

1. What measures have been taken to strengthen normative, legal and policy frameworks for the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

1.1. A new *National Action Plan on Equality between Women and Men 2019-2023* was prepared and approved by the Council of Ministers in September 2019, as a project of close collaboration between the Government, the Commissioner for Gender Equality, local authorities, women's organizations, NGOs, academic institutions and human rights bodies.

1.2. The National Action Plan on Gender Equality was formulated on the basis of international conventions and recommendations, particularly the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its latest Concluding Comments, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the 2013 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as EU policy frameworks.

1.3. The Action Plan, which is the most significant achievement in terms of the national policy on gender equality, includes among its seven thematic areas the Modernization/Improvement of normative, legal and policy framework, accompanied by a series of actions that accelerate its achievement.

2. What actions and investments have been made for financing gender equality and the empowerment of women?

2.1. In recent years, the budget of the National Mechanism for Women's Rights (NMWR) has increased considerably, namely from 235.000 Euros in 2016 to 270.000 Euros in 2017, 370.000 Euros in 2018 and 370.000 in 2019 and 2020.

2.2. These funds are put towards stimulating and implementing actions that aim to promote equality between men and women, and to eliminate social stereotypes and prejudice. It is noteworthy that in recent months funding has been provided to many Non-Governmental Organisations, Women's Organisations and other bodies/agents who promote gender equality through implementing actions and programmes that aimed to mitigate the consequences of Covid-19, with a particular emphasis on women.

2.3. In this context, the Commissioner for Gender Equality, in collaboration with the Non-Governmental Organisations that constitute the NMWR, have prepared a short television spot both to inform women who have become victims of violence due to the conditions of confinement created by the pandemic, and to raise public awareness of the acute problem of gender-based and domestic violence.

2.4. At the same time, the Commissioner for Gender Equality, together with Women's Organisations, have prepared a second television spot, through which all those women who actively made their presence felt during the spread of the Covid-19 are highlighted, whatever their position may have been (women doctors, medical staff, women who are members of the security forces, in cleaning and personal hygiene services, etc). They have all contributed to the mutual struggle to keep the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic at bay.

3. What steps have been taken to bolster women's leadership and women's full and equal participation in decision-making in all areas of sustainable development?

3.1. The Government, aiming to promote balanced participation between women and men in decision-making positions in all areas and to reach parity, decided to promote, among others, the following measures through the new National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2019-2023:

- Examine the introduction of special temporary measures to increase the participation of women at decision-making levels, including quotas;
- Create an Observatory and Database on participation of women in positions of responsibility in politics, the economy, society and the business sector;
- Conduct awareness-raising campaigns aiming to promote women candidates in view of the Parliamentary and Municipal Elections of 2021;
- Launch meetings and contacts with political parties and media organisations;
- Disseminate statistical data and research findings and the exchange of good practices through conferences and seminars;
- Conduct a research programme on integrating gender equality in Municipal and Community policies;
- Disseminate a Guide on Gender Mainstreaming in public policies to all relevant stakeholders.

4. What macroeconomic, labour and social policies have been put in place that promote full and productive employment and decent work for women, in response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on women's employment and economic rights and independence?

4.1. All COVID related measures apply to all employees, regardless of gender. Special schemes aimed at supporting workers during the crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic, introduced in March, are mentioned below:

- a) Special Allowance for the Self-Employed,
- b) Special Scheme for Unemployed Persons,
- c) Complete Business Suspension Plan designed to avoid layoffs by providing affected employees with an unemployment benefit for as long as the business is suspended,
- d) Partial Business Suspension Plan targeting businesses whose operations have been partially suspended as long as its turnover has decreased by more than 25% for the period starting from March 16, 2020 until April 2020, compared to the corresponding period in 2019. These businesses are not allowed to terminate employees.
- e) Sickness Benefit for employees who have particular health problems and cases of compulsory absence from work for persons who are placed either in home quarantine or medical supervision quarantine by the Authorities. This benefit is also available for self-employed workers.
- f) A Special Paid Leave for Child Care was launched for working parents responsible for the care of children up to 15 years old and/or children with disabilities, regardless of age, who cannot work either remotely or at home or with flexible working hours, due to the nature of their work. It is true that the majority of the applicants for this scheme were women, indicating the additional care burden they carry.

4.2. Five additional plans to support Businesses, Employees and the Unemployed were introduced in June and July for targeted sectors, as follows:

- a) Special Plan for Hotel Units and Tourist Accommodation
- b) Special Financial Activity Plan related to the Tourism Industry or Financial Activities which are directly affected by Tourism or Financial Activities associated with Businesses that are subject to Mandatory Full Suspension
- c) Special Plan for Businesses of Specific Financial Activities

- d) Special Plan for Complete Suspension of Company Operations
- e) Special Plan to Support the Unemployed
- f) Special Plan to Support Certain Categories of the Self Employed.

5. What response and recovery measures to the COVID-19 pandemic have been taken to improve and expand social protection for women (e.g., healthcare coverage, unemployment benefits, paid sick leave, paid parental leave, maternity benefits, pensions, income support such as cash transfers)?

5.1. As mentioned in question 4, a Sickness Benefit scheme and a Special Paid Leave for Child Care were launched (4e & 4f).

5.2. Additionally, pregnant, breastfeeding, and women who had just given birth were allowed to stay and work from home and not report for work, having been recognized as a vulnerable group in relation to COVID-19.

5.3. For working parents, special arrangements to facilitate working from home were made.

6. What actions have been taken to expand the availability and affordability of care services to address the increase in unpaid care and domestic work as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g. care subsidies, paid leave)?

6.1. The information provided under questions 4 and 5 above is relevant.

7. What actions have been taken to increase resources and support for women's and civil society organisations as they cope with the COVID-19 pandemic?

7.1. The information provided under question 2 above is relevant.

8. What steps have been taken to improve gender-responsive data collection in the context of follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and to track and monitor the gender-specific impacts and response measures to the COVID-19 pandemic?

8.1. The systematic development of gender-disaggregated statistics in the sectors of employment, education, health, poverty, quality of life and violence, has been one of the main priorities of the Statistical Service of Cyprus (CYSTAT) in recent years.

8.2. Furthermore, as regards the tracking and monitoring of the gender-specific impacts and response measures to the Covid-19 pandemic, two surveys conducted by CYPSTAT have incorporated additional questions towards this purpose. More specifically, as indicated by Eurostat, the Labour Force Survey (LFS) has added two questions that concern the Covid-19 pandemic in order to complement existing variables: the respondents are asked how the measures have affected their work attendance and their availability for work, and the data is collected also by gender. Similarly, following the request of Eurostat for specific information on the subject, some additional questions have been added to the EU-SILC survey which concern the Covid-19 pandemic and in particular questions on government support measures for which members of the household (aged 16 and over) have applied in order to deal with the pandemic. The information is collected also by gender.