

HELLENIC REPUBLIC

GREEK NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Neofytou Vamva 6, GR 106 74 Athens, Greece; Tel: +30 210 7233221-2;

E-mail: info@nchr.gr ; Website: www.nchr.gr



Oral Statement of the Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR) on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in Greece

9 November 2020

79th Virtual Pre-Sessional Working Group

Madame Chairperson,

Distinguished Members of the Committee,

It is an honour for us to provide your *Committee* on behalf of the *Greek National Commission for Human Rights* (hereinafter “the *Commission*”), with information relevant to Greece’s implementation of the *CEDAW*, in follow-up to our *Country Specific Information*.

The *Commission* is Greece’s NHRI, accredited with an A status, and has a pluralistic composition of forty-two (42) institutions-members, among which a member appointed by the *Greek League for Women’s Rights*.

The *Commission*, particularly concerned with the impact of the restrictive measures combating the spread of Covid-19 pandemic, adopted, in the early stages of the pandemic, a ***Report on the need for protection of human rights, with regard to the measures taken in response to the pandemic with recommendations to the State*** (hereinafter “*Pandemic Human Rights Report*”) that continue to be relevant, as the second wave of the pandemic is affecting the country.

More specifically:

Violence against women and domestic violence

The *Commission*, underlines in its *Pandemic Human Rights Report* **the increase of domestic violence during the lockdown** and reiterates **the need for systematic provision of support and accommodation to women**, including migrants and refugees, women with disabilities and LGBTQI, who are under threat.

In this regard, the *Commission* has addressed *Recommendations* to the competent State authorities and before the Parliament to protect victims of violence against women and to prosecute the perpetrators of such crimes.

As far as the law developments are concerned, the *Commission* notes with satisfaction the ratification by Greece of *Council of Europe’s Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence* in 2018 (*Law 4351/2018*).

In the same framework, however, the *Commission* deploras:

- the non-prosecution of perpetrators despite the significant number of domestic violence reported cases,
- the lack of introduction into schools of educational material on the elimination of gender stereotypes and of systematic training of professionals in the field and
- the lack of available sex-disaggregated data in relation to all forms of gender-based violence.

Employment

The *Commission* recognises the recent positive law developments, towards the **harmonization of national law with the EU gender equality acquis**. However, it emphasises the fact that certain gaps in the legislation and in current practices limit women's labour rights, and these are:

- the high unemployment rate for women,
- the dismissals of pregnant women in the private sector,
- the absence of a minimum single maternity benefit and
- the continuous reduction of the already insufficient day-care structures for children and dependent persons.

Moreover, the *Commission*, reiterating its standard claim that **the financial crisis had exacerbated an evident setback in protecting women's labour rights**, means to share its concerns that the **emergency restrictive measures on employment due to Covid-19 pandemic**, such as imposed flexibility in working hours or teleworking without a protective framework, may deteriorate the already existing inequalities, and blur the lines between paid work and personal life ([findings](#) of Eurofound's *Living, working and COVID-19 e-survey*).

In this regard, the *Commission* recommends the transposition in national law of the *Directive (EU) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on **work-life balance** for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU*, which will contribute to the achievement of gender equality in employment.

Likewise, the *Commission* appreciates the recent launch by *the Government* of the **Pegasus project**, which contains policy proposals for addressing the **gender gap in pensions** on a multifaceted basis.

Women in power

With regard to women's empowerment in Greece through taking up **leadership and decision making-positions both in the public and private sector**, [available data](#) by the *Observatory of the General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality* are disappointing with the exception of the justice sector.

The *Commission* has [welcomed the election](#) of the **first female President of the Hellenic Republic** in 2020 which marks, substantially and symbolically the transition of the Hellenic Republic from childhood to adulthood. However, **women are still under-represented in all major political offices** (the Cabinet, the Parliament and the Municipal and Regional Councils), despite the applicable

1/3 gender quota referring **to the total number of candidates for election and not the elected ones**. The *Commission* considers that this system has proven ineffective for the political empowerment of women and therefore the amendment introduced by recent *Law 4604/2019 on substantive gender equality, preventing and combating gender-based violence* (article 15) - whereby the relevant quota increased at 40% for parliamentary national and European elections - is likely to fail unless accompanied by additional supportive measures to women candidates.

In the **private sector**, inequalities between women and men in leadership positions are even more persistent. Only 9% of board members of the largest publicly listed companies are women. Investing in economic empowerment of women can yield higher development returns in the achievement of sustainable development goals such as gender equality (Goal 5).

Recent *Law 4706/2020 on corporate governance of public limited companies, modern capital market, incorporation into the Greek legislation of Directive (EU) 2017/828 of the European Parliament and of the Council, measures for the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2017/1131 and other provisions* which introduced a 25% quota for the representation of women in **administrative boards of listed companies** is a positive step. Similarly, the establishment of **Equality Badges** for enterprises adopting gender equality corporate policies is a great initiative – it remains to be seen how it will be implemented by the *General Secretariat*.

[Disadvantaged groups of women](#)

Women belonging to disadvantaged groups of women often face multiple obstacles accessing and enjoying their basic rights.

As regards **women with disabilities**, the *Commission* draws the attention to the first **National Action Plan 2020-2023 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**, in accordance with the UN guidelines.

However, the *Commission*, taking into account the lack of continuity and coherence in the context of the measures and services in favour of disabled persons, regardless of gender, as well as, of coordinated data, it recommends an **essential horizontal inclusion of the dimension of disability at the designing of social policies**.

For further Information on the issue, we refer to the Submission to your *Committee* by the *National Confederation of Disabled People of Greece (NCDP)*, a representative of which are appointed in the *Commission's* Plenary.

Regarding **Roma women**, the *Commission* has identified the following key aspects for their empowerment and successful social integration:

- access to **education** - but also securing school attendance - for Roma girls who often quit school to enter into an early marriage and childbirth,

- equal **employment** opportunities for Roma women to enhance the financial independence and
- effective **access to justice** in civil, criminal and administrative matters.

The *Commission* together with the *Panhellenic Confederation of Greek Roma*, which appoints a member to the *Commission*, are working towards addressing them. In addition, the *Commission* is a partner of the *Council of Europe* in capacity-building activities for the empowerment of Roma women.

With regard to **migrant women**, the *Commission* advocates for a **gender-sensitive approach to migration** policies and asylum procedures in line with the *Committee's Recommendations* (General Recommendation No. 32 on the gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality and statelessness of women, CEDAW/C/GC/32, 14 November 2014).

It is well known that Greece dealt with an unprecedented number of refugees arriving at its shores since 2015. Albeit a dramatic increase in accommodation places and a boost to the capacity of its asylum system, multiple factors contributed to the current asphyxiating situation in the Greek Aegean Islands. In this regard, the *Commission* has just issued **a comprehensive Reference Report on the Refugee and Migrant Issue** (September 2020) with analytical recommendations to the Greek State on the following topics: the situation at borders, push-backs, reception and accommodation conditions, administrative detention, asylum procedures, integration of third country nationals and the specific situation of victims of torture, migrant minors and persons with disabilities and chronic diseases.

The *Commission* would be happy to take questions on any of these issues or other issues covered in our Submission to the *Committee*.

Thank you.