Resource Manual and Strategy for the Promotion of Gender Equality in Cyprus
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AEQUITAS

AEQUITAS is an non-governmental organization in Cyprus that works on promoting human rights education, intercultural education and citizenship education. AEQUITAS' vision is to contribute to the creation of a society in which human rights are understood, protected and promoted with a view to strengthening the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, cultivating a sense of value for human dignity, ensuring gender equality in all spheres, achieving respect for cultural diversity, empowering people to become active citizens and, moreover, enhancing principles such as democracy and solidarity. AEQUITAS' mission is to implement all its activities on the basis of human rights principles as enshrined in international human rights documents. AEQUITAS seeks to raise awareness and educate individuals and groups on issues pertaining to human rights, intercultural dialogue and citizenship. In this light, AEQUITAS provides Human Rights Education, Citizenship Education and Intercultural Education to a wide range of target groups, empowers marginalized communities and individuals to know and uphold their rights, carries out awareness-raising campaigns on a variety of human rights issues, encourages human rights debate and carries out lobbying and advocacy activities for human rights issues. AEQUITAS has implemented an array of educational, capacity building as well as advocacy and lobbying activities and projects funded by institutions such as the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the Open Society Foundations and the Cyprus Youth Board. For more information on AEQUITAS please visit our website at www.aequitas-humanrights.org.
European Youth Foundation

The pilot project was funded by the European Youth Foundation. The European Youth Foundation is a fund established in 1972 by the Council of Europe to provide financial support for European youth activities. Since 1972, more than 300,000 young people, aged between 15 and 30, mostly from member states, have benefitted directly from EYF-supported activities. Its purpose is to encourage co-operation among young people in Europe by providing financial support to such European youth activities which serve the promotion of peace, understanding and co-operation in a spirit of respect for the Council of Europe's fundamental values such as human rights, democracy, tolerance and solidarity. For more information visit the EYF's website at: http://www.coe.int/en/web/european-youth-foundation/home.
Project Background

The pilot project ‘Youth for Gender Equality’ consisted of a training course with 20 participants from Cyprus aged 18-30, active in the field of youth work. During the training course, participants were empowered to take an active stance in promoting gender equality in Cypriot society through human rights education. More particularly, the project enabled participants to understand women’s rights, explore the phenomena of gender discrimination, gain the ability to recognize stereotypes and prejudices against women, challenge such phenomena within their own communities and become empowered to implement human rights education activities as a means to this end within their own organizations. It ensured that participants embrace the values necessary for the creation of a human rights culture, such as respect, solidarity and non-discrimination as this is a necessary pre-requisite for gender equality. As well as the training course, this pilot project resulted in the formulation of this strategy, which incorporates recommendations made by participants of the course to competent authorities, policy makers and NGOs in relation to the promotion of the rights of women and gender equality in Cyprus.
Objectives of the Resource Manual and Strategy

This document has been printed in Greek and English and will be disseminated to competent authorities and relevant governmental and non-organizations. Its overall aim is to provide an overview of the theoretical and legal framework of the protection of women’s rights and promotion of gender equality as these emanate from national, European and international laws, to provide a succinct appraisal of gender equality in Cyprus, considering both the public and private sphere and to outline the key recommendations made by the participants of the training course in relation to means and methods of promoting women’s rights and ensuring gender equality in Cyprus and to outline the role of competent authorities, non-governmental organizations and other bodies in the adoption of these recommendations. We hope that competent authorities, NGOs, charitable organizations and other relevant bodies and individuals find this document to be a useful tool for the protection of women’s rights and the promotion of gender equality in Cyprus and that policy makers as well as other organizations, as described below, take concrete steps and measures to take into account and implement the recommendations set forth herein. The strategy was prepared by Dr. Stavros Parlalis, Natalie Alkiviadou and Chryso Frangoudi.
Gender Equality: Cypriot Reality

Although Cyprus has taken positive steps on a legal, political and practical level in relation to the promotion of gender equality, the gap between the sexes continues to be a reality. Relevant statistics and figures on the theme are mentioned below.

**Employment**

By the end of 2012, 208.665 of the 442.483 people who make up the workforce (employed and unemployed) are women. 184.052 of the 389.046 persons who are in employment are women. The comparison with 2011 reflects unemployment among women since at the end of that year, 203.275 women were working. According to the Statistical Service of Cyprus, women constitute the majority of unemployed persons, especially those aged 30-50 (47% of unemployed women), while 27% of young women up to 29 years old are unemployed.

12% of women work part-time compared to 7.2% of men.

Cyprus still ranks first in relation to unequal pay (21.5%) in the EU, where the average is 16.5%. In Cyprus, for every 100 Euros on average earned by a man, a woman earns just 83.6 Euros for the same work or work of equal value.

Women hold only 2,486 managerial positions of the total 19.084, although they supersede as qualified staff with their number reaching 28.420 as opposed to 27.574 men. But they also supersede as unskilled labourers since their number reaches 40.507 as opposed to 27.150 men.

**Poverty**

According to official data of the State, the percentage of women who are at risk of poverty is 17.2%, of which 43.4% are elderly.

**Violence**

Women constitute 31.9% of the victims of serious offenses, with only 9% of persons convicted of serious offences being women. At the same time, 8.095 women were victims of domestic violence in the period of 2000-2012 (the number of men was 974). In 2012, the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family recorded 1,735 incidents of domestic violence, of which 1,315 were against women, 259 children and 178 men.
Political Life

The participation of women in political decision-making positions is low. Specifically, there is only one woman in the Ministerial Cabinet, while there are only eight seven members of parliament of the total 56 Members. In relation to other positions, out of the 11 ministries, there are two female permanent secretaries and one acting permanent secretary while 37% of the staff of the public service are women.
The Legal Framework

(A) International, European and National laws

(1) The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was the first binding international document which sought to promote women’s rights. It was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979 and was ratified by Cyprus in 1985 by Law 78/1985. The Convention defines discrimination against women as "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field." Article 2 of the CEDAW requires States Parties to “condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women.” The CEDAW requires States Parties to eliminate discrimination against women in areas including, inter alia, public life, education, employment, healthcare and marriage. The Convention also requires that States Parties take all appropriate measures to combat prejudices against women based on stereotypes on the roles of men and women. It imposes a positive obligation on states to ensure that women are equal before the law, that they are able to achieve their full development in political, social, economic and cultural life and to eliminate practices such as the trafficking of women. The Convention has a monitoring mechanism, the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which oversees the implementation of the Convention by States Parties. In 1999, the General Assembly adopted an Optional Protocol which allows the CEDAW’s monitoring mechanism to receive complaints from individuals or groups for violations relevant to the Convention provisions but also to instigate an inquiry procedure into grave and systematic violations of women’s rights. Cyprus ratified the Optional Protocol in 2002.
(2) The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence is the most far reaching document dealing with violence against women and domestic violence. It is a Council of Europe instrument which entered into force in August 2014 but has not yet been ratified by Cyprus. The Convention seeks to combat such violence through prevention, protection and prosecution. More particularly, the objectives of the Convention are to:

a. protect women against all forms of violence and prevent, prosecute and eliminate violence against women and domestic violence;
b. contribute to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and promote substantive equality between women and men, including by empowering women;
c. design a comprehensive framework, policies and measures for the protection of and assistance to all victims of violence against women and domestic violence;
d. promote international co-operation with a view to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence;
e. Provide support and assistance to organisations and law enforcement agencies to effectively co-operate in order to adopt an integrated approach to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence.

The Convention defines key terms for purposes of the Convention including: *Violence against women*: a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.
Domestic violence: all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim.

Gender: the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men.

Gender based violence against women: violence that is directed against a woman because she is a women or that affects women disproportionately.

The following section will draw on some of the measures and provisions of the Convention that are outlined therein as means to this end. To prevent violence and domestic violence, it provides that States Parties should take steps to tackle gender stereotypes, raise awareness, educate on equality and cooperate with civil society, media and the private sector to disseminate these messages to the public. To protect victims, it holds that States Parties should take the appropriate steps to ensure that the needs of victims lie at the epicentre of any measures drafted and implemented, to establish support services to victims and their children, set up a sufficient number of shelters and provide 24 hour help lines for victims. To prosecute perpetrators, it holds that States must ensure that violence against women is sufficiently punished, that honour crimes are not allowed and that competent authorities are alert to imminently dangerous situations. Moreover, the Convention underlines the importance for all well-rounded approach to violence against women and domestic violence, with the input of relevant authorities and agencies. Finally, with a view of ensuring compliance with its provisions, the Convention establishes a monitoring mechanism to make findings and provide recommendations to States Parties in relation to the fields covered by the Convention.
(B) National Law

This section shall provide an overview of the national laws relevant to the rights of women and the promotion of gender equality. In a nutshell, Cyprus law provides for the general principle of non-discrimination, incorporates the provisions of the CEDAW convention into national law, tackles particular forms of violence that often affect women disproportionately such as trafficking and domestic violence and seeks to ensure equality in the workplace.

Article 28(2) of the Cyprus Constitution provides for the principle of non-discrimination. More particularly, it holds that ‘every person shall enjoy all the rights and liberties provided for in this Constitution without any direct or indirect discrimination against any person on the ground of his community, race, religion, language, sex, political or other convictions, national or social descent, birth, colour, wealth, social class, or on any ground whatsoever, unless there is express provision to the contrary in this Constitution’. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women Law (1985) ratifies the CEDAW and thus binds the Republic of Cyprus to adopt the provisions as provided for therein. Cyprus has no reservations to the Convention provisions.

The following section shall look into four key national laws that directly deal with issues pertaining to the rights of women and gender equality. Namely:

- Law on Preventing and Combating Trafficking and Exploitation of Persons and Protection of Victims;
- Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims Law);
- The Equal Treatment for Men and Women in Employment and Vocational Training Law.
Law on Preventing and Combating Trafficking and Exploitation of Persons and Protection of Victims (2000-2014)

This Law was amended in 2014 to transpose Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and the Council for the prevention and combatting of trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, Directive 2004/81/EC on the residence permit issued to third-country nationals who are victims of trafficking in human beings or who have been the subject of an action to facilitate illegal immigration, who cooperate with the competent authorities and the Framework Decision of the Council on the standing of victims in criminal proceedings 2001/220/JHA.

The Law seeks to prevent the crimes, protect its victims and investigate and punish the perpetrators. More particularly, the purpose of this Law is to introduce measures to prevent, suppress and combat the trafficking, exploitation and abuse of persons, to protect and support of victims of these crimes, to create control mechanisms and to promote international cooperation for the implementation of the above measures.
Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims Law) 2002 – 2004

For the purposes of this Law, violence includes any act, omission or behaviour which causes, physical, sexual or psychological damage to any member of the family by another member of the family and includes the violence carried out for purposes of having forced sexual intercourse with the victim as well as the restriction of the victim’s freedom.

A member of the family includes a man and women who live together, whether they are married or not, their parents, their children or grandchildren as well as any person who lives with them. This definition of a family which is directly linked with the definition of violence within the family unit does not recognize the gender element of domestic violence as this occurs in practice and is thus not defined or understood as gender-based violence and/or violence against women.

This Law, inter alia:

- Raises the penalties for domestic violence
- Recognizes marital rape
- Allows the Court to issue restraining orders against perpetrators
- Facilitates access to justice through fast-track proceedings and recorded testimonies
- Provides for innovative measures such as the appointment of family counsellors and an advisory committee
- Establishes a fund for the victims of domestic violence
- Allows for the establishment of a shelter for victims of domestic violence
- Provides protection for victims and witnesses
The Equal Treatment of Men and Women in Employment and Vocational Training Law of 2002 to 2009

The purposes of this Law is to ensure the application of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in respect of access to vocational guidance, training and education and the terms and conditions of their provision, access to employment, the terms and conditions of employment, including professional development, the terms and preconditions of dismissal as well as membership and participation in employee or employer organizations.

The Law provides the following terms for its purposes:

*Direct Discrimination based on sex:* When one person enjoys less favourable treatment due to sex in relation to the treatment enjoyed or the treatment that would have been enjoyed by another in a comparable situation.

*Sex Discrimination:* Any direct or indirect discrimination including sexual harassment or harassment and any less favourable treatment based on the rejection of such behaviour or the submission to it as well as any less favourable treatment of a woman due to pregnancy, labour, lactation, motherhood or illness due to pregnancy or labour but not including the positive actions, while any instruction or order for discrimination against persons due to sex constitutes discrimination based on sex.

*Indirect Gender Discrimination:* When an order, a criterion or a practice appears to be neutral but, in fact, places a person of a particular sex in a particularly disadvantageous position, unless such an order, criterion or practice can be objectively justified for a legitimate reason and that the means for achieving the aims are necessary and suitable.

*Sexual Harassment:* Any undesirable by the receiver conduct of a sexual nature expressed in words or deeds and has the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment during
employment, vocational training or education or during access to employment or vocational education or training.

Other relevant national laws:

*The Equal Treatment of Men and Women (Access to Goods and Services and to the provision of these) Law 2008;*

*The Equal Pay between Men and Women for the same Work or for Work of Equal Value (Amendment) Law, 2009.*
Recommendations to competent authorities and other governmental and non-governmental organizations

This section will set out the recommendations formulated by the training course that took place between the framework of the project ‘Youth for Gender Equality’ and aim at promoting women’s rights and gender equality in Cyprus. The recommendations are directed to competent authorities and other governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Cyprus Government
Immediate ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

Ministry of Justice and Public Order
Implementation of fast-track procedures for divorce proceedings in relation to cases where there has been an incident or incidents of domestic violence.

Ministry of Education and Culture
1. Integration of a human rights lesson on the school curriculum that includes, *inter alia*, women’s rights.
2. Education and training of teachers on the rights of women and gender equality.

Ministry of Health
Equal treatment vis-à-vis the provision of health services in the field of reproductive rights to all migrant domestic workers.

Social Welfare Services
1. Design and implementation of seminars for women in the field of domestic violence with a view of informing them of their rights and to empower them to remove
themselves from situations of domestic violence. Particular emphasis must be placed in reaching rural and isolated areas.

2. Formulation of an external interdisciplinary expert team to train officers on innovative methodology and practices to handle cases of domestic violence.

**Asylum Service**

1. Formulation of a strategy to ensure that the element of gender is taken into account in asylum claims where appropriate.

2. Education and training of all eligibility officers on women’s rights, gender-based violence and gender as grounds of persecution.

**Political parties**

1. Formulation and implementation of measures and incentives for the encouragement of women candidates to take part in local, national and regional elections with the aim of eliminating the gender gap in the political sphere.

2. To examine the potential of adopting a gender quota in relation to the candidates standing for elections.

**Municipalities**

1. Formulation of action plans through which municipalities organize and implement awareness raising programmes on the rights of women and gender equality.

2. Appointment of an officer to deal with issues pertaining to women’s rights and gender equality.

3. Setting up help lines for women who are at risk or are victims of domestic violence. Through these help lines, the municipality will offer psycho-social and legal support to potential and actual victims of domestic violence.

The above measures will be directed to women living in the particular municipality.
**Police Force**

1. Adoption of measures and/or incentives to promote the integration of more women in the police force.
2. Education and training of members of the police force on issues pertaining to women’s rights and gender equality.

**Media**

1. Conduct regular informative shows on women’s rights and gender equality
2. Limitation of television series, including cartoons, which show violent scenes in general but also against women.
3. Granting of free time to competent authorities and non-governmental organizations for the airing of campaign messages pertaining to women’s rights and gender equality.

**Universities**

1. Organization of competitions such as essay competitions amongst students on women’s rights and gender equality.
2. Implementation of seminars and workshops on women’s rights with credits given to students studying all subjects and not just one’s directly correlated with the theme.

**Non-governmental organizations**

1. Implementation of initiatives that seek to inform and sensitize the public on women’s rights and gender equality such as educational seminars, leaflets, posters and awareness raising campaigns.
2. Formulation of a strategic cooperation between all relevant NGO’s in the field of gender equality and women’s rights.

**Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council**

Strategic action plan to promote holistic cooperation between all relevant NGOs and volunteering bodies for the promotion of collective actions.
Cyprus Youth Board

1. Formulation of strategic action plan through which youth are further involved in promoting and protecting women’s rights and gender equality.

2. Place emphasis on integrating youth from rural and isolated areas in all measures and initiatives so as to ensure equal participation of all.

Cyprus Bar Association

Promotion of pro bono services to cases pertaining to women’s rights, gender equality and gender-based violence.
CONTACT DETAILS

For any further information please contact AEQUITAS at:

Email: info@aequitas-humanrights.org
Telephone/Telefax: 25 582333
Address: John Kennedy Str., Iris House, Office 840A, Limassol 3106 Cyprus

Website: www.aequitas-humanrights.org
Facebook: AEQUITAS Human Rights NGO
Twitter: AEQUITAS
Blog: https://aequitashumanrights.wordpress.com/