CPC	Cyprus Productivity Centre
CRTA	Cyprus Radio Television Authority
CSW	Commission for the Status of Women
<i>CYSTAT</i>	Statistical Service of Cyprus
EIGE	European Institute of Gender Equality
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GECEVT	Gender Equality Committee in Employment and Vocational Training
GEU	Gender Equality Unit
HOR	House of Representatives
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MJPO	Ministry of Justice and Public Order
MLSI	Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance
MOESY	Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth
MECI	Ministry of Energy, Commerce, and Industry
NAPGE	National Action Plan on Gender Equality
NAPPHFAV	National Action Plan for the Prevention and Handling of Family Violence
NCBPCVAW	National Coordinating Body for the Prevention and Combating of Violence Against Women
NHRI	National Human Rights Institution
NHS	National Health System
NMWR	National Mechanism for Women's Rights
NRM	National Referral Mechanism
NSANAPPCVAW	National Strategy and National Action Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Violence Against Women
OCECPR	Office of the Commissioner for Electronic Communications and Postal Regulation
PES	Public Employment Services
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
SWS	Social Welfare Services
UPR	Universal Periodic Review

Introduction

1. The Government of the Republic of Cyprus regrets that due to the continuing illegal occupation and effective control of the 37% of its territory by Turkish military forces, the Government is unable to ensure the full realization of women's rights and equality between women and men in the whole of its territory and that, therefore, is also deprived of its ability to apply gender equality law, policies, practices and programmes to those living in the occupied area. It is for this reason that no reliable information and data are available regarding the enjoyment of the relevant rights by the Cypriot population living in the occupied area which is not controlled by the Government of the Republic of Cyprus. Unfortunately, it had not been possible to reach a solution on the Cyprus problem at the simultaneous referenda before the accession of Cyprus to the European Union in 2004, despite considerable efforts deployed by the international community and the United Nations Secretary General. The Cyprus Government policy is to keep the road open towards the reunification of the island.
2. Therefore, all information provided in this report concerns the Republic of Cyprus controlled areas.
3. The report has been written by the Gender Equality Unit (GEU) of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order. The report was compiled by the Gender Equality Unit, with the provision of all relevant material and data submitted by all Governmental ministries/Departments and other agencies including a wide range of Women's Organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations that promote gender equality and human rights in general.
4. In this regard the report is a comprehensive national level review assessing the progress made in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) as well as taking stock of achievements, identifying gaps and setbacks and outlining strategies for addressing those gaps and challenges aiming at achieving equality between women and men and therefore for all women living in Cyprus to fully enjoy their rights. The Cyprus Government would particularly wish to stress the advancement of collaboration between the state and civil society organisations underlining in this respect a more holistic, democratic approach to the implementation of actions and policies in place.
5. During the period under review, Cyprus has made considerable progress and headway in the promotion of women's rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women. Since the last report on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) in 2019, Cyprus has been hit by the COVID-19 pandemic and progress was affected in many different areas. However, the general picture remains satisfactory and efforts continue to promote gender equality.
6. Despite considerable progress in the field of gender equality through policies, regulations and legislation, entrenched social and cultural norms continue to perpetuate discrimination against women. Persistent gender stereotypes and bias in policymaking and budget decisions are hampering and slowing progress. While women comprise 65% of public sector employees, there are still too few women in senior public positions and decision-making posts.
7. The Government of Cyprus is committed in taking all the necessary measures to overcome the slow progress and barriers to reach substantial gender equality. All legislations, policies, programmes implemented in the field of gender equality are discussed in detail below.

Section One: Highlights

Over the past years, Cyprus has made considerable progress in promoting gender equality and empowering women. A series of National Action Plans and Strategies have been developed to address various aspects of gender equality. New laws tackling gender inequalities have been enacted, and new institutional mechanisms have been established. Additionally, policies have been formulated to address violence against women, trafficking in human beings, employment, social inclusion, education, health, and participation in public and political life, emphasizing the positive role women can play as agents of change.

These policies include the National Strategy on Gender Equality in 2024, on Trafficking in Human Beings in 2023, on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women in 2023, on Gender Equality in Education in 2023, on Demographic and Family Policy in 2024, on Women, Peace and Security Agenda in 2021, as well as the National Strategy for the Prevention and Management of Violence in the Schools (2018-2022), also covering the gender aspect.

These initiatives collectively highlight the commitment of the Government of Cyprus to advancing gender equality and empowering women, ensuring their active participation in all spheres of life.

During its session on 11 January 2024, the Council of Ministers approved the new National Strategy on Gender Equality for 2024-2026. The Strategy on Gender Equality, which was drawn up by the Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality, is the product of wide public consultation which was carried out between all jointly-responsible state bodies, Local Administration, Women's Organisations and civil society Organisations, research and academic bodies and other Organisations that are active within the sector of promoting equality between men and women.

The Strategy for Gender Equality aims for the dimension of gender to be horizontally incorporated in all state programmes and policies, thereby demonstrating the practical commitment of Ministries, Deputy Ministries and other state authorities and bodies to sow and cultivate a culture of equality between women and men in Cyprus.

In March 2023, and in an effort to mainstream gender in governmental policies, the Council of Ministers decided that all ministries and deputy ministries shall appoint a person, as a gender focal point, who will work, in coordination with the Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality, for the horizontal implementation of equality policies in the public sector.

On February 2, 2024, following an initiative by the Commissioner for Gender Equality, a Ceremony for the Signing of the Policy Declaration on Gender Equality took place at the Presidential Palace. This declaration was signed by the President of the Republic and all Ministers and Deputy

Ministers of the Government.

The Policy Declaration is a document that constitutes a practical commitment for each Ministry and Deputy Ministry individually, based on the principle of gender equality, highlighting that all necessary measures will be taken to ensure the principle of gender equality among the personnel of each Ministry and Deputy Ministry. According to the Gender Equality Commitment Declaration, state officials and the hierarchy in the Public Service are required to set an example and serve as a model for zero tolerance towards gender discrimination, as well as sexist and harassing behaviors based on gender.

In the same period, the involvement of women's organizations and NGOs in policy formulation in areas, such as, family and demography, children, peace, social inclusion, employment, violence and trafficking, has increased significantly and their contribution has been vitally important in ensuring that the needs of all women, including vulnerable groups, are taken into account.

Besides, the Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality has undertaken the crucial task of drafting legislation entitled "The Commissioner for Gender Equality and Related Matters Law of 2024." This initiative marks a significant step forward in advancing gender equality within Cyprus. The bill has been diligently subjected to a comprehensive public consultation process, engaging various stakeholders, including competent state bodies and esteemed members of civil society such as the Member Organizations of the National Mechanism for Women's Rights.

At its core, the proposed legislation aims to formalize the role and functions of the Commissioner for Gender Equality, delineating their mission, responsibilities, powers, and obligations. Additionally, it establishes the National Mechanism for Women's Rights (NMWR), building upon the foundation laid by the erstwhile Central Agency for Women established in 1989 and its subsequent Advisory Body, formed in 1994 as per the Council of Ministers' decision.

The overarching objective is to fortify and safeguard equal rights and opportunities for all, fostering parity between men and women, boys and girls. This entails fostering equal visibility, empowerment, and access to responsibilities and opportunities across all spheres of public and private life. The bill further seeks to ensure equitable distribution and utilization of resources throughout Cypriot society, dismantling barriers that hinder gender parity and promoting inclusivity and fairness.

Section Two: Priorities, achievements, challenges and setbacks

2.1. What have been the most important achievements, challenges and setbacks in progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women?

Cyprus has a comprehensive policy on gender equality, which is formulated in accordance with the provisions of International Conventions, in particular the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), International Recommendations, Action Programs, including the Action Plan of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing 1995), the European Acquis, European policies in the field of equality between men and women.

The Government policy has two main goals:

- Elimination of legal discrimination against women and the safeguarding of equality between men and women in all areas of law, and
- Strengthening the principle of equality and equal opportunities in practice, involving, inter alia, the change of attitudes, promoting specific programmes that support and empower women in their multiple roles, and mainstreaming the principle of equality into all programmes and policies.

To address these two goals a number of measures are being taken. These are the following:

Assessment Report on the Progress of Implementing the National Action Plan on Equality of Men and Women 2019-2023

The Ministry of Justice and Public Order commissioned the UNESCO Chair for Gender Equality at the University of Cyprus, as independent expert, to assess the National Action Plan for Equality of Men and Women 2019-2023. The assessment revealed significant progress in the field of gender equality while at the same time confirmed that the implementation of the Action Plan reflected the state's practical commitment to achieving gender equality, with substantial results in all spheres of life for both women and men.

More specifically, within the framework of its implementation, various actions have been promoted, including:

- **Outsourcing Research on Temporary Positive Measures:** This involved engaging an external partner to research the introduction of temporary positive measures, such as quotas, aimed at increasing the number of women in decision-making centers. The research covered women's participation in Boards of Semi-governmental organizations, Management Boards of Public Companies, and party ballot papers. Additionally, a study

on the positive measures employed by other European countries, their application, and results was conducted.

- **Organising Training and Educational Seminars:** Continuous and systematic seminars were organised for women aspiring to enter politics. Conducted by the National Mechanism for Women's Rights and the Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality, these seminars aimed to encourage political participation by women, enhance their abilities and skills, present best practices for managing political life, and prepare women to undertake political offices and confront the challenges of a political career.
- **Promoting Sexual and Reproductive Rights:** The National Mechanism for Women's Rights and the Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality organised actions and programmes to inform and enlighten women about their sexual and reproductive rights. These actions proposed practical ways to protect and safeguard women's sexual and reproductive health and discussed best practices used in other European countries.
- **Incorporating Gender in State Budgets:** Actions were organised to promote the incorporation of gender in state budgets, through informing and training civil servants and their counterparts in the private sector. An informative conference, initiated by the National Mechanism for Women's Rights, presented the benefits of gender budgeting in promoting gender equality, development, fairer distribution of economic resources, and improving life conditions, especially for women from vulnerable sections of the population.
- **Reforming and Modernising Family Law:** The Ministry of Justice and Public Order prepared eight amending bills expected to have a significant positive impact across society. These aim to ensure the rights and best interests of children, smooth relations between parents and children following a divorce, guarantee equal treatment of parents in family disputes, simplify procedures, and expedite the judicial process in family law cases.
- **Introducing Mediation for Family Disputes:** The institution of mediation as a form of resolving family disputes has been formally enacted. The law provides for mediation as an alternative means of solving family disputes, aiming to achieve consensual approaches, reduce conflict, improve communication between all family members, and support and maintain working relationships.

Additionally, the Assessment Report highlighted a series of recommendations, including:

- Establishing a coordinating body between all Ministries and Deputy Ministries to ensure collaboration in implementing actions, alongside bodies from the wider public sector, civil society, university institutions, and other involved parties.
- Immediately incorporating gender budgeting within the state budget to contribute holistically and comprehensively to gender equality.

- Emphasizing the role of the media, education system, and political parties in deconstructing outdated gender stereotypes and eliminating discrimination against women.
- Strengthening public awareness of the actions included in strategic plans for gender equality and relevant legislation pertaining to gender equality.

These recommendations were taken into account during the drafting the new National Strategy for Gender Equality, prepared by the Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality.

National Strategy on Gender Equality 2024-2026

The National Strategy on Gender Equality, was drafted by the Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality, in close collaboration with Ministries' gender focal points, and it was the result of wide public consultation which was carried out between all jointly-responsible state bodies, Local Administration, the National Machinery for Women's Rights, Women's Organisations and civil society Organisations, research and academic bodies and other organisations. The new National Strategy on Gender Equality took into account the recommendations of the assessment report of the implementation of the National Action Plan on equality between men and women and the obligations derived by the national, European and international framework on gender equality and on women's rights.

The National Strategy on Gender Equality was approved by the Council of Ministers in January 11th, 2024.

In March 2023, the Council of Ministers decided that all ministries and deputy ministries shall appoint a person, as a gender focal point, who will work, in coordination with the Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality, for the horizontal implementation of equality policies in the public sector.

The Statistical Service launched the 'Gendered Statistics' publication and has an important role to play on adequately and systematically collecting sex-disaggregated data. Such data are vital for developing targeted policies and measures that promote gender equality.

Recognising that women are not a homogenous group, and that they often face intersectional prejudices based on their sex, the new National Strategy on Gender Equality includes actions to be implemented horizontally for groups of women; young women; women with disabilities; single-parent women and women with large families; as well as women from migrant backgrounds.

The National Strategy is providing different stages of evaluation:

- Internal evaluation by the Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality, based on reporting made by gender focal points.
- Interim evaluation by a newly established Platform called “Civil Society Platform”
- Final evaluation by independent expert.

It is worthwhile noting that the new national Strategy on Gender Equality includes amongst others, a standalone overarching goal focused on achieving balanced participation of women and men in high-level positions in public and political life. Under this pillar, several actions are being pursued, such as empowering women interested in engaging in politics, establishing a digital databank on women's participation in positions of responsibility across politics, integrating the gender dimension into state budgets, addressing the gender pay gap, and expanding childcare and elderly care services, thus fostering reconciliation between family and professional life. Furthermore, proactive measures are underway to prevent and combat gender-based violence, including tailored training programs for frontline professionals, improved data collection, and enhanced support for women confronting multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

Political Declaration on Gender Equality

The President of the Republic of Cyprus and all Ministers, Deputy Ministers and Commissioners to the President, signed a political declaration on gender equality, which was co-signed by the Commissioner for Gender Equality.

With this political declaration, the President, the Council of Ministers and the Commissioners declare zero tolerance to sexism and harassment based on gender.

Bill entitled “The Commissioner for Gender Equality and Related Matters Law of 2024”

A bill entitled "The Commissioner for Gender Equality and Related Matters Law of 2024" has been drafted to enhance the role of the Commissioner for Gender Equality and to legally establish the institutional mechanism. The draft legislation has been approved by the Council of Ministers and is currently under discussion before the Standing Committee on Legal Affairs, Justice and Public Order. The bill was drafted in close collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and Public Order, the Law Commissioner and the National Mechanism for Women's Rights. The bill has undergone a thorough public consultation process.

The draft legislation aims to enhance the role and functions of the Commissioner for Gender Equality, delineating his/her mission, responsibilities, powers, and obligations and the role of gender focal points. Additionally, it establishes the National Mechanism for Women's Rights (NMWR), building upon the foundation laid by the erstwhile Central Agency for Women established in 1989 and its subsequent Advisory Body, formed in 1994 as per the Council of Ministers' decision.

The overarching objective is to fortify and safeguard equal rights and opportunities for all, fostering parity between men and women, boys and girls. This entails fostering equal visibility, empowerment, and access to responsibilities and opportunities across all spheres of public and private life. The bill further seeks to ensure equitable distribution and utilization of resources throughout Cypriot society, dismantling barriers that hinder gender parity and promoting inclusivity and fairness.

Enhancing women's representation in decision-making positions

Enhancing women's representation in decision-making and promoting gender equality in public life stands at the forefront of policy debates, both nationally and within the EU. Gender equality is not merely a fundamental human right but also a cornerstone principle of the EU, enshrined in its Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

A critical facet of advancing gender equality in leadership entails implementing targeted strategies and mechanisms at the national level. Notably, upon his election in February 2023, the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr Nikos Christodoulides, prioritised the promotion of women's rights and gender equality within the government's agenda. 38,8% of the appointments in the Council of Ministers are women marking the highest proportion of female participation at the ministerial level to date. Furthermore, the Council of Ministers appointed women to 40% of positions as Presidents and Vice Presidents of public legal entities, despite only 25% of total applications being submitted by women.

In this context, the appointment of the Commissioner for Gender Equality is deemed a matter of utmost significance, now formally expected to be established by law for the first time. This development conveys a strong and clear message regarding the elevated priority assigned to the promotion of gender equality, recognising it as an essential prerequisite for social and economic stability, development, and growth. Additionally, as stated above, the Commissioner for Gender Equality has been entrusted with the responsibility of formulating the National Strategy for Gender Equality, endorsed by the Council of Ministers in January 2024. The Government of Cyprus is also exploring the implementation of special positive measures of temporary nature to increase women's representation in decision-making positions and to raise awareness among citizens about the benefits of leveraging the knowledge, abilities, and skills of the entire workforce.

National Strategy and National Action Plan on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women 2023-2028

The National Coordinating Body for the Prevention and Combating of Violence Against Women, in close collaboration with an external expert, compiled the first National Strategy and the first National Action Plan on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women for the years 2023-2028.

It is worth noting that this is the first time that there has been a Strategy and an Action Plan to Prevent and Combat all forms of violence against women that are included within the Istanbul Convention on a national level. The two policy documents confront all forms of gender-based violence in a cohesive and thorough manner, fulfilling an extremely important obligation arising from the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) as well as the basic ratifying Law L.115(I)/2021.

These two documents are particularly succinct, comprehensive and targeted. They lay out the intention of the Ministry of Justice, and the Republic of Cyprus in general, to fully conform with the extensive guidelines that the Istanbul Convention establishes. In particular, the Strategy and the Action Plan condense the aims of the Istanbul Convention, which are:

- a) to protect women from all forms of violence, and to prevent, prosecute and eliminate gender-based and domestic violence,
- b) to contribute to eliminating all forms of discrimination against women, and to promote substantial equality between the sexes,
- c) to plan a comprehensive framework of policies of measures to protect and support victims of gender-based and domestic violence,
- d) to promote international cooperation with the aim of eliminating gender-based and domestic violence, and
- e) to provide support and assistance to organisations and law-enforcement services for effective collaboration, in order to adopt a holistic approach to eliminating gender-based and domestic violence.

Further, the Strategy and the Action Plan were drawn up based on the Recommendations from the GREVIO Expert Committee Assessment Report from the Council of Europe. They lay out realistic and achievable goals, while they concentrate on specific goals and priorities, which are subdivided as interim goals, actions, implementing body, implementing timeline, budget, as well as action monitoring indicators.

Both the National Strategy and the National Action Plan were subjected to a wide public consultation, which lasted over a month, and in which a large number of Ministries, Services, state and other bodies, and Organisations from civil society participated. It is worth noting that before the initial drafting of the two policy documents in June 2022, all jointly-responsible bodies were asked for their preliminary positions.

The National Strategy records the current legislative framework for the prevention and combating of gender-based violence, the obligations arising from the Istanbul Convention, and details national needs and basic goals towards satisfying them.

Similarly, the basic priority goals under the 4 Pillars of the Convention are laid out in a systematic way. These are subdivided as interim goals, actions, implementing body, implementing timelines, budget, as well as qualitative and quantitative indicators for action monitoring.

The National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Violence Against Women includes innovative actions, which are expected to have a particularly positive response in preventing gender-based violence and effectively protecting victims of violence. These include:

- Actions to raise awareness within civil society, with a view to changing stereotypical attitudes that lead to violence and abuse,
- Promoting compulsory, comprehensive sex and gender identity education at all levels of education,
- Strengthening training for all professionals within the field of violence, including Judges, Police Officers, Social Workers, Health Workers, Educators, etc,
- Promoting measures to encourage Mass Media to self-regulate on matters of equality and preventing gender-based violence,
- Creating therapy programmes aimed at perpetrators of violence,
- Providing specialist support and protection to women migrants/refugees/asylum seekers who are victims of violence and to any women victims of violence that belong to vulnerable groups of population,
- Creating programmes and services to reintegrate women victims of violence in society,
- Developing research programmes on the issue of gender-based violence,
- Creating specialised programmes for the victims of sexual violence and rape, etc.

Both the National Strategy and the National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Violence Against Women 2023-2028 are expected to be useful tools in the efforts been made towards effective prevention and combating of violence against women, since, besides setting out goals and programming actions, they will also contribute both to coordinating actions and programmes through the various Ministries, Services, Departments, state bodies and other authorities, and to the overall monitoring and assessment of these actions being carried out.

Development of National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000)

- On December 22, the Council of Ministers approved the first five-year National Action Plan of the Republic of Cyprus for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 "Women, Peace and Security".
- The National Action Plan consists of four main pillars covering, respectively, Participation and Empowerment, Protection, Prevention and Promotion/Information for the Resolution. Its main objective is to identify the disproportionate and unprecedented consequences of armed conflict on women; and to utilise women's experiences in conflict prevention and resolution, as well as in preserving peace. The Plan sets the framework for a coherent horizontal policy, which will create, among other things, appropriate synergies between stakeholders, including the broader civil society.

- The protection and promotion of women's rights strengthens the effort to achieve full and effective equality, which in turn plays a key role in the prosperity of societies, creating the basis and prospects for sustainable development.

The first NAP for the implementation of the UNSC Resolution 1325 “Women, Peace and Security” for the period 2021-2025 includes actions relating to the participation and empowerment, as well as protection, prevention and the promotion of the women’s rights. The budget for the implementation of actions amounts to €180,000, while an additional amount is annually included in the budget of the GEC. This Plan aims to ensure the full implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. The Action Plan as it stands today is consisted by four main pillars:

- Participation and Empowerment;
- Protection;
- Prevention;
- Promoting and informing civil society about UNSCR.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is also one of the stakeholders implementing the 1325 (2000) UNSC Resolution on Women, Peace and Security and the relevant NAP, through its contributions to humanitarian and development assistance as well as its contributions to international organisations. In 2023 alone, the Republic of Cyprus has contributed to the following organisations dealing with women empowerment or concerning women and girls: La Francophonie avec Elles, UNITAR, programmes implemented by the OSCE including the OSCE’s Women Peace Leadership Programme, UN-Women, programmes implemented by the Council of Europe, the European Endowment for Democracy, UNODC, UNICEF, the Office of the UN Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, and the UN Population Fund. A significant contribution of 101,000 USD is earmarked each year, including in 2023, for the UN Women’s programme for the implementation of the NAP for WSP of Jordan, which is considered one of the most important programmes implemented and supported in a third country by the Republic of Cyprus. Overall, the aforementioned funding amounts to 53% of the total voluntary contributions made by the Republic of Cyprus to international organisations and foundations in 2023.

Strategic Planning of the Interdepartmental Committee of the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth, especially targeted on equality between women and men.

One of the main aims of the Plan is to combat negative gender stereotypes and perceptions amongst educators, counselors and students. More specifically a specific programme is created aiming to the increase of female participation in technical fields and the promotion of girls in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). The plan includes activities aiming at the reshaping of Secondary Technical and Vocational education with the aim of attracting female participation. Additionally, another innovative action of this specific plan relates to the examination for the implementation of all day school aiming at allowing students to stay at school studying and be involved in sports, arts and any other pedagogical actions. This action at the same time can be considered as an action for the reconciliation between family and professional life of parents and particularly the mothers.

The “Interdepartmental Committee of the MOESY” in collaboration with the “Gender Equality Committee in Employment and Vocational Training” launches on an annual basis a writing competition related to gender equality for students in primary and secondary education. The competition often asks for written pieces that fit a certain theme or even follow a prompt. For example, the competition launched for the school year 2022-2023 was asking students to write a descriptive text or essay following a certain prompt: “We envision a school where all children are equally treated regardless of their gender, where they are given equal opportunities and rights, while they feel protected and free. Describe that school explaining the ways all persons in that school try to make that vision a reality”.

In addition, representatives of the Interdepartmental Committee for gender equality often participate in several meetings and/or training sessions related to the promotion of gender equality in the educational system as well as in society in general.

CYPRUS OBSERVATORY ON SCHOOL VIOLENCE (COSV)

The Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth (MOESY) has designed and developed the National Strategy for Preventing and addressing School Violence, which has a four-year timeframe of implementation (2018-2024). According to its role and responsibilities, and based on the aforementioned Strategy, the COSV has developed and implemented actions that aim to prevent and address bullying and violence at schools. The COSV provides support to school units for the implementation of actions and programmes aimed at improving the school climate, with the ultimate aim of reducing violence at schools. These programmes, run on an annual basis and are school-based, are the "Conflict Resolution - School Mediation" and the "Recognition and Management of School Bullying". The COSV supports schools in the implementation of anti-bullying programmes, which deal with recognizing, preventing and combating bullying. With "Conflict Resolution - School Mediation" schools are encouraged to find effective ways of resolving pupils' conflicts as well as alternative ways of managing conflict situations at school. In 2023, 104 schools were supported and 4008 teachers and 300 parents were trained by COSV.

Guidelines on how to handle conflicts or bullying were produced and disseminated at the training courses. In addition, educational material to assist teachers on how to undertake activities with children to enhance their competences needed for prevention and management of school violence was produced and disseminated. The curriculum of this material includes activities to enhance anger management, team building, empathy, emotional intelligence, social and communicative skills, tolerance, acceptance of diversity, mediation skills, anti-bullying skills, conflict management etc.

The COSV also monitored a national-level research that investigates the phenomenon of violence at schools. The research aims to collect data about violence in education, from all schools of all levels in Cyprus, for three consecutive years, with the participation of teachers, parents and students.

The National Mechanism for Women's Rights

The NMWR plays a leading role in ensuring the introduction of gender mainstreaming in all national policies and programmes. This is done through the encouragement of training of relevant professionals within the public service on gender equality issues, the support of the development of research on gender-related issues, the promotion of data collection and gender-disaggregated statistics, and the organisation of relevant training workshops, seminars, and conferences with the participation of international experts.

The budget of the NMWR covers operational expenses of the Equality Unit, as well as a budget for grants and subsidies to women's organizations, which constitutes the biggest part of the annual budget. The grants for women's organizations and NGOs cover two categories of sponsoring: a) an annual subsidy to cover operational costs of all members of the Council and some members of the National Committee on specific conditions according to Revised Regulations, which have been in force since 2014 and b) the subsidies for the implementation of particular projects and activities such as conferences, training workshops and information seminars, research, on gender related issues. The budget for the grants and subsidies to women's organisations is 290.000 euros every year the last five years.

The Office of the CGE, as well as the GEU use the services of external consultants who have been commissioned to provide support and assistance for actions and programmes on a needed basis. In recent years, the budget of the NMWR has been increasing considerably, namely from 370.000 euros in 2020 to 520,000 euros in 2022 and 656,000 euros in 2024.

Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance (MLSI)

The Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance has always been dedicated to combating gender discrimination at work and the empowerment of women in the areas of employment. One of the main priorities has been to significantly reduce inequalities regarding pay. The gender pay gap in Cyprus which currently stands at 10.2% (based on 2022 official data), has recorded a total decrease of 34.6% in the last decade. In order to ensure the application of the principle of equal pay between men and women for equal work or work of equal value, several actions have been taken and being planned, details of which are explained in the answers below. Furthermore, the implementation of active labour market policies/measures such as subsidized employment schemes and continuous training programmes have supported the most vulnerable groups of the unemployed.

Shipping Deputy Ministry

The Council of Ministers has decided the establishment of the Gender Equality Award in Cyprus Shipping in order to, among others :

- Recognize individuals , irrespective of their gender , who either in their personal capacity or as representatives of their respective organizations have made a significant contribution to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women in the shipping sector.
- Support young women who excel in all shipping sectors, in positions both on land and at sea

For this reason, the Shipping Deputy Ministry announces the submission of nominations for the 1st “Cyprus Shipping Gender Equality Award”, following a relevant decision of the Council of Ministers.

Activities by the Cyprus Academy of Public Administration for horizontal awareness in the public sector

Activities by the Public Administration and Personnel Department (PAPD) - Cyprus Academy for Public Administration (CAPA) for horizontal awareness in the public sector.

As part of the holistic action of the government in promoting women’s rights and gender equality, PAPD - CAPA is promoting awareness seminars and trainings to all public officers. The Public Administration and Personnel Department (PAPD) through the Cyprus Academy for Public Administration (CAPA), is the responsible organization for policy setting on learning and development in the Cyprus Public Service and for providing training programmes, mainly, on horizontal issues, in cooperation/ with the support of external experts. CAPA’s mission is to contribute to the efficiency, effectiveness and continuous improvement of the Public Service for the benefit of the individual and the society at large, mainly through the formulation and implementation of a comprehensive learning and development policy for the Public Service.

In promoting women’s rights and gender equality in the public service, PAPD - CAPA is working closely with the Office for the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights (Ombudsman), the Ministry of Justice and Public Order, the Gender Equality Committee, the Office of the GEC and different NGOs such as the MIGS, the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family (APHVF) and the CGEO.

In this direction PAPD - CAPA, in the last five years:

- Organized and implemented trainings on Gender Equality in Employment and Vocational Training in the Public Service, highlighting the legislative framework and sexual harassment in the workplace;
- Organized and implemented trainings on the Code of practice in the public service for preventing and combating Harassment and Sexual Harassment;
- Participated as Lead Partner in the Erasmus+ programme ‘Active Strategies for prevention and handling of sexual harassment incidents’. The outputs of this program were:
 - Development of a Guide for effective prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace.
 - Development of relevant training material for a five-day training programme.
 - Development of an e-Learning Portal for the provision of e-learning
 - Development of a risk assessment tool and participation in a 3-day training programme
- Participation in National Action Plans as an implementing agency for learning interventions (National Plan for Gender Equality, National Plan for the implementation of UN Resolution 1325, National Plan against Corruption)

- Design and development of an asynchronous e-learning course entitled "Women, Peace and Security - UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000)"

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs continues its active efforts to incorporate and mainstream the gender dimension into the Republic of Cyprus' foreign policy. Following the termination of the appointment of the relevant Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, diplomats continue to carry on the tasks of the dedicated Unit for gender mainstreaming that has been set up in the Ministry. In this framework, the Ministry continues to implement targeted actions and initiatives at a regional, European and international level to contribute to efforts to eliminate inequality between women and men in all sectors and to accelerate progress internationally.

In line with the NAP for Gender Equality, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is implementing actions to encourage young girls to get interested and be involved in diplomacy and it also continues organising seminars for all staff on the effective integration of the gender dimension into foreign policy. The Ministry and its diplomatic missions continue also organising side-events emphasising gender equality, such as the event titled "Breaking the link between poverty and violence against women and girls", which was organised on 13 March 2024 during CSW68 by the Permanent Mission of Cyprus to the United Nations, in cooperation with the Permanent Missions of Panama and Portugal, the Jordanian National Commission for Women, and UN Women. In addition, steps are taken to consciously continue involving women diplomats in decision-making positions in the ministry, which is, nevertheless, directly affected by the continuous relocation of diplomats between HQs and diplomatic missions. Currently, the number of women serving as Head of Diplomatic Missions of the Republic has increased to nine, including, for the first time, a woman Permanent Representative to the UN in New York, while a significant number of women diplomats is currently serving in key positions at the MFA.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also continues to coordinate the Government's active participation in the Universal Period Review (UPR), posing questions to other countries about women's rights and gender equality, and also informing other countries on the actions taken to uproot traditional concepts and introduce positive measures to promote equal participation of women in public and political life. To this end, the Republic of Cyprus has submitted its national report for the Fourth Cyprus, which was considered on 30 April 2024.

2.2 What have been the top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls through laws, policies and/or programmes?

2.2.1 Violence against Women

Over the past years, combating violence against women has become a priority for the Government of Cyprus. More specifically, the Ministry of Justice and Public Order coordinates actions, which in 2017 led to ratifying the International Convention of the Council of Europe on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women, also known as Istanbul Convention.

In this regard, several measures have been taken on a national level, aiming to effectively combat gender-based violence. Some examples are listed below:

- Setting up a National Coordinating Body to Prevent and Combat Violence Against Women, according to the provisions of the Istanbul Convention^[1]. The Coordinating Body has set out the first National Strategy and the first National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Violence Against Women 2023-2028, which are based upon the four basic pillars of the Istanbul Convention and the Recommendations of GREVIO Committee. At the same time, the Coordinating Body is promoting the creation of a Unified Database on statistics relating to violence^[2], to include all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention nationwide.
- Drafting legislation comprehensively implementing the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combatting gender-based violence against women and domestic violence^[3].
- Drafting and implementing a law criminalizing harassment and stalking^[4], as laid out in Article 34 of the Istanbul Convention.
- Drafting and implementing an innovative law criminalizing sexism and online sexism; which was previously absent from national legislation and which fully coincides with the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on “Preventing and Combating Sexism”.
- Drafting a bill to provide independent assistance and legal aid to victims of gender-Based and domestic violence. Through this, women victims of violence are entitled to such services as distinct groups who need special support and protection.
- Establishing the crime of femicide as a separate, specific offence in the special law on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. This is a Law that was proposed by the President of the House of Representatives, and was voted in as a law in July 2022. Through the specific legislative reform, the most extreme form of gender-based violence is now visible, and the conditions under which the crime is committed constitute aggravating circumstances which will be taken seriously into consideration during sentencing.

^[1] The Coordinating Body was set up following a Decision by the Council of Ministers on 3 March 2022, and is responsible for coordinating, planning, implementing, monitoring and assessing the policies and measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence which are included in the Istanbul Convention, as well as the basic law to implement the Convention, which is “Law on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence and Related Issues 2021 (L.115(I)/2021)”.

^[2] The Unified Archive will collect, process, analyse and evaluate statistical data on all the forms of violence included in the Istanbul Convention in an effort to contribute substantially to planning more targeted measures and policies, as well as to dealing as effectively as possible with the problem of gender-based violence on a national basis.

^[3] The Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and for Related Matters Law of 2021 (L. 115(I)/2021)

^[4] The Protection from Harassment and Stalking Law of 2021 (L.114(I)/2021)

- Establishing the Women’s House which functions as a multi-disciplinary crisis centre for women victims of any form of violence and their children, providing specialized support and care in a safe environment.
- Training government officials.
- Launching of awareness-raising campaigns addressed to the general public and women in particular.
- Developing research in the field of violence against women.
- Improving data collection.
- Funding NGOs and women’s organizations providing protection and assistance to women victims of gender-based violence (eg. funding of a telephone helpline for victims of domestic and gender-based violence on a 24-hour basis operated by an NGO).
- Creating specialized teams within the police force to handle cases of domestic violence so that the officers receiving testimony and thereafter handling the case are specifically trained for such sensitive matters.
- Revising the Police Protocols in cases of dealing with victims of sexual violence and rape, in such a way as to fully incorporate the provisions of the Istanbul Convention. The new revised Protocols fully adopt and implement a victim-centred approach, through which the victim is treated with respect, sensitivity; an individualised, professional and non-discriminatory approach. The rights of women victims are fully guaranteed under conditions of security, confidentiality and trust. This avoids the danger of secondary and repeated victimisation.

Revising/Modernising the definition of rape contained within the Penal Code after a relevant Law Proposal submitted by a group of Men and Women MPs. The revised definition, which complies with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention, sets the absence of consent at the centre of its protective framework, while it has been widened so as to cover all persons regardless of gender. At the same time, there have been additions in order to cover other forms of abuse, such as sexual abuse by penetration, coercion to commit rape, coercion to sexual abuse by penetration, coercion to sexual acts or other acts of a sexual nature.

- Promoting, in close cooperation with Cyprus Police the development of the smart app “ELPIS” to provide immediate assistance to victims of domestic violence who are in danger on a 24h basis throughout the week.
- Contributing to efforts by the Law Commissioner and the Deputy Ministry of Social Welfare to bring all legislation in line regarding gender-based and domestic violence in accordance with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention.
- Drawing up training sessions for frontline Health Care Workers (Doctors, Nurses, Midwives, Personal Doctors and Medical Examiners), as well as for workers in Education, in order to provide training and education on crucial matters of gender-based violence.
- Withdrawing two of the three reservations that had been set upon signing the Istanbul Convention in 2015. More specifically, according to a recent Council of Minister’s Decision, the Republic of Cyprus has decided to withdraw the reservations that refer to Article 44 (1e) (3) (4) and Article 59 of the Convention, which refer to Jurisdiction and the Resident status of Victims of Violence respectively. The reservations on Article 30 (2) which regards state compensation to victims of violence remains in place for the time being, along with an obligation on jointly-responsible

Ministries to conduct research into the possibly financial cost that would result for the State in the event of withdrawing this reservation within a clear timeline. The withdrawal of two of the three reservations brings Cyprus a step closer to full compliance with the extended guiding framework established by the Istanbul Convention. At the same time, it constitutes another example of steady focus on and respect for human rights and gender equality, which are guaranteed through the Istanbul Convention.

The Republic of Cyprus also intends to undertake the following Commitment in the field of Preventing and Combating Gender-based Violence:

- Contribute to setting up and Operating a unified Europe-wide telephone helpline for the victims of gender-based violence. This initiative has been undertaken at a European level, in order to facilitate access to suitable services providing support, protection and guidance for victims all over Europe. The government will provide financial support in order to create the necessary infrastructure, and to acquire equipment, organise the operation of the helpline at a national level, and connect it with the unified European number.

2.2.2. Promoting women and men's equal opportunities by combating gender stereotypes and bias

Combating gender stereotypes and bias is paramount for fostering a more equitable and inclusive society. By challenging these entrenched beliefs, we create environments where everyone, regardless of gender, can thrive based on their abilities and aspirations rather than predetermined societal expectations.

Moreover, breaking down gender stereotypes and biases is essential for achieving gender equality in all aspects of life, including education, employment, healthcare, and representation in leadership roles. Embracing diversity not only benefits individuals but also enriches communities and economies. Ultimately, combating gender stereotypes and bias is a crucial step towards building a more just and inclusive world where everyone has the freedom to pursue their dreams and contribute fully to society.

Effective ways of combating gender stereotypes involve a multifaceted approach that encompasses education, awareness-raising, policy interventions, and cultural shifts.

Additionally, implementing policies that promote gender equality in all spheres of society, such as quotas for gender representation in leadership positions and enforcing anti-discrimination laws, can help dismantle systemic biases. Media literacy programs aimed at deconstructing harmful portrayals of gender in the media can also contribute to challenging stereotypes.

Moreover, fostering dialogue and collaboration between diverse stakeholders, including governments, civil society organizations, businesses, and individuals, is crucial for creating a collective effort towards cultural change. By combining these approaches, societies can make significant strides in combatting gender stereotypes and fostering a more equitable and inclusive world.

The National Strategy aims to deconstruct gender stereotypes and further promote gender equality. Gender stereotypes and the intersectional approach are important parameter to promote gender equality,

to combat violence against women and girls and trafficking in human beings. In the field of education, a specific Action Plan is being implemented to promote equality, while collaborations and partnerships with Mass Media, Local Authorities, political parties, civil society, and other stakeholders are being fostered.

2.2.3. Vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of women

It is worth noting that within the framework of the National Strategy and National Action Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women 2023-2028, actions have been included targeting vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of women who have experienced or are experiencing gender-based violence. Specifically, the policy document includes actions such as the:

- Development of targeted information actions to support and protect groups with special needs, such as migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and women with disabilities.
- Preparation and issuance of practical information material for victims of gender-based violence.
- Development of a specialised assessment tool for the specific needs of asylum seekers to determine specialised support and protection needs.
- Creation of informational material in various languages, specifically designed for communities with migration backgrounds, regarding their rights, protection measures, and support services at all stages of reception, asylum application process, and appeal procedures.
- Preparation of a protocol for cases where migrant victims of violence need to access sexual and reproductive health services (e.g., victims of female genital mutilation) etc.

2.2.4. Gender Pay Gap

Reducing the gender pay gap has been pursued through several and targeted actions and interventions; from strengthening the application of the principle of equal pay between men and women for equal work or work of equal value through enforcement mechanisms, to addressing the deep-rooted stereotypes regarding traditional gender roles.

Acknowledging the importance of effective enforcement mechanisms of the equal pay legislation, but at the same time recognising the barriers faced by victims in raising gender pay discrimination claims, the Republic of Cyprus has continued to strengthen ex officio inspection. The inspectorate's role, in addition to requesting data aiming mainly at detecting direct discrimination in pay, also focused on providing information to both employers and employees on the provisions of the legislation and the right to file a complaint, but also practical compliance guidance to employers. Since 2022 targeted and detailed inspections on the equal pay legislation are taking place, focusing on economic activities with high gender pay gap rates, based on risk assessment analysis. Following the inspection, specific recommendations are made to the employers,

including corrective measures on the recruitment procedures, the pay structures or the promotion policies, such as reviewing the horizontal representation of men and women within the company, or their equal representation in higher managerial levels.

Moreover, the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, in cooperation with civil society, has engaged in activities contributing to raising public awareness on the gender pay gap and its detrimental consequences on women's economic and social life, such as the organisation of annual Equal Pay Day events or online campaigns. In 2022, a panel discussion titled "The gender pay gap between men and women - The current situation and concerns for the future", marked the 2022 Equal Pay Day. A representative of the Ministry and one representative from each of the trade unions and employers' associations participated in the panel, aiming to shed light on issues such as the implications of the gap for workers, the economy and society, the impact on young people and the importance of choosing a profession amongst others. More than 1700 persons watched the panel discussion online, commenting and raising questions.

The National Certification Body which was established in 2014 with the scope of certifying enterprises which adopt policies promoting gender equality in the workplace and especially equality in pay, continues operating in success. Until February 2024, seventy-four (74) exemplary companies had been rewarded for their efforts to ensure equal pay and attract and retain the underrepresented sex, for applying actions to improve gender balance in decision making positions, for adopting gender-neutral job classification systems, for implementing policies aiming at the reconciliation of work and family life as well as establishing policies for preventing and dealing with harassment and sexual harassment. Thirty-two (32) of the certified companies have renewed their certification.

The Republic of Cyprus recognises that in order to achieve real and full gender equality in the labour market, one must safeguard not only pay equality, but also women's continuous access to employment, throughout the different stages of their lives. Adequate wage replacement during periods of leave for parental or care purposes, is key to ensuring women's employability and men's deeper engagement in caring responsibilities, which eventually contribute to gender equality. With a focus to promoting the equal share of care responsibilities, and safeguarding women's employability, a new legislative framework was introduced in 2022, which provides for paid parental leave, in such a way as to facilitate the take-up of parental leave by both parents. More specifically, a total period of eighteen (18) weeks of parental leave per child is provided for each parent, eight (8) of which is accompanied with a parental leave allowance. At the same time, a carer's leave has been introduced for the first time, together with flexible employment arrangements for working parents and carers. Through a recent amendment of the above-mentioned legislation (April 2024), self-employed parents are now also entitled to parental leave benefit, ensuring their income is being replaced during periods of leave for parental purposes.

2.2.5 Trafficking in women in the asylum procedure

First screening for potential vulnerabilities is performed by reception officers upon submission of the asylum application in the First Reception Center “Pournara”. Later on, all women, families, and unaccompanied minors undergo vulnerability assessment. Men who are flagged during the first screening as potential vulnerable applicants also undergo vulnerability assessment. If during the vulnerability assessment, the vulnerability experts identify indications of trafficking, they inform the applicant that their statements indicate potential trafficking, and that they have the right to file a report to the police. A referral report is communicated to Social Welfare Service and the Police for further support.

The Asylum Service in cooperation with the EUAA drafted the 2023 Standard Operational Procedures regarding the vulnerability identification, assessment, and referral. In addition, leaflets and booklets with relevant information have been issued in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior and other competent authorities to be distributed to asylum seekers in Pournara Reception Center. The leaflet and booklet are currently available in English and French and other languages.

Safe zones have been established in Pournara, to accommodate unaccompanied minors, vulnerable single women, and women with children, including women who are potential victims of trafficking, with carers, social workers and 24/7 women security guards.

The vulnerability assessment form is signed by the competent officer and the applicant and is part of the applicant’s file – that is, the case worker responsible for the examination of the asylum claim has access to that information.

Referrals for potential victims of trafficking can be done throughout the procedure of an asylum claim, at any stage that indicators might be detected.

The Refugee Law of 2000 recognizes that asylum seekers who are victims or potential victims of human trafficking need special procedural guarantees, are considered vulnerable persons, and according to the law – and in practice - the examination of their asylum application is prioritized and are handled by expertized officers.

2.2.6. Women in the National Guard - Ministry of Defense

In the context of the continuous strengthening of the position of women in the National Guard, especially after the recruitment of female contract soldiers in 2017, the facilities for their safe and comfortable living within the military premises have been improved and will be further improved for the performance of their normal duties as well as for the performance of special tasks with an overnight stay.

With the enactment of amending Regulations 28/2016 concerning non-commissioned Officers (NCO’s) and the simultaneous abolishment of Regulations on women who served in the army as NCO’s (Regulations 311/1993), matters concerning both women and men NCOs are regulated by the same legislation.

In addition, in 2016 the National Guard Law [Law 19(I)/2011] has been amended with Law 82(I)/2016 in order to be possible for women to be recruited as contract soldiers.

It is also considered very important to note that the training (e.g. participation in military exercises, participation in military training schools or colleges, etc.) provided to both men and women performing the same duties is not differentiated in any way. The same applies for the recruitment and the promotion criteria for each military rank, which do not differ according to gender.

It must be noted that:

- (a) 22 of the 44 female Officers serve in positions of responsibility and administration, largely participating and shaping decision-making.
- (b) Female non-commissioned Officers occupy the proportion of 32,6% in the Army and female soldiers with contract the proportion of 20,7%.

2.3 What specific actions have you taken to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of marginalized groups of women and girls?

Ministry of Interior

In regards to women and girls who have applied for international protection, Asylum Service has taken measures to ensure fair process, prioritization, and identification of vulnerabilities. More specifically, in July 2023 Asylum Service drafted with the collaboration of the European Union Agency for Asylum and adopted the Standard Operational Procedures regarding the vulnerability identification, assessment, and referral. All women, families, and unaccompanied minors undergo vulnerability assessment. Women who have been subjected to physical, psychological or sexual violence, single women with minor children, potential victims of trafficking in human beings are some categories of women in vulnerable positions. In Pournara reception camp, have been established safe zones that accommodate vulnerable single women and women with children, including women who are potential victims of trafficking, with carers, social workers and 24/7 women security guards. Further, a team that consists of 7 caseworkers focus on the examination of applications of persons identified as vulnerable, with the biggest percentage to be women applicants.

Ministry of Health

Younger women

The Health Visitors of the Ministry of Health, are currently implementing ongoing educational programs at elementary and secondary schools . Students in the 5th grade of elementary school and the 1st grade of gymnasium receive education on puberty. For students in the 3rd gymnasium and the 1st lyceum, there are educational sessions focused on HIV/AIDS. Additionally, students in the 2nd lyceum participate in educational sessions covering reproduction and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

Older women

Services described in question “Access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights” are made available to all General Healthcare System beneficiaries.

Migrant women and girls

Services described above are made available to all General Healthcare System beneficiaries irrespective of country origin, as long as the individual meets the criteria for enrolling. More

information on the criteria for GHS beneficiaries is available in General Healthcare System Law of 2001 (N.89(I)/2001).

There have been vaccination campaigns for the cervical cancer vaccine (HPV vaccine), with strong recommendation for girls aged 11-13 and 364 days to get vaccinated. Information campaigns were also held to emphasize the importance of vaccination. Migrant girls have equal access to vaccinations just like the native population.

Health educational programs, covering topics such as sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), contraception, and other relevant areas, are provided to all newly arriving women at the Emergency Reception Centre/Rescue Camp.

Equal access to mental health services is provided through the Directorate of Mental Health Services, regardless of gender and economic status. Mental health services are provided throughout Cyprus on an outpatient basis both through the General Health System and outside, within the community and through local General Hospitals. Home visits are also carried out through Community Nursing where necessary. Mental Health Service Officers are trained to recognize and manage incidents of violence, while they may participate in workshops aimed at raising awareness and managing such incidents by Officers of other Ministries/Departments/Agents. In 2024, Health Professionals, especially Health Visitors, received training to help them recognize and intervene in cases of violence against women.

Cyprus Prisons Department

When it comes to women prisoners, in the period under review, the following measures were introduced to further enhance the humane side of the prison system:

- Women prisoners have increased opportunities for contact with the outside world by participating in social and charity events, as well as art exhibitions both inside and outside prisons. Moreover, the children of the prisoners have the opportunity to participate in a 3-day event with their imprisoned parents, both mothers and fathers, in the context of the International Children's Day, where they enjoy creative and quality time together. The children's event includes, among other things, gymnastic activities for children, screening of short films, music and juggling as well as activity stations, inflatables and even more activities. Moreover, Prisons Department provides catering services- food and beverages- as well as gifts for children of all ages, in order for the parents to offer them to their kids. In addition to the 3-day event for children that was established 4 years ago as an annual event in our prisons, numerous other kids' events take place, for instance on International Mother's Day etc. Furthermore, every year on Christmas and New Year's Day, the Cyprus Prisons Department offers gifts for the inmates' children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews during their visits in order to bring joy to them these festive days.

- In the context of the International Women's Day, an event with music takes place at women's block where they can dance and have a good time. At this day, all women prisoners are offered a gift.

- In the context of educational programs and social contribution of the Cyprus Prisons Department another event which was organized exclusively for women in 2023, was an Informative Event from Europa Donna Cyprus, an organization which deals with programs preventing breast cancer. An informative lecture was offered to women prisoners from workers of Europa Donna Cyprus and the prisoners had also prepared various handicrafts and offered them to support the organization. The lecture was given both in Greek and English and at the same time, a ceremony to give the handicrafts which were made by the prisoners, had taken place.
- The Prisons Department offers women prisoners access to health treatment for gynecological issues like: Pap test which is used to detect potentially precancerous and cancerous processes and mammography to look for early signs of breast cancer.
- In 2023, a new office called “Office of Psycho-social support” was established within the Prison Department. The office plays an important role in the needs of the women prisoners as emphasis is given on their psycho-social status, their living in the Prisons and also to their smooth reintegration in the society through the effort to solve the social issues they may face. Furthermore, primary counseling on individual level is offered from specialized members of the staff, as well as groups of experiential workshops are being organized depending on the psycho-social needs of the prisoners.
- In the context of equal treatment and elimination of any form of discrimination in the Department of Prisons, female prisoners participate in educational programs as male prisoners do. For this reason, women prisoners are offered all the educational programs offered to men. Especially for women, the European project FEFI - Finding Education for Female Inmates was developed, which aims to find special educational needs of women in order to exchange good practice between the countries of the European Union that participate. In addition, specialized programs are offered for women prisoners such as fitness programs (Yoga, zumba) as well as handicraft programs with which they are particularly engaged (hagiography, jewelry). Special lectures are also offered to develop the parenting skills of female prisoners who are mothers. There are also branches of the Evening Technical School (Graphic Arts and Silversmiths), giving women prisoners the opportunity to obtain a technical school diploma or a Gymnasium-Lyceum diploma through placement exams.
- Especially for female prisoners, special accelerated programs for the acquisition of professional skills are offered to enhance their employment opportunities after release, such as Nail Training Courses, Professional Makeup and Confectionery-Baking Courses. These programs seem to be paying off, as prisoners who are released are employed or self-employed, utilizing this certification and the professional qualifications they acquired.

The Prisons Department firmly believes in the transformative power of education to reshape attitudes and behaviors. The Director prioritizes investment in the education of prison staff, dedicating substantial effort to enhance and upgrade their training programs. Consequently, an increasing number of prison officers have engaged in various courses, seminars, conferences,

both domestically and internationally, as well as online platforms. These educational endeavors address a range of pertinent issues, including the treatment of women prisoners.

- All prisoners have access to telephone calls on a daily basis from 0800 – 2030 hours. In many cases the Administration provides inmates with tele-cards, especially those that they work, attend school, demonstrate good behaviour and/or have no or limited financial resources. The Management of the Department has been providing inmates with a substantial amount of free tele-cards.
- Special arrangements are made for the children of the prisoners who have disability problems where they visit their inmate parents in the area of the Open Prison or in the visiting rooms for the lawyers.
- Visits by all religious representatives are allowed.
- Visits from friends and family are increased to 10.

2.4 How has the confluence of different crises affected the implementation of the BPfA and what measures have you taken to prevent their negative impact on progress for women and girls?

COVID-19 and other pandemics - Care crisis

The Directorate of Mental Health Services continued to provide support and treatment even during the pandemic, where there was an increased need for assistance. For this purpose, telephone support lines and online therapeutic meetings were made available in each province and tele-care services were provided to citizens, with the participation of all the specialties of our Directorate with the aim of providing psychological support to citizens in the context of tele-care, as was also offered and Psychiatrist and Child Psychiatrist services, in the context of telecare. For the above actions, relevant announcements and publications were made via electronic media.

Climate crisis

Over the past five years, both adaptation and mitigation plans are under development and implementation. For the implementation of the International and European obligations of Cyprus, the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment (Department of Environment), undertook the coordination of efforts, for the development and implementation of the National Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change. In 2017 the national adaptation strategy to climate change and action plan was adopted, which foresees the implementation of approximately 60 actions in 11 sectors (soil, water, coastal zones, biodiversity, agriculture, forests, fisheries, health, energy, tourism, infrastructure, transport).

For the implementation of the Adaptation Strategy, a relevant Action Plan was prepared which

includes a series of actions with a medium-term horizon, which are expected to be implemented by various Ministries/Departments/Services. The implementation of the Action Plan is subject to the implementation of measures which the competent Ministries/Authorities will promote within the framework of their budgets. In view of the adoption of the new Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change of the EU in 2021 and the results of the research carried out on the effects of climate change in Cyprus through the Initiative of the Republic of Cyprus on Climate Change 2019-2022, the revision of the National Adaptation Strategy is underway, which is expected to be completed by the end of 2025, through funding from the EU.

With regards to mitigation, the national energy and climate plan for the period 2021-2030 was adopted in 2020. This plan includes policies and measures to be implemented during the period 2021 and 2030 in the sectors of energy, transport, waste, land use and industry, to achieve a reduction of 23% in 2030 compared to 2005 in emissions. The plan is currently under review to increase its ambition in view of the new national target for 2030 through the EU “fit-for-55” package, of 32% compared to 2005.

These plans and strategies are designed for the whole of the population in Cyprus and there are no specific measures or policies focusing on women and girls.

2.5 What are the priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in your country through laws, policies and/or programmes?

In recent years, a complete legislative framework has been created to prevent and combat gender-based violence. The driver for the changes that have arisen came from adopting and implementing the Istanbul Convention, which triggered a series of important legislative changes, strengthening and extending the network of services for victims, and intensifying efforts to raise awareness on this serious social problem.

In particular, in the last five years, important legislation has been passed to combat violence against women, sexism, harassment and stalking. The Ministry of Justice and Public Order has compiled two important pieces of legislation, which criminalise in the first case all forms of gender-based violence against women, and in the second, harassment and stalking.

The “2021 Law on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence and Related Issues” (L.115(I)/2021), which was passed in April 2021, for the first time in Cyprus, adopts a cohesive, systematic and complete framework, which criminalises violence against women and effectively protects women victims of violence in all its aspects and forms. For the first time, the law places gender at the core, exclusively aiming to protect it, recognising that women are more strongly and adversely affected by gender-based violence, as a consequence of inequality between women and men.

Apart from the offences that it criminalises, the law on gender-based violence also extends

protection to other forms of violence that were not criminalised sufficiently, or at all in other legislation, such as financial and psychological violence, and dissemination of pornographic or sexual material. It also covers a wide spectrum of actions and measures aimed at prevention and effective protection of victims, as well as prosecuting perpetrators of violence, areas which form the primary cornerstones of the Istanbul Convention. The law sets out very clearly the basis to provide for a specialised, multidisciplinary approach to dealing with, protecting and supporting victims of gender-based violence.

At the same time, it sets out a thorough, modern network of actions, to inform and raise awareness among professionals who are involved in dealing with cases of violence, and it institutes a Coordinating Body which is responsible for coordinating, planning, implementing, monitoring and assessing policies and measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence covered by the legislation.

The new law reforms and widens the current legislative framework to combat violence against women, and it promotes substantial equality, as it includes a large number of reforms and provisions to combat social stereotypes, and power relations between men and women.

With the recent law reform, femicide is now listed as such in the law on gender-based violence, thereby making it a separate offence with clear gender-based targeting and motive, and requiring special measures to prevent and combat this most extreme form of gender-based violence against women.

Overall, the law is an innovative tool which is expected to contribute materially and substantially to efforts to combat gender-based violence and overturn deeply-rooted patriarchal structures that permeate Cypriot society. It also sends a clear message that violence against women is not a private matter, but a matter that concerns and must concern society as a whole.

At the same time, the Ministry of Justice and Public Order drew up and submitted to Parliament a special Bill to criminalise harassment and stalking, as laid out in Article 34 of the Istanbul Convention.

The aim of the legislation, which was passed in 2021, is to regulate for protecting people against behaviours which constitute harassment and stalking. The legislation sets out in full the regulation to define, identify and outline new punishable offences, and provides for exacerbating circumstances to increase sentencing in serious cases, as well as regulating for immediate and effective measures of a preventative nature to protect victims.

This is a framework that is fully in keeping with European legislation and legislation in other European states, as well as with the imperative to protect vulnerable groups of population.

Given the continually increasing numbers of harassment and stalking cases reported to the authorities, with all the serious consequences that arise for victims, men and women, this law is expected to become a useful tool in the hands of the competent authorities in order to prevent, investigate and prosecute these offences.

Furthermore, following an initiative by a group of women MPs in the Parliamentary Committee for Human Rights and Equal Opportunities between Men and Women, in 2020 a new law was drawn up and passed. This is the “Law on Combating Sexism and Internet Sexism and Related Issues 2020 (L. 209(I)/2020)”, which aims to criminalise sexism, including online forms of sexism, which pervade all levels of society.

The law fully complies with the provisions of the relevant Recommendation from the Ministerial Committee of the Council of Europe (March 2019), and aims to prevent and combat sexism, which is an expression of historical inequalities between men and women, hindering full emancipation of women in society.

At the same time, the definition of rape contained within the Penal Code has been modernised after a relevant Law Proposal submitted by a group of Men and Women MPs.

The revised definition, which complies with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention, sets the absence of consent at the centre of its protective framework, while it has been widened so as to cover all persons regardless of gender. At the same time, there have been additions in order to cover other forms of abuse, such as sexual abuse by penetration, coercion to commit rape, coercion to sexual abuse by penetration, coercion to sexual acts or other acts of a sexual nature.

Overall, the legislation covering the prevention and combating of gender based and domestic violence in Cyprus is as follows:

- Law on Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) 2000 (L. 119(I)/2000), as amended.
- Law on Equal Treatment of Men and Women in Employment and Professional Training 2002 (L. 205(I)/2002), as amended.
- Law on Preventing and Combating Sexual Abuse, Sexual Exploitation of Children and Child Pornography 2014 (91(I)/2014), as amended.
- Law on Adopting Minimum Standards relating to Rights, Support and Protection of Victims of Crime 2016 (L. 51(I)/2016), as amended.
- Law on the Convention of the Council of Europe to Prevent and Combat Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Ratification) 2017 (L. 14(III)/2017).

- Article 233A of the Penal Code which criminalises Female Genital Mutilation.
- Article 144 of the Penal Code, which criminalises Rape.
- Article 150 of the Penal Code, which defines forced marriage as an offence.
- Other crimes provided for in the Penal Code include among others attempted rape, incest, kidnapping a woman, kidnapping a young girl under the age of 16, violating a girl under the age of 13, violating a girl under the age of 16, violating a woman with cognitive or mental impairment, promoting violating a women with threats, deception or drugging, false imprisonment of a woman, exploiting women through prostitution, living off the profits of prostitution (pimping), etc.
- Law on Combating Sexism and Online Sexism and Related Issues (L. 209(I)/2020).
- Law on Protection from Harassment and Stalking 2021 (L. 114(I)/2021).
- Law on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence and Related Issues 2021 (L. 115(I)/2021), as amended.
- Legislation that falls within the remit of Family Law and which guarantees women’s rights.

“Woman’s House”

As part of the implementation of the obligations under the Istanbul Convention, on 27.11.2019 the Council of Ministers of Cyprus approved the operation of a “Woman’s House” (WH) which functions as a multi-agency multi-disciplinary crisis centre for women victims of violence and their children. The Woman’s House is based on the Family Justice Centre (FJC) model, and operates as a ‘one-stop-shop’ providing integrated services for victims of violence against women. The mission of the WH is to provide safety and protection, crisis management and support women victims of violence and their children through quality, specialized, accessible and coordinated services, all under one roof.

Specialist services from various disciplines including social workers, psychologists, medical staff, legal professionals, and police work under the same roof to provide appropriate support and protection to women and their children.

Importantly, the Woman’s House fulfils our obligations under Article 22 – Specialist Support Services that provides for specialist women’s support services to all women victims of violence and their children, based on a gendered understanding of violence against women and domestic violence, focusing on the human rights and safety of the victim.

The objectives of the WH include:

- Improve multi-agency cooperation and coordination of relevant services providing services to victims.
- Provide accessible, effective and quality services to women (and their minor children) and girls (under 18 years) victims of violence.
- Provide a safe, supportive environment for victims asking for help.
- Reduce the time required for victims to access these services and prevent revictimization.
- Promote reporting of violence against women and increase criminal prosecutions of violence against women and girls.
- Improve system responses to violence against women in order to reducing recidivism and prevent femicide.

The services of the WH are offered without discrimination including to migrant or refugee women, regardless of their immigration or refugee status. Furthermore, the provision of services shall not depend on the victim's willingness to press charges or testify against any perpetrator.

It is important to stress that all women victims of sexual violence and rape without any exception whatsoever on the basis of race, colour, language, religion, politics or other opinions, national or social origins, sexual orientation, age, health, disability, civil status, immigration or refugee status, or any other condition, are entitled to access the services of the Woman's House.

"NIMA" Center

The "NIMA" Center was launched within 2023 and stands as the inaugural institution in Cyprus dedicated to offering specialized support and therapeutic services to adults, both males and females, who have endured sexual abuse or exploitation during their childhood, as well as to their families or support networks. The Cyprus Family Planning Association, with funding from the Ministry of Health, oversees the operation of the Center.

NIMA provides its support and therapy services at no cost, encompassing psychological support and therapy for adult individuals (both men and women) and their families or support systems, social support and connections to other services, counseling on sexual and reproductive health, and legal consultation (upon the individual's request).

Shelters for women victims of domestic violence and their children

The government provides financial assistance, through the Grants in Aid Scheme, to the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the family (APHVF-NGO) for the operation of several programmes concerning protection and support for victims of domestic violence, including 3 shelters for women victims of domestic violence and their children.

When shelters are full, the APHVF also provides alternative accommodation in one-bedroom flats, to victims in need. Victims whose safety may be in danger or when there are issues of parental custody or child neglect are not offered this type of accommodation, as they are in need of closer supervision. In addition, when the shelters are full, the Social Welfare Office books a hotel or a hostel for a short stay.

The shelters for victims of violence and their children and can offer short term accommodation of up to three months:

- i. The shelter in Nicosia, the first purpose-built Women's Shelter and Crisis Centre in the capital of the Republic of Cyprus, can accommodate victims and their children in 7 rooms;
- ii. The shelter in Limassol, can accommodate victims and their children in 5 rooms; and
- iii. The shelter in Paphos, that can accommodate victims and their children in 2 rooms. It should be noted that in some occasions more than one family can be accommodated in one room, depending on availability.

The services of the shelters are free of charge for all women irrespective of their income.

Equal Pay Legislation

The Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance has realised that improving the practical application of equal pay legislation will demand greater transparency in pay, as a means to uncovering and preventing discrimination. Therefore, the Ministry is currently running a preparatory process, evaluating the infrastructure required as well as the practical aspects of introducing a new legislation for the promotion of pay transparency in the near future. The anticipated legislation to be adopted by 2026, will provide, amongst others, the employers' obligation to publish gender pay gap statistics, and prepare pay audits in cooperation with the employees' representatives, in the case of high gender pay gap rates. We firmly believe that, when seeking to strengthen enforcement and compliance to equal pay legislation, one has to ensure accurate information, adequate practical guidance and tools for both employers and employees in order to facilitate job evaluation procedures and wage setting mechanisms. A proposal for funding the establishment of a gender-neutral analytical job evaluation tool, accessible to employers as well as social partners, has been recently submitted in this respect (Citizens Equality Rights and Values (CERV) Programme).

In order to pursue a further reduction of the gender pay gap, through suitable measures, a study on the qualitative analysis of the gender pay gap is planned in the context of the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2024-2026, in cooperation with the social partners. The study will aim to analyse the reasons why the gender pay gap persists in certain economic sectors.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance is currently evaluating the possibility of extending the

right of working parents to use parental leave until the child's 15th year of age, (instead of the 8th year as it currently stands), including an actuarial study, with the aim of amending the relevant legislation in this direction, in the near future.

Moreover, in the framework of the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2024-2026, and with a view to further strengthening the reconciliation of work and family life, a number of studies are planned for exploring the needs of vulnerable groups of working parents (e.g. single-parents, families with three or more children, families with children with disabilities or rare diseases). Possible solutions will be sought based on the studies' conclusions and the related actuarial reports, with the aim of promoting special leave-arrangements at work, for these groups of working parents.

Access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights

Since the introduction of the General Healthcare System in June 2019, all-female beneficiaries have direct access to a Personal Doctor as well as to a Gynecologist (for those above the age of 15 years old) of their choosing. All visits to a Personal Doctor do not require any reimbursement by the beneficiary unless the latter has exceeded the maximum annual number of visits to the specific specialty. Visits to a Gynecologist require a copayment of 6 euro per visit. During the interaction with their physicians, female beneficiaries can receive all medically necessary services as well as be referred for additional evaluation by other specialties or be referred for further laboratory examinations, image examinations etc.

Mental Health related services are covered by the General Healthcare System through psychiatrists, clinical psychologists and mental health nurses. Access to these healthcare professionals can be achieved only through referral by the Personal Doctor of the beneficiary. A copayment of 6-10 euros per visit applies. Patients, can also have direct access to a Psychiatrists, bypassing the Personal Doctor with a 25 euro fee per visit.

Through their interaction with all relevant healthcare professionals, female beneficiaries can undergo past testing in the absence of any signs or symptoms or a positive personal or family medical history. Prophylactic pap test is covered every 2 years for females 18-65 years of age. In the case of women presenting with specific signs, symptoms or medical history, the beneficiary can undergo pap testing according to the decision of the treating physician without any limitation in the frequency or age.

The Ministry of Health, also provides free of charge screening for breast cancer for women at the ages 45-74 every in not included in the services covered by GHS and falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health. In the case of female beneficiaries with relevant signs or symptoms, the

treating physician can refer the patient to receive any evaluation deemed appropriate i.e. breast ultrasound, mammography, biopsy etc. All these evaluations are fully covered by General Healthcare System.

Vaccination is also provided for free for all the population. A strategy and immunization scheme are formed according to international standards.

HPV vaccination (2 doses) is offered for free for girls aged 13 since 2016. Since 2021, this vaccine is also offered for boys aged 13 as well.

Access to affordable quality health care, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. Services described in question “Access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights” are made available to all General Healthcare System beneficiaries. The only method of contraception provided under the new health system is the Mirena intrauterine device which provides contraception but requires a medical indication.

Gender-responsive social protection (e.g. universal health coverage, cash transfers, pensions) Services described in question “Access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights” are made available to all General Healthcare System beneficiaries.

Section Three: Progress across the 12 critical areas of concern

Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work

3.1 What actions has your country taken to advance gender equality in the world of work (including informal and no-standard employment as well as entrepreneurship)?

During the past five years, several measures have been implemented in the area of employment, aiming at the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Employment Policy of the country has been targeted, among others, towards supporting the most vulnerable groups of unemployed through the continuous implementation of active labour market policy measures such as training programs for upgrading of skills and subsidized employment schemes. Other measures to promote gender equality in employment include the following:

- The Public Employment Services (PES) of the Department of Labour offer all job seekers who have access to the labour market, without any kind of discrimination, free of charge, assistance in finding employment, through registration, job search services and placement services, which include vocational guidance, counselling and referrals to training programmes and job vacancies. In the process of matching, Employment Officers do not allow any kind of gender discrimination or discrimination with regards to marital status, family situation/responsibilities by employers concerning the posting and filling of vacancies and they inform employers about the provisions of the gender equality legislation. Also, PES allow registration of all pregnant women, even if they are unable to work at the time of registration in order to help them when they become available for work.
- Since 2018, in order to improve the services offered by PES, the Department of Labour hired 30 new temporary Employment Counselors, for the provision of individualized services to the unemployed, mainly people belonging to vulnerable groups. They are placed in Public Employment Service Offices throughout the Republic of Cyprus and they will be employed until the end of 2029.
- The Department of Labour is in the process of hiring 10 temporary Labour Officers that will be placed in PES offices in all districts of Cyprus and will offer services to asylum seekers and to employers that wish to employ third-country nationals. 8 of these Officers have already been hired.

- PES is operating four (4) mobile units staffed with Employment Counsellors for the outreach to NEETs (young people aged 15-29, who are not in employment, education or training). The units operate in all districts of Cyprus aiming at approaching and attracting NEETs to register with the PES with the view to provide them with guidance, counselling and employment services. The ultimate purpose of these units is to minimize the risks of social exclusion of NEETs and increase the opportunities for their integration in the labour market. (ESF+). In particular, from the beginning of January 2024, 12 Employment Counselors for NEETs, with the support of a coordinator, and in collaboration with PES Employment Counselors, began touring the country, in rural and urban areas, with the aim of approaching, attracting, guiding and supporting young NEETs.

As a result of the recent favourable performance of the economy of the country and the implementation of the above-mentioned measures, there has been an improvement in the situation of women in the labour market. In particular, the female employment rate indicates an increasing trend since 2021, reaching 74.6% in 2023. The employment rate gap between men and women has dropped from 11.6 pp in 2019 to 9 pp in 2023. The unemployment trend of women has been decreasing, with a sharper drop in 2023, reaching 6.2%. The corresponding unemployment rate for men was 6.0%. The temporary employment rate for women decreased from 18.1% in 2019 to 15.8% in 2023 and their part-time employment rate dropped to 11.2% in 2023 from 15.1% in 2019 (see table 1 below).

		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Employment rate (%)	Total	75,7	74,9	75,9	77,9	78,9
	Men	81,7	81,1	82,2	84,2	83,6
	Women	70,1	69,1	70,0	72,1	74,6
Part-time employment (%)	Total	11,3	10,9	11,5	10,4	9,0
	Men	7,9	8,1	9,7	8,4	6,9
	Women	15,1	14,2	13,4	12,7	11,2
Temporary employment (%)	Total	13,6	13,3	12,9	11,4	13,1
	Men	9,4	8,8	9,1	8,0	10,4
	Women	18,1	18,1	17,0	15,2	15,8
Unemployment rate (%)	Total	7,1	7,6	7,5	6,8	6,1
	Men	6,3	7,6	7,0	5,9	6,0
	Women	8,0	7,6	7,9	7,7	6,2

Promoting equality between men and women in employment-Reconciliation of family and professional responsibilities

Reconciliation of family and professional responsibilities has always been a barrier to reach gender equality in Cyprus. It is for this reason that the government will step up efforts towards:

- The improvement/widening of accessible child and elderly care facilities;
- The creation of creches in workplaces where a large number of women are employed;
- The Continuing of the programme to strengthen Women's Entrepreneurship;
- Systematically educating and information to employers in order for them to adopt family friendly measures and policies through different programmes;
- Systematic monitoring and evaluation of legislative implementation and measures regarding equality in the workplace;
- Examine new measures aiming to reconcile family and professional life.

Eliminating Gender Stereotypes and Social Prejudices.

As mentioned in the beginning of the report one of the biggest barriers in the promotion of gender equality in Cyprus it towards the elimination of gender stereotypes, attitudes, behaviours and social prejudices. In order to eliminate these the Government will continue to:

- Monitoring and rewarding good practices promoting gender equality;
- Informing and sensitising the public on the rights of women;
- Conducting research into the way women are shown on Mass Media and advertisements and drafting Recommendations aiming to combat sexism;
- Training and education of Mass Media professionals and establishment of an annual prize for journalists who cultivate a culture of equality;
- Promoting gender equality through creative activities aimed at children;

To eliminate sexual harassment in the workplace, the Gender Equality Committee in Employment and Vocational Training, an interministerial/interagency Committee (GEC) introduced a public awareness campaign, including distribution of information posters for workplaces and a publication of the "Guide to Preventing and Dealing with Harassment and Sexual Harassment in the Workplace for Employees and Employers" which sets a protocol against incidents of harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace. The amended Public Service Law stipulates that a public servant who engages in conduct that constitutes sexual harassment or harassment in the workplace may face disciplinary action. In 2021, the CAPHR launched an information and awareness raising campaign "Break the Silence" regarding harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace. The aim was to inform potential victims of their rights and the existing out-of-court protective mechanisms and encourage them report any possible violences. Additionally, in collaboration with the Cyprus Academy of Public Administration and the GEC, the CAPHR held a series of 3-hour workshops on the prevention and eradication of sexual harassment in the workplace. Until 2023, more than 30 workshops have been carried out in which more than 800 civil servants participated.

3.2 What actions has your country taken to recognise, reduce and/or redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, promote work-life and family balance and strengthen the rights of paid care workers?

With a focus to promoting the equal share of care responsibilities, and safeguarding women's employability, a new legislative framework was introduced, which provides for paid parental leave, in such a way as to facilitate the take-up of parental leave by both parents. At the same time, a carer's leave has been introduced for the first time, together with flexible employment arrangements for working parents and carers.

Within the framework of the transposition of Directive 2019/1158 in December 2022 the Social Insurance legislation was amended in December 2022 in order to provide 8 weeks of parental leave benefit for each employed parent for each child until the child reaches the age of 8 years old or in the case of a child with disability until the age of 18 years old.

In the case of a child with a disability, the duration of parental leave allowance is extended by:

- Four (4) weeks provided that the child has been certified by the Disability Assessment System of the Department of Social Integration of Persons with Disabilities, as a person with a severe disability or with a moderate mental disability.
- Six (6) weeks provided that the child has been certified by the Disability Assessment System of the Department of Social Integration of Persons with Disabilities, as a person with a total disability.

The legislation was also amended so that in the case where the mother dies at birth during maternity leave the paternity benefit is extended for as many weeks as the remaining weeks of maternity benefit to which the mother would have been entitled. The amending legislation of December 2022 also abolished the requirement for the father to be married in order to be eligible to paternity benefit. As a result, paternity benefit, as well as parental leave benefit, is provided to fathers who meet the insurance conditions irrespective of marital status.

Furthermore, the amendment above also provides for insurance credits for:

- any period of parental leave where a parent does not meet the insurance conditions for entitlement to Parental Leave benefit from the Social Insurance Fund and for the period of unpaid parental leave (10 weeks).
- for employees for 5 days of carers' leave and 7 days for absence from work as a result of force majeure.

Within the same context the Annual Leave with Pay Law was amended so that, the periods that an employee is absent from work on paternity leave or care leave are considered as working periods are also added, while at the same time they are not considered as annual leave with pay. In addition, the Termination of Employment law was amended extending the protection against

dismissal to the periods when an employee receives paternity leave and carer's leave, ensuring the continuity of employment during the absence from work due to paternity leave and carer's leave and the period of receiving these leaves is taken into account in the calculation of the period of employment.

Furthermore, the periods when the employee is absent on care leave and paternity leave during the notice of termination period, are taken into account for the purposes of payments to which the employee is entitled.

Parental leave was already covered by the two legislations above.

In May 2024 the Social Insurance legislation was further amended extending the right to parental leave benefit to the self-employed, ensuring their lost income is being adequately replaced during periods of leave for parental purposes.

As regards maternity benefit, during the period 2024 the government amended the Social Insurance legislation increasing the period for which maternity benefit is paid for a second, third or even subsequent births /adoption /acquisition of a child through a surrogate mother. In particular, the maternity benefit was it extended from 18 to 22 weeks for all cases of second childbirth / adoption / childbirth by surrogate mother, and to 26 weeks in cases of third childbirth / adoption / childbirth by surrogate mother, for the purpose of caring for the new-born and balancing the professional family life.

Within the context of the National Strategy for Gender Equality the Government increased the period for which maternity benefit is paid for the first child from 18 to 22 weeks. In addition, in the case of hospitalization of the newborn continues beyond the first sixty-three (63) days, then one additional week of maternity benefit is granted for each additional fourteen (14) days of hospitalization, but in no case the additional period of pay can exceed eight (8) weeks.

The Department of Labour Relations of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, strives for the protection and safeguarding of all employees' rights and the improvement of their living and working conditions, aiming at promoting decent work for all- Cypriots, EU nationals or migrant workers that originate from third countries.

In this respect, effective complaint procedures have been established, enabling women migrant domestic workers to lodge complaints against their employers without fear of reprisals, arrest, or deportation. More specifically, third country nationals who wish to submit a complaint, may do so in writing to the Aliens and Immigration Unit of the Police, through which, the complaint is forwarded to the relevant District Office of the Department of Labour Relations for resolution.

The District Labour Relations Office invites the two parties (employer-employee) to a meeting, aiming at the investigation and resolution of the complaint. If the complaint is not resolved, a report is then prepared by the examining officer of the District Labour Relations Office, and is

submitted to the Civil Registry and Migration Department of the Ministry of Interior, for appropriate action. Depending on the allegations, complaints may also be forwarded to other Authorities, for investigating any suspicion for trafficking, sexual offenses, living conditions, etc. Moreover, Cyprus is currently in the process of adopting new legislation for regulating domestic employment, with adequate sanctions for employees engaging in abusive practices. More specifically, the Republic of Cyprus is in the process of ratifying ILO Convention 189, with accompanying new legislation for the application of the ratified Convention. Both ratifying law and new Domestic Workers legislation have been drafted and have gone through social dialogue, and legal vetting by the Republic's Law Office. It is expected that the draft laws will be forwarded to the Parliament for adoption in the following months.

3.3. What actions have you taken to reduce the gender digital divide?

The Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy (DMRID) has launched a number of initiatives to promote digital adoption in Cyprus, such as the Digital Skills through the Digital SKills National Action Plan 2021-2025.

Cyprus and specifically DMRID has started implementing a series of measures aiming to the development and continuous updating of the digital skills in all population groups and at all levels. The measures regarding training and updating of digital skills are covering starting, intermediate as well as advanced learners by offering training in different groups according to the specific needs of each group. Special target groups have also been identified (e.g. women in rural and remote areas) and individual measures have been designed according to their needs. For the training programme for upgrading digital skills of women in rural and remote areas, we have gathered stakeholders and have developed a questionnaire for mapping their needs.

Regarding Information and Communications Technology (ICT) professionals, the measures implemented are targeting both a part of the unemployed ICT population in Cyprus as well as interested people in following an ICT career in the future. Taking into account the gender gap in ICT professionals in Cyprus, a particular reference to the promotion of participation of girls and women in the ICT sector is also made in the Communication Strategy which is aiming to raise overall awareness on the issue.

One of DMRID's actions that has also been incorporated in the National Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2026 focuses on re-evaluating the statistical data to be collected and analysed in the areas of research, innovation and digital policy.

3.4. How has the macroeconomic and fiscal policy environment affected the implementation of the BPfA and what macroeconomic policies implemented in support of a more gender-equal economy?

The promotion of equality between women and men and the full safeguarding of women's human rights is an important issue and prerequisite for the social and economic development of all societies. Gender mainstreaming in public policies ensures that the conditions are created to provide equal opportunities for all.

In Cyprus there is a clear need to better understand the portfolio/variety, latest methodologies, and developments in gender equality policymaking, supporting diagnostic work for development of an action plan for further gender mainstreaming in public policy.

Therefore, the Ministry of Finance has included in the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2024-2026 six Actions that are expected to create mechanisms to better address gender inequalities and promote gender mainstreaming in state policies.

Specifically, the Ministry of Finance has applied to the European Commission through the Directorate General for Structural Reform Support for the provision of technical assistance for gender mainstreaming in public policy and budgeting which has been approved on the 26 March 2024. The programme has a duration of 30 months and is expected to be completed by the end of 2026.

The general objective of the project is to contribute to the integration of Gender Mainstreaming (GM), through the application of Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB), Gender Impact Assessment (GIA), Gender Action Plans (GAP) or other relevant tools to foster the implementation of policies that consider equality between women and men.

At the same time, the Statistical Service of the Ministry of Finance will contribute toward monitoring the effectiveness of State actions to promote gender equality with actions relating to the representation of men and women in decision-making positions and recording of the representation of men and women in professions in the tourism sector and the blue economy.

Poverty eradication, social protection and social services

3.5 What actions have you taken to reduce/eradicate poverty among women and girls?

Vulnerable Groups of women

Cyprus is committed towards securing the rights of vulnerable groups of women, such as, migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, disabled, elderly, rural, single mothers and LGBTI.

Through legislation, like the Guaranteed Minimum Income and Other Benefits Law and the legislative provisions concerning single parent families, unmarried couples living together are now legally recognized and therefore have access to them the same rights as married couples. Single parent families, mostly

women, are entitled to additional support, such as, an additional monetary allowance for each child, and complementary services (care and assistance, transportation, education etc) based on socioeconomic criteria.

Concerning women asylum-seekers, a mechanism has been established for early identification of their specific needs (upon submission of the asylum application and throughout the asylum procedure), while, properly trained female officers and interpreters undertake the examination of their claim. Training and guidelines on preventing gender-related persecution are systematically provided to the staff of the Asylum Service and other Services involved by, mainly, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and within the framework of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) Special Support Plan to Cyprus.

The Ministry of Energy, Commerce and Industry implemented a Scheme for the enhancement of Female Entrepreneurship. The Scheme was part of the Operational Programme 2014-2020 'Sustainable Development and Competitiveness' which was co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund and the Republic of Cyprus with a total amount of €5.57 million. By the end of 2023, 129 projects completed out of 231 applications approved after two rounds of calls, for an amount of €3.7million. The Scheme of Female and Youth Entrepreneurship is now under a new name as the New Entrepreneurship Scheme and is included in the "THALIA" Program 2021-2027 which is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Republic of Cyprus. The Scheme's aim is to develop, support and encourage women's entrepreneurship between the ages 18-55, who wish to establish a new enterprise in the sectors of manufacturing, services, tourist activities and e-commerce. The eligible investment projects included various professions such as nurseries, hairdressing and beauty salons, law offices, accounting/ consulting offices, bakeries, small manufacturing business, gym centres amongst others. The first call of the Scheme was announced in May 2021 and closed in 31/12/2021 for a budget of €30 million and 820 applications were submitted, corresponding to a total of €46.9 million. The Ministry completed the evaluation process and given 528 approvals for €30.7m. The total amount paid as a grant to the applicants by the end of 31/03/2024 was €4.6m. The second call of the scheme was announced in April 2024 for another €20 million.

Historically, in Cyprus, women's contribution to the rural life has always been important. In the rural areas, women participate in all aspects of the farming life, whether this is cultivation of cereals, potatoes, fruits and vegetables, or the production of wine and olive oil, dairy and meat products, as well as other foodstuffs. Women in rural areas in Cyprus still have a vital position to play in the agricultural communities. Women are actively participating in a number of different tasks, such as the production of organic and traditional products, the revival of handicrafts and traditional embroideries and the direct selling of their products. Undoubtedly, women play an important role in increasing the family income. This is especially true for new and non-agricultural farm activities: it is often the wife who takes the first step and builds up a new on-farm business. Thus, farm women contribute considerably to the survival of family farms and the viability of the rural economy. It is worth mentioning that, recognizing the important role of women in family farming, the Republic of Cyprus organized at the World Conference on Family Farming, held at the FAO headquarters in Rome on 27-28 October 2014, a Side event on "Women in family farming".

The Ministry of Agricultural, Rural Development and Environment through the agricultural extension section informs, advises, instructs and trains the rural population. Furthermore, the Ministry designs, and implements in-service training courses. The Section is responsible for coordinating the organizing of the Pancyprian Agricultural Fair. Disseminating of information, training/advising farmers and rural women is done through the Agricultural Extension Sections Programme, which includes amongst others: Training courses and apprentice training courses at the Agricultural Training Centres; Study trips; Group activities (lectures, demonstrations and local short training courses).

Nevertheless, the challenges women face in farming nowadays have been changing. In order to become more competitive, women need to be educated further in the fields of economics, technology and information, as well as marketing, so as to promote in an effective way their various products. Acknowledging this need, the training schemes for empowering women in farming are being redesigned within the Cypriot Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment, aiming at offering the best possible training as dictated by the current challenges and needs.

In the context of the various training programs carried out by the Department of Agriculture for farmers and livestock owners, 530 women participated, corresponding to 10% of all participants. It is noted that all the programs are provided free to the participants and are aiming to all those involved in the agricultural sector, men and women.

3.6. What actions have you taken to improve access to social protection for women and girls?

Women and poverty

The main functions of the Social Welfare Services concern the strengthening of the family so that it can respond to its contemporary complex role, the provision of support to individuals and families who are facing serious social problems, the protection and care of children and other vulnerable groups of people, the mobilization and strengthening of civil society in order to achieve high quality social services at local level, the provision of services to vulnerable groups of people, etc.

Within the framework of care services to children and other vulnerable groups, the Social Welfare Services implement a State Aid Scheme, under the Regulation 360/2012, for the provision of services of general economic interest where NGOs and Local Authorities may receive state aid, if they fulfil certain criteria, for the development and functioning of quality social care programmes at local level. The State Aid Scheme is published annually and NGOs and LAs submit their applications for operation social care programmes and after evaluation they receive state aid according to their needs, which covers part of their operational and other expenses. In addition, assistance, guidance and support is provided to the NGOs and the LAs receiving state aid through the district and local Social Welfare Services Offices.

In 2023 an amount of about €3.5 mln euros was provided for the funding of 134 programs covering child

care needs (Day Care Centres for preschool and school age children, care Centres for children with disabilities. Also, in 2023, an amount of about 7.4 mln euros was provided for the funding of 109 programmes covering the long-term social care needs of the elderly and people with disabilities (including homecare, day care and 24hr care for the elderly and people with disabilities).

Furthermore, the Social Welfare Services as Implementing Body of two Investments of the national Recovery and Resilience Plan (2021-2026), published on the 24th of February 2023, a new State Aid Scheme targeting Local Authorities and NGOs for establishing new or enhancing existing multifunctional centers for children and child care centers, as well as 24hr Care Centers for adult persons with long term care needs (small community-based care centers for up to 10 persons). Supporting in this way, the provision of formal integrated care services and other services, in living units that foster independent living, inclusion in the community and quality care.

The Social Welfare Services are responsible for the registration and the inspection of care services provided by the private sector (profit and non-profit). The Social Welfare Services of the Deputy Ministry of Social Welfare, promote the modernization of its current legislative framework for the provision of long-term social care services.

Project “Baby’s Dowry”: is co-funded by the Fund of European Aid to the Most Deprived and complements the efforts to combat child deprivation and poverty. Since the beginning of the Project, basic material assistance was provided to about 5200 cases of newborn babies from deprived families, along with social inclusion activities (2017-2023).

The Prevention and Combating of Sexual Abuse and Sexual Exploitation of Children and Child Pornography Law of 2014 (N.91(I)/2014) provides for the prevention and combating of all forms of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography.

Cases of domestic violence are handled according to the Manual of Interdepartmental Cooperation on Domestic Violence (a cooperation between government agencies and NGOs), approved by the Council of Ministers in 2002. Furthermore, the Council of Ministers approved in 2017 the Manual of Interdepartmental Cooperation on Domestic Violence for the handling of cases of children.

The Children’s House, which has been in operation since 2017, handles cases of sexual abuse and/or exploitation of children. The Children’s House provides a multi-disciplinary, child-friendly approach to the management of cases of child sexual abuse. It operates under the supervision of the Social Welfare Services and in cooperation with the Social Welfare Services and all competent Services/Organizations. It is fully subsidised by national resources.

The above laws, policies and programmes apply to all women and girls residing in the Republic of Cyprus.

Combating Trafficking, Exploitation of Human Beings

According to the Law 60(I)/2014 on the Prevention and Fighting against Trafficking in the Exploitation of Human Beings and Protection of Victims, in order to safeguard and respect the rights of victims of

trafficking the Social Welfare Services of the Deputy Ministry of Social Welfare continue the provision of support and protection services to victims. All victims receive immediate support and assistance, including accommodation. Furthermore, victims are entitled to financial, psychological, and social support, which they receive from the government agencies, in cooperation with non-governmental organizations. Our efforts are focused to provide all the necessary support services to victims in order to assist them with their re-integration in the society and protection from possible re-victimization. The services are provided on the principle of no discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, residence status, etc.

It is important also to mention that in close cooperation with the Anti-Trafficking Police Unit and the Attorney General Office, the Social Welfare Services are closely monitoring, supporting and protecting victims of trafficking during the court procedure, covering all their basic and special needs (travelling expenses, accommodation, personal and other expenses, etc.). Within the framework of handling cases victims of trafficking, on the basis of a multidisciplinary/multiagency approach a care plan is prepared for each case based on the individual needs of the victim, in cooperation with the all the relevant Services.

In January 2022 the Ministry of Justice & Public Order and the Deputy Ministry of Social Welfare signed a Memorandum of Cooperation between the Police and the Social Welfare Services for the referral, handling, protection and briefing of potential and recognized victims of trafficking. The Memorandum is particularly important because it supports the government's efforts to effectively combat trafficking and to protect the victims.

The girl child

According to the legislation that determines the minimum level of operation of programs of social care, the Social Welfare Services during the reporting period continued the inspection of Children Day-care Centres, Child Day-care, Child Protection Centres, Homes for the Elderly and Adult Day Care Centres. Aiming at upgrading the provided services, the Social Welfare Services are in the process of modernizing the current legislation.

According to Article 10 of the Refugees Law 2000-2020, as soon as an unaccompanied minor enters the Republic of Cyprus, he/she is placed under the care of the Director of Social Welfare Services, who acts as a guardian of the minor, safeguarding access to his/her rights (i.e. accommodation, care, health, education, leisure time, etc.) based on the best interest of the child.

Welfare Benefits Administration Service:

The Welfare Benefits Administration Service is in its core a compass for gender equality as the CHILD BENEFIT as well as the SINGLE PARENT BENEFIT were thought of as an aid for women's financial independence. These are payable to more than 55 000 women annually.

The Guaranteed Minimum Income has been financially aiding women who have been victims of Human Trafficking. Applications received, are dealt with the outmost care and always with collaboration to Social Services.

Women who are living in shelters or are under the guidance of the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family (APHVF) and receive the Guaranteed Minimum Income are supported

further once rehabilitated with the possibility of rent subsidy.

Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities:

In Cyprus efforts of mainstreaming the principle of equal treatment between men and women in all policies are continuous. Article 28 of the Constitution grounds the value of equality before the law, administration and justice and the right of equal protection and treatment in order for everyone to enjoy their rights and freedoms without direct or indirect discrimination on a gender basis among others. Women with disabilities are taken into consideration in the implementation of all laws concerning equal treatment. Women with disabilities have all the rights and are entitled to all support services and benefits as all persons with disabilities.

3.7. What actions have you taken to improve health outcomes for women and girls?

Participation in gender-specific campaigns/festivals to promote and inform about Health Visitors Services targeting younger women and girls.

The Health Visitors of the Ministry of Health, are currently implementing ongoing educational programs at elementary and secondary schools. Students in the 5th grade of elementary school and the 1st grade of gymnasium receive education on puberty. For students in the 3rd gymnasium and the 1st lyceum, there are educational sessions focused on HIV/AIDS. Additionally, students in the 2nd lyceum participate in educational sessions covering reproduction and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

The School Health Services, led by Health Visitors, continue to provide ongoing educational programs for young people.

In 2024, Health Professionals, including Health Visitors, completed training to recognize and intervene in cases of violence against women.

In the framework of the "National Strategy and National Action Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women 2023 - 2028", the Nursing Services of Ministry of Health organized in collaboration with the "Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family" (ΣΠΑΒΟ), educational seminars aiming to enhance the knowledge, skills and expertise of frontline health professionals of all involved services to effectively address and respond to all forms of violence against women. One seminar took place in December 2023 and another two will follow in June 2024. The frontline health professionals are those nurses and midwives in Accident and emergence departments, Gynaecological outpatient departments, psychiatric services and health visitors.

3.8. What actions has your country taken to improve education outcomes and skills for women and girls, including in sectors where they are underrepresented?

Representation of women in high level positions within the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth (MOESY)

With regard to the representation of women in the sector of education, a woman was appointed as the Minister of Education, Sport and Youth in 2023. Moreover, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry is also a woman since 2023.

Also, the Director of the Pedagogical Institute as well as the Heads of all four sectors of the Pedagogical Institute are women.

The MOESY has four departments of education: Primary, Secondary General, Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Higher Education. The three of the departments are directed by men and one department (Higher Education) is directed by a woman.

Statistical data regarding the distribution of men and women in education

Distribution of Graduates in Tertiary Education, 2019 -2021

In terms of Education, Cyprus has achieved, to a great extent, equal access to education for women with statistics showing that women are in greater numbers in higher education institutions. Table 1 shows the distribution of graduates in tertiary education for the academic years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 with regards to their gender. More specifically, it is shown that in both academic years the percentage of women graduates is significantly higher than the percentage of men (62,1% and 64,0% for women versus 37,9% and 36,0% for men respectively).

Table 1: Distribution of Graduates in Tertiary Education, 2019 -2021

Year	Gender	%
2019 - 2020	Men	37,9
	Women	62,1
2020 - 2021	Men	36,0
	Women	64,0

* https://library.cystat.gov.cy/NEW/GENDER_STATISTICS-2023-EL-201023.pdf

Distribution of Teaching Personnel by level

Table 2 shows the distribution of teaching personnel in all levels of education for the academic years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 with regards to their gender. It is clear that only in “Upper secondary education – vocational” and “Tertiary education” men have higher representations

than women. In all other levels of education women have significantly higher percentages when

	2019 - 2020 (%)		2020 - 2021 (%)	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Pre-primary education	1,1	98,9	1,5	98,5
Primary education	10,2	89,8	16,0	84,0
Lower secondary education	27,1	72,9	27,9	72,1
Upper secondary education	38,1	61,9	39,0	61,0
Upper secondary education - general	32,5	67,5	33,4	66,6
Upper secondary education - vocational	58,6	41,4	58,7	41,3
Tertiary education	56,7	43,3	57,8	42,2

compared to men.

Table 2: Distribution of Teaching Personnel by level, 2019 - 2021

* <https://ec.europa.eu/eurosta>

Distribution of Students in University Level by Field of study and year

Table 3 shows the distribution of students in university level by field of study for the academic years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 with regards to their gender. As shown, women have higher percentages in most fields of studies except Business management, Information and communication technologies, Engineering and Transport services.

Table 3: Distribution of Students in University Level by Field of study and year

Field of study	2019 - 2020					2020 - 2021				
	Total	N		%		Total	N		%	
		Men	Women	Men	Women		Men	Women	Men	Women
	53.192	24.392	28.800	45,9	54,1	53.508	23.435	30.073	43,8	56,2
Pedagogy/Education	8.715	1.259	7.456	14,4	85,6	10.117	1.497	8.620	14,8	85,2
Arts	1.321	527	794	39,9	60,1	1.271	514	757	40,4	59,6
Humanities (except languages)	1.211	514	697	42,4	57,6	1.261	524	737	41,6	58,4
Languages	1.215	196	1.019	16,1	83,9	1.201	205	996	17,1	82,9
Social Sciences	3.391	916	2.475	27,0	73,0	3.574	1.088	2.486	30,4	69,6
Journalism and librarianship	497	190	307	38,2	61,8	523	198	325	37,9	62,1
Business management	19.785	12.036	7.749	60,8	39,2	18.256	10.381	7.875	56,9	43,1
Law	2.190	917	1.273	41,9	58,1	2.147	740	1.407	34,5	65,5
Biological sciences	625	158	467	25,3	74,7	654	269	385	41,1	58,9
Environmental studies	102	47	55	46,1	53,9	81	41	40	50,6	49,4
Natural Sciences	296	117	179	39,5	60,5	313	122	191	39,0	61,0
Mathematics and statistics	382	150	232	39,3	60,7	385	184	201	47,8	52,2

Information and communication technologies	1.801	1.422	379	79,0	21,0	1.932	1.445	487	74,8	25,2
Engineering	2.443	2.068	375	84,7	15,3	2.514	2.067	447	82,2	17,8
Processing	262	126	136	48,1	51,9	235	91	144	38,7	61,3
Architecture and constructions	1.062	606	456	57,1	42,9	1.069	606	463	56,7	43,3
Agriculture	224	137	87	61,2	38,8	211	138	73	65,4	34,6
Health	4.819	1.781	3.038	37,0	63,0	4.960	2.201	2.759	44,4	55,6
Social welfare	420	70	350	16,7	83,3	496	94	402	19,0	81,0
Personal services	1.946	890	1.056	45,7	54,3	1.780	777	1.003	43,7	56,3
Hygiene and Health services	148	51	97	34,5	65,5	199	49	150	24,6	75,4
Security services	327	204	123	62,4	37,6	312	191	121	61,2	38,8
Transport services	10	10	0	100,0	0,0	17	13	4	76,5	23,5

* https://library.cystat.gov.cy/NEW/GENDER_STATISTICS-2023-EL-201023.pdf

Policies of the M.E.C.S.Y which enhance gender equality

ANTIRACIST POLICY

The antiracist policy «Code of Conduct against Racism & Guide for Managing and Recording Racist Incidents» of the M.E.C.S.Y is being implemented with the support of the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CPI) since the school year 2014-2015. The antiracist policy was developed based on the Follow-up Report of Cyprus for Recommendation No 20 and a recommendation by the Anti-Discrimination Body. The development and implementation of the policy responds to the European Commission's against Racism and Intolerance guideline No 10 and is also in line with various international and European conventions that Cyprus has ratified, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Council of Europe's Recommendation CM/Rec(2010) of the Committee of Ministers to member states, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women, and the European Social Charter.

Homophobia and transphobia are specifically categorized amongst the types of racist incidents that may be identified, managed and recorded by schools, based on the antiracist policy.

The policy conceptualizes racism in a broad manner, including all sorts of discrimination. It includes definitions of basic concepts which form the theoretical background (e.g. racism, racist incident, discrimination, stereotypes, diversity, etc.), outlines the responsibilities and commitments, expected by each member of the school community, and provides the steps to be followed by schools for dealing with racist incidents in a practical rubric. It provides schools and teachers with a detailed plan on how to deal with and prevent racist incidents. As the antiracist views diversity as a multidimensional phenomenon, involving various aspects of people's

identities, it is expected to contribute to the decrease of bullying and discrimination based on any form of diversity in schools, including religion, beliefs, ethnicity, language, appearance, disability, gender, sexual orientation, etc.

Since 2018, the CPI continues to organize and facilitate a “School Network for the Support of Antiracist Policy Implementation”, which supports teachers from schools of all levels wishing to participate in the network while their school implements the MOESY antiracist policy. Each school year, the network consists of around 30 schools of all levels. Several face to face and online meetings are conducted each year, aiming to empower and train these teachers in relation to the theoretical and practical aspects of the antiracist policy. Specifically, in relation to the conceptualization of racism in a broad manner, including all sorts of discrimination on a local and global level, the definitions of basic concepts which form the theoretical background (e.g. racism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, antigypsyism, racist incident, discrimination, stereotypes, diversity, etc.), the responsibilities and commitments, expected by each member of the school community, and the steps to be followed by schools for dealing with racist incidents. The theoretical concept of intersectionality permeates all trainings conducted, as the antiracist policy views diversity as a multidimensional phenomenon, involving various aspects of people’s identities and contributes to the decrease of discrimination based on any form of diversity in schools, including religion, beliefs, ethnicity, language, appearance, disability, gender, sexual orientation, etc. In addition to the trainings, every year, the CPI offers support to the Network schools in the following ways:

- Continuous update of website (presentations, FAQs, supportive material etc)
- Support helpline (phone and email)
- Parents information leaflet about the policy in 7 languages (Greek, English, Arabic, Turkish, Russian, Romanian, Bulgarian)
- Focused training opportunities (school based seminars, optional afternoon seminars, network meetings, conferences in collaboration with relevant NGOs and Bodies, e.g. UNHCR, Commissioner for Children’s Rights etc).

Overall, the Network, employing an intersectional approach, identifies and aims to empower teachers and schools in dealing with challenges that relate to the implementation of antiracist policies not only in Cyprus but across the world: the under-reporting of racist incidents, the need for accountability on behalf of organizations and individuals, the development of contextually appropriate pedagogical interventions based on the racisms operating in each context and, the constant awareness of the continually changing and evolving racisms across the globe.

SEXUALITY EDUCATION

Sexuality Education (SD) is part of the Health Education Curriculum (HEC), which is taught in Primary Education through the Health Education course and in Secondary General Education through the Health Education (Home Economics) course, since 2011 (in Gymnasium and in two grades of the Lyceum as an elective). According to the "Law for Holistic Sexuality Education of 2022" (Law 205(I)/2022) dated December 2, 2022, during the current school year 2023-2024, Sexuality Education is offered to all Lyceum and Technical school students with six (6) teaching periods per school year.

The purpose of this Law is to develop a framework for mandatory holistic sexual education, through the syllabus in all classes and at all levels of public and private education.

Sexuality education, as included in Health Education, may contribute to the prevention and dealing of social problems such as sexual violence, bullying, unwanted pregnancies in teenagers, homophobia, risky sexual behaviours, HIV/AIDS and other STDs, reproduction of gender stereotypes, violence against women, stigmatization and discrimination of marginalized groups such as LGBT pupils etc. Based on the methodological approach of Health Education, sexuality education is approached in a way that no pupil, from any background, will feel insulted, excluded or uncomfortable during the lesson. On the contrary, each pupil is empowered through their own cultural and ethical framework in order to acquire the skills and adopt the attitudes, values and behaviours which enhance their resistance to the early initiation of sexual activities and/or involvement in high-risk sexual behaviours.

The learning objectives of sexuality education in the Health Education Curriculum aim to the promotion of critical analysis perspectives on issues of sexuality and not to a moralistic position in favour or against any choice of sexual behaviour. Sexuality education, based on the Health Education Curriculum, does not aim to teach what is "right" or "wrong" in relation to family planning and sexual life¹ - and it is offered always in the context of international, European and national legal framework and of the International Declaration of Human Rights. Learning objectives are based on the health promotion approach and aim to provide opportunities to pupils in order to critically explore the various social factors which determine issues of sexuality, and to understand the ways in which society may influence the attitudes, choices and behaviours of a person in relation to sexuality issues.

The CPI continues to support teachers with multiple types of teacher training on the Health Education Curriculum every year, such as series of trainings for primary and secondary education teachers on teaching sexuality education through the implementation of the Health Education

¹ Ioannou, Kouta, Andreou, (2015), "Cyprus Health Education Curriculum: from 'victim blaming to empowerment'", *Health Education*, Vol. 115, Iss 3-4.

curriculum, workshops for pupils and teachers of secondary education on issues of sexting and sexual abuse etc.

CYPRUS OBSERVATORY ON SCHOOL VIOLENCE (COSV)

The M.O.E.S.Y has designed and developed the National Strategy for Preventing and addressing School Violence, which has a four-year timeframe of implementation (2018 -2024). According to its role and responsibilities, and based on the aforementioned Strategy, the COSV has developed and implemented actions that aim to prevent and address bullying and violence at schools. The COSV provides support to school units for the implementation of actions and programmes aimed at improving the school climate, with the ultimate aim of reducing violence at schools. These programmes, run on an annual basis and are school-based, are the "Conflict Resolution - School Mediation" and the "Recognition and Management of School Bullying". The COSV supports schools in the implementation of anti-bullying programmes, which deal with recognizing, preventing and combating bullying. With "Conflict Resolution - School Mediation" schools are encouraged to find effective ways of resolving pupils' conflicts as well as alternative ways of managing conflict situations at school. In 2023, 104 schools were supported and 4008 teachers and 300 parents were trained by C.O.S.V.

Guidelines on how to handle conflicts or bullying were produced and disseminated at the training courses. Also, educational material to assist teachers on how to undertake activities with children to enhance their competences needed for prevention and management of school violence was produced and disseminated. The curriculum of this material includes activities to enhance anger management, team building, empathy, emotional intelligence, social and communicative skills, tolerance, acceptance of diversity, mediation skills, anti-bullying skills, conflict management etc. The COSV also monitored a national-level research that investigates the phenomenon of violence at schools. The research aims to collect data about violence in education, from all schools of all levels in Cyprus, for three consecutive years, with the participation of teachers, parents and students.

Moreover, the COSV collects data concerning good practices for the prevention of violence in schools, it evaluates these practices, and it organizes an annual conference where the best practices are awarded, thus receiving visibility and outreach. It also collaborates with other stakeholders involved in preventing and responding to school violence. Additionally, COSV organizes school based seminars related to the prevention and management of violence and delinquency. During the school year 2022-2023, 25 schools (2 kindergartens, 21 primary schools and 2 secondary schools) received such training and support.

In addition, the COSV participates as a partner in the Erasmus+ KA3 project titled "SAFER: Social competences and Fundamental Rights for preventing bullying (including on-line bullying)" (December 2020-November 2023). This project aims to experiment with the innovative method of "Whole School and Community Approach" in preventing and combating bullying.

TEACHER TRAINING SEMINARS BY THE CPI

The CPI continues to support teachers and schools, by providing training workshops for the implementation of the anti-racist policy and by organising conferences on issues of racism and human rights. In addition, it supports schools on relevant issues through the Professional Learning Programme, organises in-service teachers' training seminars, on a school basis, as well as a series of seminars where teachers can attend in the afternoon, on an optional basis. Indicatively, during 2023, the following in-service seminars were offered by, for both primary and secondary education:

- "Nail" or defender? Ways to empower pupils as bystanders in incidents of school violence and bullying
- Recognition and management of incidents of school bullying: Policy of the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth and Culture
- Addressing and managing bullying behaviors in the school environment
- Anti-racist policy of the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth: Stages of implementation and challenges in the management of racist incidents
- Conflict management in the school environment
- Peer support group
- School delinquency and school bullying - Managing crises and conflicts around issues of social class, gender and ethnicity
- Prevention and management of homophobia and transphobia at school
- School Conflicts: Prevention and management
- Teacher empowerment techniques on school bullying.

GENDER EQUALITY WITHIN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SPORTS AND YOUTH

The M.O.E.S.Y is focused on ensuring equal opportunities in education for all genders on a non-discriminatory basis at all levels of education. Towards this end, it has formed an Interdepartmental Committee with representatives from all its departments and services. This Committee oversees and coordinates all gender equality issues related to actions taken.

The work of the Committee focuses on the development of an Action Plan, every three years, targeting gender equality in the structures of the educational system and the teacher in-service training. The Gender Equality Action Plan is a set of objectives, actions and commitments aiming at promoting a gender equality culture through sustainable ways in multiple levels, such as training different target groups (i.e., students, teachers, parents), research (i.e., integration of gender equality dimension in research projects for which the MOESY is the coordinator or partner), and relevant processes involved.

Furthermore, every year the “Interdepartmental Committee” in collaboration with the “Gender Equality Committee in Employment and Vocational Training” launches a writing competition related to gender equality for students in primary and secondary education. The competition often asks for written pieces that fit a certain theme or even follow a prompt. For example, the competition launched for the school year 2022-2023 was asking students to write a descriptive text or essay following a certain prompt: “We envision a school where all children are equally treated regardless of their gender, where they are given equal opportunities and rights, while they feel protected and free. Describe that school explaining the ways all persons in that school try to make that vision a reality”.

In addition, representatives of the Interdepartmental Committee for gender equality often participate in several meetings and/or training sessions related to the promotion of gender equality in the educational system as well as in society in general.

The Interdepartmental Committee’s work and actions are made public through the Committee’s website, hosted by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, in which among others, useful information regarding the Committee’s actions as well as teaching material for promoting equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming in the educational process is presented:

https://www.pi.ac.cy/pi/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=910&Itemid=383&lang=el

The Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth has developed a new policy in 2018, which defines the use of a non-sexist language in all Ministry documents. The policy is implemented through a guide called “Guide for the Transcendence of Language Sexism in the Language of the Documents of the Public Administration of the Republic of Cyprus”.

“The Department of Higher Education (DHE) has already taken steps in the academic year 2021-2022 for the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data through the development of an online platform on various aspects of Higher Education in Cyprus (e.g. student population, academic/teaching staff, programs of study etc.) from all Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in Cyprus on a yearly basis. Data collection involves among other things, gender disaggregated data regarding the student population and academic/teaching staff in HEIs alongside other indicators (such as level of study, field of study for student population) in order to develop initial baseline assessment, but also to be able to evaluate progress on gender equality in terms of access and participation in Higher Education (HE). In the context of the annual report of DHE on mapping the field of Higher Education in Cyprus, a separate chapter will be devoted to gender participation in HE. This systematic gathering and analysis of data will provide the necessary evidence in order to evaluate and explore whether gender equality works and where it works and thus inform decision-makers regarding existing inequalities. Finally, the DHE will develop a comprehensive National Graduate Tracking Mechanism that will generate high quality and comparable data on a

longitudinal basis from graduates of all genders in all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Cyprus, regarding their career paths after obtaining their qualifications in Higher Education by combining survey and administrative data. The online platform and the National Graduate Tracking Mechanism will provide valid and reliable data in order to estimate statistical indicators and track progress on various dimensions regarding gender equality.”

The Department of Secondary Education of the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth has implemented a Guide for Secondary Education teachers and deals with combating occupational segregation on the basis of gender. This guide is called “Actions for reducing the wage gap between men and women”.

The Department of Secondary Education of the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth has implemented in Secondary education schools the guide regarding the management of domestic violent incidents. This Guide is published by the Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family.

Lifelong Education

With regard to activities on lifelong education and gender issues in a wider sense, the University of Cyprus as well as some private universities in Cyprus have very good work to exhibit: (a) The University of Cyprus has established a Centre for Gender Studies and a UNESCO Chair in Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment as of 2010 with a focus on research and training activities on gender issues and education with the establishment of a new Gender Studies postgraduate programme offered both in Greek and English, (b) The new Gender Studies postgraduate programme of the University of Cyprus that received its first students in the Fall semester of 2012, is currently organizing a series of public events which aim to intervene in the public sphere and introduce the dimensions of gender equality in issues of public health and intimate citizenship, (c) The University of Nicosia, which has a strong record of researching gender issues, such as ‘Women Managers’, ‘Women Entrepreneurs’, ‘Women in the Tourist Industry’, ‘Women in Conflict’, keeps supporting the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, which is an NGO aimed at making recommendations on policy and practices on gender issues as well as increasing awareness on gender issues in Cyprus civil society, (d) The Open University of Cyprus includes a gender perspective in its research projects while it provides the opportunity to women to continue their studies through distance learning, contributing in this way to the promotion of reconciliation between family and career, and (e) The Frederick University has established a committee for promoting an action plan on gender equality as well as a scientific committee on gender issues. One of the actions promoted was a conference on combating trafficking that took place in February 2014.

Furthermore, especially with regard to the aiming at the development of non-discriminatory education and training, it is worth mentioning that women in prison also receive education and training. Prison administration is continuously trying to increase the range of activities for inmates, such as various educational programmes, workshops and vocational training. In this way, female inmates have the opportunity to receive certificates in order to be able to work in relevant areas after their release. During the last two years under review, the school programmes have been enriched according to the preferences of detainees. As a result, the number of detainees attending school courses has been increased and therefore the prisoners are occupied for many hours of the day. Moreover, European programmes like FEFI (Formal Education for Female Inmates 2013-2015), and LeaP (Learning in Prison 2010-2012) came along to increase the chances for education and training within the prison. Yet, in August 2013, the prisons’ department, in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth, has prepared a special vocational programme for all the prisoners (men and women).

Results from International Surveys

In the section below, the achievement of boys and girls are presented based on the results from four international studies that are implemented in Cyprus schools. As shown below, girls perform better than boys in most studies and subjects.

The studies are the following:

Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study – TIMSS 2019: TIMSS focuses on effectively measuring educational achievement in mathematics and science at the fourth and eighth grades.

Progress in International Reading Literacy Study - PIRLS 2021: PIRLS provides trends and international comparisons of fourth grade students’ reading achievement and students’ competencies in relation to goals and standards for reading education.

Programme for International Student Assessment - PISA 2022: PISA measures 15-year-olds’ ability to use their reading, mathematics and science knowledge and skills to meet real-life challenges.

International Civic and Citizenship Education Study - ICCS 2022: ICCS investigates the ways in which young people are prepared to undertake their roles as citizens in a world where contexts of democracy and civic participation continue to change.

Table 4: Achievement of Students in International Surveys, by Gender

Achievement	Boys	Girls
PIRLS 2021 – Grade 4 students	506	515
TIMSS 2019 – Grade 4 students (Mathematics)	542	523
TIMSS 2019 – Grade 4 students (Science)	514	509

TIMSS 2019 – Grade 8 students (Mathematics)	503	499
TIMSS 2019 – Grade 8 students (Science)	476	491
PISA 2022 – 15 year old students (Mathematics)	411	426
PISA 2022- 15 year old students (Science)	397	426
PISA 2022 - 15 year old students (Reading)	355	409
ICCS 2022	443	476

European University of Cyprus

The EUC Gender Equality Plan (EUC-GEP), adopted in December 2021, demonstrates the University's commitment to advancing gender equality across a number of areas. Research and innovation (R&I), being one of the University's strategic priorities, can significantly benefit from actions aiming to promote, enhance, and ultimately achieve gender equality within the University.

The EUC-GEP details the University's Gender Equality goals for the period January 2022 – December 2024 and focuses on the following five (5) interrelated thematic areas:

a. Work-life balance and organisational culture, b. Gender balance in leadership and decision-making, c. Gender equality in recruitment and career progression, d. Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content, and e. Measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment.

Frederick University

Frederick University founded in 2014, EnAF (Equality 'n' Awareness @ Frederick), a dedicated Center on Gender Issues, Diversity, and Equality, with the aim of fostering gender equality both within the University and throughout society.

Named to reflect its primary objective while invoking a sense of urgency, the Center serves as a pivotal advisory body to the Council, Senate, and administrative units of the University's Schools and Departments, advocating for equality across all facets of academic life.

EnAF is structured around four core pillars: Teaching, Research, Operations, and Engagement with Society. Over the years, it has spearheaded numerous initiatives, including the impactful Women in STEM campaign and awareness-raising efforts on gender equality, gender-based violence, and human trafficking.

Furthermore, the Center plays a crucial role in policy development and staff training on the prevention and combating of harassment and sexual harassment. Through its multifaceted approach, EnAF strives to create an inclusive and equitable academic environment while driving societal change.

Promoting women's participation in STEM is also crucial. The green and digital transition could

worsen gender inequalities if women are underrepresented in emerging job sectors. The demand for STEM-educated individuals is set to rise, but current gender disparities limit women's access to opportunities. Encouraging women in STEM is vital for economic independence, narrowing the wage gap, and addressing global challenges through diverse perspectives. In 2021 Frederick University initiated its long-term campaign “To all women and girls: Join the Journey in Engineering and Technology” to address the UNDER-representation of girls and to attract more women to STEM fields.

Acknowledging the multifaceted nature of this challenge, rooted in discrimination, biases, societal norms, and expectations, we recognized from the beginning that meaningful change would require continuous long-term efforts. The initiative seeks to engage various demographic groups, including university female students, young girls, parents, educators, organizations, and the wider public.

As a first step, the University offered (and still does) a 50% scholarship to all women who chose to enroll in a degree program at the School of Engineering.

Additionally,

- it organizes and implements free STEM activities (STEM Days and Camps) for girls aged 9–16 led by female role models.
- organizes free workshops for parents and educators emphasizing the significance of increased female representation in STEM fields, girls' self-confidence enhancement, and fostering an upbringing free from stereotypes.
- It raises awareness within the STEM industries about the critical need for gender diversity.
- It offers mentorship opportunities to women in the School of Engineering.

Scholarships are funded by the University and co-funded by industry partners (the University has been able to attract organizations invested in STEM fields, eager to participate and contribute to our mission). STEM activities are partly-funded by the Cyprus Mechanism for Women’s Rights while the University uses its own resources for the design and delivery of programs. The initiative has also secured the support of the Cyprus Commissioner of Gender Equality.

The campaign in numbers:

- Enrolment of women in the Engineering School increased from 13.5% in 2019 to 22.6% in 2023.
- 350 girls aged 9-12 participated in STEM workshops as part of STEM DAY.
- 65 girls aged 13-16 participated in STEM workshops as part of STEM CAMP.
- 130 parents of girls participated in parents workshops

Awareness-raising campaigns on gender issues

Every year, Frederick University organizes and implements awareness-raising campaigns on gender issues within the University community and the general public. It has implemented several successful campaigns on promoting and raising awareness on gender equality, gender-based violence and human trafficking.

Red Card Campaign – Preventing Dating Violence

The University's Red Card Campaign, initially launched in 2014-2015 and subsequently repeated in 2021-2022, is a proactive initiative aimed at preventing dating violence among its student body. Dating violence, characterized by assaultive and controlling behaviors, poses a serious threat to the well-being of individuals and communities.

This campaign is meticulously designed to equip students with the tools to identify warning signs of unhealthy behaviors and foster a culture of respect and safety within relationships. By engaging over 1000 students experientially and personally, the University succeeded in opening a dialogue on this sensitive issue. The campaign's structure guided students through various emotional stages, mirroring the progression of relationships: recognizing the problem, acknowledging its presence in their lives, understanding the necessity for change, and ultimately taking action.

By empowering students to confront dating violence and cultivate healthy relationship dynamics, the University reaffirms its commitment to fostering a campus environment where all members can thrive and flourish.

Anti-trafficking Campaigns

As part of its commitment to raising awareness and combatting human trafficking, the University regularly hosts film screenings focused on this critical issue. Following each screening, students are provided with a platform to engage in meaningful discussions facilitated by experts from both the police anti-trafficking unit and specialized non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This initiative not only educates students about the complexities of human trafficking but also empowers them to contribute to the ongoing efforts to prevent and address this form of exploitation. By fostering dialogue and collaboration between academia, law enforcement, and civil society, the University demonstrates its dedication to tackling social injustices and promoting a safer, more equitable world.

Code of Practice for the Prevention and Combating of Harassment and Sexual Harassment

Frederick University has taken decisive steps to address and prevent harassment and sexual harassment within its community. A comprehensive 'Code of Practice for the Prevention and Combating of Harassment and Sexual Harassment' has been developed, providing clear guidelines for all university members and establishing procedures for reporting and addressing incidents.

In collaboration with the University's Personal and Professional Development Center (P²DF), EnAF spearheaded interactive training workshops aimed at equipping academic and administrative staff with the knowledge and skills to prevent and respond to harassment and sexual harassment. During the academic year 2022-2023, 184 staff members actively participated in these workshops, signaling a strong commitment to fostering a safe and respectful environment. Looking ahead, the University continues to prioritize the development of further training initiatives in the ongoing academic year, reinforcing its dedication to fostering a culture of dignity and respect.

Incentives to promote female researchers

The University has implemented proactive measures to advance gender equality, particularly in the realm of academic research. For instance, in the latest internal funding initiative, a deliberate

step was taken to address gender imbalance by stipulating that a minimum of 40% of the funding allocation be reserved for proposals led by female faculty members. This not only promotes inclusivity but also provides tangible support to enhance the representation and advancement of women in academia.

Neapolis University Pafos

For Neapolis University Pafos quality education, training and life-long learning for women and girls, as well as - right - to - work and rights - at -work are among the principal priorities. Therefore, since the past three (3) years, significant achievements, have been overcome with regard to challenges and setbacks towards gender equality. For Neapolis University, empowerment of women is among priorities for accelerating progress through policies and programs for all women of the academic, administrative staff and students.

Neapolis University treats gender as a concept that is not limited to the biological categories of “male” and “female” but includes male and female identities - as well as other forms of understanding characteristics of gender.

During the past years, the University's Committee of Gender Equality of Neapolis University aims at promoting equality policies and configuring an educational, working and social environment, free from gender discrimination.

At the University, differences are observed in relation to the representation of women and men, with typical cases being the over-representation of men faculty members and the over-representation of women in administrative staff. However, a primary record of faculty members holding administrative positions shows the existence of gender inequalities at the expense of women.

The Code of Ethics and the Code of Good Practices of the University refer to the necessity to avoid gender and any other kind of discrimination in the development of the work of academic community and the implementation of research.

The goal of the University and of the Gender Equality Committee -based on available time for implementation- will continue to seek:

The formation of an internal network to promote issues related to gender; the creation of networks with other Universities, and the formation of networks with members of the academic community; the encouragement of Departments to enrich study programs and include small-scale research projects and group projects in relation to gender; the encouragement of the preparation of diploma theses, mainly in the Departments of Humanities and Social Sciences, with the aim of their inclusion in the financial support program of the University's Research Committee and the Senate; the continuous updating of the University's Gender Map; the continuous collaboration with the Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality of the Republic of Cyprus; cooperation with other related Cypriot organizations in order to train and educate members of the university community through events, workshops and seminars.

The goals for the next years focus on the development of actions:

By assigning research projects to a group/groups of students from individual Departments or inter-departmental projects on issues related to gender; encouraging the preparation of publications and doctoral theses that include gender dimension; encouraging the creation and support of volunteer groups in organizing events and tributes particularly with student participation; the continuation and stronger presentation on social media and mass media; the completion of the Code of Good Practices on harassment issues and the improvement of policies to achieve a balance between professional and personal lives of members of the university community.

With the support of the Rector's Office, the students and the administrative staff, prompt goals of the University and the Gender Equality Committee are the organization of the Office of Gender Equality to support cases of discrimination and violation of rights and the signing of memorandums of cooperation with local community agencies.

Public Employment Services (PES)

The Public Employment Services (PES) according to the evaluation of the profiling of each jobseeker, provide referrals to training programs with the aim to upgrade their skills and enhance their employability. Every year a series of training programs are running, organized by the Human Resource Development Authority, such as the successful Scheme for the Employment and Training of Tertiary Education Graduates, the Scheme for the Training of the Long-term Unemployed in Enterprises/Organisations, Training Programmes for the Unemployed which offers training opportunities for the unemployed in order to acquire, enrich and/or upgrade their skills and knowledge, in accordance with the needs observed in the labour market, the Standard Multi-Company Training Programmes which allows the participation of the Unemployed etc.

In addition, the Department of Labour currently participates in the implementation of the ICT Re/Up Skilling pilot programme. Considering the shortage of professionals in the Information and Communications Sector (ICT) in the labour market, the co-organizers, through this pilot program, aim to increase and employ young ICT professionals. The purpose of the program is the upgrading of skills and reskilling (reskilling-upskilling) of the country's labour force - with an emphasis on the registered unemployed - who hold academic qualifications in positive or economic sciences, and with appropriate training will evolve into specialists in the ICT sector. Through the "ICT Re-Up Skilling" program, young people as well as professionals will be given the opportunity to diversify their existing career towards the ICT sector where there is an increasing demand. The program has been running since March 2024.

Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes

3.9 Which forms of violence against women and girls, and in which specific contexts or settings, have you prioritized for action?

Cyprus is of the first countries to legislatively establish the recognition of the crime of femicide as a separate, specific offence. The most extreme form of gender-based violence is visible, and the conditions under which the crime is committed constitute aggravating circumstances which are taken seriously into consideration during sentencing.

Having put the issue of combating violence against women high in its priorities, the Government of Cyprus, has ratified in 2017 the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), on the basis of which relevant legislation established the National Coordinating Body to Prevent and Combat Violence Against Women. This Body has set out the first National Strategy and the first National Action Plan (NAP) for 2023-2028. It is responsible for monitoring, coordinating, implementing and evaluating the policies and measures for preventing and combating violence against women. Moreover, it has drafted a bill aiming to provide independent assistance and legal aid to victims of gender-based and domestic violence, through which women victims of violence are entitled to such services as a distinct group that requires special support and protection. At present, the Body is promoting the development of a Unified Database on Violence Statistics on a national level in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders and the operation of a Europe-wide telephone support line for victims of gender-based violence at a national level.

Justice and police officers of all ranks regularly receive trainings to better identify, investigate and prosecute cases of gender-based violence, domestic violence, sexual abuse, stalking and harassment. According to existing guidelines, victims must be treated in a dignified, individualised and non-discriminatory manner. Due diligence is paid to avoid re-victimisation, by ensuring that victim's rights are fully guaranteed under conditions of safety, confidentiality and trust. Services are available for women in need of assistance and health care. First-responders undergo training on a regular basis to effectively handle possible cases of victims of violence and abuse.

A dedicated Unit in Police for Education, Awareness and Communication was established in July 2021. It is tasked to promote public awareness on issues of domestic violence, child abuse, child sexual abuse and gender-based violence.

In relation to femicide, during HRC53, the Permanent Missions of Cyprus and Israel in Geneva led a Joint Statement supported by more than 50 Delegations. In addition, during the 67th CSW, the Permanent Missions of Cyprus and Malta and UNODC-NYLO, UN Women co-organised a side event titled "Breaking the silence on femicide: ending gender-based violence against women and girls".

3.10 What actions has your country prioritized to address gender-based violence?

- Introduced or strengthened violence against women **laws**, and their enforcement and implementation
- Introduced, updated or expanded **national action plans** on ending violence against women and girls

- Introduced or strengthened measures to increase **women's access to justice** (e.g. establishment of specialist courts, training for the judiciary and police, protection orders, redress and reparations, including for femicide cases)
- Introduced or strengthened **services for survivors of violence** (e.g. shelters, help lines, dedicated health services, legal, justice service, counselling, housing, socioeconomic rehabilitation)
- Introduced or strengthened strategies and interventions to **prevent violence** against women and girls (e.g. in the education sector, in the media, community mobilization, work with men and boys)

In the past five years, the legal framework of Cyprus has been strengthened in order to comply with the Istanbul Convention, through the introduction of new laws and also updating the existing ones, as mentioned previously (question 15).

There are the following national strategies/ action plans including actions on ending violence against women and girls:

- National Strategy and National Action Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women (2023-2028)
- National Action Plan of the Republic of Cyprus for the implementation of United Nations Resolution 1325 "Women, Peace and Security" (2021-2025)
- National Strategy and Action Plan to Combat Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation and Child Pornography (2021-2023)
- National Action Plan for Gender Equality (2019-2023)

Regarding the current official/ governmental guidelines on dealing with violence in the family, are issued by the Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating Violence in the Family, and approved by the Council of Ministers. These guidelines are addressed to: Public prosecutors, the social services, the police, health services, the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth and Culture, and to NGOs. In 2021, the Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating Violence in the Family, in the frame of its legal mandate, has conducted and submitted to the government, Evaluation Report on Interdepartmental Procedures Manual on Handling cases of Domestic Violence in relation to Children (2017).

Concerning women's access to justice

Legal Aid

The access of gender-based/ domestic violence women victims to Legal Aid is a current topic of debate at Parliamentary Committees. The problem is that while women victims of gender-based/ domestic violence have the right to Legal Aid (Article 23 of Law 115(I)/2021 based on Law 165(I)/2002), in practice, there are currently no specific criteria and the Courts often deny this right arbitrarily.

Protective orders

There are efforts in process on how/ ways to implement electronic monitoring of protective orders aiming to ensure the protection/ safety of gender-based/ domestic violence victims. At the moment, the process of issuing and implementing protective orders (articles 22 and 23 of 119(I)/2000 Law, and articles 32 and 33 of 115(I)/2021 Law) is time-consuming and, in cases of domestic violence, carry criteria that leave many victims without protection. Even cases where protective orders are issued, there is no system or monitoring mechanism for their implementation, having as a result, again, the victim to remain exposed to the perpetrator.

Specialized services to victims

The Woman's House (WH) was set up at the end of 2020 and has been in operation since 1 December 2020. The Advisory Committee for the Prevention & Combating of Violence in the Family (ACPCVF) was

appointed by the Council of Ministers, as the Coordinator for the issue. It is a multi-agency and multi-professional crisis centre for victims of VAW and their children. It is based on the Family Justice Centre model and shall operate as a “one-stop-shop” according to which all the services involved are co-located and coordinated under the same roof, with the aim of effectively managing cases. The provision of services is not conditional on the victim having to press charges against the perpetrator. The multi-professional network of services in the Woman’s House includes services provided by social workers, psychologists, healthcare professionals, legal professionals and the police. The mother and her dependent children will receive the initial services at the Home for Women in order to avoid their separation and thus avoid further re-victimisation. The Istanbul Convention also requires specialised support for children based on their needs (Articles 22, 23 and 26). That is why a Child Advocate has been included in the Woman’s House, who will provide specialised support to children victims of DV and will ensure that all procedures are child-friendly, safe and in line with the rights of the child. The Woman’s House provide the following services to adult women and under age girls (under 18 years of age) victims of violence, as well as to their dependant: a) take measures (regarding the victim and the perpetrator) for the immediate protection and safety of the victim, b) immediate/short psychological support and possible referral to Mental Health Services (NGOs)/ NGOs for long-term monitoring and treatment, c) socio-economic support, d) medical examination, e) receiving a victim’s statement, as well as a visualised statement from the Police, f) referral and/or escort services and g) legal services. By its opening (1/12/2020) until the 4/03/2021 the Woman’s House has handled 106 cases of VAW and their children.

There are Shelters for women victims of domestic violence in Cyprus, accessible 24/7 and free of charge. The domestic violence shelters are run by the NGO Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family (SPAVO). There are shelters in Nicosia, Limassol, Paphos, and a new one is under construction in Larnaca.

Additionally, in 2023, a new psychological support center called Nima (*Το Νήμα*) was created with the aim to provide psychological support and treatment to adults - men and women - who had suffered sexual abuse in their childhood. The center is funded by the Ministry of Health, and run by the Cyprus Family Planning Association (CFPA).

Specialised teams for domestic violence cases at Police

In 2020-2021, specialised teams for the investigation of cases of domestic violence have been set up in the Criminal Investigations Department of the Police in each district (Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaca, Paphos and Famagusta). The specialised teams work closely with the Shelters, the Woman’s House and the Children’s House.

Prevention/ Training

The ACPCVF, in collaboration with governmental services and NGOs of DV field, promotes the implementation of the provisions of the relevant directives and national laws regarding violence in the family and violence against women through media interventions, trainings, proposals for support services to victims, etc.

- The ACPCVF, as the appointed – by the Council of Minister – Coordinator for the set up of Woman’s House (WH), in collaboration with SPAVO which is the Administrator/ Operator of the WH, organized, participated and funded the induction training of the personnel of the WH, 9-27 November 2020.
- The ACPCVF gave a lecture on Violence against Women at the Training Program for Sergeants No.113 (04/10/2021 - 26/11/2021) of the Cyprus Police Academy, 4 November 2021.

- The ACPCVF gave a lecture on Domestic Violence/ Violence against Women at the Training Program on Development of Administrative and Professional Skills for police Sergeants No.116 (23/01/2023 - 17/03/2023) at the Cyprus Police Academy, 3 March 2023.
- The ACPCVF, promoting the importance of relating child custody issues with domestic violence/ violence against women, held a Scientific Seminar on "Safe & Together Model". The main speaker was Mr. David Mandel, international expert on domestic violence, and Executive Director of the Safe & Together Institute who presented the Model and explained how it can be adapted to the needs of Cyprus. The aim of the Scientific Seminar was to introduce the Model to the Ministries/ governmental services involved, 10 October 2023.
- The ACPCVF gave a lecture on Gender-Based Violence: types and approaches at the Training Program for police members dealing with cases of vulnerable people (09-20/10/2023) at the Cyprus Police Academy, 20 October 2023.
- The ACPCVF gave a lecture on Domestic Violence/ Violence against Women at the Training Program on Development of Administrative and Professional Skills for police Sergeants No.117 (09/10/2023 - 01/12/2023) at the Cyprus Police Academy, 24 November 2023.

3.11 What strategies has your country used to prevent gender-based violence?

Preventing and combating violence of any form and particularly violence against women is of high priority of the Government. In this regard, important developments have been implemented during the period under review:

- *“The Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and Related Issues Law, 2021”, [L.115(I)/ 2021], was enacted. The criminal offence of femicide was established as a separate, specific offence in the above Law. Femicide is punished with the maximum of sentences, the life imprisonment sentence.*
- The Safeguarding Sub-directorate, has been established in the CP in 2021. Its main role is, inter alia, to provide support, information and guidance to the CP officers as well as to the possible victims of domestic violence, gender- based violence, and sexually abused children.
- The National Coordinating Body to Prevent and Combat Violence against Women (NCBPCVAW), was established in 2022 according to the provisions of the Istanbul Convention. NCBVW is responsible for coordinating, planning, implementing, monitoring and assessing the policies and measures taken to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women.
- The NCBPCVAW has set out the first National Strategy and the first National Action Plan (NAP) to Prevent and Combat Violence Against Women 2023-2028, which was approved by the Council of Ministers on the 15th February of 2023. At the same time, the NCBVW is promoting the creation of a Unified Database on statistics relating to violence, to include all form all violence covered by the Istanbul Convention nationwide. Moreover, the NCBVW has drafted a bill aiming to provide independent assistance and legal aid to victims

of gender-based and domestic violence, through which women victims of violence are entitled to such services as a distinct group that requires special support and protection.

- In 2021, the “*Protection from Harassment and Stalking Law, 2021*” [L.114(I)/2021], was enacted, following the State’s obligation deriving from the *Law 115(I)/ 2021*.
- In 2020, the “*Combating of Sexism and Online Sexism and Other Related Matters Law, 2020*”, [L.209(I)/2020] was enacted, in line with the recommendations of the Council of Europe (CoE)
- The “*Legal Aid Law, 2002*”, [L.165(I)/2002], is proposed to be amended in order to include provisions for all the victims of violence against women and domestic violence. The draft bill is pending before the House of Representatives.
- The Women’s House (WH) was established in 2020 and functions as a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary crisis centre for women victims of violence and their children. It is based on the Family Justice Centre model, and operates as a ‘one-stop-shop’ providing integrated services for victims of violence against women. The mission of the WH is to provide safety and protection, crisis management, and support women victims of violence and their children through quality, specialized, accessible and coordinated services, all under one roof. The operation of the WH has been assigned, through the Grants-in-Aid Scheme, to the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Family Violence (APHFV) under the supervision and in cooperation of the Social Welfare Services (SWS) and other relevant Services (i.e. CP, MHS etc.) and it is fully subsidized by state funds.
- Government officials (law enforcement officers, social workers, healthcare professionals) were trained on this subject
- NGOs and women’s organizations providing protection and assistance to women victims of gender-based violence were funded
- The CP Protocols in cases of dealing with victims of sexual violence and rape, were revised in such a way as to fully incorporate the provisions of the Istanbul Convention.
- Two of the three reservations that had been set upon signing the Istanbul Convention in 2015 were withdrawn. More specifically, according to a Council of Minister’s Decision in 2023, Cyprus has decided to withdraw the reservations which refer to the Jurisdiction and the Resident status of Victims of Violence respectively.

Both laws, on criminalizing all forms of gender-based violence against women and protecting from harassment and stalking, have been enacted in 2021 (*L.115(I)/2021*, *L.114(I)/2021*, respectively). Cyprus has taken both legislative and institutional measures to ensure that appropriate protection, support and empowerment is offered to women victims and child witnesses of any form of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention. Protective and supportive measures aim at avoiding secondary victimisation and at addressing the specific needs of victims. These measures also aim at the empowerment and economic independence of women victims.

Also, the new NAP to Prevent and Combat Violence Against Women 2023-2028, with targeted actions towards prevention and effective support of victims, was approved in 2023. Targeted actions have been included towards prevention, and effective support of victims of violence, as well as prosecution of the perpetrators of violence, such as the following:

- Informing and raising awareness among the community about issues and effects of gender-based violence. The Education, Awareness Raising and Communications Unit established in July 2021, as part of the Safeguarding Sub directorate of CP, in order to raise awareness on issues of domestic violence.
- Informing specific social groups of the population who especially need support and protection, such as migrants, refugees, and women with disabilities.
- Preparing and issuing practical information on victims of gender-based and domestic violence, and their rights, where they can seek assistance.
- Providing specialised education for all professionals involved in the field of violence, including the CP, the Prosecution Authorities, the Justice Service, Social Workers, Health Care Professionals and Educators
- Guaranteeing access for all victims of violence to general and specialised services, regardless of charges filed against the perpetrators
- Increasing the number and the capacity of refuges for women and their dependents.
- Providing both short and long term specialised psychological support to victims of gender-based violence.
- Simplifying and speeding up the process for women victims of violence to access state financial support services.
- Connecting victims of violence to educational programmes to gain professional skills.
- Developing programmes within local and regional authorities to reintegrate and support victims of violence.
- Contributing to setting up and Operating a unified Europe-wide telephone helpline for the victims of gender-based violence. This initiative has been undertaken at a European level, in order to facilitate access to suitable services providing support, protection and guidance for victims all over Europe.

Femicide

Having put the issue of combating violence against women high in its priorities, the Government of Cyprus, has ratified in 2017 the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), on the basis of which relevant legislation established the National Coordinating Body to Prevent and Combat Violence Against Women. This Body has set out the first National Strategy and the first National Action Plan (NAP) for 2023-2028. It is responsible for monitoring, coordinating, implementing and evaluating the policies and measures for preventing and combating violence against women. Moreover, it has drafted a bill aiming to provide independent assistance and legal aid to victims of gender-based and domestic violence, through which women victims of violence are entitled to such services as a distinct group that requires special support and protection. At present, the Body is promoting the development of a Unified Database on Violence

Statistics on a national level in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders and the operation of a Europe-wide telephone support line for victims of gender-based violence at a national level.

Based on the provisions of the Istanbul Convention, the Woman's House was established in 2020 and is being fully subsidised by government funds. It is a multi-agency, multi-professional crisis centre for women victims of violence and their children regardless of their migrant or legal status. The House is based on the Family Justice Centre model providing specialized support and care in a safe environment with integrated services for victims and their children.

Justice and police officers of all ranks regularly receive trainings to better identify, investigate and prosecute cases of gender-based violence, domestic violence, sexual abuse, stalking and harassment. According to existing guidelines, victims must be treated in a dignified, individualised and non-discriminatory manner. Due diligence is paid to avoid re-victimisation, by ensuring that victim's rights are fully guaranteed under conditions of safety, confidentiality and trust. Services are available for women in need of assistance and health care. First-responders undergo training on a regular basis to effectively handle possible cases of victims of violence and abuse.

A dedicated Unit in Police for Education, Awareness and Communication was established in July 2021. It is tasked to promote public awareness on issues of domestic violence, child abuse, child sexual abuse and gender-based violence.

In relation to femicide, during HRC53, the Permanent Missions of Cyprus and Israel in Geneva led a Joint Statement supported by more than 50 Delegations. In addition, during the 67th CSW, the Permanent Missions of Cyprus and Malta and UNODC-NYLO, UN Women co-organised a side event titled "Breaking the silence on femicide: ending gender-based violence against women and girls".

(Promoting gender-egalitarian values in primary and secondary education, including through comprehensive sexuality education)

With the enactment of the Holistic Sexual Education Law, 2022 (L. 205(I)/2022) children in primary and secondary education, both public and private, are informed, through updated curricula and/or other measures, about sexuality education and the prevention of sexual violence, violence against women and girls, rape and domestic violence, including issues of gender equality and combating gender stereotypes and prejudices.

3.12 What actions has your country taken to prevent and respond to technology-facilitated gender-based violence?

Cyprus has undertaken several initiatives to combat technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), reflecting a growing awareness and response to this issue. Here are the key actions:

Legislative Measures:

Strengthened Legal Framework: Cyprus has enhanced its legal framework to address online harassment and abuse. The country has laws that criminalize various forms of online abuse, including cyberstalking, non-consensual sharing of intimate images (often referred to as "revenge

porn"), and online threats (UN Women) (United Nations Population Fund).

Public Awareness and Education:

Educational Campaigns: The Cypriot government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) conduct campaigns to raise awareness about TFGBV. These campaigns aim to educate the public on recognizing and preventing online abuse, as well as informing victims about their rights and available resources (UN Women).

Workshops and Training: Workshops and training programs are organized for various stakeholders, including law enforcement officers, educators, and community leaders, to better understand and address TFGBV (United Nations Population Fund).

Support Services for Victims:

Hotlines and Counseling Services: Cyprus offers hotlines and counseling services specifically for victims of TFGBV. These services provide immediate support and guidance on how to handle incidents of online abuse (UN Women).

Shelter and Legal Assistance: Victims have access to shelters and legal assistance, helping them navigate the legal system and find safe spaces if they are in danger (United Nations Population Fund).

Collaboration and Partnerships:

International Cooperation: Cyprus collaborates with international organizations such as the United Nations and the European Union to align its strategies with global best practices and benefit from shared resources and expertise (United Nations Population Fund).

NGO Partnerships: Partnerships with local and international NGOs help in providing comprehensive support to victims and in driving advocacy and policy changes (UN Women).

Technology and Innovation

Developing Digital Tools: There is a focus on developing and implementing digital tools to protect users from online abuse. This includes reporting mechanisms on social media platforms and tools to enhance digital safety (UN Women).

Data Collection and Research

Research Initiatives: Cyprus participates in research initiatives to better understand the scope and impact of TFGBV. Data collected from these studies inform policy-making and the development of targeted interventions (United Nations Population Fund).

These actions demonstrate Cyprus's commitment to addressing technology-facilitated gender-based violence through a multifaceted approach that includes legal reforms, public education, victim support services, and international cooperation.

The Cyprus Police is operating a four-digit hotline (1497), which receives anonymous information for human trafficking matters. A campaign has been launched by the Sub-Directorate of Communication, Public Relations and Social Responsibility of the Police, in order to promote the hotline. At the same time, information is received through the citizen's hotline (1460- 24/7) for trafficking matters.

Since 22/09/2022, the Trafficking in Human Beings platform is operating for online reports regarding human trafficking. The platform is linked to the Cyprus Police website and is monitored on a daily basis by members of the Office of Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. Reports on the platform can even be submitted anonymously.

Trainings are considered as a major tool towards ensuring the identification, assistance, support and protection of victims. In this regard, this thematic continued to be incorporated in all recruitment and sergeant courses, as well as in the Crime Investigation Department's courses and in specialized trainings offered to members of the Immigration Department of the Police and of the members of Community Policing.

In accordance with the Council of Ministers Decision, issued on February 2, 2024, the Cyprus Radio Television Authority (CRTA) has been appointed as the Digital Services Coordinator (DSC) for the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) as per Article 49(3) of the DSA Regulation 2022/2065. Additionally, the CRTA, along with the Office of the Commissioner for Electronic Communications and Postal Regulation (OCECPR), the Ministry of Energy, Commerce, and Industry (MECI), and the Office of the Commissioner for Personal Data Protection have been designated by the Council of Ministers as the Competent Authorities for the RoC.

The Digital Services Act (DSA) Regulation establishes new mandatory due diligence requirements for online platforms. Large online platforms (VLOPs) are also subject to additional obligations aimed at mitigating potential societal risks associated with their services. These risks include threats to fundamental rights and the risk of online gender-based violence. Cyprus must enact and/or amend existing legislation to comply with the provisions of DSA and also to define the National Digital Services Coordinator.

Cyprus Radiotelevision Authority (CRTA)

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potential societal risks associated with their services. These risks include threats to fundamental rights and the risk of online gender-based violence.

Cyprus must enact and/or amend existing legislation to comply with the provisions of DSA and also to define the National Digital Services Coordinator.

C. Examination of cases by CRTA

CRTA has examined of its own motion or following complaints matters regarding violations of the provisions of the aforesaid Law and the Regulations and issued Decisions against media service providers. The CRTA examined more than 80 cases and imposed administrative sanctions in cases of infringement of the legislation by broadcasters regarding media content (media reports on violence against women and girls, issues related to respect for gender dignity, stereotypes, etc.)

3.13 What measures has your country taken to resource women's organisations working to prevent and respond to GBV?

Cyprus has taken several measures to support women's organizations in their efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. One key initiative is the funding of various programs and services specifically aimed at addressing gender-based violence (GBV). These efforts include:

National Funding and Grants: The Government of Cyprus provides grants to women's organizations through national funding mechanisms. This financial support helps organizations offer critical services such as shelters, hotlines, legal aid, and counseling. These services are essential for survivors of GBV and play a vital role in their recovery and empowerment.

Policy Support and Implementation: Cyprus has developed and implemented national action plans to address violence against women. These plans often emphasize the importance of supporting women's organizations financially and logistically. The implementation of these plans involves collaboration with NGOs to ensure comprehensive and effective service delivery.

Awareness and Training Programs: Women's organizations in Cyprus also benefit from government-supported awareness campaigns and training programs. These initiatives are designed to educate the public and professionals about GBV, promoting prevention and improving the response to incidents of violence.

Collaboration with International Bodies: Cyprus works closely with international organizations such as the United Nations and the European Union to align its efforts with global standards and best practices. This collaboration often includes funding and technical support for local women's organizations.

Support for Women's Shelters: One common initiative is funding women's shelters or safe houses that provide refuge and support services for victims of GBV. These shelters offer a safe space for

women and sometimes their children fleeing abusive situations. Funding may cover operational costs, staff salaries, counseling services, legal aid, and educational programs for residents.

Despite these efforts, there is a recognition that women's organizations in Cyprus, like in many other countries, remain underfunded relative to the scale of the problem. Increased and sustained funding is essential to ensure these organizations can continue their vital work in supporting survivors and preventing violence against women (UN Women)

3.14 What actions has your country taken to address the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination and/or gender bias in the media, including social media?

The Cyprus Radio Television Authority (CRTA) is the audiovisual regulator responsible to ensure that private radio and television broadcasters act in compliance with the Law and Regulations of the Republic. Furthermore, the CRTA has limited regulating authority over the Public Service Broadcaster.

The CRTA organised a workshop in March 2023 on the regulatory framework of the digital environment and the connection between human trafficking and violence against women. The workshop included a dedicated session on the role of violence against women in the media.

In 2023 the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) organized a three-day seminar focusing on gender equality, hosted by the Union of Cyprus Journalists. The aim of the seminar was to train journalists in gender-equal journalistic presentation of politicians in view of the upcoming European elections. The seminar was attended by 16 journalists from Cyprus and other European countries.

Also, in 2021 CRTA developed Guidelines on gender equality and portrayal in order to promote balanced, non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the broadcasting media, whilst fostering accurate, responsible, sensitive and ethical reporting of violence against women and girls. Media service providers, Union of Cyprus Journalists and the Cyprus Media Complaints Commission (media self-regulatory body) have already approved the above-mentioned Guidelines. In order to promote awareness and consciousness, CRTA organised a three-day workshop in June 2023 on Gender equality in Media, which was attended by journalists working in mainstream and online media.

The Mediterranean Institute of Gender studies provides a platform, She Experts, aimed at connecting expert women with organizations, employers, political parties, and the industry, including the media. The database features profiles of women from various professional fields, to expand professional opportunities for women, amplify their presence and influence in business, politics and industries, and promote the visibility of female role models in Cyprus.

The Gender Equality Committee in Employment and Vocational Training, as well as the Institution

for Gender Equality of the Republic of Cyprus, provide relevant information and protection in cases of violation of the rights of Cypriot women, including journalists. In addition, they assist journalists belonging to minority groups and those reporting on equality issues in performing their professional tasks.

More recently, the Press and Information Office has undertaken the coordination of the Council of Europe's campaign on the safety of journalists entitled "JOURNALISTS MATTER" with envisioned actions up to 2027. The focus of 2024's initiatives, involves matters of protection. It is aimed to include actions that ensure gender-sensitive support for women journalists.

Finally, the CRTA encourages students, through media literacy workshops, to develop critical thinking skills so they can identify and challenge gender stereotyping in advertising.

In 2021 CRTA has developed Guidelines on gender equality and portrayal to promote balanced, non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the broadcasting media, whilst fostering accurate, responsible, sensitive and ethical reporting of violence against women and girls (Annex A). Media service providers, Union of Cyprus Journalists and the Cyprus Media Complaints Commission (media self-regulatory body) have already approved the above mentioned Guidelines. The Guidelines are divided into 6 groups of provisions, as follows:

- Gender Parity (includes data gathering on representation of gender on/off screen).
- Avoiding and combating gender stereotypes.
- Promoting gender equality in the fields of politics and economics (Promoting the use of databases of female and gender variant professionals and experts).
- Contributing to the elimination of Violence against Women and Girls (including guidelines for the appropriate coverage by the media of cases of gender - based violence against women and girls. How to place incidents within a broader social context, protection of minors' identity, dignity, privacy etc).
- Avoiding linguistic sexism.
- Promoting gender equality in the infrastructures of broadcasters.

For each of the group of the afore-described provisions, both data and practical tools are presented, based on research and recommendations of European and international bodies.

CRTA organised and implemented training programmes for journalists aiming and enhancing journalistic skills as regards the effective understanding and actual implementation of guidelines in practice (Gender Equality and Media, Domestic Violence/Femicide/Trafficking, The Role of Media in Preventing Sexual Violence etc).

CRTA disseminated various Circulars to all audiovisual media service providers regarding the responsible reporting of incidents of violence against women, highlighting the necessity of respecting privacy.

B. Developments in Legislation

1. Amendment 197(I)/2021, enacted on the 23.12.2021, harmonized the Radio and

Television Broadcasters Law 7(I)/1998 (as subsequently amended) with the Audiovisual Media Services Directive 2018/1808/EE which amends the Audiovisual Media Services Directive 2010/13/EE. The following amending provisions of the aforesaid Law (Annex B) reinforce the protection of human rights, in particular the fundamental freedom of expression and information, the prohibition of discrimination, the protection of human dignity, the right to respect private and family life, the rights and the protection of minors, the right to protect personal data and the right to judicial review:

- Article 29 enhances the protection of minors against harmful content and stipulates that the most harmful content, such as gratuitous violence and pornography, shall be subject to the strictest measures. Also, it aligns the rules for the protection of minors in all audiovisual media services, linear and non-linear.
- Article 30 introduces stricter provisions to media service providers under the jurisdiction of the Republic, of ensuring with appropriate measures that their broadcasted audiovisual media services do not contain elements of (a) incitement to violence or hatred directed against any person, group of persons or a member of a group of persons in such a manner as to violate fundamental human rights protected by the Constitution of the Republic and/or violate human rights protected by article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and (b) public provocation to commit a terrorist offence, as set out in article 13 of the Combating of Terrorism and Victim Protection Law of 2019 (as subsequently amended).
- Article 30B adds several obligations to audiovisual media service providers regarding the promotion of the accessibility of such services to people with disabilities. Audiovisual media services should thus be continuously and progressively made all the more accessible to people with disabilities. Emergency information, available to the public through audiovisual media services, shall also be made accessible to people with disabilities.
- Article 32F requires video-sharing platform providers under the jurisdiction of the Republic (as the jurisdiction is specified in Article 32E of the Law 7(I)/1998) to take appropriate measures to protect (a) minors from programmes, user-generated videos and audiovisual commercial communications which may impair their physical, mental or moral development in accordance with the aforesaid article 29 and (b) the general public from programmes, user-generated videos and audiovisual commercial communications containing incitement to violence or hatred directed against any person, a group of persons or a member of a group in such a manner as to violate the fundamental rights protected by the Constitution of the Republic and/or the rights protected under article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.
- Further, section (15) of article 32F stipulates that users can assert their rights before a competent District Court in relation to video-sharing platform providers.

Cyprus Radio Television Authority is in the process of drafting an amendment of the Radio and Television Stations Regulations of 2000. Among the proposed amendments are further provisions:

- Prohibition of direct or indirect disclosure of the identity of sexual harassment, sexual abuse or rape victims and the transmission of information that may lead to the disclosure of their identity.
- To guarantee that the transmission of information for sexual or other crimes remains plain, without details or dramatization of the fact. Further attention is drawn to crimes involving minors.

- To guarantee issues on gender equality.
- To prevent the use of the language in a manner which may offend the sensitivities of a person, or a group of persons based on, among other, gender.
- To prevent the broadcast of programs that insult the dignity of, among other, the two genders.

3.15 What actions has your country taken any action specifically tailored to address violence against marginalized groups of women and girls?

The Woman's House provides services to migrant women on the principle of non-discrimination, regardless of their migrant/ legal status.

Also, since 2022, SPAVO runs a new Shelter that accommodates only young mothers, asylum seekers under 18 years old. The shelter is funded by the Social Welfare Services.

Cyprus Police

The Cyprus Police has taken great steps and is making continuous and systematic efforts to prevent and combat gender-based violence, child abuse and human trafficking. In this context, the following actions were taken in this filed:

A. Domestic violence / violence against women / gender-based violence

Cyprus Police actions to prevent and combat domestic violence:

A Safeguarding Sub-Directorate has been established in 2021. Its role and mission are, inter alia, the prevention and fight against domestic violence and violence against women and young girls, through the implementation of all the relevant laws, regulations and directions/orders. The Safeguarding Sub-Directorate has an overall control and supervision of the work of the newly established Specialized Police Units of Domestic Violence, in an attempt to have a robust system in dealing with such cases.

Specialized Police Units for the investigation of cases of domestic violence, and other related offences, have been established since 2020 in all Police Divisions in Cyprus. These Units, are staffed with trained police personnel, who cooperate with all competent authorities of the Republic when investigating and dealing with domestic violence, child abuse, harassment, stalking, and violence against women cases.

Risk assessment tools are used by police members during the investigation of domestic violence cases:

- a. Risk Assessment Protocol for violence between former or current spouses, cohabitants or partners (based on the Law 14(III)/2017), is a powerful tool, used by the investigators for the

proper investigation and evaluation of each case.

b. Individual Risk Assessment of the victim to determine special protection needs (based on the Law 51(I)/2016), is conducted in order to evaluate the risk of death, the severity of the situation in question and the danger of a repeated violence.

Protocol for the investigation of cases of rape and sexual abuse - The Protocol contains useful information and provides guidance on the cases of rape and sexual abuse, in order to protect and support the victim, as well as the early individual evaluation, on the needs of the victim or possible risks.

Raising public awareness and providing information to the public, but also to members of the police, on issues of gender-based violence and domestic violence is of great importance. In this regard, the Unit of Education, Awareness and Communication, was established in 2021, as part of the Safeguarding Sub-directorate. The aim of this Unit is to raise public awareness on issues of domestic violence, child abuse, child sexual abuse and gender-based violence. Therefore, the following informative material was prepared, during 2021 and 2022:

‘Important Information on Domestic Violence - You can stop the violence... It concerns all of us.’

‘Violence against Women and Domestic Violence – Look for the Signs’

‘Child Sexual Abuse - Look for the Signs’

‘Protection against violence concerns us all – The Legal Framework’ (it deals with issues of violence against women, domestic violence, harassment, and stalking)

Besides the above, television spots on gender-based violence and domestic violence have also been prepared and promoted through TV channels and the social media. Moreover, members of the Safeguarding Sub-directorate participate systematically in various awareness-raising campaigns.

Promotion of education of police members on issues of gender-based violence, the investigation and handling of cases of rape and of offences of sexual violence, domestic violence and other related issues, is included on a regular basis, at all levels and ranks, within the framework of officers’ initial training, but also through specialized programs. The Safeguarding Sub-Directorate in collaboration with the Cyprus Police Academy trains its members systematically on a variety of relevant issues and offences, including those covered by the Istanbul Convention. A new two-week educational programme on dealing with vulnerable victims has been implemented, in an effort to assist members of the police to deal more effectively with vulnerable victims. The modules of this training programme cover the new offences provided for by Law 115(I)/2021, such as stalking, female genital mutilation and forced marriage. The training also includes lectures on various issues regarding prejudice, stereotypes, sexual harassment in the workplace, digital forms of violence, the identification of victims of violence, the handling of rape victims and minimizing recidivism.

A new application (ELPIS APP) for smart phones and tables, has been prepared in cooperation

with a telecommunication company, in order for silent victims to seek immediate help by pressing a SOS button, which notifies the Police on the exact location of the victim. This App will soon be implemented for all people residing in Cyprus.

B. Children sexual abuse

Cyprus Police actions to prevent and combat child sexual abuse

The investigation of cases concerning the sexual abuse of minors is carried out by the Special Investigation Team of the Safeguarding Sub-Directorate. The members of the Police, who investigate such cases, are especially trained. The Special Investigation Team, has cooperation with the Cybercrime Sub-Directorate of the Police and with other competent authorities and NGO's, aiming to prevent and combat the offenses of child sexual abuse. There is also close cooperation with the Child's House. Child pornography crimes are investigated by the Cybercrime Sub-Directorate.

The members of the Special Team, have been trained, based on established models of receiving statements, handling witnesses and perpetrators and victim-centered approach. Particularly, the members of the Special Team are trained in the following topics:

Training in the Investigation of Cases Involving the Sexual Abuse of Children

Typology of offenders / psychological profiling of perpetrators (Paraphilia
Incest)

Psychiatric forensic interview

Forensic Psychiatry and workshop

False Accusations – malingering

Dealing with perpetrators

Traumatology

Relapse Risk Assessment

Training in Taking Video Recorded Statements

NCAC Forensic Interview techniques – NCAC Protocol

Video – audio recorded statements: Importance, Use and Procedure

Child Development, Memory and Suggestibility, Management of Emotions, Assessment of statement given by the child

Conducting interviews – practical application

Training on Issues Relating to the Sexual Abuse of Children

Introduction to the basic current theories on child abuse

Dealing with child victims – an introduction

Modern child protection practices

General principles in handling the first contact with the child – victim / during the rapport stage

C. Trafficking in Human Beings

Cyprus Police actions to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings

The Office of Combating Trafficking in Human Beings of the Cyprus Police is the specialized investigation unit for the investigation of serious and complicated THB cases. Besides the investigation of all serious cases of trafficking in human beings, the Office deals with the identification of victims, the assistance and guidance of other police departments in regards to issues of trafficking and exploitation.

The Office is staffed with experienced investigators, who have been trained on handling and dealing with victims and potential victims, attending specialized trainings and seminars in Cyprus and abroad.

Cyprus Police has conducted several cooperative international investigations on human trafficking. The European and International cooperation concerning human trafficking offences is of major importance for the identification and efficient prosecution of suspects, but also for the protection of victims and their families.

The Cyprus Police is operating a four-digit hotline (1497), which receives anonymous information for human trafficking matters. A campaign has been launched by the Sub-Directorate of Communication, Public Relations and Social Responsibility of the Police, in order to promote the hotline. At the same time, information is received through the citizen's hotline (1460- 24/7) for trafficking matters.

Since 22/09/2022, the Trafficking in Human Beings platform is operating for online reports regarding human trafficking. The platform is linked to the Cyprus Police website and is monitored on a daily basis by members of the Office of Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. Reports on the platform can even be submitted anonymously.

Trainings are considered as a major tool towards ensuring the identification, assistance, support and protection of victims. In this regard, this thematic continued to be incorporated in all recruitment and sergeant courses, as well as in the Crime Investigation Department's courses and in specialized trainings offered to members of the Immigration Department of the Police and of the members of Community Policing.

In 2019, the Handbook for the Identification of Victims has been revised. It includes, among other, the indicators for the identification of children.

Trafficking in women

Although trafficking in women is considered a form of violence against women, the Government places Trafficking in Human Beings (THB) and trafficking in women in particular as a stand alone priority in order to underline the special attention that this crime requires.

THB in general and more specifically trafficking in women and girls has been a priority issue for Cyprus. During the period under review, new comprehensive tools have been developed in a continuous effort to combat trafficking in women. Such tools include:

A new legislation which transposes the Directive 20011/36/EU on combating and preventing trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims into Cypriot Law 60(I) of 2014 on Combating Trafficking and Exploitation of Persons and Protecting Victims;

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) aiming in strengthening the interdepartmental collaboration and the collaboration between the state and NGOs through memorandum of understanding.

The Anti- Trafficking Police Office has been strengthened with specialized agents and therefore investigations and prosecutions has been accelerated. Although there are still barriers to overcome, the fact that the Anti- Trafficking Police Office has been strengthened several cases has been brought before the court, resulting in convictions. The support and protection provided to the victims has been a major factor in successfully filing a case before the court.

It should be underlined that overall the collaboration amongst the state and the NGOs has succeeded in bringing the crime on the surface and out of invisibility, placing it in the social sphere through discussing in the schools, army camps and the universities as well as panel discussions. The media has also been sensitized on the issue. This is evident through reporting in the news (newspapers, TV, radio and social media).

Further, awareness raising on the issue has also been achieved through large scale conferences, training programmes, press conferences, and seminars. At the administrative level, the issue has grown into an ongoing issue which is developing based on the ground realities.

Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions

3.16 What actions and measures has your country taken to promote women's participation in public life and decision-making?

Women in political and public life

The issue of enhancing women's representation in decision-making and promoting gender equality in public life stands at the forefront of policy debates, both nationally and within the EU. Gender equality is not merely a fundamental human right but also a cornerstone principle of the EU, enshrined in its Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

A critical facet of advancing gender equality in leadership entails implementing targeted strategies and mechanisms at the national level. Notably, upon his election in February 2023, the

President of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr Nikos Christodoulides, prioritised the promotion of women's rights and gender equality within the government's agenda. A significant milestone in this endeavour was the appointment of women to 38.8% of positions in the Council of Ministers, marking the highest proportion of female participation at the ministerial level to date. Furthermore, the Council of Ministers appointed women to 40% of positions as Presidents and Vice Presidents of public legal entities, despite only 25% of total applications being submitted by women.

In this context, the appointment of the Commissioner for Gender Equality is deemed a matter of utmost significance, now formally expected to be established by law for the first time. This development conveys a strong and clear message regarding the elevated priority assigned to the promotion of gender equality, recognising it as an essential prerequisite for social and economic stability, development, and growth. Additionally, the Commissioner for Gender Equality has been entrusted with the responsibility of formulating the National Strategy for Gender Equality, endorsed by the Council of Ministers in January 2024.

The new national Strategy on Gender Equality 2024-2026, which mainstreams gender in a holistic and horizontal manner, includes amongst others, a standalone overarching goal focused on achieving balanced participation of women and men in high-level positions in public and political life. Under this pillar, several actions are being pursued, such as empowering women interested in engaging in politics, establishing a digital databank on women's participation in positions of responsibility across politics, integrating the gender dimension into state budgets, addressing the gender pay gap, and expanding childcare and elderly care services, thus fostering reconciliation between family and professional life. Furthermore, proactive measures are underway to prevent and combat gender-based violence, including tailored training programs for frontline professionals, improved data collection, and enhanced support for women confronting multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

The Government of Cyprus is also exploring the implementation of special positive measures of temporary nature to increase women's representation in decision-making positions and to raise awareness among citizens about the benefits of leveraging the knowledge, abilities, and skills of the entire workforce.

Promoting balanced participation between women and men in decision-making positions in public, political, social and economic life.

Aiming to promote the balance participation between women and men in decision- making position in all areas and to reach parity the government will take the following measures:

- Examine the introduction of special temporary measures to increase the participation of women at decision-making levels, including quotas;

- Creating an Observatory and Database on participation of women in positions of responsibility in politics, the economy, society and the business sector;
- Awareness-raising campaigns aiming to promote women candidates in view of the municipal and European Elections of 2024;
- Meetings and contacts with political parties and media organizations;
- Dissemination of statistical data and research findings and the exchange of good practices through conferences and seminars;
- Research programme on integrating gender equality in Municipal and Community policies;
- Dissemination of a Guide on Gender Mainstreaming in public policies.

3.17 What actions has your country taken to increase women's access to expression and participation in decision-making in the media, including through information and communication technologies (ICT)?

Cyprus has implemented various actions to enhance women's access to expression and participation in decision-making within the media, including through information and communication technologies (ICT). Here are some potential actions that Cyprus may have taken:

Policy Initiatives: Cyprus may have implemented policies aimed at promoting gender equality in the media sector. This could involve legislative measures to ensure equal opportunities for women in media organizations, such as quotas for female representation on governing boards or initiatives to address gender bias in media content.

Training and Capacity Building: Cyprus might have organized training programs and workshops to build the skills and capacities of women in media and ICT-related fields. These initiatives could focus on areas such as journalism, digital media production, coding, and digital literacy to empower women to actively participate in decision-making processes within the media industry.

Support for Women-Owned Media Ventures: The government or other stakeholders may have provided funding or support for women-owned media outlets or digital platforms. This support could include grants, subsidies, or access to resources and infrastructure to enable women to establish and sustain their media ventures.

Promotion of Female Role Models: Cyprus might have undertaken efforts to promote female role models and leaders in the media industry. This could involve highlighting the achievements and contributions of women in media through awards, recognition programs, and public campaigns to inspire other women to pursue careers in media and ICT.

Advocacy and Awareness Campaigns: The government and civil society organizations may have launched advocacy and awareness campaigns to raise public consciousness about the importance of gender equality in the media. These campaigns could focus on challenging stereotypes, promoting gender-sensitive reporting, and advocating for policies that support women's participation and representation in media decision-making.

Research and Data Collection: Cyprus may have conducted research studies and collected data to assess the current status of women's representation and participation in the media sector. This research can provide valuable insights into the barriers and challenges faced by women in accessing decision-making roles within the media industry and inform the development of targeted interventions and policies.

Partnerships and Collaboration: Collaboration between government, media organizations, civil society, and other stakeholders is essential for advancing gender equality in the media. Cyprus might have formed partnerships with these entities to develop and implement initiatives aimed at increasing women's access to expression and participation in media decision-making.

These actions are part of broader efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in Cyprus, and they contribute to creating a more inclusive and representative media landscape that reflects the diversity of society. For specific details on the actions taken by Cyprus in this regard, consulting official government reports, policy documents, and statements from relevant ministries or organizations would provide the most accurate information.

3.18 Please describe your country's current national women's machinery (government entity exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women) and describe the measures that your country taken over the past five years to establish and/or strengthen it.

Institutional mechanisms

In terms of institutional development, the Equality Unit of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order, the Commissioner for Gender Equality and the National Mechanism for Women's Rights, having both co-ordinating and advisory functions, continue to play a leading role in the overall promotion of gender equality. These include: law reform, awareness-raising activities, support of NGOs and the promotion of gender mainstreaming. In recent years, the National Mechanism for Women's Rights has focused its work on the implementation of the National Action Plan on Gender Equality and the first National Action Plan on the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 on "Women, Peace and Security" 2021-2025.

In addition, a number of equality bodies have been set up or strengthened, giving a new momentum to the promotion of gender equality. Special reference is made to the *Commissioner for Gender Equality*, appointed for the first time by the President of the Republic in 2014, with a remit to further promote gender equality issues and women's rights in Cyprus. The Commissioner is responsible, inter alia, for the promotion of equality between women and men and the elimination of discrimination against women, the monitoring and coordination of the work of the National Mechanism for Women's Rights, the submission of proposals for legislative safeguarding

of equality and the elimination of discrimination in the legislation, the launching of seminars and campaigns to raise public awareness and, in particular, women's, on their rights, as well as the utilisation of European programmes in the field of gender equality.

Recently, the Council of Ministers decided to entrust the Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality with the drafting, coordination and monitoring of the National Strategy on Gender Equality for a 3-year period (2024-2026). The new Strategy includes new pillars and new actions related to gender mainstreaming across the board of public policies, including, amongst others, gender budgeting, gender mainstreaming in foreign policy, gender and transport, women in sports, gender and justice.

In addition, a Commissioner for Gender Equality was appointed for the first time by the President of the Republic in 2014 to further promote gender equality issues and women's rights in Cyprus. The Commissioner is responsible, inter alia, for the promotion of equality between women and men and the elimination of discrimination against women, the monitoring and coordination of the work of the National Mechanism for Women's Rights, the submission of proposals for legislative safeguarding of equality and the elimination of discrimination in the legislation, the launching of seminars and campaigns to raise public awareness and, in particular, women's, on their rights.

For better coordination and close collaboration with the Ministries and the Deputy Ministries to mainstream gender horizontally in public policies, the Council of Ministers appointed the Commissioner for Gender Equality as the Chair of an Interministerial Committee composed of gender focal points of each Ministry and Deputy Ministry. The Commissioner for Gender Equality continues chairing the National Machinery for Women's Rights, which is an advisory body, composed of women's rights organisations, women's wings of political parties and trade unions.

Since Gender Equality is one of the main horizontal priorities of the Government the Council of Ministers, in July 2023 decided to upgrade the role of the Commissioner for Gender Equality and is now responsible for the drafting, coordinating, monitoring and evaluating National Strategy on Gender Equality for a 3-year period (2024-2026) in close collaboration with all the Ministries and Deputy Ministries. The new Strategy includes new pillars and new actions related to gender mainstreaming across the board of public policies, including, amongst others, gender budgeting, gender mainstreaming in foreign policy, gender and transport, women in sports, gender and justice. The Strategy aims to deconstruct gender stereotypes and to promote equal participation of women and men in all sectors of life.

The Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality is also responsible for the implementation of the National Action Plan 2021-25 for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council

Resolution 1325 "Women, Peace and Security". The Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality has undertaken a number of actions promoting gender equality in cooperation with non-governmental organisations, civil society, local authorities, public and private sector. Indicatively, during the last year:

(a) A political declaration was signed by the President of the Republic, the Ministers, Deputy Ministers and the Commissioners to the President and co-signed by the Commissioner for Gender Equality.

(b) the Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality and the Union of Cyprus Municipalities have established a network of gender focal points in local authorities and prepared an action plan for 2024 to be implemented from every Municipality,

(c) the Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality has launched a strategic collaboration with the Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry to provide companies with further and structured assistance on gender equality.

(d) a collaboration was established with the Cyprus Basketball Federation with a view to promoting women's participation in basketball through innovative programmes and initiatives, trainings to coaches, referees, athletes

(e) an annual scholarship program has been established, in memorial to Christiana Kouta, a well-known gender equality activist and university professor, in collaboration with the Cyprus State Scholarships Foundation, following an announcement by the President of the Republic in March 2023, to provide scholarships to ten women who wish to pursue studies in fields where women are underrepresented.

(f) The Republic of Cyprus, through the Ministry of Finance and in collaboration with the Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality applied for technical support on gender budgeting, from the Directorate General for Structural Reform Support of the European Commission. The application was approved by the EU Commissioners and the project is expected to be launch by the end of 2024.

At the same time, the close collaboration with women's organizations and NGOs and the wider civil society including academic institutions in policy formulation in areas, such as, family and demography, children, peace, social inclusion, employment, violence and trafficking, has increased significantly and their contribution has been crucial in ensuring that the needs of all women, including vulnerable groups, are included in governmental actions and policies.

Also, actions were organised to promote the incorporation of gender in state budgets, through informing and training civil servants and their counterparts in the private sector. An informative conference, initiated by the National Machinery for Women's Rights, presented the benefits of gender budgeting in promoting gender equality, development, fairer distribution of economic resources, and improving life conditions, especially for women from vulnerable sections of the

population. The Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality also requested and will now receive technical assistance from the European Commission regarding gender budgeting.

The National Mechanism for Women's Rights

The NMWRs, is chaired by the CGE, based on a decision of the Council of Ministers dated 23/4/2014.

The NMWR plays a leading role in ensuring the introduction of gender mainstreaming in all national policies and programmes. This is done through the encouragement of training of relevant professionals within the public service on gender equality issues, the support of the development of research on gender-related issues, the promotion of data collection and gender-disaggregated statistics, and the organisation of relevant training workshops, seminars, and conferences with the participation of international experts.

The NMWR also participates in a number of multidisciplinary committees under other ministries dealing with issues such as family, children, violence against women, trafficking, social inclusion, employment and contributes substantially to ensuring a gender perspective in the formulation and implementation of relevant policies. It should also be noted, that the government has developed much stronger ties with women's organisations by involving them in relevant spheres of policy formulation and decision-making processes [See more details Section I- Institutional Mechanisms].

3.19 What other mechanisms and tools has your country used to mainstream gender equality across sectors? (e.g. gender focal points in the Executive, Legislature or Judiciary; inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms; gender audits, consultations with women's organizations)

For the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), a Military Advisory Council was established in October, 2019 and renewed in February 2024 consisting of 6 members (Army Officers of the Republic). The Council aims to promote Gender Equality and its role is described as follows:

- (c) Advocate for gender equality and promote policies to increase the presence of women at all levels of the Army.
- (d) Ensuring that gender specificities are taken into account in the implementation of Army actions.

- (e) Encouraging members of the Army to co-operate and contribute to its activities and report on gender equality issues.
- (f) Inform members of the Army about the impact of armed conflict on both sexes and the value of women's involvement in conflict resolution and decision-making.
- (g) Organize seminars and experiential workshops to train members of the Army, regardless of their position, in order to inform them on gender equality issues.

Also, the Council carries out the tasks of the Gender Equality Committee in the prevention of harassment and sexual harassment in the Army of the Republic, the elimination of stereotypes that maintain and reproduce discrimination, inequality and gender-based violence.

Alongside, the “Gender Equality Committee of the Ministry of Defense” consists of 3 members (2 public servants, 1 Army Officer), has also been set up on behalf of the Ministry and has similar responsibilities and aims to the one set up in the National Guard.

Cyprus has implemented various mechanisms and tools to mainstream gender equality across sectors. Some of these include:

Gender Focal Points: Cyprus have designated gender focal points within government institutions at different levels, such as the Executive, Legislature, and Judiciary. These focal points are responsible for integrating gender perspectives into policies, programs, and decision-making processes within their respective institutions.

Inter-Ministerial Coordination Mechanisms: The country has inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms or gender equality committees to ensure collaboration and coherence in gender mainstreaming efforts across different government departments. These mechanisms facilitate the exchange of information and coordination of activities related to gender equality.

Gender Audits: Cyprus conduct gender audits to assess the extent to which policies, legislation, and programs promote gender equality. Gender audits help identify gaps and biases in existing policies and practices and inform strategies for addressing them.

Consultations with Women’s Organizations: The government engages in regular consultations with women’s organizations and civil society groups to gather input and feedback on gender-related policies and initiatives. These consultations ensure that gender mainstreaming efforts are informed by the perspectives and experiences of diverse women.

Gender Impact Assessments: Cyprus conduct gender impact assessments to evaluate the potential effects of policies, programs, and projects on gender equality. Gender impact assessments help identify potential risks and opportunities to advance gender equality and women's empowerment.

By utilizing these mechanisms and tools, Cyprus seeks to advance gender equality and women's empowerment across various sectors of society. These efforts contribute to creating a more inclusive, equitable, and just society for all citizens.

3.20 If there is a national human rights institution in your country, what measures has it taken to address violations of women's rights and promote gender equality?

The Commissioner for Administration and for the Protection of Human Rights, which is an umbrella organisation, acts as National Human Rights Institution (NHRI – A status) and Equality Body. More specifically, in 2011, the Commissioner for Administration Law was amended (no. 158(I)/2011) and mandated the Commissioner with specific functions for the promotion and protection of human rights, their preservation or expansion in the Republic of Cyprus and the observance of fundamental principles of human rights by the administration (art. 5 (1)(d)). The Commissioner for Administration was renamed to the "Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights", a name, which reflected its broader functions in the area of protecting, promoting and guaranteeing human rights as NHRI in line with the Paris Principles.

In particular, the Commissioner has responsibility through the exercise of its own power to:

- submit ex-officio reports related to any situation of violation of human rights which it decides to take up;
- submit ex-officio reports related to the national situation with regard to human rights in general and on more specific matters.
- have consultations with non-governmental organisations, human rights organisations, other social groups and human rights bodies.

In addition, the Commissioner for Administration and Protection of Human Rights, as the national Equality Body examines complaints related to discrimination. The Combating of Racial and other forms of Discrimination Law (L. 42(I)/2004) provides the legal basis for Commissioner's interventions. According to the law, any discrimination is prohibited.

The Law covers discrimination on: the conditions of access, employment, promotion and selection criteria in employment, self-employment and occupation; the access to vocational guidance, vocational training and retraining and obtaining practical work experience; the working conditions and terms of employment, dismissals and pay; the membership of and involvement in organisations of workers, employers or any organisations whose members carry on a particular profession, including the benefits provided for by such

organisations; the social protection, including social security and healthcare; education; and the access to and supply of goods and services including housing.

Under the above mandate and through its continuous engagement with relevant actors at the national, regional and international level, the Commissioner is in an ideal position to contribute to the development of laws, policies and practices to protect human rights especially for those people who find themselves in a situation of vulnerability.

Victims of violations of gender-based violence are among the most vulnerable groups of the population and they expect from the Commissioner to respond to their experiences of maladministration, inefficiency or indifference on the part of police, social services and other actors in the administration of justice. And it is true that the Commissioner has a unique entry point as monitors of state administration and as catalysts of redress for citizens whose rights have been impugned. Furthermore, the Commissioner has also access to the parliamentary processes and the media and therefore, the possibility of making visible and therefore political citizens' legitimate expectations of fairness, efficiency and responsiveness of state actors.

More particularly, the Commissioner uses some of its existing functions such as:

- Receive and review complaint about the actions and/or omissions of government departments, agencies, employees, laws or policies;
- Refer victims to programs and services as appropriate and provide guidance about the rights of victims and about the services and programs available through the government or NGO's
- Make recommendations to the government on how to change its policies or laws to better suit the needs and concerns of victims
- Promote public awareness of gender equality and the obligation of eliminating violence against women and girls
- Disseminate information through training of relevant actors
- Prepare reports on specific areas of abuse, which needs urgent and immediate redress and try to have the matter prioritize.

Regarding sexual harassment in the workplace, in 2018 the Commissioner drafted the Code of Conduct to prevent and deal with sexual harassment within the civil service, which was adopted by the Council of Ministers and has become obligatory throughout the public sector. The Code provides practical guidance aiming at securing appropriate procedures to deal with sexual harassment and harassment incidents, through prevention but also through repression. This is a useful manual for the creation of a working environment that embraces the gender equality principles and respect of human dignity while uplifting any discrimination on the basis of gender.

One year later, the main Employers and Industrialists Federations of our country signed a similar code of conduct for sexual harassment in the workplace, with the view to incorporate it into collective labour agreements for the first time. The Code aims at preventing and effectively tackling unacceptable behaviours which create an unpleasant work environment that affects human dignity and disrupts the smooth operation of a company.

Furthermore, in the beginning of 2021 the Commissioner carried out an Awareness Campaign for harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace, under its mandate as an Equality Body, within the 30 years since the establishment of the Institution in Cyprus. In this context, the Commissioner cooperated with several Organisations (eg. Cyprus Theatre Organisation, Cyprus Sports Organisation, Open University of Cyprus) for drafting Codes of Conduct to prevent and combat harassment sexual harassment. Furthermore, through media spots victims of such behaviors were encouraged to break their silence and report to the competent authorities.

In the meantime, the Commissioner, in cooperation with the Cyprus Academy of Public Administration, has carried out a series of training seminars on the Code of Conduct about sexual harassment within the civil service, with large numbers of civil service having been trained about their rights or responsibilities under the Code. It must be also noted that, after recommendations of the Commissioner, the Public Service Law was amended by the Parliament, so that sexual harassment in the public sector is explicitly defined as a distinct disciplinary offence.

Another initiative of the Commissioner was the submission of a Report on the Status of Foreign Domestic Workers (FDW), in December 2020, which showed that there are several factors that contribute to the phenomena of coercion and violence against this extremely vulnerable group of female immigrants. These factors mainly include their gender and race, great financial need, the weak framework of their protection by the state, the absence of sanctions against abusive employers, their social isolation and the prevailing culture of tolerance of their exploitation. These factors, apart from contributing to the abusive practices themselves, also prevent the reporting of abuse by FDW, thus making their exploitation even more invisible.

The research findings suggest that FDW are generally unwilling to complain about situations which they consider unfair or illegal, even in cases where physical or sexual violence has been used against them, due to their mistrust of Cypriot authorities and concerns that any interaction with them will damage their legal or employment status in the Republic. Facing the possibility of the termination of their employment, especially in light of the disproportionate cost they bore for their arrival and the consequences that returning to their home country will have for them and their families, FDW are likely to endure not only the violation of their employment contract, but also threats and violent behaviour.

As a result, the Commissioner underlined that the correct confrontation of sexual harassment, violence and abuse requires, in the first place, the development of policies of prevention and repression of these phenomena. Further, the investigation of the complaints should be conducted through a victim-centered approach. The mechanisms for locating the victims of serious employment exploitation should also be enhanced and utilised by the relevant support services.

Peaceful and Inclusive societies

3.21 What actions has your country taken to build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and implement the women, peace and security agenda?

The first NAP for the implementation of the UNSC Resolution 1325 “Women, Peace and Security” for the period 2021-2025 includes actions relating to the participation and empowerment, as well as protection, prevention and the promotion of the women’s rights. The budget for the implementation of actions amounts to €180,000, while an additional amount is annually included in the budget of the GEC.

A number of actions were taken to implement the Resolution, such as the development of a gendered guide of conduct for personnel serving in military and civil missions regarding their obligations to respect the rights of women and girls, establishment of a Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee of the NAP, awareness raising video material available on Social Media, organization of seminars and workshops targeting front line officers aiming at raising awareness on gender related issues and become more gender sensitive especially for victims of violence. The Ministry of Defense organized in 2022 a conference with large number of participants serving in the Armed Forces.

3.22 What actions has your country taken to increase the leadership, representation and participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action and crisis response, at decision-making levels in situations of armed and other conflicts, and in fragile or crisis settings?”

A Code of Conduct for personnel serving in military and civilian missions in respect of their obligations to respect the rights of women and girls during conflicts and peace processes has been developed in cooperation with the office of Gender Equality Commissioner.

Also Cyprus has undertaken several initiatives to enhance the leadership, representation, and participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action, and crisis response. Here are the key actions:

National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS): Cyprus has developed and is implementing a National Action Plan (NAP) in alignment with UN Security Council Resolution 1325. This plan focuses on increasing women's involvement in peace and security efforts, ensuring their protection in conflict situations, and integrating gender perspectives into all aspects of peace and security operations.

Training and Capacity Building: The Government of Cyprus, in collaboration with various international organizations, conducts training programs for women to build their capacity in conflict resolution, negotiation, and peacebuilding. These programs aim to equip women with the skills necessary to take on leadership roles in these areas.

Inclusion in Peace Processes: Efforts have been made to include more women in formal peace negotiations and conflict resolution processes. This includes appointing women to key positions in peacebuilding initiatives and supporting women's civil society organizations that advocate for peace and security.

Gender-Sensitive Policies: Cyprus has been working on mainstreaming gender perspectives in its foreign and security policies. This involves ensuring that women's specific needs and contributions are considered in humanitarian responses and peacebuilding efforts.

International Cooperation: Cyprus actively participates in international forums and collaborates with global partners to promote the WPS agenda. This includes engaging with the United Nations and the European Union to advance gender equality in peace and security efforts.

Support for Grassroots Organizations: The government supports local women's organizations that work on peacebuilding and humanitarian issues. This support includes financial assistance, capacity building, and creating platforms for these organizations to voice their concerns and recommendations at national and international levels.

These efforts reflect Cyprus's commitment to enhancing women's roles in conflict prevention, resolution, and peacebuilding, recognizing the critical impact that women's participation can have on achieving sustainable peace and security.

3.23 In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to eliminate discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child, including adolescent girls?

Tackled disadvantages in health outcomes due to malnutrition, early childbearing (e.g. anemia) and exposure to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Implemented policies and programmes to eliminate violence against girls, including physical and sexual violence and harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation

Implemented policies and programmes to eradicate child labour and to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work undertaken by girl children

Participation (Health Visitors Services) in the National Committee for Sexual and Reproductive

Health of Young People (policy making)

Participation and intervention in school violence committee through School Health Visitors.

The Health Visitors Services actively participate in the National Committee for Sexual and Reproductive Health of Young People, contributing to policy-making.

Furthermore, Health Visitors play a crucial role in addressing school violence by actively participating and intervening in the school violence committee. Top of Form

Environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation

3.24 What actions has your country taken to integrate gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies, including climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation and land degradation?

See section II above- Priorities, achievements, challenges and setbacks (q. 31, pg. 24)

Section Four: National institutions and processes

4.1. Please describe your country's national strategy or action plan for gender equality

The Council of Ministers decided that the Commissioner for Gender Equality should draft, coordinate, monitor and evaluate of the newly approved (January 2024) National Strategy on Gender Equality for a 3-year period (2024-2026). The Strategy includes new pillars and new actions related to gender mainstreaming across the board of public policies and aims to deconstruct gender stereotypes and to promote equal participation of women and men in everyday life. For better coordination and close collaboration with the Ministries and the Deputy Ministries to mainstream gender horizontally in public policies, the Council of Ministers appointed the Commissioner for Gender Equality as the Chair of an Interministerial Committee composed by gender focal points of each Ministry and Deputy Ministry. Promoting equality between women and men and deconstructing gender stereotypes are important parameters of the prevention of violence against women.

Political Declaration on zero tolerance to sexism and harassment based on gender
The declaration was signed by the President of the Republic, the Ministers, Deputy Ministers and the Commissioners to the President and co-signed by the Commissioner for Gender Equality.

4.2 Please describe your country's system for tracking the proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender-responsive budgeting), including the approximate proportion of the national budget that is invested in this area.

See section II above- Priorities, achievements, challenges and setbacks (q. 21, pg. 11)

4.3 Are there formal mechanisms in place for different stakeholders to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

The implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and all actions towards equality between women and men specifically are included in the different NAPs stated above [see Policy and Institutional Developments]. However, the main policy document that monitors the implementation of the BPfA and the 2030 for sustainable development is through the NAPGE. As part of the implementation of the aforementioned plans the following stakeholders participate formally or informally in national coordination mechanisms established

to contribute to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It should be underlined that all Strategic Plans are publically consulted before their approval by the Ministerial Committee. The Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women often calls all relevant actors including NGOs for discussion related to the monitoring and implementation of the main policy document that of National Action Plan on Gender Equality.

4.4 Please describe how stakeholders have contributed to the preparation of the present national report.

The development of this national report was a collective achievement of close collaboration of the Government and local authorities, the Commissioner for Gender Equality, women's organizations, NGOs, academic institutions and human rights bodies.

4.5 Please describe your country's action plan and timeline for implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (if a State party), or of the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review or other United Nations human rights mechanisms that address gender inequality/discrimination against women.

The Republic of Cyprus remains steadfastly committed to implementing the Recommendations of International Organizations that advocate for human rights and gender equality, to which it has acceded as a member through the relevant ratifications (e.g. the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Universal Periodic Review, Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, etc.). The effort to comply with the Concluding Recommendations and Observations of these Organisations is both daily and continuous, involving the concerted actions of all relevant state agencies and bodies. It is a longstanding government policy that these Concluding Recommendations are translated into Greek and widely disseminated across all competent state services. Additionally, a significant number of Non-Governmental Organisations within civil society receive these translations to ensure broad awareness and adherence to these standards.

Section Five: Data and statistics

5.1. Areas in which Cyprus has made most progress over the past five years when it comes to gender statistics at the national level, including for future activities

The Cyprus Statistical Service [CYSTAT] is mainly concerned with the initiation, organisation and carrying out of various censuses, surveys and statistical enquiries of an economic, demographic, social or environmental content and the publication of the results with the intention both, of assisting the government in policy-making and planning of the activities and the statistical information of the private sector the general public. At the same time, CYSTAT acts as a co-ordinator in cases where other institutions (such as the Central Bank, other Ministries and Government Departments and semi-Government organisations) pursue work of a statistical nature for the collection of data of direct interest to the area of their activity.

Having said the above and based on research, studies and the collection of statistical information, all competent authorities and services are using the information provided the CYSTAT to design legislations, strategies, measures, policies and programmes related to women's rights and gender equality. Examples include policies and programmes to combat violence against women including on trafficking in women, FGM, women in decision making, gender equality and education, women and health, amongst others. Statistical information is also be used in order to measure the impact of the measures implemented.

The systematic development of gender-disaggregated statistics has been one of the main priorities of the Statistical Service of Cyprus in recent years. Although there is no legal basis for the collection of sex-disaggregated data, most of the surveys conducted from the Cyprus Statistical Service (CYSTAT) in line with EU regulations, they typically collect data disaggregated by sex. Specifically, most of the surveys regulated by the EU on employment, education, health, living conditions, and income (e.g. European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), Labour Force Survey (LFS), Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), European Health Interview Survey (EHIS) and Adult Education Survey (AES)), include the variable of gender. The national population census also includes sex disaggregated information.

The core social variables collected from most surveys are the geographic location (district and urban/rural area), sex, age in years completed, marital status, highest educational level achieved and income (not from all social surveys). Additionally, to the above, the population census also includes information on the religion and ethnic group.

41. Dissemination of gender disaggregated statistics:

CYSTAT is responsible for disseminating all sex-disaggregated data produced. Specifically, gender disaggregated data are being disseminated in CYSTAT's web portal, under the following themes/subthemes:

Theme:

Population and social conditions>

Subthemes:

Population

Living Conditions

Education

Health

Labour Market

In 2012, the ad-hoc publication "The Statistical Portrait of Women in Cyprus" was published in CYSTAT's web portal. The publication can be downloaded at the link below:

<https://www.cystat.gov.cy/en/PublicationList?s=32&p=10>

From 2023 onwards, a regular annual publication "Gender Statistics" is also disseminated. It comprises of a collection of indicators with gender disaggregated data that will be revised on an annual basis. The publication is a pdf format report in Greek and English and can be downloaded at the following link:

<https://www.cystat.gov.cy/en/PublicationList?s=32>

(Cross-sectional statistics, GENDER STATISTICS - 2023)

Also, the following gender indicators have been revised with the most recent data available:

- Employment rate
- Temporary employment
- Part-time employment
- Unemployment rate
- Long-term unemployment
- Gender pay gap
- Graduates of tertiary education
- Women in tertiary education all ages
- Women in tertiary education for the ages 30-34 years old
- Attainment in private and public universities

Have you defined a national set of indicators for monitoring progress on the SDGs?

The Government and more specifically the national coordinator for the implementation and monitoring for progress on the SDGs, the Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development is in the process of designing the national set of indicators.

5.2 Over the next five years, what are your country's priorities for strengthening national gender statistics?

The National Coordinating Body for the Prevention and Combating of Violence Against Women is promoting the creation of a unified statistical database on gender-based violence on a nationwide basis and has already taken several significant actions in this direction. It is anticipated that the establishment

of a unified statistical data archive will provide a clear picture of the true extent and frequency of the problem, serving as a valuable tool for the implementation of effective and, most importantly, targeted measures for the prevention and addressing of gender-based violence by the state.

The statistical analysis and evaluation of the data will also assist in identifying geographic areas with high rates of violence, as well as high-risk and vulnerable groups, thereby contributing to the effective implementation of relevant measures and legislation regarding gender-based and domestic violence. Furthermore, it will lead to the design of effective prevention programmes, as well as the protection and support of victims of violence, while also aiding in the assessment and improvement of training and awareness programmes for professionals dealing with violence.

5.3 Which data disaggregations ² are routinely provided by major surveys in your country?

Geographic location

Income not in all

Sex/gender

Age

Education

Marital status

² As specified in A/RES/70/1, with the addition of education and marital status.

Section Six: Conclusion and next steps

Despite the significant positive developments in the field of gender equality over the past years, traditional perceptions in relation to the role of women and men, gender stereotypes and prejudices continue to impede de facto realization of gender equality.

The following seven thematic areas/objectives that will form the key priorities for action over the next three years:

- Combating all forms of Violence against Women and gradual implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (“Istanbul Convention”);
- Promoting balanced participation between women and men in decision-making positions in public, political, social and economic life;
- Reforming and improving the legislative framework;
- Protecting and Empowering Vulnerable Groups of Women;
- Promoting equality between men and women in employment;
- Eliminating Gender Stereotypes and Social Prejudices and
- Education and Training of Women in Information and Communication Technologies.

Cyprus future priority is to holistically promote gender equality, preventing and combating violence against women and girls and deconstructing gender stereotypes. This may be achieved by upgrading the institutional mechanisms, establishing the links between all involved – parties, having close cooperation with civil society, local authorities, universities and raising awareness in schools, in universities, in workplaces and other stakeholders.

Addressing the remaining gaps and emerging issues in the future gender equality agenda requires focused attention on several key areas. Combatting Gender-Based Violence remains a significant challenge, particularly in conflict zones, necessitating comprehensive strategies encompassing survivor support and prevention measures.

Economic Empowerment remains hindered by persistent gender gaps in employment, pay, and pensions, calling for targeted interventions such as gender-neutral recruitment and equal pay initiatives.

Moreover, increase women's participation and leadership roles for gender-responsive policies, especially in critical sectors like green and digital transitions, increase women's representation in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics), in Artificial Intelligence, and in maritime/ blue economy.

At the same time, specific emphasis shall be placed in the efforts of recognizing women's roles throughout the story of Cyprus and promote women's narrative. Towards this direction an ongoing campaign under the umbrella title "Herstory" was launched adding to all of our efforts to make women and women's participation in everyday life more visible.

Mainstream gender Mainstreaming across the board in public policies and initiate the designing of Gender Budgeting tools, based to sex-disaggregated data.

Moreover, strengthening Institutional Mechanisms for Gender Equality involves enhancing visibility and political leadership, ensuring institutional continuity, implementing gender mainstreaming and budgeting, and recognizing the vital role of civil society in advocacy and accountability.

Cyprus is determined to intensify its efforts towards promoting and further advancing women's rights.