General Information about Women in Cyprus

Employment among Women

Cyprus has long had a high degree of female participation in the workforce. In the period 1960-85, women's share of the workforce rose only slightly, from 40.8 percent to 42.2 percent. However, there were great changes in the nature of female employment. Women's share of the urban workforce rose from 22 percent to 41 percent, while their share of the rural workforce fell from 51 percent to 44.4 percent. The decline in rural areas stemmed from the overall shift away from agricultural work, where women's contribution had always been vital, to employment in urban occupations such as manufacturing and services. Based on a Ministry of Labour study, in 2008 women constituted 44.6% of total employment and for every 100 women aged 15-64, sixty-three (63) were employed, three (3) were unemployed and thirty four (34) were inactive as compared to fifty-nine (59), four (4) and thirty-seven (37) respectively in 2004.

Rights of Women

Cypriot women enjoy the same rights to social welfare as men in such matters as social security payments, unemployment compensation, vacation time, and other common social provisions. In addition, after 1985 women benefited from special protective legislation that provided them with marriage and maternity grants that paid them 75 percent of their insurable earnings. Still, a large number of women, including the self-employed and unpaid family workers on farms, were not covered by the Social Insurance Scheme. These women constituted 28 percent of the economically active female population.

In 1985, the Republic of Cyprus ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. Despite ratification of this agreement, as of late 1990 there was no legislation in the Republic of Cyprus that guaranteed the right to equal pay for work of equal value, nor the right of women to the same employment opportunities.

The Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS)

The institute is a non-governmental, non-profit organization, that promotes and contributes to projects of social, political, and economic themes relating to gender and women’s rights on a national, regional, and EU level. The Institute deals with the complexities of discrimination against women and attempts to eliminate them, using a combination of research, advocacy and lobbying, as well as trainings, conferences, and other activities. The Institute is closely monitoring the policies and strategies adopted by the State and the European Union in relation to gender equality in all fields. The Institute is in close cooperation with relevant European committees and participates in the implementation of several European projects. The Institute is an active member of the Cyprus Women's Lobby, which consists of 16 women's organizations and NGOs and is the newest member of the European Women's Lobby, the largest coalition of women's NGOs in the European Union promoting women's rights and equality between women and men.
Inequality

The occupational segregation of the sexes was still persistent in Cyprus at the beginning of the 1990s. Even though the participation of women in clerical jobs had more than doubled since the late 1970s, only one woman in fifteen was in an administrative or managerial position in 1985. Women's share of professional jobs increased to 39 percent by the mid-1980s, compared with 36 percent ten years earlier, but these jobs were concentrated in medicine and teaching, where women had traditionally found employment. In fields where men were dominant, women's share of professional positions amounted to only 11 percent, up from 8 percent in 1976. In the fields where women were dominant, men took just under half the professional positions.

Although most Cypriot women worked outside the home, they were expected to fulfill the traditional domestic roles of housewife and mother. They could expect little help from their spouses, for most Cypriot men were not ready to accept any domestic duties, and most women did not expect them to behave otherwise. Nonetheless, even women with full-time jobs were judged by the traditional standards of whether they kept a clean house and provided daily hot meals.

Office of the Commissioner for Administration (Ombudsman)
The Commissioner for Administration is the Ombudsman of the Republic of Cyprus, whose mandate has been extended in May 2004 to also act as National Equality Body (NEB). Within the Body, 2 departments operate: The Equality Authority; dealing with discrimination in the field of employment and occupation, and gender issues in all fields, and the Antidiscrimination Body.

Website: [www.no-discrimination.gov.cy](http://www.no-discrimination.gov.cy)

Traditional views

Even at the beginning of the 1990s, Cypriot women were still burdened with the expectation of safeguarding the honor of the family. The honor of a family, that is, the sense of dignity of its male members, depended partly on the modesty and virtue of its women. These traditional attitudes have waned somewhat in recent decades, especially in urban areas, but were still prevalent in the early 1990s. Nevertheless, women's increasing economic independence was a force for liberation in all sections of the population. Currently, and after the accession of Cyprus to the EU, many social perspectives on women have changed and many NGOs that support women rights have evolved in Cypriot society such as the Cyprus Gender Research Centre. [http://www.ekif.org/html/board.html](http://www.ekif.org/html/board.html) or Cyprus Equality authority