



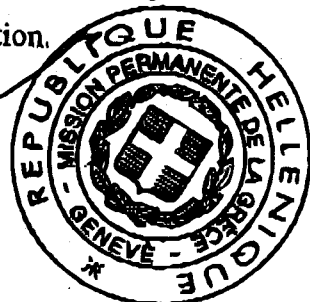
PERMANENT MISSION OF GREECE
GENEVA

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NOTE VERBALE

The Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other International Organizations in Switzerland presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and, following the latter's Note Verbale, dated 8 December 2011, on discrimination against women in law and in practice, has the honour to forward information, by the Greek Government (General Secretariat of Gender Equality), to the issues raised by the relevant Working Group.

The Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other International Organizations in Switzerland avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.



Geneva, February 9, 2012

To: **The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights**
Special procedures of the Human Rights Council
Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland
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Pages attached 7

OHCHR REGISTRY

10 FEB. 2012

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PERMANENT MISSION OF GREECE

Contribution by Greece on the issue of:

**DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN IN LAW
AND IN PRACTICE.**

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In Greece, from 1981 until now, significant gender equality policies have been developed in relation to employment, education, decision-making and public awareness. In parallel, legislation has been reviewed in order to be adjusted to the constitutional principle of gender equality. The Greek Constitution recognises the necessity for the State to take measures to promote substantive equality between men and women, particularly in connection with "*the removal of existing inequalities especially to the detriment of women*" (Article 116, Greek Constitution, par. 2).

The current government has set as a goal the improvement of the everyday life of women and men. The General Secretariat for Gender Equality (GSGE) is working on the elimination of gender inequalities and the achievement of substantive gender equality in all aspects of our society.

The National Programme for Substantive Gender Equality 2010-2013 has been drafted with four strategic goals in mind:

1. Protection of all women's rights through the promotion of gender equality and the orientation of interventions towards groups of women facing multiple discrimination.
2. Prevention and combating of all forms and types of violence against women.
3. Support of women's employment and their financial independence.
4. Utilisation of cultural creation in order to highlight the goal of gender equality.

The Programme is structured on three pillars. They entail respectively:

- a. proposed legislative regulations to improve family law, reform and enhance legislation addressing violence and introduce new provisions aimed at substantive gender equality;
- b. GSGE specialised gender equality policies (interventions in selected areas of public policy and creation of policy making institutions, structures and bodies); and
- c. interventions by other Ministries and public agencies which foster gender equity via public policies (mainstreaming policies).

IMPROVEMENT, ENHANCEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF LEGISLATION

Legal guarantee of gender equality and women's institutional rights is required in order to ensure that democracy is not hindered by direct or indirect discrimination, as well as to combat practices that infringe upon the principle of gender equality and harm women's dignity.

Legislative Committees have been established to draft provisions to improve and enhance existing legislation. Such committees shall recommend legislative interventions, aiming at: a) improving family law, b) combating violence against women, and c) promoting substantive gender equality. The Committees shall take into consideration the views expressed by women's organisations, the provisions of recent International and European Conventions and other official instruments (UN, European Council, EU), as well legislation by other European countries, such as Spanish Laws: a) "Framework Law on Integrated protective measures against gender violence" (2004) and b) "Framework Law on substantive equality between men and women" (2007).

Amendment of Family Law

Family Law shall be amended so as to be fully harmonised with the Constitutional Principle of Gender Equality and the protection of women's rights within the context of the unequal economic and social conditions under which most women currently live. Indicatively, proposed provisions shall address the following issues:

- Re-introduction of permanence of spouses' surnames.
- Modernisation of the legal provisions on adoption.
- Ensuring alimony payment.

- Unification and expedition of court procedures vis-à-vis hearing of Family Law cases.
- Children's' last name acquisition to ensure gender equality.
- Issues of parental responsibility in divorce cases.
- Amendments in the cohabitation agreement.

Law on combating violence against women

Violence is a harsh expression of social inequality. Violence against women is gender-based violence, since it is inextricably linked to the victim's and offender's gender. New legislative provisions on combating violence against women shall place emphasis on awareness and protection measures for victims. They shall refer to all forms of violence committed against women, physically, psychologically, verbally and morally. In parallel, legislation shall focus on safeguarding victims' rights, such as their right to be informed and to free legal assistance, their right to employment and social insurance, their economic rights, etc.

The preparation of a Unified Bill on violence against women reflects the cross-sectional character of gender violence and is an internationally accepted method for legislative addressing of the multiple and complex aspects of such criminal activities that penetrate all aspects of everyday life. More specifically:

Domestic violence: improvement of Law 3500/2006 on domestic violence and enhancement of the framework addressing domestic violence by creating support centres for victims and offering them temporary refuge.

Employment-related violence: improvement and enhancement of Law 3488/2006 in relation to the implementation of the principle of equal treatment of men and women in labour market access, with a special chapter on sexual harassment and violence in the workplace.

Social violence: improvement and enhancement of legislation addressing crimes such as rape (Law 1419/1984) and human trafficking (Law 3064/2002 and P.D. 233/2003). Ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings and of the European Council Convention on Violence against Women shall be included in the Bill.

In addition, some cross-cutting issues shall be also addressed:

- Enhancement of the GSGE institutional role (Consultation Centres) in the confrontation of violence against women in all of its forms and protection of the victims,
- Expansion of provisions on legal assistance to victims in cooperation with Bar Associations,
- Establishment of a National Observatory on combating violence against women.

Law on the promotion of substantive legal equality

The proposed bill is grounded in the cross-cutting dimension of gender equality, which constitutes the most common approach of anti-discrimination modern law. The innovations of the proposed bill include the

establishment of active policies for the effectuation of the principle of gender equality (gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting, gender proofing), the promotion of the equality principle at all levels of economic, social and cultural activity, and - most importantly - the creation of policy making and results assessment mechanisms. The provisions shall indicatively include:

- More effective protection against discrimination and enhancement of equal treatment in employment and in access to goods and services;
- Promotion of equal treatment and equal opportunities, as well as removal of gender stereotypes in the field of education;
- Improvement of mass media legislation vis-à-vis women's dignity in TV shows and commercials;
- Effective implementation of the principle of gender equality in public policies and active intervention of Ministries in the implementation and monitoring of gender policy impacts;
- Ensuring of balanced participation of men and women in decision-making, with the aim of improved representation and, therefore, improved democracy;
- Provision of motivation for promoting enterprises' social responsibility re: gender equitable promotion;
- Reformation of the institutional framework that governs: a) the National Committee on equality between men and women and b) the Inter-ministerial Committee on gender mainstreaming.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE FROM GREECE IN THE FIELD OF GENDER EQUALITY

A. GENDER POLICIES

1. Operation of the bilingual (Greek and English) telephone line SOS 15900 for the support of victims of gender-based violence. The line operates on a 24- hour basis / 365 days per year and offers specialized information and counseling services to women - victims of all forms of violence.
2. Creation of a Structure of Monitoring Policies on Gender Equality through the establishment of a specialized Mechanism / Observatory , aiming at the supervision and monitoring gender equality in all public policies , as well as gender impact assessment and gender mainstreaming in public administration and local government .
3. Support of Women's Organizations and NGOs specialized in gender equality and the protection of human rights for the elaboration and implementation of Action Plans in favor of gender equality for duration of two years.
4. Elaboration of a Manual for the professionals dealing with refugees, aiming at the protection of female refugees. This Manual was

compiled by the General Secretariat for Gender Equality in cooperation with the U.N. High Commission for Refugees.

5. Upgrading of the services offered by the Library of Equality and Gender Issues / General Secretariat for Gender Equality through digitalization and adoption of advanced information systems.
6. Implementation of a specific Project by the Manpower Employment Organization aiming at the promotion of female entrepreneurship for 4,000 unemployed women aged 22-64. The maximum public cost of the Project has been estimated to 96,000,000 euros.
7. Financial support of employed mothers, depending on their income, whose children attend kindergartens through the offer of special coupons/vouchers by the Ministry of Labor & Social Protection.

B. CAMPAIGNS , CONFERENCES

1. National Campaign for information and sensitization of the public on violence against women. The emphasis has been put on the operation of the telephone line SOS 15900 through the social message <<You are not the only one. You are not alone >>.
2. National Campaign in favor of female candidates at the Regional and Municipal Elections (November, 2010).

PLAN OF ACTION TO COMBAT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (2009-2013)

The "National Program on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women 2009 - 2013" is analyzed in preventive actions of the phenomenon and support of the victims on one hand and in legislative interventions that reinforce the institutional framework. In particular:

The General Secretariat for Gender Equality of the Ministry of Interior as the competent state entity regarding combating violence against women has established an "Integrated Action Plan in favor of women and combating of violence at national and local level" which is composed by horizontal and vertical actions. The Plan is financed by the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) and in particular from Axon 3 of the Operational Program "Management Reformation".

The horizontal actions include:

1. Establishment and operation of Scientific Committee, non- paid, to which is assigned the entire supervision of the project.
2. The elaboration of training material as well as protocols of operation and counselling of the Consultation Centres.
3. Training of counsellors that will staff the Consultation Centres and the SOS telephone line, lawyers who will participate in the legal aid programs of women-victims of violence as well as professionals that handle corresponding cases (i.e. policemen, judges, professionals of health etc.)

4. Establishment and operation of the SOS telephone helpline, of 24 hours operation.
5. Implementation of an awareness raising campaign including relevant seminars, special conference, informational material, TV and radio spots, webpage and banner in WebPages.
6. Evaluation of horizontal interventions.

The vertical actions include:

1. Operation of 12 new Consultation Centres of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality at the corresponding Regions of the country.
2. Upgrading of the two existing Consultation Centres of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality
3. Establishment of 13 new Shelters at the corresponding Regions of the country (in cooperation with the Local Administration Organizations [OTA] and public institutions.
4. Upgrading of the existing structures of the Local Administration Organizations.

The program is being implemented. The helpline is already operating, the educational material has been developed, the awareness raising campaign is being scheduled. The totality of the actions is in various levels of implementation.

In the meantime legislative initiatives have been undertaken. A Standing Committee has been established in order to elaborate a Law on combating gender based violence against women.

In parallel we have participated in the ad hoc Committee (CAHVIO) of the Council of Europe which has processed the Convention on the Elimination of Violence against women and domestic violence aiming firstly to all types of violence that are traditionally suffered by women. On May 11th 2011 Greece was among the thirteen countries that signed the Convention in Istanbul - Turkey.