

**Information about the application of
Resolution A/HRC/RES/31/15
of the Human Rights Council “The Right to Work”
adopted at the 31st session of HRC on 23 March 2016**

- **Realisation of the right to work and empowerment of women** are among the priorities of the Republic of Bulgaria in the social sphere and a real demonstration of the fulfilment of our country’s obligations to implement international human rights law. Gender equality and empowerment of women are the flagship themes in this field.

- **Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls** are singled out as a separate objective in the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda prepared by the UN. The integration of gender equality issues in the national documents in line with EU’s revised growth and employment strategy EU 2020 is a prerequisite for making full use of the potential of women and a determining factor for addressing social and economic challenges.

- **The legal guarantees for the equality and equal treatment of women and men** are contained in the existing Bulgarian legislation – the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria and a number of sectoral and special laws. Some key laws have been passed, such as the Law on Protection against Discrimination, the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence, etc. A particularly important step is the passing in 2016 of the first **law guaranteeing the equal rights of women and men**. Our country has also achieved progress through the long-term efforts to reduce the gaps between women and men with regard to employment, education and research by increasing the number of women on managerial and qualified positions and in the political life of our country. Furthermore, Bulgaria strictly respects its commitments under the **Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**.

- **The first ever Law on Equality between Women and Men** (*promulgated, SG, No. 33 / 26 April 2016*) regulates the implementation of the state policy on equality between women and men. It achieves better alignment of the national legislation with the EU standards and the international legal acts in the field of equality between women and men to which Bulgaria is a party. The document also regulates the bodies and the mechanisms of implementation of an integrated government policy on gender equality and allocates the government responsibilities. It introduces principles, mechanisms and tools for the implementation of national policies in this field.

- The Bulgarian Government places a special focus on the development of **measures for equal participation of women and men in the labour market** and in the economic activities, reconciliation of professional and family life, access to vocational training and qualification, equal pay for equal work, including through counselling, motivation and training in accordance with the gender specific development needs and perspectives. The support for women is tailored to the specific difficulties which women encounter in the labour market. Implemented are appropriate measures to enhance the employment of women;

develop the opportunities for flexible employment and professional mobility; promote self-employment; enhance the professional qualification and key competences, provide special protection to working women – pregnant women, mothers of children under the age of 3 and in women in the advance stage of in-vitro treatment; enhance the effectiveness of the control for compliance with the labour legislation; promote the role of the father in the sharing of family obligations, including through legislative incentives for use of parental leave; expand the system of affordable and quality social services, including for raising children, dependent family members, etc.

- The measures for reconciling professional, family and private life are essential to promoting **the economic empowerment of women and overcoming the gender-based social stereotypes**. The implementation of effective policies in this field is a prerequisite for reaching the target of 76% employment in 2020, laid down in the National Reform Programme of Bulgaria.

- An important element of the gender equality policy is the **drafting of a National Strategy for Promoting the Equality between Women and Men till 2020**, the main purpose whereof is to create guarantees for equal treatment, equal access to the social resources and equal participation in decision making of women and men in the Republic of Bulgaria in view of their successful personal and social fulfillment and promotion of the equality between women and men in all spheres of social, economic and political life in Bulgaria.

- The 2014 amendment to the **Rules on the Structure and Organisation of Work of the National Council on Equality between Women and Men at the Council of Ministers** introduced the figure of the so-called “**coordinators of equality between women and men**” in the respective institutions through an order or by laying this down in their job descriptions. The coordinators pursue the state policy for equality between women and men at the operational level. The methodological guidance of the coordinators is provided by the Secretariat of the National Council.

- An important role plays Bulgaria’s accession to the **Council of Europe’s (CE) Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention)**, signed on 21 April 2016. Violence against women is a serious form of discrimination and a violation of fundamental human rights which is caused by the inequality between women and men. It may also impede the access of women to jobs and unfortunately it is met all over the world, in every country, whatever its social and economic development. In connection with the ongoing process of alignment of the Bulgarian legislation with the principles and requirements of the Istanbul Convention, an interinstitutional working group involving also representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and of the Agency for Social Assistance has been set up at the Ministry of Justice.

- **The economic empowerment of women** is the main prerequisite for achieving actual equality between women and men. Encouraging the participation of women in setting up their own business is an important element of the policy in the field. The legislative amendments

(in the Law on Protection against Discrimination and the Social Insurance Code) made in 2012 guarantee the application of the principle of equal treatment of men and women carrying out activities as self-employed persons or contribute to the implementation of such activities. A possibility to undertake positive measures for promotion of entrepreneurship among women in the cases where they are the under-represented gender has been created. Other legislative amendments (to the Insurance Code and the Social Insurance Code) guarantee the implementation of the principle of equal treatment of women and men with regard to the access and provision of insurance services and of additional voluntary pension insurance.

- The Global Gender Gap Report (2015) was presented at the World Economic Forum in Davos. The report is published since 2006. The indexes on which the report is based include economic participation, educational attainment, healthcare and political empowerment. According to the report, Bulgaria ranks 43 out of 145 countries covered by the survey. /For your information, the top 5 ranking countries are Iceland, Norway, Finland, Sweden and Ireland./

- In support of the policy for equality between women and men, in particular for economic independence and participation of women in the economic life, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy implemented a **Project for equality in economic decision making** financed from the EU Progress Programme (2007-2013). The project aimed to contribute to building an environment conducive of improving the gender balance in the management boards of companies listed on the Bulgarian stock exchange. The project helped raise the awareness of the target groups and the society in general about the equality between women and men in economic decision making and about the need to improve the gender balance among non-executive directors in Bulgaria, to design and disseminate tools for improving the gender balance in economic decision making.

- Implemented is also an interinstitutional **Action Plan for implementation of the final recommendations to Bulgaria made by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women** approved by CM in 2013. The plan shows the commitment of the Bulgarian Government for the implementation of CEDAW and the efforts to improve the protection of women's rights in different spheres and to promote the equality between women and men. The Plan was designed within a broad consultation process and interaction of more than 60 representatives of institutions, organisations, social partners and the civil society, under the leadership and coordination of MLSP.

- To sum up, Bulgaria's consistent policy for ensuring and guaranteeing **the right to work and the empowerment of women** is implemented in particular through the measures for achieving equality between women and men in all spheres and, therefore, the integration of the principle of equality between women and men in all policies and the effective interaction of the competent bodies is a necessary condition and a guarantee for good governance and social progress.

