

MINISTRY OF INTERIOR
GENERAL SECRETARY FOR THE
GENDER EQUALITY

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

1. In what ways do women experience the impact of business-related human rights abuses differently and disproportionately? Please provide concrete examples in the context of both generic and sector- or region-specific experiences of women.

Gender equality is of paramount importance for the United Nations system and for the majority of national legal systems. Protecting and promoting women's and men's rights in an equal manner is an obligation of all states. However, despite the theoretical debate and the explicitly expressed gender equality legislation, there are still, in practice, discriminations, sometimes disguised. This is the case of violations of women's rights in the working environment. These violations involving the abuse of basic labor rights for women constitute, in our opinion, forms of structural violence that need immediate treatment. Such violations are indicatively: the current pay gap between men and women for work of equal value, the absence of practical and flexible arrangements for reconciling family and professional life, maternity or pregnancy intolerance in the working environments, barriers to the professional recognition and professional advancement of women, sexist speech and resulting sexist attitudes towards women.

2. Please share any good practices on how to deal with increased marginalisation or vulnerabilities faced by women due to intersectionality, feminisation of work, informal economy, and conflicts.

In particular, women who encounter greater difficulties in working life are those who have also other "aggravating" factors that make them more vulnerable to unequal treatment. The question of intersectionality means that a woman can be discriminated not only because of her gender but also because of other age, national, social, political, cultural, religious or economic factors that characterize her. For example, a female migrant woman who is also a single parent will be disproportionately affected than a woman who lives in her own country and has no children on the labor market. Also, due to the cross-sectoral nature and the difficulties it brings, women end up working in low-wage and part-time jobs, so they have to resort to atypical forms of work that favors the informal economy. The informal economy is also favored when women, due to the difficulty of reconciling work and family life, resort to unpaid domestic work.

Examples of good practices:

Our service through the drafting of the National Action Plan on Gender Equality contributes to the implementation of actions for all women, regardless of the different factors that may differentiate them. Such actions are indicatively the following:

1. For training in new technologies and the elimination of the digital divide: We have included in the National Action Plan on Gender Equality (NAPGE) 2016-2020 as a goal, "The Digital Divide, the use of ICT as a field of gender inequality and their interconnection with school vocational guidance and the labor market".
2. We have submitted to the General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning and Youth proposed actions under the "New National Lifelong Learning Programs" aiming at the elimination of digital illiteracy and the integration of vulnerable social groups, especially young women and girls, in the workplace.
3. For increasing women' participation in the labor market: "Women's participation in the labor market, reconciliation of family and professional life" is one of the strategic goals of the National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2016-2020 elaborated by the GSGE. We are also collaborating with all the relevant stakeholders always in line with the European and international guidelines.

Our objectives are:

- i) Encouragement of female labour market participation.
- ii) promotion of the principle of equality in enterprises.
- iii) Promotion of female entrepreneurship -social and solidarity economy.
- iv) Improvement of the status of women in the agricultural sector.
- v) Encouragement of the use of ICTs by women.
- vi) Reconciliation of work and family life.
- vii) Collection and provision of data on gender differences in the labour market outcomes.

4. Actions to address the needs of women and girls facing multiple discrimination:

-In the National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2016-2020 there is a clear reference to the economic crisis affecting some EU countries, including Greece and consequently to the austerity and fiscal adjustment policies applied, thus exacerbating the risk of multiple discrimination against women. In Greece, the gender impact of the economic crisis is closely linked to cuts in the public sector, difficulties in reconciliation of family and working life, rising of precarious work, and deregulation of labor relations. The multidimensional nature of women's poverty makes it imperative to manage and resolve wider economic and social life parameters than those directly related to the labor market. Particular attention and care should also be given to working poor women.

Based on the above situation, the General Secretariat for Gender Equality puts the focus of its intervention policies on women who belong to vulnerable social groups or suffer multiple discrimination, including, but not limited to:

1. Women at the poverty line
2. Women heads of single parent families
3. Homeless women
4. Roma women
5. Migrant women
6. Women refugees or asylum seekers
7. Women victims of violence, torture or trafficking in human beings
8. Women with disabilities / chronic diseases
9. Drug-addicted women
10. Prisoners or prison released
11. Older women
12. Long-term unemployed women

-The General Secretariat for Gender Equality, in order to be able to intervene effectively in the increasing needs of the above categories of women in the context of the ongoing economic crisis, initially established an organizational unit within the GSGE for women who suffer multiple discrimination, through the revision of the Ministry's Organizational Chart. Specifically, the newly established Department of Social Protection and Combating Multiple Discrimination (Directorate of Social Protection and Counseling Services) is responsible for:

1. Elaborating and promoting measures to tackle gender discrimination against persons belonging to vulnerable social groups (migrant women, refugee women, single parent families, Roma women, etc.) with a view to their social integration and social cohesion.
2. Working and networking with all relevant stakeholders to mainstream gender in the context of national, regional and local social policy planning for vulnerable social groups.
3. Designing, coordinating and implementing social networking and co-operation actions with supranational institutions and international organizations, as well as with national actors, on issues of multiple discrimination.
4. Providing of first-line services and counseling services on psychosocial support and legal counseling to women who face multiple discrimination (e.g migrant women, refugees, single parents, disabled people etc).

-Finally, it is important to refer to care work.

Despite various policies and measures to advance gender equality in international level, women still remain the main carers of children and the elderly and the main contributors to domestic chores. Also care work, that is providing what is necessary for health, well-being, maintenance and protection of someone or something, is perceived to be less valuable as it is frequently not considered as work. According to OECD, if domestic tasks and direct care were assigned a monetary value, they would constitute between 10% and 39% of GDP, but it is generally unrecognized and undervalued by policymakers and legislators.

In Greece there is a social dialogue initiated with civil society and stakeholders under the central guidance of the Ministry of Labour in which the GSGE will intervene with specific suggestions. Once more synergies and high political commitment is necessary.

3. How to address sexual harassment and sexual or physical violence suffered by women in the business-related context, including at the workplace, in supply chains and in surrounding communities? Please share any good practices which have proved to be effective in dealing with sexual harassment and violence against women.

According to the domestic legal framework, offensive behavior against the dignity of a person in the field of their sexual life (art. 337 paras. 1, 5 of the Greek Criminal Code) as well as the act of stalking (art. 333 para. 1 of the Greek Criminal Code) constitute criminal offences.

Adding to that, Law No. 4531/2018, ratifying the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, is in force since 29.3.2018. One of its major goals is to contribute to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and promote substantive equality between women and men, including by empowering women. The Convention emphasizes on prevention of gender-based violence through specialized education and awareness programs and specialized measures are envisaged:

- to protect women-victims of violence in order to prevent their secondary victimization,
- to protect children witnesses of abuse,
- to facilitate access for victims of gender violence to legal compensation and

- to establish a mechanism for the monitoring of its implementation, which is the GSGE
- to empower the economic independence of women victims of violence

Article 40 in particular is dedicated to sexual harassment as follows: "Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment, is subject to criminal or other legal sanction".

In 2017, as part of a comprehensive campaign on Violence against Women in Greece, four TV spots on sexual harassment in public places were created and presented in the context of the celebration of the World Day against Violence against Women (25 November 2017). The spots were dedicated also on sexual harassment in work places. Moreover, the National Network of structures on violence against women still operates and is in the disposal for women victims of all forms of violence, including sexual harassment.

4. Which State laws and policies or social, cultural and religious norms continue to impede women's integration into economic activities and public life generally?

There are no such laws in Greece. The problem lies in the implementation of the laws, that is on the way we interpret them.

5. Are there any good practices of integrating a gender perspective into States' economic sphere (e.g., state-owned enterprises, public procurement agencies, trade missions, export credit agencies, privatization of public services, public-private partnerships, and trade and investment agreements)?

Some indicative relevant actions included in the NAPGE, that can be considered good practices are the following:

1. Commitment of partners to implement the principle of gender equality by elaborating Equality Plans and Gaining an Equality Sign, while at the same time linking the European Charter on Gender Equality.
2. Establishing Equality signs and prizes for businesses.
3. Networking and raising awareness among businesses on the benefits of gender equality and equal pay and promoting the principle of equal pay between employers.
4. Establishment of a "wage calculator", which provides up-to-date and easily accessible information on standard wages in an industry per region. (Data will be provided by businesses and chambers committed to implementing the principle of equality).
5. Actions to raise public awareness of the pay gap and establishment of a National Equal Pay Day.
6. Actions to encourage the use of ICT by enterprises.
7. Proposal to improve legislation on maternity leave in the case of workers in cooperation with the relevant ministries.
8. Study on the adoption of a uniform framework for the protection of motherhood in the public and private sectors.
9. Networking with the competent authorities (the Ombudsman and the Labor Inspectors' Body) to control complaints concerning dismissals or discrimination against childrearing rights of men and women.

Furthermore, we should mention the new bill on Substantive Gender Equality and on combating gender-based violence, that has been drafted under the initiative of the GSGE, put into public consultation from 6 to 20 March 2018 and is now ready to be brought to the Hellenic Parliament and become national law. It is the first attempt in Greece of drafting a horizontal bill aiming at the creation of all those circumstances that could lead to the achievement of substantive gender equality and the elimination of gender inequalities in all sectors of public, social and economic life. The notions of gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting are introduced for the first time into a legislative text. A chapter is dedicated to “gender mainstreaming in private life and labor”, with articles concerning provisions on behalf of the employer for the substantive gender equality in labor, social dialogue, establishment of Equality Signs and Gender Awards for enterprises adopting gender equality corporate policies.

6. How could policy coherence be improved between different government ministries or departments dealing with women issues and business-related matters?

Policy coherence is matter of close cooperation between government, NGOs dealing with women’s right and all relevant stakeholders. Bringing together all these parties is essential to build strong partnerships and effective synergies to promote gender equality in their particular policy actions and initiatives. Gender mainstreaming should be taught to all policy makers (not only in the public sector but also in private sector). The guidance should be given by the state and international organizations with expertise on these issues and then monitoring and evaluation of the implementation should be realized in a periodical manner. Businesses should give a periodical feedback of their work on gender mainstreaming of their function and take corrective measures if necessary. As far as the cooperation between different government ministries or departments dealing with women issues and business-related matters is concerned, it is crucial for them to have regular meetings and coordinated actions on these issues. Training is also very important if the body of relevant knowledge and expertise is missing.

7. Are there any good practices of business enterprises adopting a gender perspective in making human rights policy commitments, addressing the gender wage gap and underrepresentation of women in boards and senior positions, or involving affected women in meaningful consultations and remediation processes?

In general, large companies implement business plans involving gender equality issues in order to tackle all the above mentioned problems, within the framework of their corporate social responsibility policies. However, gender equality issues do not appear to be among the immediate priorities of enterprises, especially during the economic crisis in Greece.

8. What is the role of businesses in dealing with domestic laws, policies and societal practices which are discriminatory to women?

The role of businesses in dealing with discriminatory laws and policies towards women is dual. First, it is to their own interest and sustainability to implement gender sensitive plans of operation, because the effective development of the 100% of their employees means that they increase their general prosperity.

On the other hand the whole society takes advantage of their good performance in gender equality issues, because they serve as a good example to all employers and employees and to the general public.

9. How could media and advertising industries fight against gender stereotyping and disempowerment of women?

The role of Media and advertising companies is crucial in dismantling the existing gender stereotypes regarding female body image and sexism in public places, through training in gender issues. The prevention of gender stereotypes in journalism and the elimination of sexist speech in the media could also be achieved by gender mainstreaming tool in their functions. The General Secretariat for Gender Equality in Greece has incorporated the notion of gender mainstreaming in journalism and mass media into the National Action Plan for Gender Equality (NAPGE) for the period 2016-2020 through further development of synergies among competent stakeholders from the public and the private sector. On the one hand, the General Secretariat for Information & Communication, as well as other relevant stakeholders associated with the domain of journalism and the mass media can take advantage of the programs (seminars, training courses, conferences) offered by the National Centre for Public Administration & Local Administration (relevant link from the English page of the EKDDA website on its mission: <http://www.ekdd.gr/ekdda/index.php/en/2012-06-29-09-59-33>). On the other hand, the General Secretariat for Gender Equality (GSGE), through its competent department, continues to spot, protest and issue press releases in cases of sexist incidents against women in public life.

10. What additional or specific barriers do women (women human rights defenders) face in accessing effective remedies for business-related human rights abuses?

Women human rights defenders face additional barriers in accessing effective remedies for business-related human rights abuses, not only due to their gender but also due to the fact that they fight usually for issues considered threats to religion or culture. These issues have enormous importance for some communities and states, so that they put administrative barriers to discourage them from being active on these matters.

11. How could all types of remedial mechanisms, processes and outcomes be made more gender-sensitive?

Some indicative actions that we could mention are: gender advisors in each enterprise to provide counseling on gender issues to all employees, training in gender issues of the legal departments of the enterprises in order to be more gender sensitive and provide their guidance to remedies appropriately and without any preconditions and stereotypical judgments. Use of new technologies to inform and apply gender sensitive policies in each and every business (online platforms to monitor progress) and to collect relevant data.

It is also worth mentioning that the United Nations System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, the action plan that created the first set of common metrics for the United Nations system to evaluate progress in its gender-related work, is a very powerful tool that could be spread to facilitate the work of governments or enterprises in the area of gender mainstreaming.