



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Ninth periodic report submitted by Cyprus under article 18 of the Convention due in 2025***

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- * The present document is being issued without formal editing.
- ** The present document was submitted pursuant to the simplified reporting procedure. It contains the responses of the State Party to the Committee's list of issues prior to reporting ([CEDAW/C/CYP/QPR/9](#)).
- *** The annexes to the present document may be accessed from the web page of the Committee.



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List of Abbreviations

ACPCDV	Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Domestic Violence
AP	Action Plan
APHVF	Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family
BiCTCGE	Bi-Communal Technical Committee on Gender Equality
CAPHR	Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights
CCD	Cyprus Civil Defence
CGE	Commissioner for Gender Equality
CPI	Cyprus Pedagogical Institute
COM	Council of Ministers
COSV	Cyprus Observatory on School Violence
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSS	Cyprus Statistical Services
CRTA	Cyprus Radio Television Authority
CUT	Cyprus University of Technology
CYSTAT	Cyprus Statistical Service
DOL	Department of Labour
DV	Domestic Violence
GE	Gender Equality
GECEVT	Gender Equality Committee in Employment and Vocational Training
GEC	Gender Equality Committee
MACPGE	Military Advisory Council for the Promotion of Gender Equality
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MJPO	Ministry of Justice and Public Order
MGI	Minimum Guaranteed Income
MOD	Ministry of Defence
MOESY	Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth
MOF	Ministry of Finance
NAPATHB	National Action Plan Against Trafficking in Human Beings
NAP	National Action Plan
NAPGE	National Action Plan for Gender Equality
NSGE	National Strategy for Gender Equality

NSPNCPP	National Strategy for the Promotion of Normal Childbirth and the Prevention of Prematurity
NSNAPPCVAW	National Strategy and Action Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women
NG	National Guard
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NMWR	National Machinery for Women's Rights
NRM	National Referral Mechanism
PES	Public Employment Service
PIO	Press Information Office
POCTHB	Police Office for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings
SP	Strategic Plan
SDMCIVP	Sub-directorate for the Management of Cases Involving Vulnerable Persons
SWS	Social Welfare Service
THB	Trafficking in Human Beings
VAW	Violence Against Women
WBAS	Welfare Benefits Administration Service
WH	Women's House
WHO	World Health Organization

Introduction

1. The Ninth Periodic Report of Cyprus on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (hereinafter referred to as the “present report”) addresses the issues raised in the Advance Unedited Version entitled “List of Issues and Questions Prior to the Submission of the Ninth Periodic Report of Cyprus”, adopted by the pre-sessional working group on 21 February 2024. It also responds to the recommendations outlined in the Concluding Observations on the Eighth Periodic Report of Cyprus, (hereinafter the “Concluding Observations”), which were adopted by the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, during its consideration of the Eighth Periodic Report of Cyprus (25 July 2018) (hereinafter the “previous report”).
2. The present report covers the developments in the elimination of discrimination against women, and the promotion of gender equality (GE) from June 2018 to February 2024.
3. The present report has been prepared by the Law Commissioner of the Republic of Cyprus, who, pursuant to a decision by the Council of Ministers (COM), is entrusted with ensuring Cyprus’ compliance with its reporting obligations under international human rights instruments. It has been compiled based on information and data provided by the Ministry of Justice and Public Order (MJPO), the competent authority for the purposes of the Convention, as well as by other ministries and government departments responsible for specific matters.
4. Additional information was obtained from the Commissioner for Gender Equality (CGE), relevant NGOs, particularly women’s organizations under the National Machinery for Women’s Rights (NMWR), the Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights (CAPHR), and the Gender Equality Committee in Employment and Vocational Training Education (GECEVT).
5. The present report has also been communicated to women’s organizations, human rights NGOs and professional associations.
6. The CEDAW Concluding Observations were promptly disseminated in both English and Greek to the ministries, other government authorities, the House of Representatives (HOR), the Judiciary, NGOs, universities and other institutions to promote awareness and support implementation. They were also made available on the website of the MJPO. Similarly, CEDAW along with its Optional Protocol and the Committee’s Recommendations, has been distributed to all relevant stakeholders involved in GE and women’s empowerment.
7. It is important to note that due to the ongoing illegal occupation of 36.2 per cent of the territory of the Republic of Cyprus, the Government is not in a position to exercise effective control over all of its territory. Consequently, it cannot ensure the application of the international human rights instruments or implement the recommendations of Treaty Bodies in areas beyond its effective control.
8. As a result, the Government of the Republic of Cyprus is unable to ensure full realization of women’s rights and GE laws, policies and programs for those residing in the occupied areas. It is important to recall that Cyprus’s accession to the European Union was subject to Protocol 10 of the 2003 Act of Accession, which states that *“the application of the acquis shall be suspended in those areas of the Republic of Cyprus in which the Government of the Republic of Cyprus does not exercise effective control”*. Accordingly, all information and data presented in this report pertain solely to the Government-controlled areas.

I. General

9. The total number of women in Cyprus is 463,600, accounting for 51.2 per cent of the total population. The age distribution of women is as follows: 15 per cent are children aged 0-14, 68 per cent are aged 15-64, and 17 per cent are aged 65 and older. As of 2021, the fertility rate stands at 1.39.

10. In terms of education, 52 per cent of women in Cyprus have attained tertiary education, compared to 44.2 per cent of men. The employment rate for women aged 20-64 is 72.1 per cent, while for men in the same age group, it is 84.2 per cent. In 2022, the long-term unemployment rate was 2.5 per cent for women and 2.0 per cent for men. Additionally, 1.4 per cent of women and 0.3 per cent of men aged 20-64 in 2022 were outside the labour force due to caregiving responsibilities.

11. The gender employment gap, defined as the difference in employment rates between men and women, was 12.1 per cent, according to the EU Labour Force Survey (**See Annex 4**). The total unmet need for employment as a percentage of the extended labour force in 2022 was 14.7 per cent for women and 10.6 per cent for men. The gender pay gap stood at 9.7 per cent in 2021, with a disparity of 18.6 per cent in the private sector and 1 per cent in the public sector.

12. Life expectancy at birth is 83.3 years for women and 79.1 years for men. According to EUROSTAT (2020) healthy life expectancy at age 65 is 7 years for women and 7.36 years for men.

13. In 2021, 36.1 per cent of women and 41.4 per cent of men aged 65 and older rated their health as “very good” or “good.”

14. For additional data and infographics, please visit:

- Gender Statistics report of the Cyprus Statistical Service (CSS): https://library.cystat.gov.cy/NEW/GENDER_STATISTICS-2023-E%CE%9D-141223.pdf;
- Demographic Statistics - 2019, CSS: <https://www.cystat.gov.cy/en/PublicationList?s=46>;
- Health and Hospital Statistics, 2021, CSS: <https://www.cystat.gov.cy/en/SubthemeStatistics?id=38>.

15. It is important to note that although there is no legal basis for the collection of sex-disaggregated data, most surveys conducted by the Cyprus Statistical Service (CYSTAT) include sex as a variable. CYSTAT systematically includes gender in surveys on employment, education, health, living conditions, and income. These surveys and the national population census help in the collection and analysis of data relevant to the areas covered by the Convention. By disaggregating data in these key areas, CYSTAT supports the development of policies aimed at improving GE and monitoring progress toward achieving equality between women and men.

II. Women's rights and gender equality in relation to pandemic, recovery efforts and global crises

16. The COVID-19 pandemic has created a global crisis with profound social and economic impacts, disproportionately affecting women and girls, primarily due to pre-existing gender inequalities and increased caregiving responsibilities. In Cyprus, national stakeholders implemented various measures to mitigate these effects, focusing on addressing domestic violence (DV) exacerbated by lockdowns.

17. The Ministry of Health (MOH), in cooperation with the National Strategy Implementation Council “*Foni*” (“*Voice*”) and the Police, established a telephone-helpline to support children and adolescents facing violence-related issues.

18. The Police prioritized DV case investigations, adhering to pandemic protocols. Key actions included:

- Risk assessment in cases of spousal or partner violence;
- Enforcing protective orders, arrests, and court orders for victim protection;
- Remote testimony options for children, compliant with social distancing measures;
- Accelerated adoption of technology to improve victims’ access to police services;
- Cooperation with Social Welfare Services (SWS) and NGOs, including the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family (APHVF), for comprehensive victim support.

19. Additionally, the CGE, with support from the MJPO, prepared a televised campaign highlighting the critical roles women played across sectors, like healthcare, security, and essential services, during the pandemic. The CGE also encouraged women experiencing violence to report incidents to the police or APHVF 24-hour helpline.

20. APHVF maintained full shelter operations and provided support via its telephone helpline, teleconferences, live chat, email, and SMS. Key actions included:

- Development of COVID-19-specific management protocols for shelters, new admissions, and staff;
- Collaboration with private doctors for medical evaluations and private companies for alternative accommodation when shelters reached capacity;
- Procurement of masks, antiseptics, and vitamins for shelter residents;
- Enhanced staffing with psychologists and social workers;
- Creation of manuals for managing DV cases remotely.

21. The pandemic also brought challenges to employment, prompting Cyprus to implement inclusive measures supporting employees, self-employed individuals, and businesses. A Special Allowance for the Self-Employed was introduced, providing 60 per cent of insurable weekly earnings to individuals whose work was either completely or partially suspended. Additionally, a Special Scheme for Unemployed Persons offered financial assistance to those who lost their jobs, alleviating the income loss caused by the crisis.

22. To prevent layoffs, the Complete Business Suspension Plan provided unemployment benefits to employees of businesses that had suspended operations. A Sickness Benefit was introduced for employees with health vulnerabilities or in quarantine, extending the support to self-employed individuals as well. A Special Paid Leave for Child Care was launched to assist working parents caring for children up to 15 years old or children with disabilities. Allowances were income-based, with single-parent families receiving slightly higher benefits. Pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women were classified as a vulnerable group and allowed to work from home under a Special Leave for Vulnerable Workers scheme.

23. On a broader scale, social measures included the creation of Mobile Service Units to assist the elderly and vulnerable populations, providing essential items like food and medicine in collaboration with NGOs and voluntary organizations. A

dedicated website was launched to streamline the submission of applications and faster processing of benefits.

24. These measures demonstrate Cyprus's proactive approach to safeguarding employment, mitigating the pandemic's socioeconomic effects, and supporting working parents and vulnerable groups.

III. Women, peace and security

25. The first National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAPWPS) (2021-2025) outlines actions to promote women's participation and empowerment, enhance protection, prevention, and the advancement of women's rights, with a budget of €180,000. Additional annual funding allocated to the Office of the CGE supports Civil Society Organizations (CSO) implementing activities aligned with UN Security Council Resolution (SCR) [1325\(2000\)](#). A Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee oversees the implementation of the NAPWPS.

26. Awareness-raising videos on social media, inform the public about gender-related issues, while training sessions and workshops for frontline officers are regularly organized to raise awareness and promote gender sensitivity, particularly regarding victims of violence.

27. As part of the NAPWPS, Cyprus Civil Defence (CCD) has undertaken key actions, including the establishment of a Gender Equality Committee, guided by the *"Code of Practice on Preventing and Combating Harassment and Sexual Harassment in Public Services"* (CPPCHSH). In November 2023, a meeting with representatives of the CAPHR finalized various forms and an action protocol prepared by the CCD. This protocol outlines procedures for protecting the population and vulnerable groups in cases of harassment, sexual harassment, or violence among CCD members, along with reporting forms and process for psychological or sexual harassment involving employees, volunteers, conscripts, or individuals needing protection.

28. In February 2024, a training workshop for the CCD's GE committee was conducted by officers from the CAPHR and the CGE. The workshop covered topics such as GE, stereotypes, the NAPWPS, and the CPPCHSH, concluding with discussions on the CCD's specific needs and operations.

29. As part of the initiative, a comprehensive Guide was created in collaboration with the CAPHR and CGE, aligned with the CPPCHSH based on *the Equal Treatment of Men and Women in Employment and Vocational Training Law, 2002, [L.205(I)/2002]*. This guide provides clear guidelines for preventing and addressing gender harassment and sexual harassment within CCD and has been distributed to CCD members and posted on the organization's website.

30. The CCD plans to accelerate the procurement process for expert services to conduct further training on GE, the protection of women, and the principles and objectives of UN SCR 1325. CCD personnel and volunteers will also receive training on the guide created under the NAPWPS. While in 2024, initial training sessions were conducted by the CAPHR and the CGE, in 2025, consultants under cooperation contracts will lead further training initiatives.

31. In 2019, a Military Advisory Council for the Promotion of Gender Equality (MACPGE) was established to support the implementation of UN SCR 1325. The MACPGE consists of 3 women and 2 men, all officers in the National Guard (NG) of the Republic, and has the following responsibilities:

(a) Advocating for GE and promoting policies to increase women's representation at all levels of the NG;

- (b) Ensuring that gender considerations are integrated into NG actions;
- (c) Encouraging NG members to support the Council's activities and report on GE issues;
- (d) Informing NG personnel about the impact of armed conflict on both sexes and emphasizing the value of women's involvement in conflict resolution and decision-making;
- (e) Organizing seminars and experiential workshops to educate all NG personnel on GE.

32. The MACPGE also serves as the Gender Equality Committee (GEC) for preventing harassment and sexual harassment within the NG, and for eliminating stereotypes that perpetuate discrimination, inequality, and gender-based violence. A Code of Conduct for military and civilian personnel involved in missions has been developed in collaboration with the Office of the CGE. This code outlines obligations to respect the rights of women and girls during conflicts and peace processes.

33. Under the National Strategy for Gender Equality (NSGE) (2024-2026), the MOD has launched targeted and systematic training for all NG personnel, including contract soldiers, Ministry staff, and National Guardsmen. These programs include workshops, electronic and audio-visual materials, and conferences, to educate personnel on GE principles, deconstruct stereotypes and promote equality. Training on gender perspectives and women and girls' rights is also incorporated into all basic courses required for promotion to higher ranks.

34. In 2016, the Regulations for non-commissioned officers (NCOs) were amended (Regulations 28/2016) to unify the rules for male and female NCOs, replacing previous gender-specific regulations (Regulations 311/1993). The *National Guard (Amendment) Law, 2016 [L.82(I)/2016]* also allows women to be recruited as contract soldiers. No further legislation under the MOD requires amendment to eliminate discrimination. Since the recruitment of female contract soldiers in 2017, improvements have been made to ensure safe and comfortable living conditions for women in military premises, with further enhancements planned for regular duties and overnight assignments.

35. All training programs, military exercises, and education opportunities are equally provided to both men and women. Recruitment and promotion criteria are also consistent across genders.

36. Significant progress has been made in increasing the representation of women in leadership positions within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the MOD. Out of the 44 female officers serving in the NG, 22 hold positions of responsibility and participate significantly in decision-making processes. Female non-commissioned officers constitute 32.6 per cent of the NG's NCOs, and female contract soldiers represent 20.7 per cent of the force.

37. In the MFA, 61 women hold diplomatic roles out of 181 diplomats, and women lead 10 diplomatic missions. 7 women head key directorates and departments, including the Communication and Public Diplomacy Unit and the offices of the Minister and Permanent Secretary. The position of diplomatic advisor to the Minister of Defence is also held by a woman.

38. Cyprus has strengthened its bilateral relations by contributing to GE programs in neighbouring countries, including supporting Jordan in the development of its NAP. Furthermore, Cyprus continues to collaborate with UN organizations dedicated to empowering women globally.

39. The bi-communal Technical Committee on Gender Equality (BiCTCGE)¹ organized several gender-related activities:

(a) On 13 April 2022, it presented an Action Plan to the leaders for ensuring women's full, equal and meaningful participation in the settlement process, in response to UN Security Council Resolution [2587 \(2021\)](#);

(b) In March 2023, a photo exhibition was organized to highlight and celebrate the pivotal contributions of women in the Cyprus talks. The exhibition aimed to showcase how both sides have increasingly included senior women in delegations, as political and legal advisors, co-chairs, and members of working groups and technical committees, with the goal of informing and inspiring;

(c) A panel discussion, in May 2023 entitled "*A seat at the table: Women's contribution to the Cyprus talks*", brought together female experts in politics and civil society issues from over 25 island-wide CSOs;

(d) A seminar on "*Women and Leadership*" was held on November 7, 2023, followed by a seminar on "*Women and Entrepreneurship*" on December 4, 2023. The second seminar focused on the accomplishments and challenges faced by Cypriot women in entrepreneurship, as well as the cultural and structural barriers specific to Cyprus.

40. The membership in the Technical Committees now reflects full gender parity, following efforts to "*ensure women's full and meaningful representation in the settlement process/ an eventual settlement process*", as provided in the 2022 Action Plan recommendations.

IV. Women's access to justice

41. In the context of *implementing the Establishment of Minimum Standards on the Rights, Support, and Protection of Victims of Crime Law, 2016, [L. 51(I)/2016]* which was amended in 2022, the Cyprus Police (CP) has created the following resources:

(i) "Rights of Victims of Crime"- Translated into 9 languages, including Braille. This document outlines victims' rights under the legal framework. It is accessible on the official Police website and internal portal, printed as a booklet, and distributed to all victims who interact with the Police;

(ii) "Rights, Support, and Protection of Victims of Gender-Based Violence"- Also translated into 9 languages. This booklet was distributed to all relevant departments. It is also accessible on both the official Police website and the internal portal.

42. The Welfare Benefits Administration Service (WBAS) supports the activation of Minimum Guaranteed Income (MGI) beneficiaries by subsidizing Greek language courses for non-Greek speakers. It also promotes participation in educational programs, basic skills development, and professional training. In collaboration with the Public Employment Service (PES), WBAS *takes a personalized approach to help*

¹ The Gender Committee was introduced in 2015 as one of 12 Bi-communal Technical Committees in Cyprus that were established with the general mandate of "addressing issues that affect the day-to-day life of people, through encouraging and facilitating greater interaction and understanding between the two communities", and that are run under the auspices of the UN. The Committee comprised approximately 10 members from each community (i.e. 10 Greek Cypriots and 10 Turkish Cypriots), including both women and men with diverse backgrounds. The Committee's establishment has been a significant step to address the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda, which seeks to increase the involvement of women and gender perspectives in peace processes.

women integrate into the labour market, empowering them to become active and contributing members of society.

43. The Committee for Gender Equality in Employment and Vocational Training (CGEEVT), established under sections 22 and 23 of *Law 205(I)/2002*, plays a key role in providing independent assistance to victims of gender discrimination in the workplace. This includes offering free legal advice and legal aid. Notably, to encourage victims to report workplace GE violations, legal *aid* is not contingent on financial criteria. Legal aid is available to all women, regardless of their nationality, economic status, or social background. The Committee either submits complaints ex officio or accepts them from individuals, forwarding them to the Chief Inspector for appropriate action.

44. Its advisory role to the Minister of Labor and Social Insurance includes addressing gender discrimination, *advising* on national policies, monitoring the implementation of relevant laws, and handling complaints related to gender inequality.

45. The Committee's authority to provide independent assistance is established under section 23(ia) of *Law 205(I)/2002*. *The Independent Assistance to Victims of Discrimination Regulations, 2009 (P.I. 176/2009)* govern the provision of legal aid. In December 2024, these regulations were reviewed and extended to cover all judicial proceedings, including appeals (*P.I. 459/2024*).

46. Additionally, under *the Leave (Paternity, Parental, Care, Force Majeure) and Flexible Working Arrangements for Work-Life Balance Law, 2022, [L. 216(I)/2022]*, the Committee's authority now includes providing legal aid for gender discrimination violations. Regulations governing legal aid approved by the Committee came into effect on 30 December 2024 (*P.I. 462/2024*).

47. Notably, *the Legal Aid (Amendment) Law, 2024, [L.128(I)/2024]* grants victims of gender-based or DV access to free legal aid. Eligibility requires a certificate from a relevant agency or organization *confirming* that the victim is receiving support by the WH and/or the Shelter or has filed an official complaint with the Police.

48. The amendments further specify that victims are entitled to legal aid for:

- Claiming compensation under the Prevention and Combating of Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence and for Related Issues Law, 2021 [L.115(I)/2021];
- Seeking court orders to resolve disputes with the perpetrator regarding child custody and visitation rights, under the Parents and Children Relations Law, 1990, [L.216/1990];
- Securing exclusive use of the home, as provided by the Family Courts Law, 1990, [L.23/1990];
- Pursuing actions against the perpetrator under the Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection) Law,2000, [L.119(I)/2000].

49. These legislative changes mark a significant step toward ensuring effective access to justice for *women* victims of gender-based violence and DV, addressing previous gaps and strengthening their rights and protection.

50. The NSGE 2024-2026 outlines specific actions under the thematic area “*Gender and Justice*” to provide targeted training on GE issues. These sessions are designed for diverse audiences, including judges and attorneys/prosecutors from the Attorney General’s Office, to enhance their understanding and application of GE principles in their professional roles. The aim is to foster a more informed and equitable judicial

system, by integrating gender considerations into legal practices and decision-making.

51. The MJPO commissioned the UNESCO Chair for GE at the University of Cyprus, an independent body, to assess the National Action Plan for Gender Equality (NAPGEN) 2019-2023. The assessment revealed significant progress in GE and confirmed that the NAPGEN's implementation reflected the state's practical commitment to GE, delivering substantial results across all areas of life for both women and men.

52. As part of its implementation, various *actions* have been promoted, including:

- **Outsourcing Research on Temporary Positive Measures:** An external partner was engaged to study the introduction of temporary positive measures, such as quotas, to increase women's representation in decision-making centres. The research examined women's participation in Boards of Semi-Governmental organizations, Management Boards of Public Companies, and party ballot papers. It also included a study of positive measures implemented in other European countries, their application, and their impact;
- **Organising Training and Educational Seminars:** Continuous and systematic seminars for women aspiring to enter politics were conducted by the NMWR and the Office of the CGE. These seminars aimed to encourage political participation, enhance abilities and skills, present best practices for managing political life, and prepare women for political offices and political career challenges;
- **Promoting Sexual and Reproductive Rights:** The NMWR and the Office of the CGE organised programmes to inform women about their sexual and reproductive rights. These initiatives offered practical solutions to safeguard women's sexual and reproductive health and highlighted best practices from other European countries;
- **Incorporating Gender in State Budgets:** Actions were organised to promote gender integration in state budgets, through informing and training civil servants and private sector counterparts. An informative conference, initiated by the NMWR, presented the benefits of gender budgeting in promoting GE, development, fairer resource distribution, and improving life conditions, especially for vulnerable women;
- **Reforming and Modernising Family Law:** The MJPO prepared 8 amending bills expected to positively impact society by ensuring the rights and best interests of children, promoting smooth parents-children's relations after divorce, guaranteeing equal treatment of parents in family disputes, simplifying procedures, and expediting family law cases;
- **Introducing Mediation for Family Disputes:** The Family Disputes Mediation Law 2019, [L.62(I)/2019] was enacted, establishing mediation as an alternative means of resolving family disputes. The law aims to achieve consensual solutions, reduce conflict, improve communication between all family members, and support and maintain working relationships. The relevant regulations The Family Mediation Regulations 2022 (P.I.507/2022,) enacted on 30.12.2022, facilitate the procedure of family mediation and regulate the mediators' qualifications, their education, their fees and the registry kept by the MJPO.

53. The Assessment Report by the University of Cyprus highlighted several key *recommendations*, including:

- Establishing a coordinating body between all Ministries and Deputy Ministries to ensure collaboration on implementing actions, alongside bodies from the wider public sector, civil society, university institutions, and other stakeholders;
- Immediately incorporating gender budgeting into the state budget to support a holistic and comprehensive approach to GE;
- Emphasizing the role of media, education system, and political parties in deconstructing outdated gender stereotypes and eliminating discrimination against women;
- Strengthening public awareness regarding strategic GE plans and relevant legislation pertaining to GE.

54. These recommendations were considered in drafting the new NSGE, prepared by the Office of the CGE in close collaboration with all Ministries, state services, women's organizations, CSOs, research and academic centres, equality bodies, and local administrations.

V. National Machinery for the advancement of women

55. The annual budget allocated to the NMWR currently stands at €290,000. In the 2025 State Budget, this amount is expected to increase to €350,000, pending approval by the national parliament.

56. According to the *Commissioner for Gender Equality Law, 2024 [L.108(I)/2024]*:

- The NMWR serves as an advisory body, consisting of the Council and the Committee;
- The Council of the NMWR comprises women's rights organizations, women's wings of political parties, and trade unions;
- The CGE continues to chair the NMWR;
- The Office of the CGE supports the NMWR's operations;
- The Chair of the NMWR establishes committees composed of members and representatives from the organizations within the Council of the NMWR;
- The COM approves funding schemes, including:
 - (a) Annual grants to NMWR members; and
 - (b) Funding for programs and actions implemented by NMWR members and/or other CSOs.

57. An extensive consultation process with NMWR members was conducted during the drafting of the NSGE.

58. The NSGE 2024-2026 was drafted by the Office of the CGE in close collaboration with gender focal points from various Ministries. The strategy is the outcome of a comprehensive public consultation involving state bodies, local authorities, the NMWR, women's organizations, CSOs, research and academic institutions, and other stakeholders.

59. The new NSGE incorporates recommendations from the assessment report of the NPAGE, (2019-2023) and aligns with national, European, and international frameworks on GE and women's rights. The NSGE was approved by the COM on January 11, 2024.

60. This NSGE aims to mainstream GE across public policies and promote a culture of equality between women and men in Cyprus. As the key policy document on GE, it serves as a guide for integrating gender considerations into the policies and actions of all Ministries and Deputy Ministries. It promotes collaboration with social partners, civil society, local administration, academic institutions, and the business sector.

61. Recognizing that women are not a homogenous group and often face intersectional prejudices, the NSGE includes horizontal targeted actions for specific groups of women, such as young women, women with disabilities, single-parent women, women from large families, women from migrant backgrounds, and women in rural areas.

62. Furthermore, it includes 3 evaluation stages:

- (a) An internal evaluation by the Office of the CGE, based on reports from gender focal points;
- (b) An interim evaluation by the newly established “*Civil Society Platform*”; and
- (c) A final evaluation conducted by independent experts.

63. The NSGE encompasses 14 thematic areas and 64 actions/policies to be implemented over a three-year period, including integrating gender considerations into the state budget. In the first 10 months of implementation, 13 actions/policies were completed, and 20 more are in progress. Notably, the Office of the CGE is promoting a draft law on gender mainstreaming to ensure gender considerations are incorporated at all stages of public policy development, implementation, and monitoring. This includes areas such as the state budget, legal drafting, and public procurement. This draft law will apply to central government bodies (Ministries, Deputy Ministries, Independent Bodies, etc.) and the wider public sector.

64. The Republic of Cyprus, through the Ministry of Finance (MOF) and in collaboration with the Office of the CGE, applied for and received approval for technical support on gender-responsive budgeting from the Directorate General for Structural Reform Support of the European Commission. Launched in June 2024, the project is expected to be completed by the end of 2025. It includes tailored technical support and training sessions for representatives of the Budget Directorate of the MOF, the CSS, and the Office of the CGE.

VI. National Human Rights Institution

65. In 2022, the Office of the CAPHR was accredited with “A” status by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions. Since then, the MOF has provided additional human and financial resources to support the Office’s effective mandate and mission.

66. Although CAPHR does not have a specific mandate on women’s rights, it was designated as an Equality Body in 2004 and has played a key role in addressing GE issues. As a National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) it examines complaints and provides recommendations on gender-based discrimination.

67. Key actions of the Office include:

- Raising awareness about the gendered nature of violence against women. (VAW) and monitoring the implementation and coordination of measures and policies aimed at combating VAW and DV;

- Examining numerous complaints related to gender-based discrimination in the workplace and issuing recommendations to address such issues;
- In 2019, in collaboration with the CGEEVT, developed a Code of Conduct aimed at preventing and addressing sexual harassment in the civil service. Adopted by the COM, the Code became mandatory across the public sector. It offers practical guidance on establishing appropriate procedures to prevent and manage incidents of sexual harassment and harassment. The Code serves as a manual for fostering a respectful, gender-equal work environment;
- In 2020, the leading employers' and industrialists' federations in Cyprus signed a similar Code of Conduct for sexual harassment in the workplace which was incorporated into collective labour agreements. It aims to prevent and effectively address behaviours that create hostile work environments, infringing on human dignity and disrupting the smooth functioning of businesses;
- Launching an awareness campaign in 2021 on harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace including collaboration with organizations such as the Cyprus Theatre Organisation, the Cyprus Sports Organisation, and the Open University of Cyprus to draft relevant Codes of Conduct.

68. In partnership with the Cyprus Academy of Public Administration, conducted training seminars for civil servants on the Code of Conduct regarding sexual harassment in the public sector. Following the Commissioner's recommendations, the government promoted a bill to Parliament for the amendment of the Public Service Law to explicitly define sexual harassment in the public sector as a distinct disciplinary offence. The law is *the Public Service (Amendment) Law, 2023, [L.64(I)2023]*.

- In December 2020, the Office of the CAPHR issued a report on the status of Foreign Domestic Workers (FDWs) in Cyprus. The report highlighted various factors contributing to the coercion and violence faced by this vulnerable group of female immigrants. The Commissioner emphasized that addressing sexual harassment, violence, and abuse against FDWs requires comprehensive prevention and repression policies. Investigating complaints should adopt a victim-centred approach, and mechanisms for identifying victims of severe employment exploitation must be enhanced and better utilized by relevant support services.

VII. Temporary Special Measures

69. The Government of Cyprus is currently exploring temporary positive measures to increase women's representation in decision-making positions and to raise awareness of the benefits of utilizing the entire workforce's potential. To support this, the MJPO assigned the University of Cyprus to research the feasibility of introducing additional temporary special measures, including quotas. The study completed and submitted to the MJPO in October 2023, concluded that implementing positive measures to support women is feasible, desirable, and constitutionally permissible. These measures could include quotas for participation on the boards of semi-governmental organizations and public companies. The research found that Article 28 of the Constitution, which guarantees equality, can (and should) be interpreted in line with international and EU law to support temporary positive measures addressing women's underrepresentation in political life.

70. Based on these findings, the MJPO plans to introduce temporary positive measures to increase women's representation in decision-making roles and to raise public awareness about the benefits of leveraging the full potential of the workforce.

Additionally, as part of implementing the NAPGE2019–2023, the MJPO carried out several initiatives under the priority pillar of promoting balanced participation in decision-making. Notably, the Ministry supported and fully funded educational seminars organized by the NMWR to empower and prepare women for political life. These seminars, held in 2022-2023, target women in political office, aspiring public officials, and those interested in politics. Two rounds of seminars were conducted, each with 12 sessions, benefiting and providing instruction to over 50 women. The seminars, organized by the NMWR and the Office of the CGE, had several goals: encouraging women’s political participation, enhancing their skills and abilities, sharing best practices for managing political careers, and preparing participants for the challenges of political careers. These initiatives, part of the new NSGE 2024–2026, will continue to promote GE in decision-making.

VIII. Stereotypes and Harmful Practices

71. The NSGE 2024-2026 aims to incorporate gender perspectives into all public policies, focusing on dismantling gender stereotypes and promoting equal participation for both men and women, particularly for minority groups.

72. Key actions to foster a culture of GE, include:

- A public campaign raising awareness about the law addressing sexism and online sexism;
- Appointment of a female Ambassador for GE in Sports every two years to advocate for gender balance in sports;
- Revising Cyprus history textbooks to include the contributions, roles and stories of Cypriot women, highlighting their pivotal roles;
- Organizing training programs for School Counselling and Guidance Teachers, and other educators, to deconstruct gender stereotypes and promote GE;
- Systematic and targeted GE training to all ranks in the NG, Ministry of Defence personnel, and soldiers;
- Developing a digital archive documenting the contributions of Cypriot female politicians;
- Experiential and interactive workshops for media representatives to promote GE;
- Launching a campaign to promote advertising that challenges and avoids perpetuating gender stereotypes.

73. To strengthen collaboration among various entities, the Office of the CGE has actively engaged with key stakeholders:

- **Memorandum with the Cyprus Advertising Control Agency:** A renewed memorandum of understanding aims to promote advertising without gender stereotypes. This includes awareness-raising campaigns, training sessions, and cooperation on handling complaints related to gender inequalities and stereotypes. A joint campaign for stereotype-free advertising is planned for 2025;
- **Collaboration with the Cyprus Sportswriters Association:** An informative meeting with sportswriters was organized to discuss GE in sport. The Office conducted a month-long study on the representation of men’s and women’s sports in newspaper articles, presenting the findings to the Association to encourage balanced reporting;

- **Memorandum with the Cyprus Chamber of Commerce:** The Office signed a memorandum of understanding with the Chamber to collaborate on initiatives related to employment, entrepreneurship, and business, with a focus on promoting GE in these sectors.

74. In 2022, the Press and Information Office, (PIO) in collaboration with the Civil Registry and Migration Department, launched an awareness campaign targeting the demand for sexual services from victims of human trafficking. This campaign primarily disseminated through social media, aimed to raise public awareness about the exploitation inherent in trafficking.

75. In 2023, the PIO, in collaboration with the CGE, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth (MOESY) and the Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy, organized an information campaign promoting the participation of women in science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics (STEAM) fields.

76. The campaign highlighted the achievements of women excelling in STEAM, presenting them as role models to inspire younger generations. Its dual purpose was to celebrate their successes and to encourage more young women to pursue careers in these areas. As part of the campaign ten short testimonial videos featuring women in STEAM were produced and shared on social media, aired on the Cyprus Broadcasting Channel, and screened in schools nationwide.

77. The Cyprus Radiotelevision Authority (CRTA) has implemented significant measures to eliminate gender stereotypes in the media and promote GE. In 2021, it adopted a Code of Conduct for media professionals in avoiding stereotypes, combating discrimination, and promoting GE in areas such as politics and economics. The Code also provides guidelines for addressing gender-based violence, avoiding linguistic sexism, and enhancing GE within broadcasters' infrastructures. Supported by workshops and tools based on European and international research, the Code has been endorsed by media providers, journalists' unions, and regulatory bodies.

78. CRTA has organized various initiatives to raise awareness and promote best practices. In 2022, it co-hosted a two-day seminar on GE and the media with the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, bringing together media professionals to discuss integrating a gender perspective into their work. In 2023, CRTA held a workshop on the regulatory framework of the digital landscape, focusing on the intersection of human trafficking and gender-based violence. Since 2019, CRTA has also conducted media literacy workshops in schools to address harmful gender stereotypes and educate students about gender-based violence in digital spaces.

79. As part of its broader efforts, CRTA partnered with the Office of the Commissioner for Children's Rights and other stakeholders to produce television advertisements promoting children's rights. These cartoon-style ads airing monthly from 2018 to 2019, raised awareness about key rights, including non-discrimination and education. CRTA has also disseminated circulars to audiovisual media providers, emphasizing privacy in reporting VAW and encouraging responsible journalism.

80. CRTA enforces compliance with legislation and has revised *the Radio and Television Broadcasters Law* of 1998 (L.7(I)/1998) to align with EU directives. The 2021 amendments strengthen human rights protections, prohibited incitement to hatred, enhanced accessibility for individuals with disabilities, and regulated harmful content, particularly related to minors. CRTA has examined over 80 cases involving violations of gender dignity and stereotypes, imposing sanctions where necessary.

81. Currently, CRTA is revising its regulations to include provisions ensuring the anonymity of sexual violence victims, straightforward reporting of offenses, and gender-sensitive language. The revised rules will emphasize equality, prohibit

sensationalism in reporting crimes involving minors, and safeguard the dignity of both genders.

82. Through these comprehensive actions, CRTA continues to foster a media environment that upholds GE, challenges stereotypes, and promotes respectful representation in all audiovisual content.

83. Moreover, GECEVT collaborates with the Pedagogical Institute and the Ministry of Education's Interdepartmental Gender Committee to organize annual student competitions focused on GE. These initiatives aim to challenge gender stereotypes in schools, promote equality, and raise awareness about discrimination. Additionally, the Committee works with universities to promote workplace equality and distributes educational materials on topics such as maternity protection and sexual harassment.

84. In 2022-2023, GECEVT launched a campaign to raise awareness about workplace harassment. Key components included:

- Posters designed by university students, distributed to public services, ministries, universities, and other organizations;
- A Guide to Preventing and Addressing Harassment and Sexual Harassment, providing organizations and businesses with practical guidelines to prevent harassment, aligning with national legislation and the NAPGEN. The guide also supports employers in drafting codes of conduct;
- Seminars for Equality Committees and Officers, enhancing the ability to manage and investigate harassment complaints;
- A seminar for high-ranking police officials, organized in collaboration with the CAPHR and the CGE, focusing on effective complaint-handling procedures and addressing sexual harassment.

85. Recognizing the increasing prevalence of sexism, including online sexism, the COM, during its meeting on December 18, 2024, approved a proposal submitted by the MJPO to assign responsibility for monitoring the *Combating Sexism and Online Sexism and of Related Matters Law, 2020, [L.209(I)/2020]* to the CGE. Following the COM decision, the CGE is entrusted with designing actions and strategies, educating, and raising awareness among civil society on combating sexism. These efforts, already promoted by the Office of the GGE aim at strengthening ongoing national initiatives to foster a culture of equality and to dismantle social stereotypes and prejudices that perpetuate sexism, gender-based violence, inequality, and discrimination.

86. In June 2023, the CSS, in collaboration with the Office of the CGE, launched the first edition of the online publication “*Gendered Statistics*”. This initiative underscores the critical need for systematically collecting sex-disaggregated data to design and implement targeted policies and actions for GE.

87. The publication will be updated annually, and as part of the NSGE, several data-related actions have been prioritized:

- Collecting and analysing data on the representation of women and men in the maritime and shipping sectors;
- Compiling data on sexual and reproductive health to inform policymaking;
- Gathering data on participation in research, innovation, and cybersecurity sectors;
- Conducting a statistical assessment of gender representation in leadership and decision-making roles.

88. The collection and systematic analysis of such sex-disaggregated data will ensure that GE efforts are evidence-based and effectively address specific gaps and needs.

IX. Gender-Based Violence Against Women

89. In line with the Republic of Cyprus's obligations under the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), ratified in 2017 by *The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Ratifying) Law, 2017, [L. 14(III)/2017]*, the COM approved the establishment of the Woman's House (WH) in January 2019. The WH officially began operations in December 2020, offering integrated services to women victims of violence and their families through a multi-agency, multidisciplinary approach, with specially trained professionals providing support under one roof.

90. The operation of the WH has been entrusted to the APHVF, under the supervision of and in cooperation with the SWS and other relevant stakeholders. Fully funded by government subsidies, the WH *operates* as a “one-stop shop,” where all involved services are co-located and coordinated to ensure effective case management. Importantly, accessing services does not require victims to press charges against perpetrators.

91. The WH's multi-professional network includes social workers, psychologists, healthcare professionals, legal professionals, and police officers. Services are designed to support mothers and their dependent children together, preventing separation and reducing the risk of re-victimization. A Child Advocate at the WH provides specialized support to child victims of DV, ensuring all procedures are child-friendly, safe, and in-line with children's rights as outlined in Articles 22, 23, and 26 of the Istanbul Convention.

92. The WH provides the following services to adult women, underage girls (under 18 years), and their dependent children who are victims of gender-based or DV:

- (a) Immediate protection and safety measures for the victim, addressing the perpetrator;
- (b) Immediate/short-term psychological support, with referrals to NGOs or Mental Health Services (MHS) for long-term treatment if needed;
- (c) Socio-economic support;
- (d) Arrangements and escort for medical examinations;
- (e) Collection of victims' statements, including visualized statements recorded by the police;
- (f) Referral and/or escort to other relevant services;
- (g) Legal services.

93. WH provides services to migrant women based on the principle of non-discrimination, regardless of their migration or legal status. Since its opening on 1st December 2020, the WH has handled approximately 850 cases of VAW and their children, as of February 2024.

94. In 2023, a new psychological support centre called Nima was established to provide psychological support and treatment to adults—both men and women—who experienced sexual abuse during their childhood. The centre is funded by the MOH and operated by the Cyprus Family Planning Association (CFPA).

95. In 2021, a Safeguarding Sub-Directorate was established within the Crime Combating Department at Police Headquarters. Its mission is to prevent and combat DV and VAW and young girls by implementing relevant laws, regulations, and directives/orders issued by the Chief of Police. The Sub-Directorate oversees and supervises the work of the newly established specialized Police Units for DV, aiming to create a robust and effective system for addressing such cases.

96. Since 2020, specialized Police Units for the investigation of DV and related offences have been established in all Police Divisions across Cyprus. These units are staffed by trained police personnel and collaborate closely with relevant authorities, including the SWS, MH S, MOESY, and the APHVF. The units handle cases involving DV, child abuse, harassment and stalking, and VAW.

97. Police officers use risk assessment tools during the investigation of DV cases to ensure the safety and protection of victims:

- **Risk Assessment Protocol:** This protocol applies to violence between current or former spouses, cohabitants, or partners, as mandated by *Law 14(III)/2017*. It is a critical tool used to properly investigate and evaluate cases;
- **Individual Risk Assessment:** Conducted under *Law 51(I)/2016*, this assessment determines a victim's special protection needs. It evaluates the risk of death, the severity of the situation, and the likelihood of repeated violence.

98. The CP follows a specific protocol for investigating rape and sexual abuse cases, which includes detailed guidance to protect and support victims while conducting an early, individualized evaluation of their needs and assessing potential risks. To ensure victims' safety, the Police may apply to the Court for the issuance of Protection Orders.

99. A new mobile application, the ELPIS App, has been developed in cooperation with a telecommunications company to help silent victims seek immediate assistance. The app features an SOS button that silently notifies the Police of the victim's exact location. The ELPIS App will soon be available 24/7 for all residents of Cyprus who are in extreme danger of DV.

100. The crime of femicide has been established as a separate-specific offence in *The Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and for Related Matters (Amendment) Law, 2022, [L. 117(I) of 2022]*. This legislative reform makes femicide visible as the most extreme form of gender-based violence, with its circumstances treated as aggravating factors during sentencing.

101. In 2021, *the Law to Provide for the Protection from Harassment and Stalking, [L.114(I)/2021]* was introduced to enhance protection against harassment and stalking. The law broadly defines harassment as actions that cause anxiety or distress, encompassing various forms of bullying and introduces stricter penalties for cases, involving fear of violence. It covers stalking behaviours, such as following attempting contact through any means, intruding on the victim's personal life via social media, as well as cyberbullying. The police are empowered to apply for a restraining order before a criminal case is filed and have the authority to enforce this provision.

102. The National Coordinating Body for the Prevention and Combating of Violence Against Women (NCBPCVAW) was established following a decision by the COM on 3 March 2022. Its primary responsibilities include coordinating, planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating policies and measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence outlined in the Istanbul Convention, guided by *Law 115(I)/2021*, which is the key legislative framework for the Convention's implementation. Since its establishment, the Coordinating Body has developed the first National Strategy and the first National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat

Violence Against Women (2023–2028) (NSNAPPCVAW), based on the four core pillars of the Istanbul Convention and incorporating the recommendations of the GREVIO Committee of the Council of Europe.

103. The Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Violence in the Family (ACPCVF) is an ex officio member of the NCBPCVAW. Its role is to provide expertise and promote a collaborative partnership to effectively address issues related to violence in the family (VF) and VAW. The ACPCVF also actively participates in the NSNAPPCVAW (2023–2028).

104. While both bodies operate in the domain of combating violence, they are governed by different laws and belong to different ministries:

- *Law 115(I)/2021* specifically addresses VAW and their children;
- *Law 119(I)/2000* VF Law has a broader scope, addressing violence against all family members.

105. These distinct legal frameworks ensure there is no conflict or overlap in the mandates or functions of the ACPCVF and NCBPCVW. Efforts are underway to harmonize the *VF Law 119(I)/2000* with the *Law 115(I)/2021* to ensure cohesive and complementary approaches to addressing violence. In tackling VAW within the family, the ACPCVF collaborates closely with the NCBPCVW to prevent overlaps and ensure unified efforts. Given the complexity of violence as a social phenomenon—with multiple risk factors requiring multi-level, interdisciplinary, and coordinated approaches—this collaboration is critical.

106. The first NSNAPPCVAW (2023–2028), approved by the COM in February 2023, is closely aligned with the objectives of the Istanbul Convention, specifically: a) protecting women from all forms of violence, and preventing, prosecuting, and eliminating gender-based and DV; b) contributing to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, and promoting substantive equality between the sexes; c) developing a comprehensive framework of policies and measures to protect and support victims of gender-based and DV; d) promoting international cooperation to eradicate gender-based and DV; and e) providing support and assistance to organizations and law enforcement agencies to foster effective collaboration and adopt a holistic approach to eliminating gender-based and DV.

107. The budget of the NCBPCVAW is covered by a specific allocation within the MJPO's budget. For 2022, the total budget of the NCBPCVAW amounted to €94,000. In 2023, the budget increased to €190,000, with €35,000 allocated for actions under the NSNAPPCVAW (2023–2028). For 2024, the total budget was €220,000, with €60,000 allocated for grants supporting programs/actions focused on preventing and combating of gender-based violence, in alignment with the goals of the NSNAPPCVAW (2023–2028). Currently, the NCBPCVAW is staffed by an administrative officer of the MJPO, and it plans to hire an external collaborator through the service procurement within the year.

108. The Cyprus Police Academy (CPA), in collaboration with the Sub-Directorate for the Management of Cases Involving Vulnerable Persons, launched a new training program titled “*Training Programme for Members of the Police Dealing with Cases Involving Vulnerable Persons*”. First introduced in October 2022 is the program is now offered annually. The program covers key topics, such as:

- DV;
- VAW and Gender-Based Violence;
- Handling Victims of Rape and Sexual Abuse;
- Protocol on Risk Assessment of Intimate Partner Violence.

109. In addition, the CPA, in cooperation with the Sub-Directorate, has developed a specialized annual training program for police members handling cases of rape and sexual violence. Lectures on DV are also part of the curriculum for Police Recruits and advanced courses, like the Sergeant Course and the Basic Criminal Investigation Department Course.

110. The CPA also organizes specialized programs in collaboration with the Sub-Directorate for the Management of Cases Involving Vulnerable Persons (formerly the Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Combating Office) to address specific needs, including:

- Specialized training on DV issues;
- Handling Juvenile Victims of DV;
- Courses on interviewing vulnerable or child victims.

111. The Protocol on Risk Assessment of Intimate Partner Violence is applied during the investigation by specially trained police officers. Training on this protocol is integrated into the CPA's programs, including the training for Police Recruits, the Sergeant Course, and the Basic Criminal Investigation Department Course. Ongoing training is provided to ensure the protocol's proper implementation.

112. The SWS of the Deputy Ministry of Social Welfare provides financial support through the Grant-in-Aid Scheme to NGOs and local authorities for programs delivering services to communities, including services for victims of DV.

113. Under this framework, the APHVF operates three shelters in Nicosia, Limassol, and Paphos, with a new shelter under construction in Larnaca district. These shelters collectively provide 17 rooms, each accommodating up to four persons. The Association also rents external apartments as needed to ensure sufficient housing capacity. The operation of these shelters is supported through state funding.

114. Sophie's House, operated also by APHVF is a dedicated shelter for young mothers who are asylum seekers and is funded by the SWS.

115. The NCBPCVAW has a key responsibility to collect, analyse, and publish statistical data on VAW and DV. This includes establishing a unified database to consolidate information from all relevant services and NGOs, in line with the Istanbul Convention and the recommendations of the GREVIO Expert Report, published in November 2022. To advance this goal, the NCBPCVAW formed a Subcommittee that collaborated with the Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation, and Digital Policy, submitting a proposal for the database in July 2022. Meetings with the Information Service Department and the CSS were also held to explore practical ways of implementing the project.

116. However, challenges remain, as, many government departments lack mechanisms to systematically record and collect statistical data, hindering the creation of a reliable and unified database. Institutional gaps also affect efforts to create a system that provides comparable data. A comprehensive study is needed to determine the human and financial resources required, with consultations with the Commissioner for Personal Data Protection to ensure proper handling of sensitive information. Due to resource limitations, the database will be outsourced to an external expert through a formal tender process. Statistics on reported incidents of DV and violence against women can be found in **Annex 1**.

117. The initial steps will involve adopting standardized systems for data collection across Ministries, services, and other government bodies dealing with cases of gender-based violence under the Istanbul Convention. Data recording will begin at

the Ministries and state services, with plans to integrate these mechanisms into a nationwide database.

118. The unified database will track detailed information about both victims and perpetrators including demographic and situational data on victims (such as identification details, age, gender, residence, area of violence, type of violence, and relationship to the perpetrator) and data on perpetrators (such as identification, relationship to the victim, charges against them, and any violations of protective orders). The database will also monitor whether offences occurred in the presence of children, the number of restraining orders, removal orders, and violations. Once fully implemented, this system will enable systematic recording, analysis, and coordination to improve responses to gender-based violence across Cyprus.

119. In July 2021, the Education, Awareness-Raising, and Communications Department was established within the Sub-directorate for the Management of Cases Involving Vulnerable Persons (SDMCIVP), part of the Crime Combating Department at Police Headquarters. This unit has been operational since its creation and focuses on raising public awareness about DV, child abuse, child sexual abuse, and gender-based violence.

120. As part of its efforts, the Department prepared informative materials in 2021 and 2022 under the following titles:

- “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” (addressing issues of VAW, DV, harassment, and stalking).

121. In addition to the above materials, television spots focusing on gender-based violence and DV were produced and promoted through TV channels and social media platforms.

122. Members of the SDMCIVP also participate actively in various awareness-raising campaigns. Furthermore, they provide training for police officers at the CPA on topics related to VAW, DV, and child abuse. To support these initiatives, a dedicated budget is allocated within the Police Budget for awareness-raising and training on these critical issues.

123. Additionally, the first NSNAPPCVAW (2023-2028), approved by the COM in February 2023, includes targeted measures for the prevention of violence and the effective support of victims, particularly those from disadvantaged and marginalized groups. These measures include:

- Developing a protocol to ensure migrant women victims of violence have access to sexual and reproductive health services, including in cases of female genital mutilation;
- Ensuring that all victims of violence have access to general and specialized services, regardless of whether charges are filed against the perpetrator;
- Expanding the number and capacity of refuges for women and their dependents;
- Offering both short-term and long-term specialized psychological support to victims of gender-based violence;
- Streamlining and accelerating the process for women victims of violence to access state financial support services;

- Connecting victims of violence with educational programs to develop professional skills;
- Implementing reintegration and support programs for victims of violence at local and regional levels;
- Developing targeted actions to inform and support vulnerable groups, such as migrant and refugee women, asylum-seekers, and women with disabilities, about gender-based violence and its effects. This includes creating multilingual information materials tailored specifically for migrant communities, outlining their rights, protection measures, and available support services throughout all stages of reception, asylum application, and the refugee process.

124. In the area of asylum, minors are recognized as a vulnerable group. Their identification and registration within the asylum procedure is prioritized to ensure timely support and guidance. The SWS continue their efforts to provide services to unaccompanied minors, acting as their guardians and ensuring they have access to necessary services while also safeguarding their rights.

X. Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

125. The National Action Plan Against Trafficking in Human Beings (NAPATHB) (2023–2026) was developed and implemented by the Multi-Disciplinary Coordinating Group to establish a comprehensive framework for setting tangible goals and specific actions aimed at preventing and combating Trafficking in Human Beings (THB) in all its forms of exploitation.

126. The primary authority responsible for its implementation is the National Coordinator, a role held by the Deputy Minister of Migration and International Protection. The actions outlined in the NAPATHB are executed by the members of the Multi-Disciplinary Coordinating Group.

127. All training programs are conducted in alignment with CEPOL's common curriculum and are tailored to the needs of specific target groups, including members of the Aliens and Immigration Department, Community Policing Officers, Criminal Investigation Departments, and other officers involved in organizing of Police operations.

128. Following the identification of training needs, the Police Office of Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (POCTHB), in collaboration with the CPA, designs and delivers specialized courses to address those needs. Typically, these specialized THB training programs cover a range of subjects, including:

- The legal framework surrounding THB;
- Victim identification methods;
- EU strategies on combating trafficking;
- Investigation techniques;
- Emerging trends and links to other crimes.

129. In addition to these specialized programs, knowledge of THB-related issues is integrated into the regular training curriculum for all members of the CP. This includes: basic training programs for recruit police officers, sergeant training courses and crime investigation courses.

130. A significant emphasis is placed on specialized and systematic training for police officers, particularly front-line responders such as immigration officers,

community policing officers, and members of criminal investigation departments. These training courses provide:

- General awareness of trafficking in human beings;
- Insights into evolving trends in trafficking;
- Guidance on handling potential victims and individuals encountered during police operations;
- Identification techniques and victim handling procedures.

131. In recent years human trafficking cases are prosecuted in a timely manner and are generally given priority by the criminal courts and the proceeding are contacted in a relatively short period of time. The Courts of the Republic of Cyprus show particular sensitivity in these cases and the penalties imposed on convicted persons for human trafficking offences are high. Additionally, the number of convictions in human trafficking cases has increased.

132. The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) provides clear guidance and standardized operating procedures for handling victims and potential victims of human trafficking. It includes guidelines for identifying and referring victims to appropriate services, ensuring they have full access to their rights. All stakeholders, including governmental and non-governmental authorities and organizations involved in assisting (presumed) victims, have been informed and trained on the NRM to enhance its effectiveness.

133. *The Prevention and Combating of Trafficking and Exploitation of Persons and the Protection of Victims Law, 2014 [L.60(I)/2014]* also outlines the rights of victims and specifies the responsibilities of the competent authorities in ensuring these rights are upheld.

134. In 2023, the POCTHB received 192 referrals of potential victims and conducted 630 interviews to assess whether the individuals could be formally identified as victims of human trafficking. These figures highlight the swift and coordinated actions of all stakeholders involved. The NRM has proven to be a highly effective framework for addressing the needs of victims and potential victims of human trafficking.

135. The “*non-punishment principle*” is enshrined in *the Prevention and Combating of Trafficking and the Exploitation of Persons and the Protection of Victims Law, 2014, [L.60(I)/2014]*, specifically in section 29, which exempts trafficked persons from criminal liability for offences committed as a direct result of their trafficking experience.

136. The provision explicitly states that third-country nationals who are victims of trafficking shall not be prosecuted for offences directly linked to their victimization. This includes offences such as illegal entry illegal residence illegal employment, or employment in breach of conditions of employment as defined in *the Aliens and Immigration Law*.

137. Furthermore, section 29 stipulates that if a case is brought before a court against a trafficking victim, and it is determined at any stage of the proceedings that the offences were connected to the victim’s state of victimization, the case must either be discontinued or resolved without any penalty being imposed on the victim, even if they are found guilty. This process is carried out under the consent and instructions of the Attorney General

138. In recent years, there have been several instances demonstrating the application of the non-punishment principle for trafficked persons, ensuring they are not penalized for acts committed as a consequence of their trafficking.

139. Additionally, to the state shelter, two NGOs operate housing programs, that provide accommodation for victims of trafficking:

(a) Transition House: A temporary home for women victims of human trafficking (sexual exploitation), where they receive 24-care and support. The long-term goals of the program are rehabilitation and social reintegration;

(b) Sophie's House: A safe house offering temporary accommodation for adult women or minor girls and their children who have experienced domestic violence and sexual exploitation. The long-term goals of the program are rehabilitation and social reintegration.

140. The Department of Labour (DOL) has enhanced its oversight of private employment agencies based on to the *Private Employment Agency Law, 2012, [L. 126(I)/2012]*. In 2023, the Department inspected 181 agencies, revoking the licenses of 21 that breached legal provisions. Additionally, 4 complaints were investigated, leading to 3 cases being referred to the police for further action regarding illegal operations and worker exploitation.

141. Moreover, the competent authority organizes an annual training program for private employment agency members, covering key aspects of *Law 60(I)/2014*. For 2023, this program (HBO 313) was held from October 16 to November 6.

142. For collected data on victims of trafficking, please refer to **Annex 2**.

143. All victims of trafficking and/or sexual exploitation who are third-country nationals have the same access to employment as Cypriots and EU citizens during their trial period. Those seeking employment can visit the District and Local Offices of the PES, where trained Employment Counsellors provide personalized counselling and professional guidance to help them find suitable job opportunities.

144. These counsellors strive to place victims in safe work environments and collaborate with Social Welfare Officers to ensure each individual finds a job where they feel secure and supported. Victims also have access to vocational training, and Employment Counsellors inform them about available Greek and English language programs, as well as other training opportunities.

145. Furthermore, employment counsellors engage with employers to clarify that victims of trafficking are exempt from the employment regulations applicable to third-country nationals, allowing them to be hired without the need for an employment permit.

XI. Participation in Political and Public Life

146. Enhancing women's representation in decision-making and promoting GE in public life stands at the forefront of policy debates, both nationally and within the EU.

147. A critical facet of advancing GE in leadership entails implementing targeted national strategies and mechanisms. Following his election in February 2023, the President of the Republic of Cyprus, prioritized women's rights and GE as part of the government's agenda. A significant milestone in this endeavour was the appointment of women to 38.8 per cent of positions in the COM, marking the highest proportion of female participation at the ministerial level to date. Furthermore, the COM appointed women to 40 per cent of positions as Presidents and Vice Presidents of public legal entities, despite only 25 per cent of total applications being submitted by women. In addition, the President promptly advanced the bill for the institutionalization of the CGE. Its establishment reflects a broader governmental

effort to mainstream GE across all sectors, ensure the effective implementation of policies, and address systemic barriers to women's participation in decision-making.

148. Regarding the representation of women in decision-making positions within the diplomatic service, the following statistical data are provided:

- **Senior ranks** (Minister Plenipotentiary/Ambassador): 26.2 per cent women and 73.8 per cent men;
- **Mid-level ranks** (Secretary/Counsellor): 36.8 per cent women and 63.2 per cent men;
- **Lower ranks** (Attaché): 37.5 per cent women and 62.5 per cent men.

149. The recruitment process for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs follows a separate examination process from the broader Public Service. National legislation prohibits quotas in recruitment, meaning there is no control over whether more women than men can be hired.

150. However, women hold senior and key positions in Diplomatic Missions, though these assignments are subject to internal rotation policies.

151. The appointment of the CGE, now formally established by law for the first time, marks a significant step in promoting GE. This development underscores GE as a priority essential for social and economic stability, development, and growth. The CGE has also been entrusted with the responsibility of formulating the NSGE, endorsed by the COM in January 2024.

152. The new NSGE, 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, such as specialized training programs for frontline professionals, improved data collection, and enhanced support for women facing multiple and intersecting discrimination.

153. Electoral laws in the Republic of Cyprus uphold GE by ensuring equal opportunities for men and women in political decision-making, with no gender-based restrictions on participation.

154. Over the past years, electoral contests have demonstrated a positive trend, with political parties increasing the number of women candidates on their ballot papers. In the latest Local Government Elections, a significant number of women were elected as Mayors, Municipal Councillors, Community Leaders, and Members of Community Councils. Notably, several political parties amended their statutes to introduce minimum quotas for women's representation on their ballot papers, promoting gender balance.

155. The Ministry of Interior actively supports efforts to increase women's electoral participation but does not currently plan to introduce mandatory measures, such as requiring a minimum number of women on ballot papers. Instead, it focuses on monitoring progress through systematically collecting data on women's representation in decision-making roles.

156. In 2023, the President of the Republic, Ministers, Deputy Ministers, and Commissioners signed a political declaration, co-signed by the CGE, committing to a zero-tolerance policy on sexism and gender-based harassment.

157. Since early 2024, the Office of the CGE, in collaboration with the CSS, initiated a comprehensive statistical assessment of gender representation in decision-making positions, focusing on semi-state organizations, ministerial roles, and elected positions (e.g. Members of the European Parliament, Mayors, and local government representatives).

158. To promote transparency and meritocracy in appointments, an Advisory Council was established to compile a list of eligible candidates for Board of Director positions in semi-state organizations, aiming for gender balance where possible.

159. The NMWR and the Office of the CGE organized a series of training sessions in 2022 and 2023 to empower women interested in politics, enhance their professional and personal skills, and inspire greater participation in political life. In May 2024, the NMWR hosted a conference showcasing women candidates running for the European Parliament elections, emphasizing their political participation and underscoring their contributions to decision-making roles. Additionally, the MOESY, in collaboration with the Office of the CGE, introduced a creative school competition titled, "*What I Would Change if I Were a Minister for a Day*". Winners of the competition are granted the unique opportunity to shadow a Minister for an entire day, offering young participants a glimpse into leadership and governance.

XII. Nationality

160. *The Civil Registry Law, 2002, [141(I)/2002]* regulates birth registration in Cyprus. Under Section 8, all births must be registered with the District Officer of the district where the birth occurred. Registration is free of charge and must be completed within 15 days, supported by a medical certificate from the attending doctor or midwife.

161. Section 16 imposes a late registration fee of 30 euros for births registered after 3 months. For registrations exceeding 3 months, the fee increases to 60 euros, and an affidavit explaining the delay is required. If the parents are not married, both must submit an affidavit acknowledging paternity.

162. *The Civil Registry (Amendment) (No. 2) Law, 2019, [65(I)/2019]*, reduced the late registration fee for delays beyond 3 months from 150 euros to 60 euros ensuring fees do not discourage timely registration.

163. In a further effort to improve accessibility, the Ministry of Interior, in collaboration with the Commissioner for Children's Rights, is considering the creation of a multilingual informational booklet on birth registration process in Cyprus. This booklet will be distributed to clinics and hospitals to provide clear guidance to parents.

164. Finally, regarding statelessness, the Republic of Cyprus is still evaluating accession to the two relevant International Conventions.

XIII. Education

165. The MOESY is committed to ensuring GE in education at all levels. To ensure effective implementation, it established an Interdepartmental Committee (IC) composing representatives from all its departments and services. This IC oversees and coordinates all GE-related actions, including the 2023-2026 Gender Equality

Action Plan, which promotes a GE culture across various levels. The plan includes objectives such as training diverse groups (students, teachers, and parents), integrating GE in research projects, and improving educational structures. This plan aligns with the NSGE 2024–2026, created collaboratively by all Ministries and published by the CGE.

166. The IC in collaboration with the GECEVT organizes an annual art or writing competition for primary and secondary school students, encouraging awareness and discussion on GE. In addition, its members regularly participate in meetings and training sessions to promote GE within the education system and society at large.

167. To enhance transparency and accessibility, the GECEVT’s website,² hosted by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CIP), provides useful information about its activities, teaching materials, and resources for integrating GE into the educational process.

168. Since 2018, the MOESY has a mandated non-sexist language in all official documents guided by the “*Guide for the Transcendence of Language Sexism in the Language of the Documents of the Public Administration of the Republic of Cyprus*”.

169. To combat stereotypes and increase female participation in male-dominated fields, an annual scholarship program was established in 2023, in memory of Christiana Kouta, a prominent GE activist and university professor. Announced by the President of the Republic, the program 10 scholarships annually to women over 25 pursuing studies in underrepresented fields, in collaboration with the Cyprus State Scholarships Foundation.

170. To further address gender underrepresentation, the “*Her Stories*” campaign was launched, celebrating women’s achievements in traditionally male-dominated fields. “*Her Stories: The STEAM Edition*”, released in late 2023, targeted schools and social media platforms in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Sports, and Youth. A follow-up campaign, “*Her Stories: The Shipping Edition*”, was launched on social media in January 2024.

171. As it was previously mentioned, in 2023, the MOESY, in collaboration with the CGE, introduced an annual school competition titled “*What I Would Change if I Were a Minister for a Day*”. Winners of this competition gain the unique opportunity to shadow a Minister for a day.

172. The NSGE includes initiatives to promote STEAM education, focusing on countering traditional gender stereotypes. Key actions include:

- (a) Implementing STEAM programs in Primary and Secondary schools to increase female student participation in Positive Sciences;
- (b) Encouraging both genders to join technical skills competitions, such as robotics and green transition projects;
- (c) Career guidance promoting studies in traditionally male and female-dominated fields;
- (d) Offering optional seminars through the CIP to help teachers address gender stereotypes and prepare students for related writing competitions.

173. The Cyprus University of Technology (CUT) supports the *Girls in STEAM Academy* through CUTing Edge, an initiative of the Be an Ally Foundation. This program aims to inspire middle school girls to explore STEAM through hands-on, inquiry-based learning and connects them with women professionals in the field.

² https://www.pi.ac.cy/pi/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=910&Itemid=383&lang=en

Through their narratives, female speakers share their experiences, fostering interest in STEAM careers. A two-day intensive program was hosted at the CUTing Edge of Cyprus University of Technology (CUT) on 4–5 December 2021.

174. The MOESY implements sexuality education in line with World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines through the Health Education Curriculum. The thematic unit "*Family Planning, Sexual and Reproductive Health*" provides a holistic approach covering stereotypes, DV, risky sexual behaviour, homophobia, and the influence of religion and media. These topics are linked with broader themes like gender stereotypes, human rights, and peer pressure to foster a comprehensive understanding of sexual health issues in relation to personal and societal contexts.

175. Sexuality education aims to prevent social issues such as sexual violence, bullying, unwanted pregnancies, risky sexual behaviour, and discrimination against marginalized groups, including LGBTQ+ students. Lessons are designed to be inclusive and culturally sensitive, empowering pupils with skills and values to resist early sexual initiation or high-risk behaviours. The curriculum avoids moralistic judgments and instead promotes critical thinking about the societal factors influencing sexuality, guided by international and national legal frameworks and human rights principles.

176. For younger children, the Department of Primary Education introduces targeted sexuality education in kindergarten and first grade, supported by an Implementation Guide for teaching "*The Underwear Rule*". Additionally, the NGO "*Hope for Children CRC Policy Centre*", in collaboration with MOESY, developed the leaflet "*Break the Silence. It is in Your Hand!*" to help adolescents identify and respond to sexual abuse. These initiatives aim to equip children with knowledge and skills to recognize abuse and ensure their safety.

177. Following the enactment of *the Holistic Sex Education Law, 2022*, [L. 205(I)/2022], the CPI enhanced teacher training on the Health Education Curriculum, covering sexting, preventing sexual abuse, and effective teaching methods. During the 2023–2024 school year, over 1,060 teachers, Headteachers, and Inspectors participated in these trainings, reinforcing MOESY's commitment to comprehensive sexuality education and violence prevention.

178. The MOESY, with the support of the CPI, has implemented the antiracist policy, "*Code of Conduct against Racism & Guide for Managing and Recording Racist Incidents*", since 2014-2015. This policy aligns with international and European conventions ratified by Cyprus, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the European Social Charter, and follows recommendations from the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance. It conceptualizes racism broadly, addressing all forms of discrimination, including homophobia, transphobia, and sexism, aiming to reduce bullying and discrimination in schools.

179. The policy provides a clear framework for managing and preventing racist incidents, defining key concepts like racism, stereotypes, and diversity, and outlining roles and responsibilities within the school community. Schools receive practical tools to handle incidents and promote a diverse and inclusive environment, tackling discrimination based on religion, beliefs, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and more.

180. Since 2018, the CPI has supported schools through the "*School Network for the Support of Antiracist Policy Implementation*", engaging around 30 schools annually. The network offers teacher training on racism, discrimination, intersectionality, and practical strategies for addressing racist incidents. Additional support includes a policy website, a helpline, informational leaflets in seven languages, and training sessions in collaboration with NGOs and other bodies.

181. Key challenges include under-reporting of racist incidents, accountability, and the development of context-specific interventions. The network also emphasizes the evolving nature of racism and the importance of adapting school responses accordingly.

182. During the 2023-2024 school year:

- 153 out of approximately 475 schools submitted reports on racist incidents;
- 61 schools recorded no incidents, while 92 schools documented 547 cases—the highest number reported to date;
- The majority of victims and perpetrators of racist incidents were students, with fewer cases involving teachers or other members of the school community.

183. This increase in reported cases reflects a growing awareness and recognition of racism in schools, reinforcing efforts to combat discrimination and promote inclusivity. (For more information and statistical data, see **Annex 3**).

184. The Cyprus Observatory on School Violence (COSV), under the CPI, promotes a safe and inclusive school environment through targeted programs, teacher training, and policy implementation. Key initiatives include:

- One-year programs such as:
 - “Conflict Resolution - School Mediation”;
 - “Recognition and Management of School Bullying”;
 - These programs empower educators to prevent and manage violence, including cyberbullying;
 - Mandatory incident recording: Schools are required to record bullying incidents on a dedicated online platform;
 - Evaluation on best practices: COSV evaluates good practices for preventing school violence and awards the best initiatives at an annual conference.

185. Educational materials: COSV offers educational material to enhance students' skills in areas like empathy, team building, and conflict management. The CPI provides extensive teacher training to support the implementation of anti-racist policies and the management of school violence. Workshops cover diverse topics such as preventing homophobia and transphobia, managing bullying and conflicts, and promoting interculturalism through educational drama. During 2023-2024, a variety of seminars were offered, including *“Addressing School Bullying”*, *“Conflict Management”*, and *“Anti-Oppressive Pedagogies for Disability in the Classroom”*. These initiatives empower teachers to address social issues like racism, gender inequality, and bullying, fostering a safer and more equitable school environment.

186. Over the past year, the MOESY has integrated human rights, anti-racist, and intercultural education into the Health Education Curriculum (HEC). The curriculum includes key success indicators for addressing bullying, recognizing violence, respecting diversity, and promoting peaceful coexistence. Students are encouraged to critically analyse stereotypes, embrace diversity, and advocate for the rights of others. Through this holistic approach, the HEC enhances students' understanding of human rights and equips them with the skills to foster inclusion and social justice within their communities.

187. The *“Actions for School and Social Inclusion+ (D.R.A.S.E.+)”* project was introduced in Cyprus during the 2021-22 school year to mitigate the negative effects of the economic crisis and modern challenges such as immigration and the pandemic on education. Its goal is to support students who face risks of social exclusion,

functional illiteracy, or school dropout, particularly those from immigrant or economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The project provides targeted support to schools selected based on measurable criteria, reaching 25-30 per cent of the student population. By 2023-24, DRA.S.E.+ had been implemented in 178 schools, benefiting tens of thousands of students through initiatives such as free supportive teaching, Greek language courses, psychosocial support, and the provision of educational materials and equipment.

188. To combat discrimination and ensure access to high-quality education for disadvantaged groups, DRA.S.E.+ has introduced inclusive measures including free teaching programs, psychosocial services, and language instruction for students and parents with immigrant backgrounds. Financial support has also been provided through the supply of educational materials and subsidies for meals, ensuring that economic barriers do not prevent participation. These efforts aim to foster social inclusion and prevent school dropout while supporting vulnerable students and their families.

189. Cyprus has also introduced All-Day Primary Schools, available in 2 forms: optional and compulsory. Optional all-day schools operate on a voluntary basis and offer supportive teaching, homework completion, and elective subjects like English, IT, and arts. Compulsory all-day schools, introduced as a pilot program in 14 schools, feature an upgraded curriculum and extended hours from 7:45 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. These schools emphasize life skills, IT, and Design and Technology while eliminating homework and ensuring inclusive meal programs. For both types, the Ministry subsidizes meals for students in financial need, ensuring equal access to quality education.

190. A further effort to support vulnerable students is the Committee of Health Education and Citizenship (CHEC) program, which provides grants for extracurricular activities targeting pupils from disadvantaged groups. Since its inception in 2012, this program has been part of the Ministry of the Interior's commitments under the National Strategy for Addressing Addictions (2021–2028).

191. The CHEC identifies and supports pupils from vulnerable population groups, including those affected by delinquent behaviour, substance abuse (alcohol, illegal drugs, smoking), extreme economic hardship, or family dysfunction (e.g., DV, serious health issues of a family member or the child, parental incarceration, unemployment, or alcoholism). Other vulnerable groups include children living in foster care or group homes.

192. The program enables these pupils to engage in creative activities of their choosing within the community, outside of school settings. Its primary aim is to provide essential support in various areas, including academic learning, emotional and social empowerment, talent development, and fostering a safe and fulfilling lifestyle. However, a key challenge the program seeks to address is the risk of social exclusion and marginalization of these pupils, particularly if they lack access to opportunities to use their free time productively and showcase their unique talents.

193. During the 2022–2023 school year, 787 extracurricular actions were implemented under this initiative. These activities were designed to support the personal and social development of pupils from vulnerable population groups, helping them to build confidence, develop skills, and achieve a sense of belonging in their communities.

XIV. Employment

194. The PES of the DOL provide free, non-discriminatory assistance to all job seekers, including registration, job search support, and placement assistance, such as vocational guidance, counselling, and referrals to training programs and job vacancies. Unemployed individuals can also participate in Employment Subsidization Schemes promoted by the Department.

195. During the job-matching process, Employment Officers ensure that vacancies are posted and filled without gender discrimination or biases related to marital status or family responsibilities. They also educate employers on GE legislation.

196. The National Certification Body, established in 2014, by the COM, to certify enterprises that promote GE in the workplace—particularly in terms of pay equality—continues to operate successfully. As of February 2024, 74 companies have been recognized for their commitment to ensuring equal pay and gender diversity. These companies have implemented measures to improve gender balance in decision-making positions, adopted gender-neutral job classification systems, and enacted policies to reconcile work and family life, while preventing and addressing harassment and sexual harassment. Additionally, 32 certified companies have successfully renewed their certification.

197. The Office of the CGE has also established a strategic partnership with the Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) to provide structured support on GE. Through this collaboration, an action plan has been developed, offering detailed recommendations on integrating GE into companies' internal and external governance. This action plan is now accessible to all CCCI members, promoting best practices to advance GE within the workplace.

198. The Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA), guided by its legal framework and strategic plan, implements a variety of activities to train and develop the human resources of Cyprus. These initiatives offer employees, the unemployed, and inactive individuals' opportunities to acquire new skills or enhance existing knowledge and attitudes. Special emphasis is placed on gaining specialized knowledge relevant to professions, along with essential horizontal skills. Priority is also given to equipping unemployed individuals with the skills needed to secure employment.

199. Currently, there are no specific schemes or programs exclusively for women. However, the following initiatives support women in pursuing non-traditional career paths:

- Actions from the National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021-2026 (funded by Next Generation EU):
 - *Digital Skills Training Programs*: Aiming to upgrade digital skills for employees in both the public and private sectors, as well as the self-employed and unemployed. Implemented through certified Vocational Training Centres (VTCs), it has a budget of €10.1 million, aiming to benefit 20,210 participants;
 - *Green Economy Skills Training Programs*: Enhancing knowledge and skills for employed in green economy sectors, targeting both employed individuals in relevant sectors, and unemployed seeking to enter these fields. The total budget is €2.1 million for 3,000 participants, with training provided by certified VTCs;
 - *Blue Economy Skills Training Programs*: Similar to the green economy initiative, targets employed individuals in blue economy sectors and the

unemployed looking to enter these occupations. It has a budget of €0.6 million for 500 participants, also implemented by certified VTCs;

- Entrepreneurship Training Programs: Providing specialized knowledge and skills related to entrepreneurship development, particularly for unemployed women up to 55 years old with upper secondary education who are interested in starting their own businesses. The budget is €3.9 million for 1,935 participants;
- Participation in these training programs is free of charge, and additional incentives such as traineeship and travel allowances are offered to unemployed individuals;
- Action from the Cyprus Cohesion Policy Programme «*THALIA 2021-2027*» (co-funded by the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and the HRDA):
 - Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) ILAs provide credits to eligible employed and unemployed individuals to attend training programs aimed at acquiring or upgrading knowledge and skills. This initiative promotes lifelong learning, offers flexible access to training opportunities, and aims to prevent social exclusion. With a total budget of €5 million for 1,800 participants, ILAs enable individuals to remain competitive in the labour market and enhance social cohesion through improved employment opportunities.

200. Cyprus has implemented several practical measures to address the gender pay gap. From 2010 to 2021, inspectors from the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance conducted random inspections to ensure compliance with equal pay legislation. These inspections had both preventive and corrective components, aiming to detect direct pay discrimination while informing employers and employees about their rights and providing practical compliance guidance.

201. Since 2022, the focus has shifted to targeted inspections in sectors with high gender pay gaps, based on risk assessment analysis. Following inspections, employers receive specific recommendations, including corrective measures related to recruitment processes, pay structures, and promotion policies, such as reviewing the gender representation in the company and ensuring equal representation in higher management.

202. Complaints regarding violations of the legislation have been minimal. Between June 2018 and February 2024, only 4 complaints were investigated—3 during the reference period and 1 prior. In one case, gender pay discrimination for equal work was identified, but no agreement was reached, leading the complainant to consider legal action. In another case, the pay difference was found not to be due to gender discrimination, while the third case found no pay difference. The fourth case concluded that no gender discrimination existed, as the roles compared were not of equal value.

203. The DOL Relations is currently evaluating the infrastructure and practical aspects for introducing new legislation and measures aimed at promote pay transparency. This forthcoming legislation will require employers to publish gender pay gap statistics and conduct pay audits in collaboration with employee representatives, particularly in sectors with significant pay disparities. Additionally, a gender-neutral job evaluation tool will be developed for employers and social partners, with training provided to inspectors and stakeholders on its use.

204. In December 2022, the *Leave (Paternity, Parental, Care, Force Majeure) and Flexible Working Arrangements for Work-Life Balance Law, 2022, [L. 216(I)/2022* was enacted following consultations with social partners to enhance work-life balance for working parents and caregivers. This law introduces several key provisions,

including parental leave allowances, the right to caregivers' leave, the right to take time off for force majeure situations, and the ability for working parents and caregivers to request flexible working arrangements.

205. Notably, special provisions apply to parents of children with disabilities. While standard parental leave is available until the child turns eight (8), parents of children with disabilities can take parental leave until the child turns eighteen (18). Additionally, parental leave allowances are also extended-by four weeks for children with serious or mild mental disabilities and by six weeks for children with total disabilities.

206. The legislation also grants employees with caregiving responsibilities the right to five days of unpaid caregivers' leaves per year. Finally, it ensures that all working parents with children up to eight years old, as well as caregivers, can request flexible working arrangements for caregiving purposes.

207. In December 2022, the *Social Insurance (Amendment) Law, 2022 [L.214(I)/2022]* introduced an eight-week parental leave benefit for each employed parent for every child until the child turns eight. The amendments also extended paternity benefits to cover any remaining weeks of the mother's maternity leave if she passes away during that period. Additionally, the requirement for fathers to be married to qualify for paternity benefits was removed, ensuring that both paternity and parental leave benefits are available to fathers who meet the insurance criteria, regardless of marital status.

208. Further expanding parental leave coverage, the *Social Insurance (Amendment) Law, 2024 [66(I)/2024]*, expanded parental leave benefits to include self-employed individuals. As part of the NSGE, the government is also exploring additional measures to enhance the scope of parental leave benefits.

209. These reforms aim to promote a more equitable distribution of caregiving responsibilities between women and men, encourage fathers to take parental leave, and facilitate the reintegration of mothers into the workforce after maternity and parental leave.

210. The DOL actively enforces national legislation promoting equality and ensuring equal opportunities for men and women in employment and vocational training, in line with the *Equal Treatment between Men and Women in Employment and Vocational Training Law, 2002 [L.205(I)/2002]* which is fully harmonized with EU Directive 2006/54/EC (recast).

211. Harassment and sexual harassment violate the principle of equal treatment and are classified as sex-based discrimination under both Directive 2006/54/EU and under the *Equal Treatment between Men and Women in Employment and Vocational Training Law, 2002 [L.205(I)/2002]*. This legislation is closely linked to the *Maternity Protection Law, 1997, [L.100(I)/1997]* as discrimination against a working woman due to pregnancy or family status constitutes direct sex discrimination, which is also addressed under *L.205(I)/2002*.

212. Equality Inspectors are available in all cities at the District Labour Offices to provide information on maternity protection under the relevant laws. They clarify rights and obligations and guide individuals on filing complaints. Informative leaflets in both English and Greek are available on the DOL's website, offering valuable information on protection from sexual harassment and maternity rights.

213. Employees facing sexual discrimination can file a complaint to the Equality Inspectors, to the GECEVT or the CAPHR, under Law, 205(I)/2002, which outlines the procedure for investigating complaints in section 27. Equality Inspectors will facilitate mediation between the complainant and the employer to resolve the issue.

If an agreement is reached, the inspector prepares a report for both parties to sign. If no resolution is achieved, a report is drafted for use in a tribunal court.

214. Since 2011, the GECEVT has focused on educating both employers and employees about the legislation on equal treatment for men and women. For measures aimed at accelerating the equal participation of disadvantaged groups of women in the labour market, please refer to paragraph 196.

215. The complaint filing system is secure and adheres to confidentiality rules and the General Data Protection Regulation.

216. The *Equal Treatment of Men and Women in Employment and Vocational Training (Amendment) Law, 2021, [L.86(I)/2021]* provides for criminal liability and penalties for violations both for public and private sector. Specifically:

(a) Individuals who intentionally violate provisions of the law may face fines of up to €10,000, imprisonment for up to 3 years, or both, unless harsher penalties apply under other laws;

(b) Legal entities or organizations, can be fined up to €20,000 if found guilty, unless a more severe punishment is applicable under other provisions. Additionally, if a managing director, chairman, director, secretary, or other official is complicit in the offense, they will be personally penalized;

(c) In cases of acts as a result of serious negligence, an individual may face a fine of up to €5,000. If the offense involves a legal entity or organization, responsible officials may be held responsible if it's proven that the offense occurred with their consent or involvement. The legal entity or organization may also incur a fine of up to €10,000.

217. Other measures reinforcing the principles of equal treatment in the workplace include the recognition of sexual harassment as a disciplinary offence for public employees under the Public Service (Amendment) Law, 2023 [L.64(I)/2023]. The same applies to members of the police, in accordance with the Police (Disciplinary) (Amendment) Regulations, 2024 [P.I. 265/2024], and to members of the fire service, as per the Fire Service (Disciplinary) (Amendment) Regulations, 2024 [P.I. 267/2024]. Additionally, a bill is currently pending approval to amend the Public Education Service Law, 1969 [L.10/1969], to establish sexual harassment as a disciplinary offence for public education employees as well.

218. The GECEVT provides free advice and independent assistance to victims of gender discrimination in employment and vocational training. Services include:

- Advising on gender discrimination issues in employment and vocational training;
- Informing victims of their rights, procedures, and the relevant authorities for filing complaints; and
- Offering legal aid, including advice and representation in judicial or administrative proceedings.

219. Victims seeking legal aid must submit a written request after filing an official complaint and completing an investigation by the Equality Inspector or the CAPHR. If approved, victims may choose a lawyer from the Cyprus Bar Association, who must provide regularly case updates to the Committee.

220. Victims of sexual harassment or discrimination can submit complaints to various entities, including:

- The CAPHR;

- The GECEVT;
- Inspectors of the DOL;
- The CP.

221. The legislation encourages out-of-court resolutions for faster outcomes. However, serious sexual harassment cases result in criminal charges, where victims are represented free of charge by the Law Office of the Republic, eliminating the need for legal aid from the GECEVT.

222. For employment and unemployment statistics from the Labour Force Survey conducted by the Cyprus Statistical Service—including labour force, employment, and unemployment rates by gender—see **Annex 4**.

XV. Women migrant domestic workers

223. Cyprus is currently considering the ratification of the Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181) by the International Labour Organization. Additionally, Cyprus is in the process of ratifying ILO Convention 189, which concerns decent work for domestic workers.

224. To implement the provisions of Convention No. 181, a ratifying law and the new Domestic Workers legislation have been drafted. These drafts laws are undergoing social dialogue and legal review by the Republic's Law Office. Once approved by the COM, they will be submitted to Parliament for adoption.

225. The legislation includes criminal sanctions for non-compliance, with penalties of up to two years in prison and/or fines of up to €10,000.

226. The DOL is implementing effective measures, as outlined in Paragraph 12(g), to ensure compliance with existing legislation regarding Private Employment Agencies. These measures aim to monitor their activities closely and prevent the trafficking and exploitation of migrant domestic workers.

227. Third-country nationals wishing to submit a complaint can do so in writing to the Aliens and Immigration Unit of the Police. The complaint will then be forwarded to the appropriate District Office of the DOL Relations for resolution. The District Labour Relations Office will arrange a meeting between the employer and employee to investigate and resolve the complaint. If the issue remains unresolved, the examining officer will prepare a report, which will be submitted to the Civil Registry and Migration Department of the Ministry of Interior for further action.

228. Depending on the nature of the allegations, complaints may also be referred to other authorities to investigate potential issues such as trafficking, sexual offenses, or living conditions.

229. The SWS continue to implement measures introduced in 2019 and 2020 to support the reception and integration of asylum seekers in the Republic of Cyprus. SWS provide material reception conditions, including monthly allowances to cover basic needs such as food, electricity, water, petty cash, and rent for asylum seekers unable to stay in Reception Centres. Special priority is given to vulnerable individuals and families with children at risk, with temporary housing arranged in hotels or similar accommodations.

230. Following a COM decision on 7/10/2020, the Government approved coverage of living expenses for up to three months for:

- Families of applicants for international protection with minor children (regardless of vulnerability);

- Vulnerable individuals, including pregnant women, persons with disabilities, and victims of violence as defined in *the Refugee Laws 2000-2020*.

231. This temporary accommodation measure aims to help asylum seekers transition to permanent housing in the community. Additionally, newly arrived individual asylum seekers receive emergency financial assistance from day one to cover immediate needs, including accommodation.

232. Among 8,699 approved MGI applications, a significant portion of beneficiaries are women. The MGI program prioritizes female victims of trafficking and exploitation processing these cases in cooperation with relevant organizations that assist victims. SWS also maintain close collaboration with organizations that support women experiencing DV.

233. The WBAS plays a critical role in empowering beneficiaries by subsidizing Greek language courses for non-Greek speakers and promoting participation in educational and professional training programs. In collaboration with the PES, the WBAS takes a personalized approach to support women's integration into the labour market, ensuring their economic independence and inclusion.

XVI. Health

234. The Cyprus General Healthcare System (GHS) was implemented in 2019 with a mission to provide a people-centred healthcare system based on the principles of social solidarity, justice and universality- both in terms of contributions and healthcare coverage. The GHS is a comprehensive and financially sustainable healthcare system designed to meet the expectations of Cypriot citizens by ensuring equal access to high-quality healthcare while making the best possible use of all available resources.

235. The GHS is an integrated health care system offering equal access to services for all citizens, allowing beneficiaries to choose their healthcare provider, from both the private and public sectors. It covers the full spectrum of healthcare needs, including treatment for chronic, rare and serious diseases, while also providing lifetime financial protection to all beneficiaries, even in cases of unexpected and costly healthcare needs. Notably, the right to health under the GHS is not dependent on contribution payments. This ensures that beneficiaries without income (unemployed, children, students, soldiers and others) have equal access to health care services.

236. All GHS beneficiaries must register with a Personal Doctor (PD)-either for adults or children- who is selected by the beneficiary or the beneficiary's parents/guardians. The PD is responsible for providing health care and making referrals to other healthcare services, when specialized care is needed. The health care services provided in the context of the GHS include specialist doctors of all medical fields, medicines, imaging and clinical laboratory tests, other health professionals (physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech pathologists, clinical dietitians, clinical psychologists), nurses, midwives, palliative care, A&E services and inpatient care. Additionally, female beneficiaries aged 015 and older have direct access to health care services from gynaecologists/obstetricians, without requiring a referral from their PD.

237. The GHS ensures universal access to health services for all women, with many choosing their own doctor within the system. However, the rate of caesarean sections remains high, accounting for more than half of all births.

238. To address this, on 7th of February 2024 the COM approved the “*National Strategy for the promotion of Natural Childbirth and the Reduction of Prematurity in Cyprus*”. This strategy, coordinated by the MOH, aims to implement coordinated actions to reduce non-medically indicated caesarean sections and prevent premature births.

239. Available contraceptive methods include the male condom, the contraceptive pill and the intrauterine device (IUD). However, apart from sterilization, no other method is covered by the GHS. The intrauterine device – Mirena IDU, is available but provided only for medical reasons, as it is not covered as contraceptive method due to its cost. Emergency contraception (the morning-after pill) is available only in the private sector. Consequently, family planning services are not offered through the GHS but are instead provided by the private sector and voluntarily by the Family Planning Association.

240. Sex education programs are implemented in primary and secondary education by Health Visitors under the MOH. Additionally, midwives within the Community Midwifery framework provide contraception counselling. Nevertheless, since December 2022, Community Midwifery services have been exclusively provided by midwives under the GHS.

- Contraception: The GHS does not cover any form of contraception;
- Reproductive health services: Covered by the GHS, i.e. screening for cervical abnormalities (pap-test), colposcopy, abortion, menopause care, sexually transmitted infection management, etc.

241. Safe abortion services are provided in accordance with section 169A of the Criminal Code. In case of abortion, consent is obtained only from the woman. However, counselling services are not offered by a multidisciplinary team of healthcare professionals.

242. The medical termination of pregnancy (pharmaceutical or surgical) is regulated by the Criminal Code, if the woman’s consent is obtained and the procedure is performed by a contracted obstetrician-gynaecologist, under one of the following conditions:

- (a) The pregnancy is the result of rape, sexual abuse of an adult or minor, or sexual abuse of a woman with a mental disability or incest, provided that the pregnancy has not exceeded 19 weeks and the woman submits a written declaration stating the cause;
- (b) A competent doctor confirms that prenatal diagnosis indicates an abnormality of the fetus that induce the birth of a newborn with pathological problems;
- (c) A competent doctor determines that the pregnancy poses an unavoidable risk to the woman’s life or a serious threat to her physical or mental health.

243. The GHS covers the termination according to the above procedure. It is noted that the GHS does not cover termination of pregnancy within the first 12 weeks of pregnancy unless one of the above conditions is met (cases 1-3).

244. According to the latest available data from the Health Monitoring Unit of the MOH, caesarean sections account for 60 per cent of total births in the Government Controlled Areas of the Republic of Cyprus (see **Annex 5**).

245. To address this high rate, the MOH has developed the National Strategy for the Promotion of Normal Childbirth and the Prevention of Prematurity (NSPNCPP) which was approved by the COM on February 7, 2024. Its implementation will be monitored by a Monitoring Committee under the overall coordination of the MOH.

246. The NSPNCPP aims to reduce unnecessary caesarean sections and promote natural childbirth. The strategy is available on the MOH website.³

247. Reducing caesarean sections and prematurity is a major public health challenge worldwide, with data concerning Cyprus. Since 2017, the MOH in collaboration with the relevant professional bodies in Cyprus, the WHO and the International Federation of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (FIGO), has implemented various actions to promote natural childbirth and reduce unnecessary caesarean sections. These actions include education of health professionals and raising public awareness.

248. The MOH is also developing and implementing an integrated strategy that ensures the advancement and protection of maternal and child health by promoting natural birth, and preventing prematurity within the health system of our country.

249. To prepare the NSPNDPPC, the MOH gathered input from foreign experts (WHO and FIGO), competent governmental authorities, scientific societies, professional associations, health professionals, university faculties, and other stakeholders. This collaborative effort identified the following key action areas:

- Policy Development & Quality Improvement (National Health System) Training of Health Professionals;
- Public Awareness Campaigns;
- Surveillance and Research.

250. A SWOT analysis was conducted, through dialogue and cooperation among all stakeholders. Specific measures under each action area have been identified along with respective bodies responsible for their implementation.

XVII. Economic Empowerment of Women

251. In line with the *Equal Treatment between Men and Women (Access to and Supply of Goods and Services) (Amendment) Law, 2013, [89(I)/2013]*, the use of gender as a determining factor in insurance premiums and benefits is prohibited. As of December 21, 2012, all new insurance contracts must ensure equal premiums and benefits for men and women, eliminating any discriminatory practices in the insurance sector.

252. The Ministry of Energy, Commerce, and Industry has implemented a comprehensive Scheme for the Enhancement of Female Entrepreneurship. This initiative supports women aged 18-55 in establishing and growing new enterprises across sectors such as manufacturing, services, tourism, and e-commerce. This initiative was part of the Operational Programme 2014-2020 “*Sustainable Development and Competitiveness*”, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund and the Republic of Cyprus, with a total allocation of €5.57 million.

253. By the end of 2023, 129 projects had been completed, with a total funding of €3.7 million from a total of 231 approved applications. The program has now been integrated into the “*THALIA Program (2021-2027)*”, under the New Entrepreneurship Scheme, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, and the Republic of Cyprus.

³ NSPNCPP Strategy: http://www01.intranet.gov.cy/public/moh/moh.nsf/dmlannouncements_gr/dmlannouncements_gr?OpenDocument; The birth data of the Health Monitoring Unit are available in the following link: <https://www.moh.gov.cy/Moh/MOH.nsf/All/1A26898D0CD56210C22579C600278E4B?OpenDocument>.

254. The Scheme focuses on promoting innovative technologies, modern production methods, environmental business solutions, and the development of dynamic entrepreneurial skills. Eligible projects cover various sectors, including nurseries, beauty salons, law and accounting firms, medical and dental practices, physiotherapy centres, bakeries, and small manufacturing businesses.

255. In its first call in May 2021, with a budget of €30 million, 820 applications were received, requesting €46.9 million. After evaluations, 528 applications were approved for funding totalling €30.7 million, and by March 31, 2024, €4.6 million had been disbursed in grants. In the second call in April 2024 with a budget of €20 million, 678 applications were submitted, totalling €43 million., with 56 applications already approved.

256. Recognizing women's hygiene products as essential rather than luxury items, the COM has amended VAT legislation to apply a zero VAT rate on products including feminine hygiene protection items, adult diapers, bread, milk, eggs, and baby food. This tax policy reform includes a gender dimension, acknowledging the economic burden on women and providing meaningful economic relief.

257. The Republic of Cyprus, through the MOF and the Office of the CGE, has submitted a request to the European Commission for technical support in developing a gender-responsive state budget. This initiative is facilitated by the Technical Support Tool of the Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support.

258. A gender-responsive ensures that public spending reflects equality between women and men. It incorporates targeted planning and statistical analysis in public policy, focusing on factors such as labour force participation, the gender pay gap, pension disparities, and poverty risks. By integrating gender and age-specific data, the project aims to align government expenditure with equality goals.

259. In February 2025, Cyprus appointed the first Ambassador for GE in Sport, a joint initiative by the Cyprus Sports Organization and the Office of CGE. Through this Ambassador, a model is established, giving a platform for female athletes, women, and girls to express the challenges they face in Cypriot sports, using a recognized figure to highlight these issues. The appointment of the Ambassador for GE in Sport, to be renewed every two years, is part of the NSGE (2024-2026). The Ambassador will play a key role in promoting GE at all levels of sport, without exception.

XVIII. Rural and disadvantaged groups of women

260. According to 2020 data from the CSS and the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment the agricultural sector in Cyprus, employed 3,734 women and 15,391 men. Under the CAP Strategic Plan 2023–2027, women have equal access to all support interventions. These include initiatives to enhance the sustainability of agricultural farms, financial incentives for young farmers, support for processing agricultural products, and opportunities through the LEADER initiative for agrotourism and related actions. These measures aim to promote women's participation and entrepreneurship in the rural economy.

261. Significant efforts have been made within the prison system to support women prisoners and improve their quality of life. Opportunities for contact with the outside world have been expanded, enabling women prisoners to participate in social and charity events, as well as art exhibitions both inside and outside the prison.

262. Special programs are organized for their children, including a three-day event during International Children's Day, where families engage in creative and

recreational activities, such as gymnastics, music, short films, and other fun events. Catering services and gifts are provided, enabling parents to share joyful moments with their children. Similar events are held on Mother's Day, Christmas, and New Year's Day, helping to strengthen family bonds during festive seasons.

263. On International Women's Day, women prisoners enjoy music and receive gifts. In 2023, Europa Donna Cyprus organized an event to raise awareness about breast cancer prevention featuring informative lectures in Greek and English. During the event, prisoners presented handcrafted items to support the organization. Additionally, the prison administration ensures that women have access to healthcare services, including Pap tests and mammograms for early detection of cervical and breast cancer.

264. A notable development in 2023 was the establishment of the "*Office of Psycho-Social Support*", which addresses the psychological and social needs of women prisoners. The office provides individual counselling and organizes experiential workshops to prepare inmates for reintegration into society. Emphasis is placed on addressing social issues and promoting emotional well-being.

265. Education and vocational training play a crucial role in the Cyprus prison system's commitment to equal treatment. Women prisoners have access to the same educational opportunities as men, including the chance to earn diplomas through the Evening Technical School. Additionally, specialized programs tailored to women's needs are offered, such as yoga, Zumba, and handicraft workshops in hagiography and jewellery-making. Parenting skills programs are also available for incarcerated mothers. The European project FEFI (Finding Education for Female Inmates) further support this effort by identifying and addressing the unique educational needs of women in collaboration with other EU countries.

266. To enhance post-release employment opportunities, accelerated vocational training programs are provided in fields such as nail care, professional makeup, and baking. These certifications have helped many former prisoners secure employment or establish their own businesses after their release.

267. The prison administration places significant emphasis on staff training, with officers participating in seminars, conferences, and programs both locally and internationally. The initiative aims to improve the understanding and treatment of women prisoners while enhancing the skills and effectiveness of prison staff.

268. Daily communication is facilitated through extended telephone access hours. Inmates with limited financial resources or those demonstrating good behaviour receive free tele-cards. Special arrangements are made for children with disabilities to visit their incarcerated parents in accessible areas. Additionally, visits from religious representatives are allowed, and inmates can receive up to 10 visits per month from friends and family, fostering connections and emotional support.

XIX. Marriage and family relations

269. According to section 14 of the Regulation of Property Relations Between Spouses Law, 1991, [L.232/1991], as amended regarding claims for participation in property:

“14.

(1) In the event that a marriage is dissolved or annulled, or in the event of separation between spouses, and the property of one spouse has increased, the other spouse, provided they contributed in any way to that increase, is entitled

to file a lawsuit in Court and claim the portion of the increase that derives from their contribution;

(2) The contribution of one spouse to the increase in the property of the other is presumed to amount to one-third of the increase unless a greater or lesser contribution is proven;

(3) The increase in the property of the spouses does not include what was acquired:

(a) Through donation, inheritance, bequest, or other gratuitous cause;

(b) Through the disposal of property acquired by the causes mentioned in paragraph (a)".

270. In addition, the MJPO has drafted a bill, which is currently pending before the competent Parliamentary Committee of Legal Affairs proposing that DV incidents must be taken into consideration by the Court or Judge when dealing with cases and issuing court orders related to child custody and visitation rights of the parents.

XX. Climate change and disaster risk reduction

271. The Cyprus Climate Change Initiative addresses the impacts of climate change impacts in Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East (EMME) region, which is particularly vulnerable to rising temperatures, droughts, and extreme weather events. The initiative promotes sustainable policies, regional cooperation, and scientific research to tackle these challenges. Its key objectives include advancing climate impact studies and adaptation strategies, strengthening collaboration among EMME nations, expanding the adoption of solar and wind energy, and combating water scarcity and desertification. These efforts support Cyprus's National Climate Action Plan aligning with the EU Green Deal and Paris Agreement commitments.

272. To implement these goals, the initiative emphasizes:

- (a) Strengthening environmental regulations;
- (b) Boosting clean energy usage;
- (c) Implementing carbon pricing and incentives;
- (d) Enhancing disaster preparedness; and
- (e) Encouraging sustainable practices among the public.

273. The revival of the 2019 initiative was recently announced, emphasizing on the Regional Action Plan agreed upon at COP27.

274. To ensure women's participation in the development and implementation of the action plan, Cyprus will adopt gender-responsive policies in line with the Committee's General Recommendation No. 37 (2018) on gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. Furthermore, the National Climate Action Plan will incorporate gender considerations by addressing the specific vulnerabilities of women to climate change. This approach fosters inclusivity and equal participation, reinforcing the country's commitment to sustainable and socially just climate action.

275. In the Commission Recommendation of 18.12.2023 on the Draft Updated National Energy and Climate Plan covering the period 2021-2030 (SWD (2023) 910 final) it is stated that:

“(16) The Commission’s recommendations on just transition reflect the assessment of whether Cyprus’ plan identifies in sufficient depth the relevant social, employment and skills impacts of the climate and energy transition and outlines adequate accompanying policies and measures to promote a just transition, while contributing to the promotion of both human rights and gender equality”.

276. The Office of the Environment and the Animal Welfare Commissioner provided the following comments regarding the inclusion of the GE aspects in relevant policies:

277. According to page 6 of the Final Update Consolidated Cyprus’ National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030 (2024):

“A total of EUR 174 million from the Social Climate Fund will be available from 2026 to compensate vulnerable households and businesses or finance actions to mitigate the negative effects of increases in energy costs. Nevertheless, no gender-based adaptation/mitigation measures could be found in the Plan. Additionally, during the public consultation presented on pages 202-205, no gender-based suggestions have been made to support gender equality”.⁴

278. However, no gender-based adaption or mitigation measures are included in the National Strategy for the Climate Change Adaptation.

XXI. Additional information

279. The CGE was first appointed in Cyprus in 2014 by the President of the Republic to promote GE and women’s rights. In July 2024, a legislative framework was enacted to regulate the roles and duties of the CGE, the NMWR, and the GE Officers in all Ministries.

280. *The Commissioner for Gender Equality and Related Matters Law, 2024, [L.108(I)/2024]*, formalizes the role of the Commissioner, outlining responsibilities such as formulating, coordinating, and evaluating the implementation of the NSGE in collaboration with Ministries and Deputy Ministries. The legislation also establishes the NMWR, defining its operation and collaboration with the Commissioner’s Office.

281. The Commissioner, appointed by the COM for a five-year term, has several key responsibilities, including:

- Drafting and coordinating the NSGE and overseeing the National Action Plan (NAP) “Women, Peace, and Security” aligned with UN SCR 1325;
- Presiding over the NMWR;
- Promoting horizontal coordination with Ministries and mainstreaming gender across public policies and legal frameworks;
- Raising awareness on GE and women’s rights;
- Consulting civil society and proposing improvements or amendments to existing GE laws;
- Advising the President, Ministers, and Deputy Ministers on measures to achieve substantial GE;
- Collecting sex-disaggregated data, conducting surveys, and managing funding schemes for the NMWR and for GE initiatives, including the implementation of the NAP 1325;

⁴ Cyprus - Final updated NECP 2021-2030 (submitted in 2024) - European Commission.

- Engaging experts and appointing advisory committees where necessary.

282. The overarching goal of the legislation is to ensure equal rights, opportunities, and visibility for all individuals, fostering equality between women and men across all areas of public and private life.

283. The NSGE, effective since January 2024, was developed in collaboration with Ministries, civil society, NMWR, higher education institutions, and the private sector. It introduces new pillars and actions including:

- Gender budgeting;
- Gender mainstreaming in foreign policy;
- Gender and transport;
- Women in sports; and
- Gender justice.

284. With 14 thematic areas and 64 planned actions, the Strategy aims to dismantle gender stereotypes and promote equal participation of women and men across all sectors of life.

285. On March 8, 2023, the COM mandated the appointment of GE Officers in each Ministry and Deputy Ministry to work closely with the CGE. These officers are responsible for:

- (a) Integrating gender perspectives into projects and policies;
- (b) Preparing annual action plans for GE; and
- (c) Ensuring public policies have equal impact on both women and men.

286. The GE officers form an Interministerial Committee, chaired by the CGE, to oversee the implementation of the National Strategy and mainstream gender in public governance.

287. Over the years, Municipalities in Cyprus have implemented various projects and initiatives to promote GE and eliminate discrimination against women. In June 2023, the President of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities, in collaboration with the CGE, introduced a GE Action Plan tailored to Local Government's responsibilities. Although participation in the plan is not mandatory, it seeks to foster a cultural shift within Local Government institutions regarding GE. Importantly, it does not interfere with individual initiatives carried out by Municipalities.

288. The 2024 Action Plan is built around five key pillars:

- Municipal GE Officers' Network: Municipalities are encouraged to appoint GE Officers who will participate in network meetings and seminars focused on integrating gender perspectives into municipal work;
- Improved Lighting in Public Spaces: A campaign to enhance lighting in municipal parking spaces and parks to address safety concerns, particularly for women. This initiative also raises awareness regarding local authorities' role in ensuring public safety;
- Breastfeeding and Breast Milk Pumping Rooms: Municipalities are encouraged to create accessible and hygienic breastfeeding and pumping rooms in public buildings for employees and citizens to promote breastfeeding as a public health initiative;
- Designated Yellow Parking Spaces for Pregnant Women and Families with Newborns: Wider, yellow-painted parking spaces are designated in municipal

parking lots for families and caregivers with young children, improving accessibility and convenience;

- Baby Changing Facilities in Restrooms: Baby changing tables are to be installed in both men's and women's restrooms in municipal buildings. This initiative challenges traditional gender stereotypes by acknowledging that caregiving responsibilities are shared by all parents.

289. The action plan was officially launched in November 2023 during the Union of Cyprus Municipalities' General Assembly. It received widespread positive feedback from the majority of Municipalities, reflecting growing support for GE initiatives at the local government level.

290. Neapolis University is committed to promoting GE in alignment with the CEDAW. The University adopts an inclusive approach to GE, recognizing identities beyond binary categories, and prioritizes quality education, lifelong learning, and workplace equality for women and girls. Since June 2018, significant progress has been made in addressing challenges to GE, including implementing a zero-tolerance policy on violence and harassment through counselling services, seminars, and inclusive programs for all students and staff.

291. The University's Committee on GE, the Committee on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, and the Counselling Centre for Research and Psychological Support have been working since 2020 to create an environment free from gender discrimination. Recent initiatives include participation in the European "*Security Inclusion*" project (since 2023) and the establishment of a Human Rights Observatory with student participation in 2024. Despite efforts, some gender disparities persist, including male overrepresentation among faculty and female overrepresentation in administrative roles, as well as inequalities in faculty holding administrative positions.

292. Neapolis University emphasizes the importance of avoiding all forms of discrimination through its Code of Ethics and Code of Good Practice. The University aims to:

- Form internal and external networks to address gender issues;
- Encourage the inclusion of gender-focused projects in study programs;
- Support gender-related research through its financial support program;
- Collaborate with national organizations and the Office of the CGE to provide education and training on gender issues. It also seeks to maintain a "*Gender Map*" and collaborate with national organizations and the Office of the CGE to provide education and training on gender issues.

293. Cyprus University of Technology (CUT) prioritizes GE, fostering diversity, and inclusivity, aiming to create an academic environment. Through policies and initiatives, the University ensures equal opportunities for all community members while empowering women across all levels.

294. As a member of the European University of Technology Alliance (EUT+), CUT collaborates with nine European universities to promote human-centred technology, diversity, and inclusiveness. EUT+ also addresses GE in relation to disability, sexual orientation, age, and socio-economic status, working towards establishing a model university free from discrimination.

295. In 2020, CUT established an Equality Committee to promote GE and inclusion across the institution. Under its Gender Equality Plan CUT focuses on four pillars:

- Fostering a culture of GE;
- Supporting equal career opportunities;

- Reforming governance processes;
- Integrating gender considerations in research and teaching.

296. The Diversity and Inclusion Office also supports these efforts by advocating for a vibrant and inclusive community. Furthermore, the University implemented a Code of Practice to prevent bullying, sexual harassment, and discrimination, applicable to all students, staff, and affiliates.

297. CUT has introduced several initiatives to enhance inclusivity, including creating breastfeeding-friendly spaces and training staff on the use of inclusive language in communication. Awareness-raising activities, such as seminars and workshops on gender issues, unconscious bias, and the promotion of gender-neutral policies, have also been integral. To celebrate women's achievements, CUT presents the annual Women's Personality Award, recently renamed the "*Christiana Kuta Prize*", which also contributes to research funding and student welfare.

298. CUT actively promotes gender balance in leadership roles by encouraging the representation of women in Senate committees and other decision-making positions. The University is also part of the Cyprus Platform for Gender Budgeting, contributing to broader systemic changes. Preparatory work for a children's employment centre is underway to support working parents within the community. These comprehensive efforts have earned CUT certifications and recognition, such as the "*HR Excellence in Research*" award from the European Commission.

299. CUT supports educational programs like the "*Girls in STEAM Academy*" to inspire young women to explore science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) fields. Research activities, such as the FeSTEM project and GenderSMART, further aim to retain and empower women in STEAM fields. Other projects, including FEM-UnitED and EWA, focus on addressing VAW, gender-based discrimination, and femicide while promoting awareness and policy reform.
