* Tool LA1.1/b: CYPRUS[[1]](#footnote-1)

**SUMMARY OF THE SITUATION OF WOMEN**

**Introduction**

Gender equality and eliminating all forms of discrimination against women are fundamental human rights but despite that, many countries worldwide including Cyprus have a long way to go in order to reach gender equity. The data used in this report are mostly extracted from analyses conducted by local or European NGOs working in the field of human rights and gender equality, but also from official information released by the government. It is important to mention that oftentimes, the data used are not recent and this highlights a major problem which is the lack of research and intervention on the topic.

***Situation of Women in Society***

Generally, the job market is becoming increasingly accessible for Cypriot women. However, two specific problems persist; those are that women mainly occupy lower-pay positions and that the field of work is gender-determined. According to the 2017 Index by the European Institute for Gender Equality, the employment rate in Cyprus was 64% for women versus 72% for men. The index also states that the gender pay gap is 14% to the detriment of women, higher than the EU-28 average (16%). Also, women earn nearly 18% less than men per month. Cyprus was amongst the bottom countries with the smallest share of female managerial positions in the EU with 21%, compared to an EU average of 34%. Additionally, the women employees on the corporate boards of publicly listed companies did not exceed 13% of total positions.

It is interesting to add that the time spent to raise children and take care of the family is still disproportionate between the two genders (50% versus 34% of men) while 81% of women compared to only 27% of men do the cooking and housework every day for at least 1 hour. This fact probably constitutes the reason why many women are hindered from participating more actively in the political and public life.

According to Eurostat, in 2018 the share of women in Cyprus’ Parliament was 18.2%, compared to the EU average of 29.9%. Also, the share of female members of government (senior and junior ministers) was 17%, compared to the EU average of 30%. The following year, the EU average of female share in national parliaments increased to 32%, but in Cyprus remained as low as 18%. In a similar fashion, the EU average of female members of government went up to 31% while in Cyprus remained at 17%. Thus, Cyprus ranked 26th out of 28 EU member states for its share of women in parliament and government in both 2018 and 2019. Lastly, according to the data compiled by the Inter-Parliamentary Union on the basis of information provided by National Parliaments by March 2020, out of 193 countries Cyprus ranked 112th for percentage of women in the Parliament (taking into account only lower or single Houses).

Furthermore, as reported by the Gender Equality Index by EIGE, 22% of women in Cyprus have experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15 and 51% of them has suffered health consequences as a result. Moreover, 20% of women who have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by any perpetrator in the past 12 months have not told anyone. Most cases involve physical violence, followed by psychological and sexual violence and many involve violence inflicted within the household. Also, Cyprus has no specific services for survivors and has some of the lowest conviction rates for sexual offences in Europe.

***Situation of Women in Sport***

A gender gap in favour of men in the majority of sports being practiced in Cyprus is undeniable. Women’s involvement and participation in those sports is lower than the one of men’s. For the most popular sports, like football, basketball and volleyball female Championships exist but the teams taking part are less than those of men. Generally, in less popular sports, such as water polo, a complete lack of female teams is observed. Additional interesting examples in support of this discrepancy are the 2019 National Championship of Sailing where in the Olympic categories there were 22 female athletes competing out of 88 in total, making men’s participation 75% against 25% of women’s; and the fact that there has never been a woman football Referee in Cyprus’s most important sport event, the A’ League National Men Championship. There has only been a female Assistant Referee for the first time back in 2008 in that Championship. Today there is a total of 15 women Referees and Assistant Referees in all divisions, which represents less than 10% of the total Referees and Assistant Referees.

In addition, during 11 Summer Olympic Games (1980-2020, including Tokyo’s qualifications), out of 165 Cypriot athletes’ participations, only 46 of those were women, translating into less than 30%. The only exception was Beijing 2008, where Cyprus’ female participants were more than men. Indubitably, in order to compete in the Olympic Games as an athlete you need to qualify by International Standards and it is not a matter of discrimination, but these numbers roughly represent the general participation of the two genders in sport.

Moreover, in the research ‘Women and Sports in Cyprus’, conducted by the Women and Sport Committee of Cyprus Sport Organisation in collaboration with the European University of Cyprus, it was found that the percentage of men occupying positions in all levels of sport decision making places, coaching and high sport performance participation is much greater than the one of women.

**Conclusion**

Presenting the situation of women in Cypriot society and their involvement and treatment in the field of sport has highlighted two main problems: First, although there has been a significant progress globally, women’s rights are still ignored and in some instances even overridden. Cyprus is just another example of this reality, as demonstrated in this report. For instance, despite women slightly outnumbering men, they are often underrepresented. This is the case in sport, as in politics and in the labour market. Indeed, even if more and more Cypriot women are entering the job market, a wide gender-determined pay gap exists, as women mainly occupy lower-pay positions. In politics, progress is even slower, as since 2006 there has been a backward trend both in political appointments of women as well as in women’s political participation, both as candidates as well as among those elected. Despite Cyprus’ law harmonisation with the EU acquis, there is still a very big gap in its application. Sport is no exception to the gender gap, despite the visible but slow change throughout the years, men are twice as likely than women to participate in sporting, cultural and leisure activities outside the household. This paper has also shown that relevant research on the topic is missing, as in this paper data from quite few years ago had to be used in absence of more recent one. Both problems seem to have a common root, that is the cultural view of women in Cypriot society. These stereotyped roles are preserved by different level of society-family, education, the political system, the church, and the media. While it is undeniable that the situation in Cyprus has been slowly changing, there is still a long way ahead in achieving gender equity and this is a goal that can be achieved only if a considerable effort is made by all levels of society.

1. Data and information represent only the southern part of the island. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)