**Current levels of representation of women in**

**human rights organs and mechanisms**

In Cyprus, there are few mechanisms promoting human rights, women’s rights and/or gender equality. Most of these mechanisms only have an advisory role. Those mechanisms are:

* The **Commissioner for Administration and Protection of Human Rights (Ombudsman)** is an independent body/authority acting, among others, as the national equality body and national human rights institution (extrajudicial protection)

The mandate, competences and all the relevant information about the Commissioner are provided by the Commissioner for Administration Law and by the Combating of Racial and other forms of Discrimination Law[[1]](#footnote-1).

After the transposition of the EU Directives to national laws (following Cyprus accession in the EU in 2004), the Commissioner was assigned to act as Equality Body. As Equality Body, the Commissioner examines complaints related to discrimination. The Combating of Racial and other forms of Discrimination Law (L. 42(I)/2004) provides the legal basis for Commissioner’s interventions. According to the law (article 5) any discrimination on grounds of race, community, language, colour, religion, political and other beliefs and national or ethnic origin is prohibited. Competences to combat discrimination on the ground of gender are given by the Equal Treatment of Men and Women in Employment and Vocational Training Law (L.205(I)/2002)[[2]](#footnote-2). The Law provides a framework for the equal treatment of men and women.

As the National Independent Human Rights Authority, the Commissioner observes violation or inadequate protection of human rights and proceeds to interventions when it is deemed necessary to promote in society a culture of respect for the rights of vulnerable groups of population.

* The **Commissioner for the Protection of Children’s Rights** is the national independent authority acting for the protection and promotion of children’s rights.

The competences and all the information about the Commissioner are provided by the relevant legislation:

<http://www.olc.gov.cy/olc/olc.nsf/8A116E6D39753C5BC225847E00285F55/$file/Children's%20Protection%20Commissioner.pdf>

* **Gender Equality in Employment and Vocational Training Committee**

The committee may receive complaints, which are forwarded to the Labour Department for investigation (the Department is responsible to inform the Committee for the outcome of the investigation), provides advice and information regarding gender equality issues in employment and vocational training and provides legal aid (free of charge) to victims of discriminative behaviour.

* **National Machinery for Women's Rights**[[3]](#footnote-3) - Ministry of Justice and Public Order
* **Gender Equality Commissioner** (presiding the National Machinery for Women’s rights, responsible for policy formulation on gender equality)
* **Labour Department** – Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance designates Inspectors

Equality Inspectors, Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance – According to the Law No. 205(I)/2002 – article 24 - the Minister of Labour and Social Insurance can appoint inspectors to ensure the better implementation of the legislation relating to gender discrimination and the promotion of equality between the sexes.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

From the above mentioned mechanisms/organs, in the cases of the Office of the Commissioner for Administration and the Office of the Commissioner for the Protection of Children’s Rights, which are single-headed organisations, Commissioner’s appointment is regulated by their relevant legislation. No specific consideration of gender balance at the process of nominating and appointing the Commissioners. However, within the last years, in both these positions, women were appointed.

In the case of the Gender Equality Commissioner, there is no specific appointment procedure. The Gender Equality Commissioner was first appointed in 2014 and is directly accountable to the President of the Republic of Cyprus. Currently, both these positions are held by women. The President of the Committee of Gender Equality in Employment and Vocational Training Committee is appointed by the Minister of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance (article 22, L.205(I)/2002). Members of the Committee are representatives from Ministries and representatives from the social partners, who are appointed by the Minister of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, after being recommended by their organisations (of employees and of employers).

Our Office, issued a report in 2011, about the balanced participation of men and women at the decision making positions in political life. It was stated that quotas, may be a positive action – not always applicable – at least until circumstances are led to adequate representation of women in such positions. Few years later, a legislation was adopted for quotas in the selection of Board members for semi-governmental organisations, but the Supreme Court decided[[4]](#footnote-4) that the law was not in line with Cyprus Constitution.

In general, our Office, NGOs and the other mechanisms took initiatives for the promotion of the equal representation of men and women, mainly in the election process.

1. Commissioner’s competences are also arising from other legislations. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Harmonisation with 76/207/EEC, 97/80/EC and 2006/54/EC. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <http://www.mjpo.gov.cy/mjpo/mjpo.nsf/All/1DD21BB8F29B6A5DC22579B40039F4CA> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Decision (in Greek): <http://www.cylaw.org/cgi-bin/open.pl?file=apofaseis/aad/meros_3/2017/3-201707-2-16Anaf.htm&qstring=%EF%F1%E9%F3%EC%E5%ED%2A%20and%20%ED%EF%EC%E9%EA%2A%20and%20%F0%F1%EF%F3%F9%F0%2A%20and%20%E4%E7%EC%EF%F3%2A%20and%20%E4%E9%EA%E1%E9%2A%20and%20%28%E4%E9%EF%F1%E9%F3%EC%2A%20and%20%E4%E9%EF%E9%EA%E7%F4%2A%20and%20%F3%F5%EC%E2%EF%F5%EB%2A%29%20and%20%28%F4%F1%EF%F0%EF%F0%EF%E9%E7%F4%E9%EA%2A%29%20and%20%ED%EF%EC%EF%20and%20%F4%EF%F5%20and%202016> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)