

Γραφείο Επιτρόπου Διοικήσεως
και Προστασίας Ανθρωπίνων
Δικαιωμάτων



Office of the Commissioner
for Administration and the Protection
of Human Rights (Ombudsman)

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UN Working Group on discrimination against women and girls
wgdiscriminationwomen@ohchr.org

Subject: Women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights in situations of crisis

With regards to the above subject, please find attached the contribution of my Office, concerning the preparation of your thematic report that will be presented to the 47th session of the Human Rights Council in June 2021.

I remain at your disposal for any further information.

Maria Stylianou-Lottides

Commissioner for Administration and
Protection Of Human Rights(Ombudsman)
CYPRUS

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Women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights in situations of crisis

The Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights (Ombudsman) was set up in 1991 by virtue of Law no. 3(I)/1991, as the independent Institution responsible to deal with individual complaints concerning maladministration, misbehavior and human rights violations by state authorities or officers. After several amendments of the basic law, the Commissioner was provided with broad functions of protecting, promoting and guaranteeing human rights as National Institution for Human Rights (NHRI). In addition, further discrete EU legislations have expanded the role and mandate of the Office, which was assigned to act, among other, as Equality Body.

Our Institution in many occasions used its above-mentioned wide powers in order to promote gender equality policies and gender mainstreaming strategies, while it also examines whether the competent national authorities take appropriate measures for the effective implementation of the country's obligations for the fulfillment of women's rights.

Furthermore, our Institution contributes in the formulation of Ethnic Strategies and Action Plans, that relate to the rights of women and girls, such as the National Action Plan for Gender Equality and the National Action Plan for Reproductive and Sexual Health. These Action Plans do not include any specialized provisions focusing on the women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights in situations of crisis.

However, quite recently the First National Action Plan (period 2020-2024) for the implementation of UN Resolution 1325 on women and peace and security was adopted. The Action Plan includes, among others, special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict. In addition, it

provides measures for the improvement of reception conditions of women and girls who are asylum seekers, as well as other vulnerable groups of asylum seekers, such as unaccompanied minors.

Aside from armed conflicts and humanitarian situations of crisis, it is widely accepted that other forms of crisis, such as financial, have a distinct and disproportionate impact on women, and particularly on their rights, health and economic independence. Even though in our country no protective measures are directly focused on women and girls, there are some horizontal policies that can be used for the economic empowerment of women.

This also stands true for situations such the one we are all now experiencing, namely the Covid 19-crisis, since evidence show that the policy of confinement leads to increased levels of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, while there are possible longer-term effects of the pandemic on the balance between professional and family life and on women's economic independence. In particular, as a response to the rising of domestic violence rates during the Covid 19-crisis period, a wide of measures were taken by the competent NGO, and the police .