

COMMUNITY INITIATIVE EQUAL
TRANSNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP SEMELI

**A GUIDE FOR EQUALITY
AND RECONCILIATION OF WORK AND FAMILY LIFE**

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This Guide constitutes part of the Cypriot, Hellenic, and Spanish collaboration in the context of the transnational partnership “SEMELI” (Equal Initiative), and in specific within the framework of Action 5 “Guide on Good Practices for Equal Opportunities and Conciliation of Professional and Family Life of Women” of the Transnational Cooperation Agreement.

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introduction

The present guide derives from the Transnational Development Partnership SEMELI, which acts within the framework of the Community Initiative EQUAL.

The Transnational Partnership SEMELI comprises the following National Partnerships:

- The Spanish «Melilla es Mujer»
- The Greek «Reconciliation Intervention»
- The Cyprian « ELANI»

The common goals of the Transnational Partnership are:

- To promote gender equality and equality of opportunities through common action of partners within the framework of Community Initiative EQUAL.
- To develop a learning process in the framework of a transnational environment, aiming at the exchange of related information and good practices.
- To develop an international Web site.
- To develop and exchange strategies, methodologies and scientific tools in order to reinforce women's professional evolution through reconciliation of work and family life.

Specifically the goals are:

- To promote methodologies that will be helpful for a great number of unemployed women, leading them to their incorporation in the labour market.
- To exchange methodologies and strategies in order to strengthen women's self-consciousness as regards social and labour issues, so that they can access the labour market on equal terms with men.
- To create a common line of action in the countries of partners.





What is a Guide for equality and reconciliation of work and family life?

This guide is a tool easy to use by those who want to be informed and sensitized and take action towards the claim of gender equality and equality of opportunities between men and women. It is based on the fact that the issues of combating social discriminations between genders are linked to the interfamilial relations and specifically to the distribution of social roles within the family. This leads to the essential demand for reconciliation of family and work life for men and women, which constitutes a principal point of the transnational partner's activities and the Community Initiative EQUAL in general.

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Profile of the National Development Partnerships that participate in the Transnational Partnership SEMELI

A. The autonomic city of Melilla participated in the first round of the PIC-EQUAL with the represented project, which was negotiated by the Council of Social Welfare, and at the moment the Council of Education, Youth and Women. This is the first time that women participate in the PIC-EQUAL, which consists a challenge and generates larger expectancies in terms of added value. The Spanish DP is composed of nine entities with different and diverse legal origins. In the first place by a public organism, which is the Autonomic City of Melilla: Council of Education, Youth and Women, which represents and administrates the project with a broad experience in sectors such as equal opportunities, employment and vocational training. Labour unions (UGT, CCOO) with a broad experience in employment and training courses are also participants as well as the Business Confederation of Melilla with experience in training and self-employment. There are also several other associations (women) with experience in training and social services.

B. The Greek DP consists of 10 institutions, coordinator of which is the Municipal Enterprise of Egaleo (Athens). These are five institutions of Local Authorities with experience on programs of social policy, the National Institution of Youth that has mission to care the school and student youth, the Research Centre for Gender Equality that is supervised by the General Secretariat for Equality of the Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralisation, a Vocational Training Centre, a Trade Union and a Trade Association.

C. The Cypriot DP consists of 8 entities of the private sector (several organizations, educational agents etc.), the public sector (Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Justice and Public Order and the local Authority) as well as various Non Governmental Organizations (Women's Associations etc.). The coordinator of the project "Open Doors" is the Cyprus Gender Equality Observatory - PIK, a specialized organization - with the relevant prearrangements of the European Union - that emphasizes on the promotion of Gender Equality and Equality of Opportunities. It has significant experience in the promotion of Gender Equality in the Cyprus society and labour market and the production of scientific tools, methodologies and educational packages.

Terms Analysis

The diversity and complexity of actions, activities, projects etc. implemented within the EU during the last decades and the establishment of women/gender studies have imposed the creation of a common "language", extensively involving new terminology. This terminology contributes to the comprehension of European terms and issues, although -being composed in English- its translation to the other European languages bears major difficulties. However, it serves the Community concern of getting the information regarding European policies out of the circle for initiated people and making it accessible and understandable by all citizens. For this reason, the Publications Office of European Communities issued, from 1998, the "100 words for Equality - a Glossary of Terms on Equality between women and men". It is addressed to policy makers, to Members of Parliament, both at national and European level, to those working in the field, to those simply interested, to all women and men. The following terms analysis is based on this issue.





Dignity at Work:

The right to respect and in particular freedom from sexual and other forms of harassment in the workplace (Council Resolution 90/C 157/02 of 29/05/90, OJ C 157).

Invisible Barriers:

Attitudes and their traditional assumptions, norms and values which prevent (women's) empowerment / full participation in society.

Gender Gap:

The gap in any area between women and men in terms of their levels of participation, access, rights, remuneration or benefits.

Domestic Violence / Family Violence:

Any form of physical, sexual or psychological violence which puts the safety or welfare of a family member at risk and/or the use of physical or emotional force or threat of physical force, including sexual violence, within the family or household. Includes child abuse, incest, wife battering and sexual or other abuse of any member of the household.

Gender-based Violence:

Any form of violence by the use or threat of physical or emotional force, including rape, wife battering, sexual harassment, incest and pedophilia.

Glass Ceiling:

The invisible barrier arising from a complex set of structures in male dominated organisations, which prevents women from accessing senior positions.

Women Studies / Gender Studies:

An academic, usually interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of women's status and gender relations, as well as the gender dimension of all other disciplines.

Parity Democracy:

The concept of society as equally composed of women and men and that their full and equal enjoyment of citizenship is contingent upon their equal representation in political decision making positions, and that the close or equivalent participation of women and men, within a 40/60 range of representation, in the full democratic process is a principle of democracy.

Democratic Deficit:

The impact of (e.g.) inadequate gender balance on the legitimacy of democracy.

Equality Dimension:

The aspect of any issue that relates to equality.

Gender Dimension:

The aspect of any issue which relates to gender/the differences in the lives of women and men.

Gender Pay Gap:

The gap between the average earnings of men and women arising from job segregation and direct discrimination.

Gender Impact Assessment:

The assessing of policy proposals on any differential impact on women and men, with a view to adapting these proposals to make sure that discriminatory effects are neutralised and that gender equality is promoted.

Gender Analysis:

The analysis and evaluation of policies, programs and institutions in terms of how they apply gender-related criteria.





Sex Discrimination - Indirect:

Where a law, regulation, policy or practice, apparently neutral, has a disproportionate adverse impact on the members of one sex, unless the difference of treatment can be justified by objective factors (Council Directive 76/207 of 09/02/76, OJ L 39).

Trafficking in Human Beings/in Women and Children:

The trade in people, primarily in women and children, for the purposes of modern slavery or cheap labour or for sexual exploitation.

Empowerment:

The process of gaining access and developing one's capacities with a view to participating actively in shaping one's own life and that of one's community in economic, social and political terms.

Desegregation of the Labour Market:

Policies aiming to reduce or eliminate segregation (vertical/horizontal) in the labour market.

Job Segregation / Employment Segregation:

The concentration of women and men in different types and levels of activity and employment, with women being confined to a narrower range of occupations (horizontal segregation) than men, and to the lower grades of work (vertical segregation).

Gender Proofing:

A check carried out on any policy proposal to ensure that any potential gender discriminatory effects arising from that policy have been avoided and that gender equality is promoted.

Positive Action:

Measures targeted at a particular group and intended to eliminate and prevent discrimination or to offset disadvantages arising from existing attitudes, behaviours and structures (sometimes referred to as positive discrimination).

Equal Opportunities for Women and Men:

The absence of barriers to economic, political and social participation on the grounds of sex.

Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value:

Equal pay for work to which equal value is attributed without discrimination on grounds of sex or marital status with regard to all aspects of pay and conditions of remuneration (Art. 141 (ex 119) of the Treaty).

Parity in Decision-Making (of Women and Men):


The sharing of power and decision-making positions (40-60% representation of either sex) between men and women in every sphere of life, which constitutes an important condition for equality between men and women (Council Recommendation 96/694/EC of 02/12/96, OJ L 319).

Equality between Women and Men:

The principle of equal rights and equal treatment of women and men.

Gender Equality:

The concept meaning that all human beings are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by strict gender roles; that the different behaviour, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally.





Gender Equity:

Fairness of treatment by gender, which may be equal treatment or treatment which is different but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities.

Vertical Job Segregation:

The concentration of women and men in different grades, levels of responsibility or positions.

Gender Contract:

A set of implicit and explicit rules governing gender relations which allocate different work and value, responsibilities and obligations to men and women and is maintained on three levels - cultural superstructure - the norms and values of society; institutions - family welfare, education and employment systems, etc.; socialisation processes, notably in the family.

Gender Perspective:

The consideration and attention to the differences in any given policy area / activity.

Quota:

A defined proportion or share of places, seats or resources to be filled by or allocated to a specific group, generally under certain rules or criteria, and aimed at correcting a previous imbalance, usually in decision making positions or in access to training opportunities or jobs.

Gender Roles:

A set of prescriptions for action and behaviour allocated to women and men respectively, and inculcated and maintained as described under 'Gender Contract'.

Sexual Harassment:

Unwanted conduct of sexual nature or other conduct based on sex affecting the dignity of women and men at work including conduct of superiors and colleagues (Council Resolution 90/C 157/02 of 29/05/90, OJ C 157).

Sex Disaggregated Statistics:

The collection and separation of data and statistical information by sex to enable comparative analysis sometime referred to as gender disaggregated statistics.

Gender Disaggregated Data:

The collection and separation of data and statistical information by gender to enable comparative analysis/gender analysis.

Reconciliation of Work and Family Life:

The introduction of family and parental leave schemes, child and elderly care arrangements, and the development of a working environment structure and organisation which facilitates the combination of work and family responsibilities for women and men.

Gender System:

A system of economic, social and political structures that sustain and reproduce distinctive gender roles and attributes of men and women.

Gender Planning:

An active approach to planning which takes gender as a key variable or criteria and which seeks to integrate an explicit gender dimension into policy or action.

Gender Relations:

The relation and unequal power distribution between women and men that characterise any specific gender system.





Sex Trade:

The trade in human beings, largely in women and children, for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

Sex:

The biological characteristics that distinguish human beings as female or male.

Gender:

A concept that refers to the social differences between women and men that have been learned, are changeable over time and have wide variations both within and between cultures.

I. Equality of Opportunities and European Equality Strategies





I. Equality of Opportunities and European Equality Strategies

1. Theory and context of Equal Opportunities

The EU is known to have a long history for the achievement of gender equality and for the consolidation of Equal Opportunities between women and men. Suggestively mentioned are the Council Directives 75/117/EEC «on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women» (10/02/1975), 76/207/EEC «on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions» (09/12/1976), 79/07/ EEC, «on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity, including agriculture, in a self-employed capacity and in the protection of self-employed women during pregnancy and motherhood» (11/12/1986), 96/34/EC on the framework agreement on parental leave concluded by UNICE, CEEP and the CES (03/06/1996) etc.

However, it is since 2001 that the EU has set out a complete Framework-Strategy on Gender Equality and on Equal Opportunities, utilizing collective experience and good practices. Considerable progress has been made by specifying, both in the content and methodology of the entrance, the gender questions in every policy, the gender balance within Community Institutions and expert groups.

A fundamental attribute of the Framework-Strategy holistic character is that changing the gender stereotypes, the management of interfamilial time also to the advantage of women, the conquest of social maternity and finally the reconciliation of family - professional responsibilities as an essential condition for ensuring equal opportunities in the social sphere of life and particularly in the fields of work, politics and lifelong learning, has been a fundamental factor of the objectives and the redistribution of social roles within the family.

Equality of Opportunities is a fundamental philosophical principle of the European Social Policy, focusing on the equality of opportunities between men and women. Equality of Opportunities is the absence of any barrier and obstacle to economic, political and social participation on the grounds of gender. It presupposes the equal treatment of men and women and the absence of any direct or indirect gender discrimination and -between others- it is set out in the article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

According to the EU the gender is an important difference for the totality of the population which needs to be surpassed in the social / cultural practice. Both men and women should not be viewed as a particular group among other similar groups. On the other hand, the gender differences affect, and usually amplify other differences: national origin, social class, age, handicap, sexual preference etc. Policies and practices that seem neutral regarding the gender may prove to have a different impact on women than on men and enforce the existing discriminations, inequalities and women's established difficulties of access to equal opportunities. This happens because a network of social prejudices, stereotypes and fabricated arguments regarding the social roles of men and women, mediates policies and practices.


For the achievement and consolidation of gender equality and equal opportunities, the EU has two tools: a) the positive actions and b) the gender mainstreaming.

2. European tools for promoting equality

a. Positive Actions

The Positive Actions are measures targeted at a particular group and/or gender and intended to eliminate and prevent discrimination or to offset disadvantages arising from existing attitudes, behaviours and structures.

They are sometimes referred to as positive discriminations and are consolidated in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (article 23) and the Amsterdam Treaty. The Positive Actions can be measures and activities defending disadvantaged women or measures and activities promoting gender equality (measures with specific outcomes, supporting measures and motivations promoting equality, and measures leading to the development of specific procedures aiming at equality). Quotas are a representative example of Positive Actions.





b. Gender Mainstreaming

The mainstreaming speculation derives from the 3rd UN Conference in Nairobi (1985), but it was completed and adopted on the 4th World Conference of the UN in Beijing on 1995. It penetrates the social formation and denotes the diffusion of equality at all levels: finance, politics and ideology.

According to the definition of the Council of Europe, Gender Mainstreaming is the reorganisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies, at all levels and at all stages.

In the relevant Communication of the EU [com (96) 67], the objective is not to localize the attempts towards promoting at the application of some measures for the benefit of women, but to mobilize every general action and policy with a view to achieve equality. This presupposes that gender dimension and equality need to be aggregated in all policies and actions in the fields of development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Successful Gender Mainstreaming implementation measures are the following:

- Gender impact assessment
- Gender Mainstreaming evaluation agents
- Increase of gender expertise
- Gender studies and statistics, etc.

Gender impact assessment is considered to be a key factor that compares and assesses, according to gender relevant criteria, the current situation and trends with the expected development resulting from the introduction of the proposed policy. These criteria are:

I. Differences between women and men in the policy field, such as:

- Participation (sex-composition of the target/population group(s), representation of women and men in decision-making positions.
- Resources (distribution of crucial resources such as time, space, information and money, education and training, job and professional career, new technologies etc.).
- Norms and values which influence gender roles.
- Rights pertaining to direct or indirect sex-discrimination.


II. The way in which European policies can contribute to the elimination of existing inequalities and promote equality between women and men.

It should be borne in mind that the above method is a synthesis of all the others, since its implementation requires detailed data and a certain expertise on the dynamics of gender relations and of Community policy on equality.

Within the framework of the Sixth Framework Program for Research and Technological Development, the EC formulates three options for the gender mainstreaming diffusion through all policies:

1. Pluralism: the obligation of certain measures and policies to take notice of different will, needs, expectations, conditions etc. of men and women.
2. Desegregation: the several measures and policies aiming at the desegregation of men and women, through reassessment and positive actions.
3. Participation: equal participation potential for men and women via policies measures, programs, etc. that are being reassessed towards this direction or newly developed.

The role of Public Sector agents and in particular of services that seemed to be “sexless” or even neutral regarding the gender, such as the Ministries of Finance, of National Defense, of the Interior and Public Administration, of Transport etc. is crucial for the inclusion of gender perspective to several policies. The gender mainstreaming requires informed, sensitized and activated agents towards the attempt of desegregation. Hereunder we typically state the contribution of such sensitized operatives in the Ministry of Finance for their actions of monitoring the public budgets regarding the gender (i.e. appropriations analysis based on their impact both on men and women) or in the National Statistical Service for monitoring indexes and data regarding the European Strategic Framework success on a national and wider level.





At the same time it should be borne in mind that the issue of gender equality and of equal opportunities is not an exclusive responsibility of the EU and its Institutions, but also of national governments. It is also a responsibility of the European society, of the political ideas society, of social agents, activities, movements etc. For instance, the employers should comprehend-through actions of awareness - the negative economic and entrepreneurial consequences of the loss of human aptitudes, dexterities and ideas due to gender bias.

According to the EC, the motivation and vigilance of the society regards the need of change of behavior, attitudes, rules and values that define and affect the two gender roles within society through education, training, media, arts, culture and science. The cultural prejudice and social stereotypes elimination is of crucial importance for the equality establishment between men and women.


The EC also points out that the perpetuation of negative or stereotypic images of women, especially on the media and electronic information and recreation, on advertisements and educational material, gives neither the realistic image of men's and women's multiple roles nor the image of their contribution to a changing world. Without offending their freedom of expression, the industries of media and culture should -by forming public opinion and values- contribute to the modification of public perception stereotypes and to the presentation of an equitable image between men and women.

3. The importance of combining Positive Actions and Gender Mainstreaming

It is often discussed that the incorporation of gender perspective to all policies results in the need of suppression of positive actions that tend to wrong one of the two genders, namely men. This perception prevails into a part of national authorities, but is also expressed in relevant case laws of several courts. Therefore, the use of mainstreaming in order to stop or eliminate special measures, programs, etc. regarding women, before the integration of women's needs, expectations and interests in the broad policy, is a risk that becomes visible. In fact, the current social status of men and women keeps requiring a consonant combination of the two tools to the advantage of women (although they have many times operated to the advantage of men, especially in case of underrepresentation).

Subsequently, it is worth mentioning that despite the considerable progress made within the EC -especially in the field of institutions and legislation- regarding the Gender Equality and the Equal Opportunities, the issue of modifying the collective social tendencies and the dominant gender stereotypic perceptions and prejudices remains. These perceptions affect the social/individual way of thinking and acting, and maintain the “gender limit”, that is the proper behaviors of each gender (those socially eligible and acknowledged), which generally either overstress any differences between men and women or create “false” differences, based at the human biological features (i.e. women's reproductive ability).

Within the framework of this European philosophy and its practices, the member-states and the members of the Transnational Partnership SEMELI have proceeded to the introduction of the essential services and organizations -with simultaneous institutional adaptations- for the development and enlargement of policies and measures ensuring gender equality and equal opportunities on a national level, with a view to combine positive actions and gender mainstreaming. It is worth mentioning that Spanish Constitutional Court has ruled that positive actions are legal, and in Greece the revised Constitution of 2001 explicitly stipulated that the adoption of positive measures for the promotion of gender equality does not constitute a gender discrimination. Both Greek and Spanish experiences are good practices that can be developed by Cyprus, where several objective difficulties regarding the Constitution's revision have not permitted the above adjustment. In any case, in all three countries there is a wide range of structures, institutions and measures focusing on education, employment and redistribution of social roles within the family. More specifically:





a. Spain

In Spain, like in other European countries, all citizens are equal before the law and may not in any way be discriminated against on account of birth, race, sex, religion, opinion or any other personal or social condition or circumstance (article 14), and this is a fundamental right of Spaniards, men and women. Within this context the government policies focus on equal opportunities as a factor of social coherence and development of the country. The General Government develops the key clauses to ensure the implementation of the constitutional order. It has thus created, on 1998, the Women's Institute, that comes under the Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs and has multiple responsibilities and activities. More specifically, the Women's

Institute objectives are:

- The elaboration and evaluation Equality Plans between men and women.
- The coordination of gender policies of various public authorities.
- The exploitation and distribution of European subsidies regarding equality policies in Spain, and at the Programs' direct implementation.
- The drafting of reports, researches and statistical data and the cooperation with agents such as the National Labour Service, the Economic and Social Council, the National Center of Research etc. for the researches' implementation.
- The technical support to different Observatories developing actions for women.
- The women Information Centers promotion on a national level.

Together with the Women's Institute, there are certain "Observatories" studying women's social status and analyzing their existence in different environments. Some of these observatories are:

1. The Observatory of Equal Opportunities
2. The Observatory against Gender Violence
3. The Observatory for Women's Health
4. The Observatory against Sexist Publicity.

Together with the activities of these organizations there are various projects and policies on the process of implementation, of drafting or of challenge.

The National Action Plan for Employment -an employment and equal opportunities policy implementation fundamental tool- includes a number of positive actions promoting women's inclusion to the majority of the labour market programs. Processes taking notice of gender dimension are particularly important:

- The Collective Negotiation Agreement, signed every four years between employers and employees associations.
- The Social Dialogue agreement, signed every four years between social partners and the government.
- The Plans for Equal Opportunities (PIOM) between men and women, elaborated by the Women's Institute and the central government or/and the separate governments, and based on a combination of positive actions and gender mainstreaming.

Several objectives -some of which are met and some others are under implementation- are the following:

1. The development and implementation of gender equality legislation.
 2. The promotion of women's equal participation at the knowledge development and diffusion.
 3. The coordination of European Programs and Community Initiatives (NOW, IRIS, EQUAL etc.)
 4. The elaboration of women's modern image and its social diffusion, mainly through sensitized media.
 5. The reinforcement of women's social and political presence and their participation in decision-making centers.
 6. The reconciliation of work and family life and the balancing of their qualitative and quantitative participation in the labour market.
- The Programs OPTIMA and CLARA, organized by the Women's Institute for the elimination of discriminations and the inclusion of women in the labour market through positive actions and co-financing by the EU.
 - Finally, the law 39/99 on the reconciliation of work and family life with protective measures for motherhood and childcare.





b. Greece

In Greece there are Institutions for the development, promotion and implementation of gender equality. Amongst them, the most important should be mentioned:

- **The General Secretariat for Gender Equality.** Created in 1985 under the Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralisation. It is the competent governmental agency to promote and implement gender equality on an institutional and practical level, in the social, political, cultural and financial fields.
- **The Research Centre for Gender Equality (KETHI).** Founded in 1994 as a Legal Entity under Private Law. It is supervised by the General Secretariat for Gender Equality of the Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralisation. KETHI is activated in enabling the advancement of women in all areas of social, political and economic life and aims at contributing decisively in the elimination of discriminations against women.
- **The 13 Regional Equality Committees.** Enacted in 2000 with a view to develop and implement effective equality and equal opportunities policies with the active and substantial participation of local and regional agents.
- **The National Committee for Equality between Men and Women.** It is an important scientific and methodological instrument for supervising the observance and implementation of gender policies. It consists of Public and Private Sectors representatives and aims at the elaboration of a dialogue between the state and the civil society regarding policies that promote gender equality within the framework of international and European establishment. Its mission is also to make relative suggestions and evaluate their results on a national and regional level.

Since 2001, Greece started to apply an integrated policy regarding the elimination of gender discriminations. This policy was put forth through the National Program for Equality 2001-2006. The Program's key responsibility is the designation of specific policies and actions for their achievement.

In order to meet its key objective, which is the modernization of the social model with a view to fully develop the human potential regardless of gender and to eliminate discriminations against women, the Program sets the following specific objectives:

- Women's participation in more jobs.
- Women's participation in full-time employment.
- Men's and women's voluntary participation in part-time employment.
- Women's active participation in economic, political and trade union decision-making centers.
- Citizens' information and awareness regarding gender equality.
- Integrated actions for women's "sensitive" and socially excluded groups.
- Change of social stereotypes and media-projected models through special measures of raising social awareness. Furthermore, actions driving at the reconciliation of family and professional responsibilities of employed people, and especially women.

c. Cyprus

In Cyprus the Ministry of Justice and Public Order is responsible for promoting gender equality, equal opportunities and women's rights protection in all fields of life. The National Machinery for Women's Rights and the Equality Unit have been founded within its framework.

A. The National Machinery for Women's Rights (NMWR) is the key structure for developing, coordinating and promoting the political equality in Cyprus. It was set up in February 1994 by a decision of the Council of Ministers, in succession of the Permanent Central Agency for Women's Rights. It consists of representatives of all Ministries, many women's organizations, trade unions and NGOs. The NMWR consist of the following Bodies:

- Council for Women's Rights: chaired by the Minister of Justice and Public Order. It consists of representatives of 15 women's organizations and other trade unions that include two Turkish-Cypriot ones.



- Transministerial Committee: chaired by the General Director of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order. It consists of representatives of the other Ministries and the Planning Bureau.
- National Committee for Women's Rights: includes all the member organizations of the Council for Women's Rights, all the competent officials for women's rights and at least 50 other Organizations promoting gender equality.

The key objective of NMWR is the elimination of discrimination against women and the promotion of real equality between women and men in all fields of public and private life. This is achieved through legislative modernization as well as monitoring, promoting and evaluating of programs and actions of empowerment and reinforcement of women's presence. These programs' main objectives are:

- Elimination of gender discrimination in all fields of public and private life;
- Reinforcement of women's participation in public and political life;
- Prevention and confrontation of violence against women;
- Women's economic independence;
- Women's information regarding their rights;
- Social sensitization, and
- Mobilization of the Governmental Machine in order to include equality in every policy and program (gender mainstreaming).

The NMWR has participated, in recent years, in European programs regarding equality between men and women. In 2004-2005 it gave flesh to the Program for the "Female Entrepreneurship Development" and in 2006 it implemented the program for the "Men's Role in Gender Equality". At the same time, the NMWR participates to the development partnerships ELANI and PANDORA for implementing programs within the framework of the Community Initiative EQUAL. It also participates to European Programs for Equal Opportunities held in Malta and Greece.

B. The Equality Unit is the competent Government Office for women's rights and gender equality. It comes under the General Director of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order and handles all governmental measures, gender equality policies and equal opportunities. Specifically, it deals with legislative modernization, subsidies to organizations, transministerial cooperation, governmental work promotion, budget preparation, publications arrangements, committees representation for Family Violence and Women's Illegal Trafficking and Exploitation, etc. At the same time, it is responsible for meeting the obligations resulting from the country's international relations, including the periodic reports preparation for applying the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Beijing Action Plan. The Equality Unit operates as the General Secretariat of NMWR, rendering administrative and scientific support. Finally, the Equality Unit is decreed, by the Council of Ministers, as the competent authority for issuing compatibility certificates regarding the projects being financed by Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund with the national and community policies for gender equality.

In Cyprus, except for the structures and services of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order, there are other agents of activity towards Equal Opportunities:





a. The Commissioner for Administration (Ombudsman)

The Commissioner for Administration was introduced under the homonymous law (L.3/1991). Its function is to look into complaints against administrative authorities including the Police and the Armed Forces for every action of maladministration that violates the human rights. Recently, it was declared as the competent authority over complaints regarding equal treatment and equal pay legislation by the Council of Ministers. For this reason, a new appropriate mechanism was developed.

b. The National Institution for the Protection of Human Rights

The National Organization for the Protection of Human Rights was established in 1998 by a decision of the Council of Ministers. It is an independent national mechanism monitoring the human rights respect, according to the relevant United Nations decisions, the Council of Europe recommendations and “the Paris Principles”.

c. Committee of Equality between Women and Men in Employment and in Vocational Training

It was founded as a consultative instrument by the homonymous law (N. 205/1/2002) and its function is to handle issues regarding the “Law for the Equal Treatment of Men and Women in Employment and Occupational Training”.

Lately there has been considerable progress -mainly on an institutional level- regarding the gender equality and gender desegregation in Cyprus. The country’s accession in the European Union and its imperative adaptation to the ‘acquis communautaire’ gave a considerable boost to this socio-political and economic aim. The comprehension that the economic progress of the country and the high standards of life could not be achieved without the active participation of women, which represent 50% of the population, is also very important.

The accumulated experience, the development of national mechanisms of promoting gender equality principles, the active participation and contribution of women’s organizations, trade unions and other NGOs promoted the “National Action Plan for equality between men and women”.


Its purpose is firstly to promote Cyprus' participation in the generalized European effort to achieve gender equality, and secondly to accentuate the project's political, economic, social and cultural dimension and its direct relation to the broader national attempts for development and social cohesion. By adopting the gender mainstreaming principle, the Republic of Cyprus intends by this NAP and through complementary steps and positive actions to promote the gender equality in economic, social and political life. It is therefore a strategy of horizontal mainstreaming. The key agents of intervention are:


- The Community Support Frameworks
- The Community Initiatives launching in Cyprus (EQUAL)
- The European experience (Community Framework Strategies)
- The National Actions

The Plan focuses on:

1. The promotion of equality in economic life and specifically in the labour market.
2. The equality promotion in Education, Training, Science and Research.
3. The promotion of equal participation and representation in the politic, social and economic fields.
4. The fight against all forms of direct and indirect violence against women, specifically of their trafficking and exploitation (emphasizing on transnational human-trafficking).
5. The promotion of equal access and application of social rights for men and women.
6. The change of common consciousness in respect of stereotypes and prejudices regarding the social roles of men and women.

It also aims at:

- Actions of holistic character that intervene in any field that could possibly affect the gender social desegregation.
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- Complementarity and compatibility with other relative actions, such as the National Action Plan for Employment.
 - Reinforcement of the involvement of women's organizations and other equality agents, NGOs and social partners towards the NAP's successful and effective implementation.

In conclusion, the main interest of all three countries in respect of positive actions and gender mainstreaming is the development and implementation of actions and measures of any level, regarding:

1. The women's promotion in economic and entrepreneurial decision-making centers and the assumption of positions of responsibility by women, which contributes to their participation in the development and implementation of policies reconciling work and family life.
2. The encouragement of the Public Sector to largely adopt Projects and Plans that promote gender equality in employment and include positive actions for work and family life reconciliation.
3. The encouragement and support of enterprises cooperating with the public sector, in order to develop actions that take the gender dimension into account, as well as the need for work and family life reconciliation.

II. Women and the Labour Market





II. Women and the Labour Market

1. The European Labour Market from the Gender Perspective

The European Union timely perceived that the existing structural gender discriminations, the double -and often multiple- discrimination against many categories of women such as immigrants, leaders of single-parent families, long-term unemployed etc. and the ongoing gender asymmetries urge the accentuation of community action regarding Equal Opportunities and the adoption of new methods and approaches in respect of this issue. This idea is also expressed in the Platform of Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (15/09/1995), according to which the elimination of discrimination against women and the removal of all obstacles towards equality is the key objective of the UN.

The Lisbon European Council (23 & 24 march 2000) emphasized on furthering all aspects of equal opportunities, including reducing occupational segregation and thus making it easier to reconcile working life and family life. The European Council went further. It associated the unobstructed and without gender discriminations women's inclusion in the Labour Market and the Gender Equal Opportunities with ampler quantitative objectives of great importance: the raise of women's employment rate to 60% by 2010, with a view to women's full access and reinforced participation in the knowledge-based economy, given that the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) increasingly affect employment.


The role of Structural Funds - Community economic instruments for cohesion reinforcement, employment perspectives improvement and sustainable development promotion - for the gender equality achievement is important. Their operation rules take notice of gender equality issues in the processes of development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

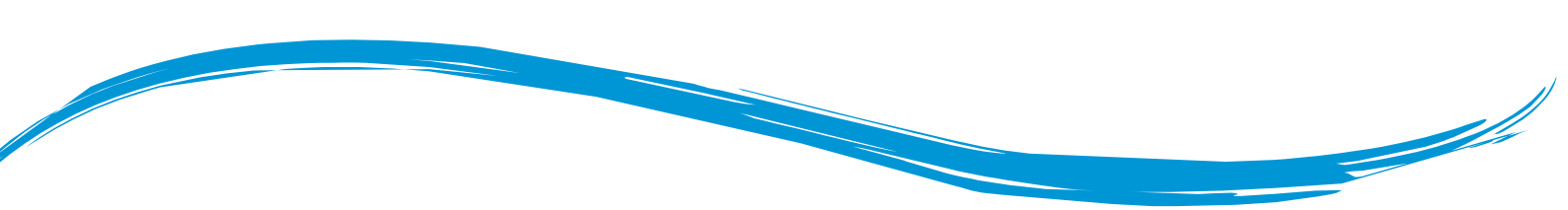
However, despite the attempts made in all levels, more than 50 million European citizens are qualified as poor, and in their large majority they are women.

Therefore, the study of the living conditions of these women and their accessibility to social security systems is still pending. At the same time, women in Europe still represent the majority of “flexible” employment workers, of unemployed and long-term unemployed people. They are paid less for equal quality, duration and qualification work, they deal with the “glass ceiling” phenomenon in their professional advancement and they are underrepresented in the economic, political and social decision-making centers. The division in male and female professions, the professional stability of women and their minor presence in senior positions as well as their increased participation in atypical forms of work is more than obvious. It is also known that women represent the highest rate of unemployed and long-term unemployed people in the majority of European countries. Even the salaried men and women are not equally divided between professions, branches and forms of employment. Men usually fill the authority positions with the highest wages as opposed to women (unequal access), who primarily bear the consequences of an eventual economic crisis. The gender dimension of the European labour market is specified as follows:

1. In nearly all member-states the female unemployment rate is considerably higher than the male unemployment and long-term unemployment hits women on a higher rate.
2. The employment rate gap between men and women is 20% on average.
3. Female employment rate falls when they have children, unlike men.

The gender segregation in the labour market is a substantial problem for the EU. Even in countries where female employment rates are high, they are engaged in divided professional structures. Women are paid less than men, especially in Cyprus where the pay gap reaches 25%. The pay gap is higher in the private sector and several structural factors, such as age, profession and activity field, do not seem to contribute to the decrease of salary gap. Finally, the limitation of traditionally “female” occupations due to the introduction of new technologies urges women’s training/specialization in order to respond to the new jobs’ requirements. The gender job segregation “derives from the socialization processes, the gender segregation in the labour market and the inequalities against women as regards the paid work (gender segregation of domestic work or social state founded on men’s role as providers and on women’s dependency)”.





Therefore, the design and implementation of Framework Strategies include research and practical activities both on European and member-states level. These activities were/are related to women's status in the labour market analysis, equality legislation implementation, social protection and taxation impact on men and women, individual access to health care, social protection and retirement systems etc. In particular, both the EU and national governments including Spain, Greece and Cyprus take action towards:

- **The gender desegregation in the labour market** by: a) activating education and training (emphasizing on new technologies), b) reinforcing the positive actions within companies through motivations development and accentuation of their social role, c) encouraging women's occupation in traditionally "male" jobs and men's occupation in care professions, d) promoting equal opportunities at all levels and fields, e) reinforcing gender dimension in the school-labour market relation etc.
- **The reconciliation of work and family life** is one of EU's essential priorities by 2002 and a substantial element of the European policy for employment and social inclusion process.

The gender asymmetries are also found on the field of Occupational Training. There are several indirect forms of discrimination regarding women's orientation towards traditional training fields, and therefore towards specific jobs/branches of economic activity, despite the importance of the ongoing occupational training for the modern working conditions in EU and the increased women's participation in it. This situation is amplified during the design and implementation of the provided training - which is financed by the European Social Fund (ESF): the gender dimension is ignored and the existence of indirect discrimination forms is unperceivable.

This kind of training pushes women towards traditionally “female” jobs that do not serve at detecting the tendencies and the demand of new specialties on the basis of the labour market’s needs. This brings about actions that do not provide equal treatment and equal opportunities in the workplace. The above situation generates a gender pay gap and a devaluation of women’s work - not to mention the loss of aptitudes and abilities resulting from the underestimation of women’s work. It also results in women’s absence from the wage scale and from the high positions of the working/entrepreneurial pyramid.


2. Data of the Spanish, Greek and Cypriot Labour Markets

a. Spain

The employment rate in Spain is one of the lowest in the EU. Therefore, lately there has been a significant increase, especially in the age group 25-49, which led to a decrease of this difference between men and women. In 1998, the employment rate of women aged 25-34 was 49,3%, while in 2004 it reached 67,3%. This development rate is also present in the age group 35-44. At the same time male employment rate remains the same in every age group and it reaches 90% in men aged 35-44. According to the C.E.S. memo for Spain, between 2002 and 2004 the female employment rate was particularly increased for the age group 25-29 (5 units increase), the age group 40-49 (almost 4 units) and the group 50-54 (nearly 6 units). This continuous increase to female employment rate (25-54 years old) is due to the immigrants’ contribution.

The Spain’s female unemployment rate was always higher than that of men. In the early 80’s this difference was of 5 units and in 1991 it reached 12,4 units (men’s rate 11,74% and women’s rate 24,71%). In other words, female unemployment is double the rate for men. In the 80’s Spain held Europe’s higher unemployment rate - 11,3% (7,7% of Europe 25). The mostly unemployed were the youngsters and people over 40 years old. From 1987 to 1993 there was a minor gap between male and female unemployment in the age group 16-24, but the gap grew bigger after 2002.





Female unemployment is characterized by its permanence, since women that remain unemployed less than a month are fewer than men, yet after this period of time the number of unemployed women increases. In 2003 the long-term unemployment rate was 63% of the total national unemployment rate.


b. Greece

In Greece, according to the latest studies, 36% of women are in the labour market, as opposed to 61% of men of the total population. The unemployment rate is 15,1% for women and 5,8% for men of economically active population, and 6,4% for women and 3,8% for men of the total population. It is therefore obvious that male employment rate is double the rate for women and that female unemployment rate is double the rate of men. The percentage of women declaring economically inactive reaches 57,6%, which is particularly disappointing. The statistical data of the second trimester 2005 indicate that the most productive age for men and women is between 30 and 64 years old, since the corresponding employment rate on the total of employed people is 77,47% and 78%. A great number of women of 30-44 years old has an unemployment problem, while the unemployment rate in ages 24-29 is also high. It is remarkable that 39% of women over 44 years old are economically inactive, while the men's respective rate is 24%. In particular, 64% of divorced women are in the labour market, while the rates of unemployed and economically inactive are 10% and 26% respectively. In the group of the employed divorced women 45% are 30-44 years old, 50% are 45-64 years old, while only 0,32% are 65 or more years old. 38,5% of married women is in the labour market. 3,1% is unemployed and 58,35% is economically inactive, which is considerably high. The single women's rates are similar, with the exception of the high unemployment rate in this category (12,6%), as opposed to 6,6% of single men.

c. Cyprus

In Cyprus, women constitute 44% of the workforce. Although the female employment rate is high compared to other EU countries (60,2% and 59% of women population aged 15-64 during 2004 and 2002 respectively) and the relative institutional framework is very developed, there are still gender inequality and discrimination phenomena in the Labour Market. Women are yet underrepresented in economic life and decision-making centers. For example, the pay gap continues to exist, despite the introduction of the Law “on Equal Treatment for Men and Women in Employment and Vocational Training” (Law 205 (1) 2002) and the Law “on equal pay for men and women for similar work or work of equal value” (Law 177 (1) 2002). Furthermore, the pay gap between men and women is obvious both in the employers’ practices and in the collective negotiations. The latter have been historically influenced by the dominant social beliefs regarding gender (underevaluation of women’s experience, and by the limited negotiating potential of working women in several professions and branches. Moreover, although the women’s unemployment rate has decreased from 7,8% in 2000 to 4,3% in 2004, it is still higher than that of men that reaches 3,8%. In Cyprus, the importance of female employment gains distinction in the services sector, which occupies 84,7% of its workforce. During the period 2000-2003 there has been a considerable amelioration of female unemployment as compared to men. The employment rate for women aged 15-64 increased sensibly in 2004, reaching 60,2% from 59% in 2002, which was far beyond EU’s objectives (57% for 2005 and 60% for 2010). Generally, the employment rate gap between men and women has decreased from 19,8% to 18,6%, while the unemployment gap has decreased from 1,6 to 0,8 units between 2002 and 2003. At the same time the percentage of economically inactive women that do not seek a job, but wish to have one, has decreased (from 3,5% in 2002 to 3% in 2003). The pay gap is also decreasing between men and women. Specifically, according to the Statistical Service, the average pay gap between men and women was 26% in 2001, while in 2002 fell to 25%. However, despite the above favoring data, a specific women’s group has difficulty in accessing the Labour Market.





These are the women of 46-60 years old. The access to employment of older women is problematic, because of disdain, past knowledge, little contact with the labour market and (other) obstacles and discriminations.

3. Good Practices

In the generalized attempt to eliminate gender discriminations on a local, regional, national and European level, the role of trade unions and organizations is particularly important, as well as the inclusion of gender dimension in the processes of Collective Negotiations. The need of its achievement in the labour market and in companies has led to the development of relative Guides, Methodologies and Tools, to the signing of important Agreements and Protocols (e.g. Collective Agreement of 1993, that is of historical importance to Greece) and to the development of remarkable good practices. Even in these important processes, the problem of women's underrepresentation is still visible, while there are no data regarding their participation rate in the three countries, however small it is. This is due to the trade unions' the lack of interest for the gender analysis of data that concern them. Several good practices are characteristically mentioned:


a. Spain

Trade Unions are the major factors (together with feminist organizations and lefty political agents) of implementing the gender equality through positive actions in the Labour Market. Their statutes mostly prefigure a rejection of any proposition, regulation, protocol etc. deriving from the employer and including sexist discriminations regarding wage equality, working time, difficulty of promotion because of the gender or the family status etc. Together with the signed Agreements and the development of essential scientific material and awareness material, the Trade Unions have trained the appropriate human power, rendering it capable of detecting the existing inequalities and helping employees to fight against them. We suggestively mention:

- Since 2002 there has been established a **Trade Union's Guide for the Inclusion of Positive Actions in Collective Negotiations**, which renders the negotiators capable of analyzing agreements under the gender perspective and establishing - in order to eliminate gender discriminations - a register of positive measures and activities that could be included in different kinds of Conventions and Agreements.
- In 2002, Trade Unions achieved the implementation of '**Zero cost**' program that establishes a bonus of the Social Security quotas for contracts of substitution for maternity leaves.
- In consultation with Trade Unions, the draft bill of 2006 on gender equality states that positive action measures may be established in collective agreements to allow preferences in the conditions of recruitment so that, between candidates who are equally suited to the job, preference will be given to the gender that is least represented in the occupational group or category. Companies with more than 250 workers will be obliged to negotiate over an **Equality Plan**, to provide paternity leave of 8 days and to allow women's representation of 40% in administrative level.
- In several Collective Agreements there are clauses favoring the reconciliation of work and family life: workers are allowed to take one part of their vacation leave at the same time with their mate or to transform one part of their maternity leave to "care days".

b. Greece

As regards the Trade Unions' role in the gender equality and equal opportunities claim in Greece, the gender dimension inclusion form is particularly interesting, not only in the field of collective negotiations but also in the way of organization of the Greek Federation of Bank Employees Unions (OTOE) since the early 90's. The development of equal opportunities mechanisms first appeared in the collective agreement of 1990, when a five-member **Sectoral Equality Committee** was founded. It included representatives of the Hellenic Bank Association and of the Greek Federation of Bank Employees Unions. It aims at making the equal opportunities principle the key objective of political activity within banks.





The collective agreement of 1994-1995 introduced in every Bank the Even Operational Committees on Equal Opportunities with initially research tasks, while with the Collective agreements of 1996 and 1997-1998 its mission was finalized. These committees' work is linked to the Social Dialogue Committee and develops the Employment Observatory's work. Its main tasks are:

- To develop principles regarding issues of equal opportunities that will be submitted to the bank's administration and to the trade union's judgment.
- To take measures regarding the desegregation of women bank workers in respect to their wage or the wage policy.
- To take measures regarding interoperational training, especially for women abstaining from their work due to maternity leaves.

These Committees consist of two members nominated by each Bank's administration and of two members nominated by the most representative Trade Union of the same Bank. At the same time, the Even Operational Committees on Equal Opportunities collects and analyzes laws and entrepreneurial regulations for gender equality, studies, registers and monitors women's progress within the bank, contributes to equal opportunities achievement in employment and functional progress for both genders and, finally, submits a justified opinion regarding violation of gender equality and personality assault. It is worth mentioning that the emphasis given on subjects of personality protection set the preconditions of detecting and fighting against sexual harassment that offends women and lowers their dignity and professional identity.

In this specific case, the Cyprian Trade-Union Movement, which has recently started to examine forms and ways of the gender dimension inclusion in the collective negotiations, can develop the Spanish and Greek good practices.

However, the close cooperation of trade-union agents with the **Parliamentary Committee of Gender Equality** regarding the labour market desegregation should be mentioned as a Cyprian good practice.





III. Family, Social Roles and Gender

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The determination of roles traditionally attributed to the social gender categories is the inherent result of an economic system and of several psychosocial processes dialectically enforced.

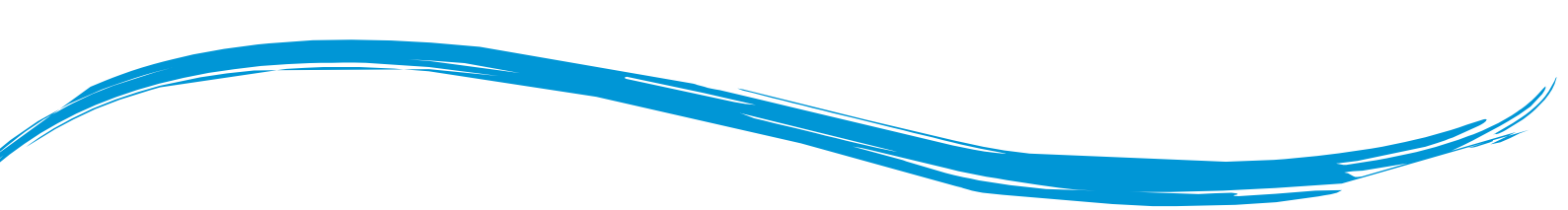
The stratification of western societies goes with a gender social asymmetry. The relation of male and female is everywhere seen as an hierarchical relation: law hierarchy or custom hierarchy, where laws and rules enter. The specific classified system -just like any other- is surrounded by myths and fabricated arguments in order to ensure its legalization and acceptance, tracing the gender asymmetry back to natural or supernatural factors. At the same time it develops a network of attitudes, ideas and representations, namely a social consciousness and a gender value scale, which involves different attitudes and expectations by gender and composes what the social sciences define as “gender social role”.

The traditional gender representations are deeply incorporated in the psychism of the members of the society. This applies not only to men but also to the majority of women that have “internalized” them since their infancy. This phenomenon manifests in every social class.

1. Family and Gender

A first social transfer of gender models takes place within the family, from the child’s conception until its day of birth, and during its care, its upbringing, its education. The gender images and values are early developed. Parents transfer their gender beliefs through their actions: they set forbiddances, canalize the children’s behavior with a whole game of impersonations and enforcing it with encouragements or punishments. The parents’ behavior is a product of their own education, enriched and corrected by their personal preferences and their adopted system of values.





The gender social roles are usually formed within the framework of representation systems of western nuclear families. Within this same framework, is distributed the interfamilial time between men, women, minors and adults. In these family life regulation processes, women shoulder many roles and obligations contrary to men and consequently, they are unfavorably incorporated in the labour market. They often have to cede “vital professional space” and their relevant personal needs and expectations (evolution, high wages etc.) subjecting them to their family obligations and to the dependent members of it (children, aged people etc.).

Men, at the same time, meet interpersonal and psychological conflicts within family, because of the obvious contradiction between the disdain “paternal role” and the new roles and behaviors that are called upon to adopt. Besides, nowadays it is increasingly acceptable that the redistribution of social roles within families, the transformation of biological maternity to social maternity with the participation of both parents is an historical-social need. This new dynamics of the father-child relationship, the essential participation of men to family obligations, and their occupation with children should be the modern social-familial reality. Towards this direction, the paternal role, which exceeds stereotypes and gender bias, needs social acceptance and support, since it considerably contributes to the communication and contact between mates and to the best upbringing of children.

However, apart from interfamilial relations and social roles, as they are accomplished within families, the State’s contribution to the elimination of gender discriminations is important. The contemporary family exists within a specific social, economic and cultural environment by which it is directly influenced. The way in which the State serves and reinforces the new family relations, ensuring the women’s normal and equal inclusion in the labour market, is related both to the legislative framework and the existence of supportive social structures. The maternity protection is considerably important, as well as the examination and upgrading of the paternal role. In a European level there is an attempt to promote different kinds of maternity leaves, paternity leaves and parental leaves, with a simultaneous deterrence of consequent unfavorable effects for women’s access to employment, working conditions, and their ability to take up positions of responsibility.

Men are encouraged to participate in children's upbringing from their birth or incorporation to the family.

According to the Court of Justice of the European Communities' jurisprudence, the maternity protection, by the Community Law, looks to the protection "of the women's biological situation during and after pregnancy and of the special relationship between mother and child after pregnancy" and also to "the achievement of essential and not only typical gender equality". The main Community text is the Council Directive 92/85/EEC on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding.


In the member states of the transnational partnership SEMELI, the States' provision regards as a good practice:

a. Spain

Since 1999, the Law 39/99 and the institution of several Laws (and bills in the process of development) ensuring equality between men and women, have introduced imperative improvements regarding maternity and paternity, as well as the reconciliation of workers' professional, personal and family life. Some of these Plans are already accomplished and some others are in the process of development. Suggestively we mention the following:

1. Integrated Plan for Family Support (2001-2004):

A series of measures, such as the improvement of the families' quality of life, the reformation of family income and the amelioration of benefits and social security per child. The strategic objectives of the Plan aim at an easier access to family obligations, an undertaking of family obligations and the adoption of a new law on the protection of families with many children.





2. Bill on the promotion of personal autonomy, emphasizing on dependent individuals:

A bill regarding the confrontation of problems deriving from the existence of dependent individuals in the family has been developed since 2006. The bill focuses on the needs of dependent individuals and of their families, especially of women that, up-to-date, are devoid of an effective policy for their care, to the effect that they give up parts of their life (e.g. work, art, distraction etc.) and their personal ambitions.

3. Bill for equality between men and women (March 3, 2006):

This bill that guarantees equality between men and women introduces some improvements regarding maternity and paternity issues, as well as the counterbalance of workers' professional, private and family life. That presupposes a development towards equal rights in professional relations and in social security. It also contributes to the development of parental joint responsibility regarding children's care and represents a major step towards the achievement of Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment of men and women within companies.

Although mothers are eligible for leave of 16 weeks (six of them are obligatorily taken before delivery), fathers are eligible for leave of two days, and in case that they have to travel they qualify for leave of four days. The father can have a part of the maternity leave of the employed mother in case she wishes to grant it. In the above bill there is already a disposition regarding a longer paternity leave.

Finally, a good Spanish practice derives from Melilla that favors working mothers of children aged 2-12 years old and heads of single-parent families, granting additional leave days for vacation. This happens in virtue of an agreement between the Women's Institute and the local Women's Council.

b. Greece


In Greece, since the early 80's, the new Family Law (1329/83) was established that radically altered the relationships within the family and was the starting point of actions for gender equality in the country. After that, the Presidential Decree 176/1997 incorporated Directive 92/85 in the National Law. This Directive was later modified by the Presidential Decree 41/2003 for its better adjustment to Community Law.

In detail, the legislative adjustments (fully reconciled with the Community Directive) that currently protect mothers and grant them rights in fields like health, work etc. are the following:

1. **Law 3174/2003:** Part-time employment and services of a social nature.
2. **Law 2874/2000:** Employment regulations and other provisions
3. **Law 1483/1984:** Protection and guarantee of facilities for workers with family responsibilities - Modifications and Improvements of labour laws.
4. **Law 1302/1982:** Ratification of the Convention 103/1952 on maternity protection.

In Greece, the competent authorities for implementing the above legislation are the courts. Moreover, like in every country of European partners, the importance of helping families to respond to their life cost and their consuming needs, especially those deriving from children's care, has led to the establishment of economic support measures.

In Greece there are the following provisions:

- Family allowances paid by the employer.
 - Infantile allowances paid by the employer.
 - Children benefit from the social security.
 - Pregnancy benefits.
 - Social security benefits for handicapped and maladapted children.
- 



c. Cyprus

The country developed its family law according to European data since 1995 (Law 19(1) 1995 on children's protection), although the country was not yet a member of the European Union. In 2003, with the enactment of Law 104(1) 2003, the civil wedding was established between Greek-Cypriots or between Greek-Cypriots and other nationalities. An important point of this Law is that for the first time the wedding between Greek-Cypriots and Turk-Cypriots is allowed.

Together with its adaptation to the European context, the country proceeded to the adaptation of its family and maternity legislation that concerns laws regarding parentality and parental leave, maternity protection (maternity leave, inhibition of discharging pregnant women, nursing facilitation etc.), childhood protection, formation of a family court etc. The institution of family intervention is interesting: it regards every family affair including parental care, children support, family assets etc., which is consistent with the Recommendation R98 of the Committee of Ministers to member-states.

IV. Reconciliation of Work and Family Life





IV. Reconciliation of work and family life

Reconciliation of work and family life is or at least it should be a major issue for both men and women. Women's difficulties, especially mothers, in finding and maintaining a paid occupation, the ingrained prejudices according to which women are responsible for taking care of the family, as well as the cultural expectations about men being the family's basic providers, are factors that can deteriorate the existing gender inequality. Men's participation in reconciling work and family life is an essential and at the same time difficult issue. It is essential because without men's participation there can be no equal distribution of responsibilities and is also difficult due to the necessity of changing the mentality of both women and men. Since 2000 the Ministers of Employment and Social Policy of the EU have stated, by relevant decree (29/6), that the principle of equality between men and women involves the need for balancing women's disfavor regarding the terms of their access and participation in the labour market, and the need of balancing men's disfavor regarding the terms of their participation in family life. These disfavors derive from social practices that continue to presuppose that unpaid work for the family care is a key responsibility of women, while the paid work -related to the economical life- is a key responsibility of men.

Consequently, the society and the authorities competent for Community Law implementation should be sensitized, in order to facilitate alterations in structures and behaviors and to develop new cooperation types between men and women. In this process companies and their choice of family-friendly and woman-friendly entrepreneurial strategies are very important. Thus, phenomena like the "glass ceiling" are surpassed and companies can develop all of men's and women's dexterities, talents and expectations. Issues of reconciliation of work and family life are the core of interest of individual national partnerships, but also of the T.P. SEMELI. In Spain, Greece and in the newly acceded Cyprus several measures and good practices are already in progress.

1. Measures on the Reconciliation of Work and Family Life

a. Spain

In Spain, an important feminist reporter, Ana Cabre, underlines that there is nothing uncompromising between women's emancipation and family's protection. She insisted that "the system is not only compatible but inevitable". The conditions for women's emancipation are the existence of an equivalent family, the reproductive functions provision and the family's protection by the State. Anything contrary to that would result in women's stay in a condition of dependency.


The Central Government of the country (that sets the conditions of gender equality for all Spanish population) and the 17 Independent Communities (that develop gender equal opportunities mechanisms) work towards the reconciliation of work and family life. To the same direction move several NGOs and the Women's Institute that aims at promoting equal opportunities and has developed different plans, such as the four Equality Plans.

The Law 39/1999 of 5th November, introducing the promotion of reconciliation of work and family life of employees and setting the legal background for the specific social change has a key role towards the reconciliation. In Spain, several projects and programs are already developed or still in the process, such as the Integrated Program of Family Support (2001-2004) etc.

Despite the positive steps, there is a lot to be done towards reconciliation. The key objectives are:

1. The promotion of institutional changes towards the prompt achievement of work-family life and the outcome evaluation of the implemented legislative measures.
2. The further examination of measures on reconciling work and family life.

An also important objective is the incitation towards Spanish companies to surpass their traditional labour organization types and the anachronistic forms of antagonism and productivity - which reproduce the gender stereotypes and maintain the well-established structural inequalities, only aiming at short-term gains.





Several large companies have already responded to the modern challenges, by improving their social image: the case of INDITEX that established an 8 day paternal leave is indicative, while keeping pace with the bill's dispositions on gender equality.

b. Greece

In Greece, apart from family protection measures, the effective combination of work and family life presupposes the existence of guarding and educating children structures. This happens in order to facilitate the access and overall participation of working mothers to the labour market, maintaining their possibility to continue their career. For the above reasons there are:

- Public nurseries under Local Authorities
- State-owned kindergartens (regular and day-long)
- Day-long elementary schools
- Private nurseries
- Children's Creative Occupation Centers

The difficulties in reconciling work and family life grow bigger when members of the family cannot help themselves, such as elderly, sick or handicapped people. For this reason, the development of specialized programs, such as **“Help at Home”** and **“Daily Care Centers for Elderly people”** was deemed necessary. The national legislator should treat all employees as social beings whom personal and family prosperity concerns both society and employers, since the secure and calm family life contributes to the unobstructed devotion and efficiency of employees. On these grounds the national legislation was developed by **Law 1483/1984** and **Law 1586/1985** that ratified the **International Convention 156/1981 on equality of workers with family responsibilities**.

In Greece a number of companies developed a series of remarkable activities and entrepreneurial equality plans towards the achievement of their social role assumption and of their contribution to equal opportunities and reconciliation of work and family life.

In these companies, in the framework of new forms of labour organization and of new management systems for human potential, the following system has been highly developed: a) increase of worker's satisfaction b) reservation of professional evolution and c) balance between work and family, resulting in the development of a working environment of high performance, worker-friendly and especially women-friendly.

c. Cyprus

The newly updated institutional framework of the Cyprian democracy has important dispositions that contribute to the workers' and especially women's reconciliation of work and family life potential. However, this need of reconciliation has to be understood by society -which, like the two other countries, still has patriarchal reflexes- and principally by the employers. The National Mechanism for Women's Rights, equality agents like the Equality Observatory of Cyprus, the innovative Bank of Women and women's departments of political parties and labour federations are activated towards this direction. A key objective of this attempt is the information/awareness/encouragement of Cyprian companies to assume their social role and to contribute to the attempt's success, by developing an internal entrepreneurial environment that is free from prejudices and gender stereotypes and women-friendly. The actions developed within the framework of the Community Initiative EQUAL are an important tool towards this direction.

It is thus evident that in all three countries the reconciliation of work and family life is a key factor for the achievement of gender equality and equal opportunities. The State and its Institutions, the Civil Society and its agents, the business world, etc. are activated towards this direction. The creation of innovative agents and the design of Programs and Plans are interesting ventures of important social reforms and changes for gender equality. The following actions and initiatives developed in all three countries are remarkable good practices.



2. Good Practices

a. Spain

- **Observatory of Equal Opportunities**

It was created in 2000 under the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Its key objective is to obtain, analyze and distribute periodic information on the situation of women in the country and to evaluate the existence of gender equality within society. It proposes policies, actions and activities that will highlight this information importance in different fields. An important part of its actions through the whole country regards issues of reconciling work and family life of women and of the legislative adaptations to this objective.

The Observatory comprises different Autonomous Communities (including Melilla), six women's organizations, INJUVE and also representatives of every Ministry. In Spain there are equivalent agents also in the Autonomous Communities.

- **Observatory for Women's Health**

It was created in 2006. This initiative started from the European panel's propositions gathered at the Madrid Declaration regarding the gender mainstreaming inclusion to health in 2001, with the support of the European Regional Office of the World Health Organization. The Declaration examines whether the health authorities accept the biological differences and social roles between men and women, the acknowledgement of social gender as an important element and the need of changes in the organizational culture of health services.

The Observatory is responsible for obtaining and distributing information with a view to improve knowledge regarding the reasons and dimensions of differences between men and women in health sector. (e.g. use of the appropriate indexes). The Observatory analyzes and distributes studies for the introduction of innovations concerning primary health care, training and research in the health organizations.

The Observatory assists and technically supports the Transregional Council of SNS in the development of indexes, methodology and processes allowing its reformative health policies analysis, under a gender perception, in cooperation with the Women's Institute.


- **Scientific tools incorporating the Gender Perspective**


Along with the above agents, there are -on a national level- methods of including gender mainstreaming in the implementation of several plans, programs and policies, such as the «Practical Guide for Gender “Perspective implementation”, developed by UAFSE (Support Unit of the European Social Funds).

There are also other tools, such as the development of indexes and methodologies by the Observatory for Women's Health for the analysis of Spanish health policies under gender perspective. Finally, there are guides regarding the mass media attitude towards women, guides for co-training, guides to detect and to prevent women's mistreatment, guides for the implementation of gender settings in labour policies drafted by trade unions, etc.

- **OPTIMA Program**

It is a management type of human resources, promoted by the Women's Institute and the trade-union confederation Comisiones Obreras. Its aim is women's inclusion and promotion in the labour market and the expansion of social development favoring equal opportunities. This is attained by the promotion of model companies that are ready to implement relative actions. The main objective was to detect policies harboring discriminations (usually indirect), to point out the sectors of these inequalities and to develop methods to eliminate them.





The Program comprises 45 different-sized companies from different sectors of the country. These companies have adopted positive actions and established a women-friendly environment that facilitates their access, permanence and evolution within equal circumstances allowing the development and use of their talents and abilities. Especially in the field of reconciling work and family life, the actions consist of measures including working hours flexibility, reduction of working hours, creation of nurseries within the workplace with full or partial financing by the company, telework, adaptation of working hours to school hours, etc.

b. Greece

- **MELLON FINANCIAL SERVICES SA**

MELLON FINANCIAL SERVICES SA was founded in 1997 with a view to provide high-quality financial services to the banking, telecommunications and commercial sectors. It occupies 288 employees (227 women and 61 men).

In 2005 the company participated in a pilot program promoting equality between men and women in the workplace. This action provided consultative and training services to 45 working women. The specified training aimed at the enforcement of women's horizontal capabilities (e.g. development of administrative capabilities and of self-projection) in order to assume positions of responsibility. The action was also a stimulus to personal improvement and there are already women that have been promoted to positions of responsibility. This fact validates the aim of creating new forms of labour organization with the active participation of working women and of creating a self-inclusive production organization. The consultative support focuses on the appointment of special qualifications, the reconciliation of work and family life, the encouragement of women, and the reinforcement of their self-esteem and initiative.

- **EGNATIA ODOS SA**


“EGNATIA ODOS SA” was created in September 1995 as a product of discussions between the European Community and the Greek Government to advance the implementation of the 2nd Community Support Framework. The Company’s sole shareholder is the State, but it operates by private sector economic and financial criteria, under the superintendence of the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works. Its aim is the management of design and construction, the maintenance, and exploitation of the Egnatia Motorway, its Vertical Axes as well as of other projects within or outside the Greek territory and occupies 286 workers.

The company is extremely interested in the training and education of all its workers under gender dimension. For this reason it participated in the program “Equal Opportunities between men and women in small or medium and large companies”, with the support of General Secretariat for Equality. In this context the company also developed a system of inter-entrepreneurial training with gender dimension and incorporated several measures regarding women’s progress within the company in its objectives. It also sensitizes and informs its external partners on gender equality and equal opportunities issues.

- **INTRACOM**

INTRACOM was founded in 1977 and is a multinational company providing solutions for information technologies and telecommunications. The group INTRACOM occupies some 2500 workers.

INTRACOM aims at the maintenance of excellent working conditions, ruled by equal opportunities. It also aims at providing modern and qualitative structures and at balancing the work and personal life. In this context it grants a nursery benefit, which covers at 80% the nursery’s cost for the employees’ children until the age of 6. It grants a monthly salary as a wedding gift. It provides medical insurance to all its employees, men and women. Finally, the company covers a percentage of the encampment cost for the employees’ children. During maternity, however, it provides wages and insurance for one of the 3,5 months of parental leave previewed by the law.





With regard to its training and educational policy, there is no gender segregation. The employees, men and women, receive over 70 training hours. This training includes educational programs within the company, seminars, but also financing of postgraduate studies abroad. To crown all its efforts, INTRACOM made its name as one of 10 Greek (4th) and one of 100 European companies with the best workplace in the international competition “BEST WORKPLACES 2004” organized by GREAT PLACE TO WORK INSTITUTE - EUROPE.

c. Cyprus

In Cyprus the activities regarding issues like maternity protection, family and childhood protection, fight against family violence, etc. -whose confrontation is a prerequisite for reconciling work and family life- still fall within the competences of the National Mechanism for Women’s Rights and several other equality agents, NGOs, etc. The employers are missing from this generalized effort, especially the Cyprian companies that, although they have a powerful social profile, they do not include gender dimension in their interoperational environment and their entrepreneurial choices (there are minimum occasional exceptions due to the Cyprus Employers and Industrialists Federation). This gap was covered by the Community Initiative Equal and specifically by the article 2.1 “reconciliation of work and family life”. Within the framework of this measure the Transnational Partnership ELANI -the Cyprian member-agent of Transnational Partnership SEMELI-has developed, during the last three years, activities aiming at the sensitization and information of the Cyprian Republic companies, with regard to the importance and future consequences of the gender perspective diffusion on their economic progress. Therefore, this specific measure:

1. Introduced a new professional profile to the Cyprian labour market: it is the Equality Council training 25 individuals, men and women, which could help the companies or every Organization and Service to plan and implement activities about equality.

2. Developed a scientific methodology of “reconciliation of work and family life plans”.
3. Implemented, with a pilot program, the Methodology in more than 15 companies and organizations.
4. Produced Reconciliation of Work and Family Life models for public and private sectors.
5. Organized, in big cities, informative meetings for employers (men and women) on the importance of reconciliation of work and family life of workers and especially women and on the development of lost dexterities, expectations and wishes.
6. Developed actions for partnership and netting with socio-economical factors and several companies.
7. Created three Women’s Consultative Structures for Employment, Entrepreneurship and Netting. One of these structures is mobile.



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