

Cyprus

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Article 28 of the Cypriot Constitution of 1960 enshrines the principle of equal treatment and the prohibition of any form of direct and indirect discrimination on the ground of gender.

In Cyprus, the promotion of gender equality through policy and legislation is a relatively recent phenomenon. As a result of Cyprus's harmonisation with the EU *acquis communautaire*, a significant number of legislative measures related to gender equality have been passed in the last decade, covering the areas of equal treatment in employment, equal pay, maternity protection, parental leave and violence in the family, among others. Overall, the transposition of the EU directives on gender equality into Cyprus's national laws is complete and these laws have begun to have a positive effect on the lives of working people.

Gender mainstreaming is primarily influenced by EU directives and international conventions for the promotion of gender equality, such as the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA). Additionally, a number of National Action Plans (NAPs) and strategies have been developed to address gender inequality, including the NAP on Gender Equality, which specifically refers to gender mainstreaming.

Since 1994, the National Machinery for the Advancement of Women (NMWR) is responsible for gender mainstreaming, among other tasks. It is situated within the Ministry of Justice and Public Order (MJPO) and also hosts the Inter-ministerial Committee on Gender Equality, composed of 11 gender equality officers representing each of the ministries.

Legislative and policy framework

Since Cyprus's EU accession and associated harmonisation with the EU acquis, as well as its compliance with international instruments throughout the last 15 years, an increasing number of new gender equality legislative measures have been passed, together with amendments to existing measures.

Cyprus has no binding legislative framework for gender mainstreaming. Despite being included in the government strategy and in the NAP on Gender Equality for 2014-2017, it is presented as a non-binding strategy. The NAP for Gender Equality 2018-2021 is in the process of public consultation but, again, includes gender mainstreaming as a non-binding strategy. It does, however, include specific gender mainstreaming actions.

One of the most fundamental developments in Cyprus is gender mainstreaming in peace and security. Currently, the Technical Committee on Gender Equality operates separately from other technical committees (including the two communities discussing Cyprus's reunification) rather than integrating gender into the technical committees concerned with security, territory, property and constitutional arrangements. The Committee's operation was suspended in August 2017, following the collapse of the UN-supported International Conference on Cyprus at Crans-Montana. Its future and effectiveness continues to be tied to political developments. Gender mainstreaming in peace negotiations can have a transformative effect on the future of a country.

However, a new NAP on Women, Peace and Security 2018-2021 is being developed, headed by the Gender Equality Commissioner (GEC), in cooperation with civil society. This new NAP focuses on implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, adopted in 2000.

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Structures

Government responsibilities

A Council of Ministers' decision invests the government's structure for gender equality with legal standing. Cyprus' 1985 ratification of CEDAW provided the context for the establishment of a permanent government body for women's rights and gender equality, with the Permanent Central Agency for Women set up in 1988. A Council of Ministers' decision in 1994 reformed this agency as the National Machinery for the Advancement of Women (NMWR).

The NMWR consists of four structures:

- 1 Council for Women's Rights, chaired by the Gender Equality Commissioner (GEC) and composed of 19 women's NGOs and trade unions;
- 2 National Committee for Women's Rights, composed of 69 organisations promoting gender equality, including all members of the Council for Women's Rights and all public officers responsible for women's rights within the ministries and agencies;
- 3 Inter-ministerial Committee on Gender Equality, composed of public officers responsible for women's rights within the ministries and the Planning Bureau;
- 4 General Secretariat, which provides administrative and scientific support for the advisory institutions of the NMWR through the Equality Unit.

The Equality Unit of the NMWR implements gender mainstreaming through participation in several multidisciplinary committees of other ministries. This participation aims to include a gender perspective in the formulation and implementation of policies dealing with family, children, violence against women, trafficking, social inclusion, employment, demography and women's entrepreneurship.

The NMWR also hosts the Inter-ministerial Committee on Gender Equality, made up of 11 gender equality officers representing each of the ministries. This unit is situated within the Ministry of Justice and Public Order (MJPO) and is the main structure responsible for formulating, coordinating and promoting gender equality policy, including gender mainstreaming.

The GEC was established in 2014 and also serves as the chair of the Council for Women's Rights of the NMWR. Although housed in the Ministry of Justice together with the NMWR, the GEC is, however, under the authority of the Presidency. A new bill is under consideration in the House of Representatives to amend the status of the office of the GEC to provide the office with the tools and tasks needed for policy-making. The bill also aims to reunite all public agencies working on gender equality policies under the authority of the GEC, as these are currently dispersed under different administrations.

Independent gender equality body

Two independent equality bodies deal with equal treatment of all persons experiencing discrimination on any grounds: the [Gender Equality Committee in Employment and Vocational Training](#) (GECEVT) [1] and the Equality Authority of the Ombudsperson's Office. The legal basis of the GECEVT is the Equal Treatment of Men and Women in Employment and Vocational Training Law of 2002 (L.205.1/2002 and L.150.1/2014). Its mandate is to monitor enforcement, training, awareness and research, and to provide independent assistance to victims of discrimination, including legal aid.

The Equality Authority in the Ombudsperson's Office is an extra-judicial mechanism that has jurisdiction to investigate complaints of gender discrimination in the areas of equal pay and equal treatment in employment and vocational training, as well as in the area of accessing goods and services in the public and private sectors. The legal basis of the Equality Authority is Law N.42.1/2004 on Combating Racial and Some Other Forms of Discrimination (Commissioner) Law [2].

Parliamentary bodies

The original Parliamentary Committee on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women was set up in 2006. A 2011 decision of the House of Representatives consolidated two separate parliamentary committees into the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women.

The Committee examines legal proposals and issues related to equality and human rights. It invites the GEC, gender equality bodies and women's organisations to express their opinions on gender equality issues.

Methods and tools

Note: the methods and tools listed under this section were the focus of EIGE's 2018-2019 assessment. If certain methods and tools are not mentioned in this section, this does not necessarily mean that they are not used at all by Cyprus.

Gender mainstreaming tools reported to EIGE by the Cypriot government include: gender awareness-raising measures, gender impact assessments (ex ante evaluation), gender equality training, gender planning, sex-disaggregated data and gender stakeholder consultation (although only for NAPs and proposals that directly relate to gender equality). Both gender awareness-raising and gender impact assessments lack systematic approaches, with their use noted as sporadic and varying widely among ministries. Gender planning is similarly variable.

As of 2019, programme evaluation in the framework of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds) includes a thematic evaluation of gender mainstreaming. The 2005 Council of Ministers' decision assigned the Equality Unit of the NMWR responsibility for evaluating and certifying the compliance of Structural Fund project proposals with national and EU legislation/policies on gender equality. The Directorate-General for European Programmes, Coordination, and Development, as the managing authority, published guidelines on project compliance with EU law on anti-discrimination and gender equality.

Training and awareness-raising

Public administrations are not legally required to undergo gender-related training and only some of the ministries participate. The training targets officials at the highest level, as well as all public employees, on an ad hoc basis. Training often forms part of the implementation of specific actions within the NAP for Gender Equality or various programmes co-funded by the European Social Funds (ESF), for example the Gender Pay Gap project, which funded training to tackle gender stereotypes in the education system.

Specific training on gender mainstreaming in public administration is expected to be implemented in 2019 by the National Academy for Public Administration. A new Gender Mainstreaming Handbook and Action Plan for public administration was approved and announced at the end of 2018. This will focus on training selected public administrators. The new Handbook and Action Plan, when implemented and supported, should contribute to gender mainstreaming and even the introduction of gender budgeting.

Gender statistics

As there is no legal basis for the collection of sex-disaggregated data, the Cyprus Statistical Service (CYSTAT) does not always systematically produce, analyse or publish data disaggregated by sex, nor does it always present gender gaps for some statistical indicators. Nevertheless, as most of the surveys are conducted in line with EU regulations, they typically collect data disaggregated by sex in practice.

CYSTAT is responsible for collecting and publishing all sex-disaggregated data produced, although there is neither a formal mechanism nor a designated unit responsible for sex-disaggregated statistics. Examples of publications reporting sex-disaggregated data are 'The Statistical Portrait of Women in Cyprus' (2012) [3], 'The Woman in Cyprus in Figures' (2017) [4] and 'The Life of Women and Men in Europe' (2018) [5].

Although CYSTAT does not conduct surveys specifically on gender-related topics, it systematically includes gender as a variable in 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)). The national population census also includes sex-disaggregated information. Where the survey data are available by gender, the disseminated results reflect this. Dissemination methods are at the discretion of survey project managers', with common methods including websites, print publications and information bulletins.

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Good practices

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Endnotes

[1] More information available at: www.eif.gov.cy

[2] Περί Καταπολέμησης των Φυλετικών και Ορισμένων Άλλων Διακρίσεων (Επίτροπος) Νόμου (Ν.42(Ι)/2004).

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[4] CYSTAT.

[5] CYSTAT.