



**Convention on the Elimination  
of All Forms of Discrimination  
against Women**

Distr.: General  
3 August 2023

Original: English  
English, French and Spanish only

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination  
against Women**

**Combined eighth and ninth periodic reports submitted by  
Greece under article 18 of the Convention, due in 2021<sup>\*,\*\*</sup>**

[Date received: 8 May 2023]

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\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

\*\* The annexes to the present document may be accessed from the web page of the Committee.



## I. Introduction

1. The combined Eighth and Ninth Periodic Report under the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women is the first submitted by Greece under the simplified reporting procedure. The Report addresses main points by providing selected examples for each paragraph of the List of Issues, while additional data and statistics are provided in the Annex.
2. The Report of Greece, in the aftermath of years of austerity measures and the COVID-19 crisis, presents the country's accomplishments, as well as challenges, in the field of women's rights and gender equality in a comprehensive and coherent way.<sup>1</sup>
3. Government Authorities, social partners and civil society have provided input during the preparation of the Report following the request by the General Secretariat for Demography, Family Policy and Gender Equality (hereinafter "General Secretariat") of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, which is the competent Governmental Authority for gender equality issues in Greece. The Report was drafted by the General Secretariat in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while the Stakeholder Report submitted by the National Commission for Human Rights, the national institution for the protection and promotion of human rights in Greece, was also taken into account. The National Commission also reviewed the final draft of the Report and its views were taken into consideration.
4. The recent financial and economic crisis had negative effects on women in most spheres of life and the Greek government sought targeted assistance from the European Union (henceforth EU) and the International Monetary Fund, as suggested in the Committee's latest concluding observations.<sup>2</sup> In August 2018, Greece successfully concluded the European Stability Mechanism economic adjustment programme and was integrated to the normal cycle of the EU's economic and social policy coordination.
5. To address the economic and social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Greece submitted its National Recovery and Resilience Plan "Greece 2.0." according to the principles set out in the relevant EU Regulation<sup>3</sup> "by mitigating the social and economic impact of the health crisis, in particular on women" and in alignment with the National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2021–2025 and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The National Recovery and Resilience Plan, endorsed by the European Commission in June 2021, is structured around four pillars: (a) green transition, (b) digital transformation, (c) employment, skill and social cohesion and (d) private investment and transformation of the economy. The third pillar includes policies and measures strengthening work-life balance and promotes women's participation in the workplace, notably through investment in childcare. Gender equality and equal opportunities for all, and the mainstreaming of those objectives were taken into account in the preparation and implementation of Greece's Recovery and Resilience Plan.

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<sup>1</sup> Since 2010 Greece has provided information on the implementation of other international human rights instruments, including the Government's response to the UNECE's questionnaire on the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (January 2020) and the National Report submitted to the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (November 2021).

<sup>2</sup> CEDAW/C/GRC/CO/7 par.6.

<sup>3</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/241/oj>.

## II. Replies to the list of issues prior to reporting

### Paragraph 1

6. In terms of data regarding the current situation of women in Greece, the Hellenic Statistical Authority, in collaboration with the Observatory for Gender Equality,<sup>4</sup> are collecting and analysing data on the 14 thematic areas of the Beijing Platform for Action, which enables the monitoring of the Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women (Annex, tables 1–3). Regarding GBV issues, the National Centre for Social Research is the responsible organization in Greece for the implementation of the EU GBV research, run by EUROSTAT.

7. Regarding women with disabilities, the National Confederation of Disabled People developed an Integrated Indicator System for monitoring the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at national level.

### Paragraph 2

8. Greece has suffered a devastating loss of human life due to the COVID-19 pandemic amounting to more than 35,000 casualties up to January 2023.<sup>5</sup>

9. During the pandemic, regular vaccination programmes continued as normal. For example, girls had the possibility to be vaccinated against the human papillomavirus, while there was a recommendation for pregnant women to be vaccinated against common infections.

10. Regarding COVID-19 vaccinations, the prioritization of eligible groups was based on the EU vaccination strategy. Health and social services staff, where women were highly represented, were the first to be vaccinated. Other vulnerable groups followed, such as the elderly, patients and staff at chronic disease clinics, recovery and rehabilitation centres, social welfare centres and day-care centres.

11. Special care was given to pregnant COVID-19 patients, who were treated in special Hospitals, such as the Third Obstetrics and Gynaecology Clinic at Attikon Hospital. In April 2021, the first premature delivery of a baby, whose mother was a COVID-19 intubated patient, was successfully performed at this clinic.

12. Women have been particularly affected by the COVID-19 crisis as they represent the majority of healthcare workers as well as of unpaid care work providers. The situation has been especially difficult for single parents, 85 per cent of whom are women. Elderly women, women with disabilities or chronic diseases, migrant and refugee women, homeless women or women victims of GBV are disproportionately affected. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs promoted legislative measures ensuring employees' health protection, especially those identified as vulnerable groups. Relevant measures were introduced by Law 4722/2020, including teleworking to protect vulnerable groups of employees, including pregnant women.

13. Decongestion of Reception and Identifications Centres on the Aegean islands, through systematic transfers of vulnerable third-country nationals to the mainland, has been a priority since March 2020, to address, inter alia, the possible impact of

<sup>4</sup> The Observatory for Gender Equality is a monitoring mechanism in the General Secretariat. A protocol of cooperation with the Hellenic Statistical Authority was renewed in April 2021 in order to monitor progress in gender equality policies in all ministries, as provided by Law 4604/2019. The Observatory is also responsible for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention regarding collection and publication of statistics on all forms of violence.

<sup>5</sup> <https://covid19.who.int/region/euro/country/gr>.

COVID-19. Women were among the groups that were prioritized, according to specific vulnerability criteria. In parallel, to protect beneficiaries within the Reception and Identification Centres, several measures have been taken for the protection of women, in particular minor women, single adults, pregnant women, single mothers. Moreover, measures were taken for the provision of medical or psychosocial support towards women and girls residing within the Centres.

14. Women GBV victims have been a particularly vulnerable group during the COVID-19 crisis given that significant increases in allegations of domestic violence were recorded during the days of compulsory confinement at home. The SOS 15900 helpline received 1,769 calls in April 2020, while the corresponding number of calls in March was 454. Calls regarding domestic violence cases almost quadrupled in the quarantine period. As part of the emergency measures to address and prevent the further spread of the Coronavirus, the General Secretariat has issued instructions to all relevant facilities to protect the health of both employees and women victims. It has also informed local authorities, in the framework of which such Counselling Centres and Shelters are operating.

15. Statistical data collected by the Observatory for Gender Equality and data provided by the General Secretariat's SOS 15900 Helpline offered a perspective of the phenomenon and helped design and evaluate dedicated policy measures.

16. The National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2021–2025 (hereinafter Gender Equality Action Plan) has been elaborated taking into account implications of the health crisis on women and its main priorities are in line with the priorities of the EU Gender Equality Strategy and the UN 2030 Development Agenda.

17. Support for women at risk of poverty and social exclusion is provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, including rent subsidy under the “Housing and Work” programme for women victims of violence who do not have access to housing and seek assistance from the General Secretariat's network of structures.

18. The role of non-governmental organizations during the pandemic has been crucial: provision of shelter, access to health services, prevention activities and medical, psychosocial, legal and employment support, and accommodation to vulnerable groups.

### **Paragraph 3**

19. For the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in Greece, the General Secretariat elaborates and implements Gender Equality Action Plans following the dual approach of gender mainstreaming and adopting specific gender equality policies and measures. Two Action Plans have already been adopted for 2015–2020 and 2021–2025, after consultations with relevant stakeholders, taking intersectional discrimination into consideration.

20. Law 4997/2022 on social security, pension and labour legislation prohibits, for the first time, discrimination at work against people with HIV. An extension of special maternity leave up from six to nine months for mothers working in the private sector, funded by the Public Employment Service (hereinafter “Employment Service”), is also included in this Law.

21. Law 4958/2022 prohibits intersex genital mutilation procedures and other medical treatments before the age of fifteen. Such interventions can be performed after the age of fifteen and only with the minor's free and informed consent.

22. The Labour Reform Law 4808/2021 includes provisions on work-life balance for parents and carers and the ratification of the International Labour Organisation's

Convention 190 on violence and harassment in the world of work. The adoption of this landmark instrument recognizes the right to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence, making Greece one of the first countries to have ratified it. Administrative initiatives have been taken for its implementation.

23. Law 4604/2019 is the first horizontal law aiming at achieving substantive gender equality and eliminating gender inequalities in all sectors of public, social and economic life. It introduces the notions of gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting. A 40 per cent gender quota is institutionalized for the candidate lists in each electoral constituency at the national and European elections. The “National Council for Gender Equality” is established as a collective advisory counselling body, with main competence to evaluate and assess the existing gender equality policies and propose new initiatives to the General Secretariat.

24. Law 4531/2018 ratified the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (see point 93).

25. Law 4538/2018 aims to coordinate foster care and adoption institutions by establishing the National Foster Care and Adoption Council. It aims at speeding up procedures, collecting national data, updating and enhancing regulations on National Registers (of children in institutional care, foster care, adoption) and providing for sanctions in cases of failure to send data to the competent Authority for registry maintenance, i.e. the National Centre for Social Solidarity. Since April 2019, all people living in Greece wishing to become foster parents or adopt, must apply online through the Information System of Fosterages and Adoptions. The procedure is conducted electronically, except for a home-study report. For the first time, same-sex couples registering a civil partnership can become foster parents.

26. Law 4491/2017 reforming legal recognition of gender identity expressly states that transgender people could change their identity documents without the requirements of medical interventions, tests or psychiatric assessments. This legislation requires a single status (not to be married) and the validation of gender recognition by a local court. While the procedure is open to all individuals above the age of fifteen, 15- to 16-year-old children seeking legal gender recognition should be subjected to a psycho-medical assessment.

27. Law 4443/2016 promoting the principle of equal treatment irrespective of race, colour, national or ethnic origin, descent, religion or belief, disability or chronic condition (illness), age, marital or social status, sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics in the field of work and employment, applies to all persons, both in the public and private sectors. The Law also facilitates the exercise of workers’ rights in the context of free movement. It appoints the Greek Ombudsman as the monitoring body to promote the implementation of the principle of equal treatment in the private and public sectors. The recent Law 5023/2023 has extended the principle of equality and non-discrimination for persons with disabilities to more socio-political fields.

28. Law 4356/2015 regulates cohabitation agreement/civil union, extending it for the first time to same-sex couples. The legislation treats registered partnerships as equivalent to marriage.

29. The General Secretariat participated in the elaboration of the first National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, coordinated by the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is to be adopted. The Plan includes four pillars of action: 1) prevention of armed conflict and any form of GBV, 2) gender-equal representation, participation and leadership in decision-making, 3) protection from any form of gender-based violence, 4) relief and recovery of the survivors of gender-based

violence. It also envisages the promotion of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda of the UN at bilateral, regional, and multilateral levels. The Plan is aligned with the National Gender Equality Plan 2021–2025.

30. Since 2021–2022, the General Secretariat is implementing a project under the EU Technical Support Instrument 2022. The project aims at developing gender impact assessment and gender budgeting methodologies and tools, organizing staff trainings and implementing pilot programme on these tools in selected ministries (Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs, Interior and Finance) with a view to extend the methodology to all ministries.

31. The promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls in Greece is implemented under the Gender Equality Action Plans as mentioned above. The current Action Plan is structured around four axes: 1) Preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, 2) Equal participation of women in decision-making processes, 3) Equal participation of women in the labour market and 4) Gender mainstreaming in sectoral policies.

32. The National Contact Point for Roma Social Inclusion is the General Secretariat for Social Solidarity and Fight against Poverty of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and it implements the National Strategy for Roma Social Inclusion [para 21 (b)].

33. The Annual National Reports on Disability area are the key information source on disability issues. The barriers and challenges faced by women with disabilities in Greek society are an indispensable part of these reports and are highlighted annually. The latest annual report (2021) is available online here (in Greek).

34. In terms of specific programmes addressing the rights of women belonging to vulnerable groups, the work of non-governmental organisations is worth mentioning. For programmes addressing the situation of Roma women, women with disabilities, migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women, see para. 21b.

35. Access to state compensation for victims of violent crimes is ensured by Law 3811/2009. The Law established the “Greek Compensation Authority for crime victims” under the Ministry of Justice. It provides that victims of violent crimes with intent or crimes of gender-based violence<sup>6</sup> have the right to claim compensation for their personal loss or expenses by the Compensation Authority.

36. According to that same Law, the compensation is expanded to include the mental and psychological support of the victim, the costs of residence relocation, especially the costs of moving and purchasing the essential consumer goods for relocation to a safe environment, and any funeral expenses. The amount of compensation for the victim’s mental and psychological support and the nature of the residence change costs to be covered are determined by joint ministerial decisions. The Greek Compensation Authority must complete the process and compensate the victim of violence within six months. Since 2016 there was only one claim, but no state compensation was granted.

37. Protection of victims of crimes is also ensured under Law 4478/2017. Its purpose is to ensure that victims are properly informed, supported and protected in order to participate in the criminal proceedings.

38. Victims are recognized and treated with respect, sensitivity, and individuality. A professional and non-discriminatory approach is applied irrespective of race, colour,

<sup>6</sup> “Trafficking in persons”, “Travel with the purpose of sexual abuse of minors”, “Rape”, “Seduction of Children”, “Indecent assault against children”, “Child Pornography”, “Enticing minors for sexual purposes”, “Pornographic performances of minors”, and finally “Sexual abuse of a minor in return for remuneration”.

national or ethnic origin, language, religion, social status, political or other opinion, property status, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics, disability or any other situation in all contacts with the competent victim support services or restorative justice services. The rights set out in the above-mentioned law apply to all victims irrespective of their national or ethnic origin or residence status.

39. According to the above-mentioned law, an individual assessment of the victim is provided to identify any specific protection needs and assess whether the victim may benefit from special protection measures during criminal proceedings, to avoid the risk of secondary and repeated victimization, intimidation and retaliation.

#### **Paragraph 4**

40. In Greece, responsibility for legal aid is shared between the Ministry of Justice, the Courts and local Bar Associations and is regulated by Law 3226/2004 as amended to date. Legal aid is available before all civil, criminal and administrative Courts for low-income citizens of an EU Member State, third-country nationals and stateless persons, provided they have legal or habitual residence in the EU. Persons with low income may request free legal aid. In civil and administrative proceedings the eligibility for legal aid is around €6,000 (annual family income should not exceed two thirds of the minimum annual personal income established by the legislation in force). In criminal proceedings, the free legal aid beneficiary's mean annual income for the past three years should not exceed €6,000 (in case one is unmarried) and €8,000 in case one is married or party of a civil union. In case of dependent children, there is an annual increment by €1,000 per child. The attorney undertaking such a case is appointed on the basis of lists kept by local Bar Associations. Recently, Law 5023/2023 has introduced the access to free legal aid for persons with at least 67 per cent degree of disability and regardless of their income.

41. Victims of certain crimes (domestic violence, slavery, trafficking in human beings, kidnapping of minors and other serious crimes, children victims of rape, sexual exploitation, etc.) are provided with free legal aid irrespective of their income. A lawyer is appointed to the person concerned and receives payment by the State. Any other legal information needed will be available to the person concerned by the competent authorities (e.g. Prosecutors). Since 2019, legal aid is also available for the procedure of mutual consent divorces before a notary.

42. Victims of crimes prosecuted ex officio, among which victims of hate speech, are exempted from the obligation to pay a fee for the initiation of criminal proceedings. For victims of domestic violence who ask for precautionary measures to be applied, legal aid is granted, provided that they cannot afford the judicial expenses, even temporarily (Law 3500/2006).

43. Free legal aid is also provided by local Bar Associations, in cooperation with the 44 Counselling Centres of the General Secretariat's Network of Structures on GBV throughout Greece (point 119).

44. In general, pro bono legal services in Greece are not widespread, apart from the state-subsidized legal aid. However, there are human rights non-governmental organizations undertaking legal representation of women victims of crimes before courts.

45. According to the national legislation on International Protection (Laws 4375/2016, 4636/2019, 4939/2022 and the related Joint Ministerial Decisions), free state legal aid is provided for all applicants of International Protection, only for appeals at second instance in case of first instance rejection decisions. Free legal aid

is provided by lawyers listed in a special Register of Lawyers of the Asylum Service, if the applicant is not represented by a lawyer outside the Register.

46. The Greek Ombudsman is mandated to combat discrimination and promote the principle of equal treatment irrespective of gender, racial or ethnic origin, family or social status, religion or belief, disability or chronic illness, age, sexual orientation and gender identity. According to the anti-discrimination Law 4443/2016, the special mandate of the Ombudsman has been expanded and its jurisdiction covers both the public and private sectors.

47. The role of the Greek Ombudsman is that of mediator. The mediation is administrative/non-judicial. The Ombudsman can refer a case to the competent prosecutor or administrative authority. The Ombudsman can also ask for administrative sanctions in areas of work and employment, that can only be imposed by the Labour Inspectorate. However, the Greek Ombudsman has no competence to legal representation of a discrimination victim and/or to be part of a trial.

48. For the period 2017–2021, the complaints investigated by the Greek Ombudsman under its special mandate as Equality Body are depicted as follows:

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Cases of discrimination on the ground of sex/gender (%) out of all cases	40	57	44	51	49

Source: Greek Ombudsman (2022)

49. In cases of gender discrimination by private actors (service providers and/or enterprises), the Presidential Decree 80/2022 codifying legislation on Individual Labour Law provides for judicial protection, administrative procedures (Labour Inspectorate) and mediation procedures (Ombudsman). It also sets out the rule of the reversal of the burden of proof in cases of discrimination on grounds of gender, apart from criminal proceedings. Associations, organizations and trade unions are also entitled to act on behalf of victims of discrimination. The victim can also choose, through his/her attorney, to reach an extrajudicial settlement.

50. Civil, administrative and penal sanctions in case of discrimination:

(a) The victim can seek compensation before the Civil Courts for violation of dignity, including restoration of moral damages;

(b) The victim can file a complaint before the Labour Inspectorate or with the Ombudsman. The Labour Inspectorate can impose administrative fines or temporary cessation of operation;

(c) Discrimination and violations of the equal treatment principle are prosecuted ex officio and criminal sanctions include a six months' to three years' imprisonment and a fine between €1,000 to €5,000.

## Paragraph 5

51. In 2021, the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Supreme Court, following a complaint of sexual assault lodged by a well-known female Olympic medallist, issued a Circular addressed to all State prosecutors' offices on the prompt and effective handling of these, ex officio, complaints of crimes against sexual freedom.

52. Laws 4531/2018 and 4356/2015 expand the term "family" to include civil partners, whereas the permanent companion of a woman or a man and their common children or the children of each one of them, are under the protection of the above-



mentioned laws without the prerequisite of cohabitation. The provisions of Law 4531/2018 are applied not only to divorced spouses, but also to members of a civil partnership that has been dissolved. Furthermore, Law 4531/2018 complements Law 3500/2006 on domestic violence, defining the conditions for initiating mediation procedure, so that the necessary legal consequences occur when the domestic violence perpetrator does not comply with the specific legislative provisions.

53. More specifically, when participation in a special Counselling-therapeutic programme in a public body has been deemed necessary and the perpetrator does not complete – by his/her own responsibility – the therapeutic programme, the prosecutor interrupts the mediation process and retrospectively removes the results achieved so far. Consequently, the file is retrieved from the archives and the criminal proceedings continue in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Penal Procedure. The newly introduced provision intends to ensure the real and effective compliance of the person responsible, to the demands of the criminal mediation, instead of his/her pre-emptive or utilitarian participation in the procedure.

54. Law 3500/2006 is amended as concerns the statute of limitation for domestic violence crimes, so that the statute of limitation for such crimes, when directed against minors, is suspended until one year after the adulthood of the victim, if it is a misdemeanour, and for three years after the adulthood of the victim, if it is a felony. Thus, Law 3500/2006 is harmonized with Article 113 of the Penal Code, to better safeguard the rights of underage victims of domestic violence.

55. Furthermore, Law 4531/2018 supplemented the protection provided to victims by criminalizing behaviour that until now were not considered crimes (e.g. “stalking”, harassment, forced marriage and female genital mutilation), as well as the compensation to victims (see para. 4).

56. Third-country nationals, victims of domestic violence, who report to the competent authorities an incident of domestic violence, are protected from deportation.

57. On measures taken by the Hellenic Police on dealing (and reporting) of gender-based violence, see para. 9.

58. Statistical data on domestic violence (complaints, prosecutions and convictions) are available in Annex, tables 4–11. For compensations, see point 37. On the number of GBV victims for 2020–2022, see tables 5-6-9-11. The number of women victims of domestic violence offences in 2020 was 4173.

## Paragraph 6

59. The Greek National Commission on Human Rights was established in 1998 as the independent advisory body to the Greek State and is the national institution for the protection and promotion of human rights in Greece. Its founding legislation (Law 2667/1998) was amended by Law 4780/2021, attributing to the Commission legal personality, functional independence, as well as administrative and financial autonomy. The Commission consists of five departments, has forty members and is being assisted by four scientific advisors and six administrative employees. Its budget in the last years has significantly increased from 2016: €133,799, 2017: €100,000, 2018: €157,000, 2019: €259,500, 2020: €189,000, 2021: €294,000.

60. The following table depicts the budget allocated to the General Secretariat since 2017. There was a critical reduction from 2019 to 2022 due to the financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

	<i>Budget (€)</i>	<i>Staff</i>
2022	1 700 000	44
2021	1 780 500	47
2020	2 014 000	41
2019	2 430 000	40
2018	2 346 000	36
2017	2 331 000	36

Source: Ministry of Finance, <https://www.minfin.gr/web/guest/proupologismos>

61. For the Greek Ombudsman’s annual budget for the years 2016–2022:

	<i>Budget(€)</i>	<i>Change(€)</i>
2022	7 226 000	+29 000
2021	7 197 000	-132 000
2020	7 329 000	+751 000
2019	6 578 000	+170 000
2018	6 408 000	+155 000
2017	6 253 000	+10 000
2016	6 243 000	

Source: Ministry of Finance, <https://www.minfin.gr/web/guest/proupologismos>

62. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Beijing Platform for Action are taken into account in all measures implemented by the General Secretariat to implement the Convention. See paras 1 and 2.

63. On gender mainstreaming at the ministerial level, a monitoring procedure of the implementation of the Gender Equality Action Plan has been established with the cooperation of all ministries involved, and with the supervising role of the General Secretariat of Coordination of the Government.

64. On gender mainstreaming at the local level, Law 4604/2019 sets the policy framework. The design, organization, coordination and implementation of gender equality programmes are added to the responsibilities of municipalities, aiming at the promotion of gender equality and initiatives to promote gender equality within their administrative boundaries, as well as the implementation of the “European Charter for Gender Equality in Local Life”, updated as of December 2022. The Charter includes a set of commitments promoting gender equality. In the context of monitoring actions promoting local equality policies, the General Secretariat has been conducting surveys in the last four years, addressed to the Municipalities and Regions.

65. The General Secretariat following the adoption of Law 4873/2021 on strengthening the actions of Civil Society Organizations, keeps an informal registry of women’s organizations/networks specialized in human rights and GBV. Additionally, it cooperates with Greek and foreign Non-Governmental Organizations dealing with international protection, migration and social integration issues.

## Paragraph 7

66. Greece has introduced the following legislation to enhance women’s participation in decision-making through the affirmative measure of quotas:

- Law 4706/2020 dealing with corporate governance provides a gender quota of at least 25 per cent on listed company boards. By the end of 2022 all companies in Greece comply with this quota;
- Law 4276/2020 dealing with the composition of sports clubs/associations management boards, states that the number of candidates from each gender/sex must be at least equal to the 1/3 of the number of the vacant seats for election, including the seat of the president/head of the management board;
- Law 4604/2019 introduces a 40 per cent quota in favour of women for the lists of candidates in each constituency at the national and European elections. Furthermore, the absence of quotas in the composition of Councils of the Public Administration results in legal penalties;
- For local and regional elections, Law 4555/2018 issues a 40 per cent gender quota on the total number of candidate regional, municipal counsellors and community counsellors. The former respective quota was 1/3;
- Law 4386/2016 provides a 1/3 gender quota in candidates for the National Council for Research, Technology and Innovation, Sectoral Research Councils, Regional Councils for Research, Technology and Innovation and the same quota for the members of Scientific Councils of Research Centres and Institutes. Scientific excellence and qualifications are also taken into consideration.

67. During the run-up to the two recent national, regional and municipal elections (2015, 2019), the General Secretariat launched awareness-raising campaigns to support and empower women candidates. During 2016–2019, the Research Centre for Gender Equality<sup>7</sup> organized seventeen training seminars for more than 350 women, candidates or elected to office, on Gender, Society Politics and Political Communication.

68. In June 2021, the Employment Service modified its employment and entrepreneurship programmes to support the unemployed women GBV victims. This is done through a 40 per cent increase in points in the “improved second business opportunity programme” and inclusion of unemployed women victims in the employment programme of Vulnerable Social Groups. The programme subsidizes for 12–24 months, 90 per cent of the total cost (wage and non-wage), up to €800 per month for full-time jobs and €400 for part-time jobs. Women victims of GBV who complete employment support sessions in the Counselling Centres will be able to participate in the programme. Victims of trafficking and transgender people are included in the programme’s beneficiaries.

69. In 2021–2022, the Employment Service implemented certain programmes that increased the subsidies for the wage costs of female workers and the proportion of business plans of women approved. Indicative examples are the Business Grant Programme for the employment of people aged 30 and over, and the Grant Programme for Entrepreneurial Initiatives for Young Entrepreneurs aged 18 to 29 all with emphasis on women (launched in 2021). In 2022, an employment programme for 10,000 unemployed people facing obstacles to their integration or reintegration into the labour market was launched; women victims of GBV and mothers returning to the labour market after bringing up their children and having at least one child up to 8 years old and 6 months of unemployment are among the beneficiaries.

70. See para 2 for measures on dealing with the pandemic.

<sup>7</sup> Legal Entity under Private Law of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs founded in 1994, supervised by the General Secretariat. It develops actions, inter alia, to eliminate gender stereotypes, and to promote women’s participation in decision-making centres.

## Paragraph 8

71. Changing negative social norms and gender stereotypes is among Greece's top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls (Beijing+25 National Review Report). It constitutes a cross-cutting element mainstreamed through the most recent Gender Equality Action Plans (2016–2020, 2021–2025).

72. The National Action Plan against Racism and Intolerance 2020–2023 provides for actions at all educational levels to combat stereotypes and awareness-raising campaigns against stereotypes and discrimination. LGBTIQ+ persons are recognized as one of the groups vulnerable to discrimination. The General Secretariat contributes to the implementation of awareness-raising campaigns.

73. Actions combating gender stereotypes and sexism are provided in the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (point 30). It includes activities to raise awareness among media professionals on gender mainstreaming and combating of gender stereotypes and sexism, related to the image of women in media.

74. In 2021, the report of the Committee established to draw the National LGBTIQ+ Equality Strategy 2021–2025, highlights the role of gender stereotypes as a causal factor in the discrimination experienced by LGBTIQ+ persons in multiple fields. The strategy was adopted following public consultation and is already being implemented.

75. Law 4779/2021 on audiovisual media services prohibits the introduction and promotion of discrimination and incitement to violence or hate speech on grounds of, inter alia, gender identity or sex characteristics and sexual orientation.

76. Law 4604/2019 stipulates that media and advertisements shall promote substantive gender equality by advocating an equal and free from gender-stereotypes image of individuals. It provides for specific measures regarding codes of conduct, programmes' content, broadcasting messages that aim at the elimination of sexism and stereotypes in relation to gender, gender identity and sexual orientation and the equal representation of women in all areas. The National Council for Radio and Television is the supervisory and sanctioning independent administrative authority.

77. The National Council for Radio and Television has imposed sanctions on television and radio channels which – with words, phrases or images – offended the dignity of women and introduced gender discrimination with sexist content. It participates in international fora on gender issues. It also took part in a study coordinated by the Moroccan and Spanish regulatory authorities in 2018 on how issues of violence against women are presented in the media, particularly on television. The results of this study led, in 2020, to the formulation of a joint communication for the adoption of recommendations on media coverage of gender violence on audiovisual informative programmes.

78. In 2016 the General Secretariat for Communication and Media and the Research Centre for Gender Equality signed a Memorandum of Cooperation including exchange of expertise and planning of concrete actions for the promotion of gender equality and the elimination of gender stereotypes in the media. To this end, the above-mentioned General Secretariat and the National Council for Radio and Television collaborated with the Research Centre for Gender Equality on the Project "Preventing and combating sexism and discrimination in matters of gender identity and sexual orientation" (point 84). In 2017, the General Secretariat also contributed to the Council of Europe's study on "Media Coverage of Elections" with a specific focus on gender equality.

79. The Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation, in addition to complying with the legislative provisions, endeavours to inform the public about gender issues, combat sexism and promote positive images of women through specific programme.
80. A Thematic Week programme has been implemented in secondary schools since 2016, aiming at raising the awareness of students through interactive activities. “Gender identities”, a section of which is “Deconstructing gender stereotypes”, constitutes a constant theme of the programme. The General Secretariat is included among the bodies invited by schools to organize educational activities throughout the country every year.
81. Since the school/academic year 2015–2016, Panhellenic Creative Contests addressed to all educational levels are organized by the General Secretariat in cooperation with various institutions (Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Educational Radiotelevision & Digital Media, Olympia International Film Festival). These competitions concern different aspects of creativity (e.g. poster-making, digital material creation, creative writing, photography) and aim to encourage the creative expression of young people and to use it as a means of deconstructing gender stereotypes. The works produced are disseminated as awareness-raising material.
82. In 2017, the Research Centre for Gender Equality published “The flower of equality”, which presents the CEDAW as a fairytale for children of preschool age. It collaborated with UNICEF in 2019 and published the book “The world Anew” as a stimulus for debate about prevention and combating GBV.
83. Each school unit can collaborate with relevant actors to carry out a variety of awareness-raising activities on gender discrimination issues (e.g. visits of pupils to the General Secretariat, implementation of awareness-raising programme in cooperation with non-governmental organisations).
84. The project “Preventing and combating sexism, and on gender identity and discrimination”, implemented by the Research Centre for Gender Equality, researched the issue of sexism and gender and at the implementation of educational interventions in relevant bodies to combat discrimination related to gender identity and sexual orientation.
85. The Project “Capacity building for women candidates and media stakeholders in public debates in Greece”<sup>8</sup> sought to reinforce the capacity of Greek female politicians, candidates, as well as media stakeholders – journalists, media studies students, bloggers – to recognize, address and prevent gender discrimination in public debates. A number of training and empowerment activities have been carried out in Athens and Thessaloniki (2019–2020).
86. The inclusion of female genital mutilation, forced marriages and so called honour-crimes included in the Istanbul Convention ensures that its provisions will be applied regarding these harmful practices (criminalisation of all such actions was introduced by amending Article 323A of the Greek Penal Code).
87. According to the Greek Civil Code, the minimum legal age for marriage is 18 years (courts may allow a minor to enter into marriage after having heard the minors and the persons exercising their custody, and only for a serious reason). Nevertheless, customary/traditional marriages during childhood/adolescence constitute a practice

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<sup>8</sup> The project has been implemented by the Centre for European Constitutional Law, the General Secretariat and the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens during the general, local/regional and European election year (2019) and immediate aftermath. Beneficiaries: Media stakeholders (journalists and media students) and female politicians and candidates. Website: <https://nosexism.isotita.gr/>.

among the Roma community (indicatively, research data show that the average age of marriage for Roma women ranges from 16–18 years).

88. Early marriages were one of the issues addressed by the “ROMplat 2019” Project (point 246). The “Early Marriage Prevention Network” is an international project implemented in Greece by the civil society organisation “Cell of Alternative Youth Initiatives”. The project included awareness-raising activities targeted at children, parents, the Roma community, as well as training analysis reports and training material.

89. On polygamy see para 22.

90. On policies or measures that have contributed to increased understanding and sharing of domestic and family responsibilities between women and men, promoting the concepts of gender equality in line with the Convention, see para 15.

91. To eradicate discriminatory gender stereotypes, the General Secretariat provides its guidance to civil society organizations and the private sector upon request. Some indicative examples include the actions of the Organizations Mexoxo<sup>9</sup> and Women on Top.<sup>10</sup>

92. Moreover, the Library on Gender Equality organizes events and actions for raising public awareness on gender equality and preventing gender discrimination and stereotyping, through the promotion of books and educational programmes for school groups of all levels.

## Paragraph 9

93. Law 4531/2018 adjusted domestic legislation, in particular in the field of criminal law. The new legislation strengthens the criminal provisions punishing female genital mutilation, criminalizes stalking, enhances the rights of victims of domestic violence and designates the General Secretariat as coordinating body, in accordance with Article 10. The Penal Code has been amended to include stricter penalties for heinous crimes, sexual crimes, crimes against minors and GBV and to provide for an extension of release time under conditions for serious offenders and those convicted to life sentence (Law 4855/2021). Revenge porn was also introduced to the Penal Code as a felony under penalty of up to eight years of prison (Law 4947/2022).

94. Law 4604/2019 provides for State funding and operation of the Counselling Centres for violence against women and the shelters for victims of domestic violence. The same goes for the Helpline.

95. On ILO 190 Convention see point 23.

96. In 2021, the Public Prosecutor of the Supreme Court issued a Circular on “Sexual offences” and one on “Domestic violence”, calling Prosecutors of the Courts of First Instance to address such cases without delay and to protect victims and survivors more effectively, as well as ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice. The second Circular refers, for the first time, to the term “femicide”, and provides,

<sup>9</sup> Mexoxo acts as Diversity and Inclusion consultant to many corporation and medium companies in Greece so as to use the (1) diverse and inclusive language (2) train its employees on avoiding stereotypes (3) create activities that inspire and engage an equal culture within the working environment.

<sup>10</sup> Since 2015, Women On Top has been creating and disseminating content around the importance of eliminating gender stereotypes and discriminating practices in the workplace and in the public sphere in general. Its podcasts, articles, videos and events have reached more than 17.000 women and men in Greece and elsewhere.

inter alia, for the facilitation of the victims' access to the criminal justice system, the prompt investigation of the alleged criminal acts, as well as allocates priority in their adjudication, to avoid lengthy proceedings.

97. In 2019, Police Domestic Violence Services were established throughout the country, aiming at coordinating, supervising and guiding Police regional services in addressing cases of GBV more efficiently and effectively. In total, seventy three Services were established, one of which within the Hellenic Police Headquarters. Their competences include, inter alia: a) monitoring of domestic violence cases, b) envisaging measures related to preventing and suppressing domestic violence offences, c) elaboration and development of actions with co-competent agencies aiming at the protection of victims, d) collection of data related to domestic violence cases, e) implementation of educational trainings/seminars in collaboration with co-competent bodies and agencies and f) actions for raising public awareness on domestic violence.

98. The Hellenic Police issued orders providing more specific guidelines for handling such cases. Inter alia, it highlighted the need to inform victims on available support services such as housing, psychological-social support and legal aid.

99. Moreover, to assist police officers in their work, contact details of Counselling centres and information on actions and initiatives taken by the General Secretariat and other organizations were distributed to the Police.

100. Relevant instructions were updated and enhanced during the pandemic, when cases of domestic violence increased significantly, as shown by the number of incidents reported to the SOS 15900 helpline.

101. Within the competences of the Cybercrime Unit, the above-mentioned Domestic Violence Services are mandated to identify, investigate and prosecute criminal offences committed online or via other means of electronic communication and digital storage. The Cybercrime Unit receives complaints on a 24-hour basis via emails, the e-services portal addressed to citizens, businesses and agencies, social media and the emergency phone number 11188 of "Cyber Alert" operation centre. In case the reported incidents do not fall within its competences, they are immediately transmitted to the local competent authority.

102. The Hellenic Police issues targeted orders on how to handle victims of sexual offenses. These orders provide useful guidance on: (a) a victim-centred approach (b) a gender-sensitive approach to avoid secondary victimization (c) informing immediately the local competent public prosecutor and (d) providing assistance and protection, in cooperation with jointly competent bodies and services.

103. Continuous and up-to-date training of Hellenic Police staff is implemented. Courses on "sexual violence crimes" are included in the curricula of the Police Academies. A key objective is to effectively train them on these issues and optimize their skills in investigating and dealing with such cases, in fully grasping the meaning of a gender-sensitive approach while dealing with victims, in promoting the cooperation with co-competent bodies and services active in providing assistance and protection to victims.

104. Gender-based hate-motivated violence targets individuals or groups due to their biological/anatomical sex or social gender. Women, in the majority of cases, are victims of hate speech (sexist speech) or hate crimes in real or online life (sexual harassment, stalking, image-based sexual abuse etc).

105. Since 2019, a series of measures have been taken to deal with these phenomena and their causes (eradication of gender stereotypes that provoke these attitudes). Legislative measures include Laws 4531/2018, 4604/2019 and 4808/2021. Policy

measures on prevention of sexist hate speech include the implementation of the National Programme on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women, participation in the preparation of the Recommendation against sexism of the Council of Europe, a campaign in the Greek media (video and radio spot), and the National Programme on Racism and Intolerance which includes actions that focus on women susceptible to multiple or cross-sectoral discriminations and sexism (para 21).

106. The Ministry of Justice along with the National Council Against Racism and Intolerance recently produced a guide for victims of hate crimes, including the existing legal framework on the rights of victims of racist crimes, instructions on necessary steps to be taken by victims of racist crimes, as well as a list of services that can assist the victim. It is translated into nine languages (English, French, Farsi, Urdu, Arabic, Pashto, Albanian, Russian and Georgian).

107. According to Law 4375/2016, the Reception and Identification Service of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum is responsible for the operation of Reception and Identification Centres and deals, inter alia, with families, women refugees, victims or potential victims of violence and their children and with vulnerable groups in general and provides housing for them. In the event that vulnerable groups of individuals, as those described above, are identified by competent authorities, the necessary procedures for their transfer to suitable accommodation facilities are implemented. In cases of GBV there is also collaboration with the General Secretariat and referral to its supporting services.

108. With the emergence of the «Metoo» movement in Greece, a special government e-platform <https://metoogreece.gr/> was created with information and supportive material on violence, sexual harassment and abuse aiming at protection from domestic violence, sexual harassment and rape for all citizens. Its creation is an initiative taken by the General Secretariat and its content includes all the Greek main hotlines for immediate help and support: 15900 – [www.womensos.gr](http://www.womensos.gr) for cases of violence against women, 100 (Police), 15512 (Labour Inspectorate), 11188 (Cybercrime), 1056 (Hotline for Children, Adolescents and Parents).

109. The National Council for Gender Equality established initially by Law 4604/2019, and amended by Law 4808/2021, includes in its composition two representatives of women or feminist organizations alternating in each subsequent formation in order to represent different women or feminist organizations. It is a counselling body monitoring gender equality issues and gender-specific issues.

110. In November 2019, with the support of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, a Declaration against domestic violence was signed by representatives of the Orthodox Church of Greece and of the Muslim Minority of Thrace. Following this, in 2021, a joint Working Group was formed with the participation of representatives of the Orthodox Church of Greece, and the Muslim Minority of Thrace, including two Muslim Minority women to deal with matters of family, social and religious nature.

111. On GBV victims' protection in reception centres, see para 21(a).

112. On the proportion of women 15–49 years old subjected to GBV, see tables 9, 11.

113. From March 2011 to December 2022, approximately 47,000 women were supported by the Counselling Centres and the Shelters and more than 74,500 persons consulted the SOS Helpline. From January to December 2022, the SOS Helpline received 5,214 calls from women victims of violence and 2,094 calls from third parties. At the same time, 5,578 women – victims and persons from their close environment – addressed the 44 Counselling Centres to seek advice and guidance from specialized psychologists and social workers, while the 19 Shelters hosted 244 women with their children.



114. The National Action Plan 2021–2025 prioritizes preventing and combating GBV and includes measures regarding the implementation of the Istanbul Convention. The following initiatives are worth mentioning:

- The development of the “Risk Assessment Tool” for women victims of GBV and domestic violence to be applied and utilized horizontally by all the reception services of women victims. The tool was piloted in 2022 and is currently under evaluation;
- The “Panic Button” application was launched in November 2022, allowing a woman in danger to call for help by pressing a button on her mobile phone so that the police can locate and help them. It was the result of a collaboration between the General Secretariat, the Ministry of Citizen Protection, the Ministry of Digital Governance and Vodafone Greece. The application will be piloted for a year in Athens and Thessaloniki;
- Under the co-operation of the General Secretariat and UNICEF Greece, the digital application “GBV Pocket Guide” has been adapted and translated into Greek, aiming at providing support and information on all professionals or people that might come across a GBV case;
- A study launched in 2022 on the profile of GBV perpetrators and evaluation of treatment programs to design proposals for their improvement is under implementation.

115. Under Law 4443/2016, the Ombudsman was defined as National Mechanism for the Investigation of Arbitrary Cases in Law Enforcement Agencies and Detention Centres. The Ombudsman is responsible for the collection, registration, evaluation, investigation or further referral for disciplinary review by the competent services, of complaints regarding actions or omissions by the Police (as well as the Hellenic Coast Guard, the Fire Brigade and Detention Facility Officers), during the performance of their duties or abuse of office, and relate to discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics. Cases are brought before the Ombudsman, either after the submission of personal complaints, or on its own initiative, or after referral by the competent Minister or Secretary General. In addition, the National Mechanism deals with cases for which convictions have been issued by the European Court of Human Rights against Greece.

116. There is also a disciplinary process in place to examine cases of complaints regarding excessive use of force against women by the Police.

## **Paragraph 10**

117. The General Secretariat and the National Centre for Social Solidarity are operating an integrated network of supporting structures across the country for the prevention and treatment of all forms of violence against women. The Network of the General Secretariat consists of 64 structures: a 24-hour SOS 15900 helpline, 44 Counselling Centres and 19 Shelters, staffed with specialized professionals.

118. The National Centre for Social Solidarity operates two Social Support Centres in Athens and Thessaloniki, providing support services to individuals and families who face a psychosocial crisis, with emphasis on victims of violence, mainly domestic violence or trafficking. It also operates two Shelters, in Thessaloniki and Attica. Emergency short-term accommodation is also provided. Two Social Shelters operate in Attica and offer temporary accommodation to adult self-reliant persons, two or single-parent families, patients and their escorts from rural areas. Beneficiaries, including women, are those who face an immediate accommodation problem due to lack of financial resources. The National Centre operates the Social

Helpline 197 and the National Child Protection Helpline 1107. Apart from state-run support structures, there are also some operated by non-governmental organisations (five shelters<sup>11</sup>, seven telephone helplines<sup>12</sup>).

119. The total number of persons working in the Network of the General Secretariat is 316. 174 persons staff the Counselling Centres (psychologists, social workers, first contact Counsellors/sociologists, legal counsellors – one in each centre)<sup>13</sup>. 142 persons staff the Shelters (psychologists and child psychologists, social workers, administrative staff, security guards and auxiliary staff). Law 5043/2023 further extends European funding for the Network throughout 2027, additionally to Greek State funding. Law 4604/2019 obliges the State to fund the operation of the Network (tables 12–13).

120. Through this funding, the Network will be upgraded to provide quality services to women beneficiaries and their children, both through the modernization of the technological equipment and the possibility of remote services as well as the updating of its database, consulting methodologies and tools.

121. The Network provides psychosocial and labour counselling, legal aid, and accommodation where necessary. All services and informational material are provided in English and other languages to facilitate access of women from different ethnic backgrounds. The Network premises are accessible to persons with disabilities. Statistical data on the cases treated are available and published regularly.

122. The gradual creation of a unified data collection system for incidents of GBV is one of our main priorities. In this context, the Observatory for Gender Equality supports the implementation of the Istanbul Convention and is responsible for the collection and analysis of data on GBV in Greece.

## Paragraph 11

123. In 2019, the National Referral Mechanism was launched as a formal national identification and referral system for inter-agency cooperation on issues of first level identification and support of victims (and presumed/potential victims) of trafficking in Greece. The Mechanism is supervised by the Office of the National Rapporteur for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and managed by the National Centre for Social Solidarity.

124. The National Rapporteur and the National Centre for Social Solidarity co-operate closely with the General Secretariat for conducting training seminars to the personnel of the shelters and Counselling centres of victims of GBV with the aim to enhance the identification of presumed trafficking victims.

125. A National Action Plan on Trafficking in Persons 2019–2023 has been drafted by the National Rapporteur's Office, including a broad range of policy-making

<sup>11</sup> NGOs: KESO (Holy Archdiocese of Athens), Phoebe, Union of Ladies of Drama, Association of members of women's unions of Heraklion and the prefecture of Heraklion-Shelter for the abused women and children.

<sup>12</sup> Telephone lines operated by: WIN Hellas (2108996636), Diotima (2108816405), Via Stop (2510211103), European Network of Women (2109700814), Association of members of women's unions of Heraklion and the prefecture of Heraklion (8011116000), Lesbian & Gay Community of Greece (OLKE), Athens Pride, Thessaloniki Pride, Positive Voice (11528), Colour Youth – Athens LGBTQ Youth Community (6944282414 & 6980038536). Furthermore, Greek Transgender Support Association (SYD) enables the reporting of homophobic and transphobic incidents – and the provision of psychological support and legal information – through the “Report it” service (<http://tgender.gr/katingile-to/>).

<sup>13</sup> With exception of some Counselling Centres (see in detail tables in the Annex) that may not be fully staffed for various reasons (for example birth leaves, etc).

projects, pertaining to prosecution, prevention, protection, and partnerships to ensure a victim-centred approach.

126. Combating trafficking is a key priority of the Anti-Crime Policy Programme 2020–2024, drafted by the Hellenic Police as was also during the previous period 2015–2019. The objectives for effectively combating trafficking include victim-centred, gender-based approach, sensitivity to juvenile victims, and zero tolerance for trafficking, while actions to achieve the objectives include: a) awareness raising of the police officers and especially those of the “front line” Services, b) information – implementation of relevant legislation, c) handling of trafficking victims belonging to vulnerable groups, such as women, minors and the disabled, with sensitivity d) networking with the relevant governmental and non-governmental bodies and e) participation in training programmes.

127. Trafficking for sexual exploitation remains the predominant THB-typology in Greece. According to the data by the National Referral Mechanism and the Hellenic Police, a total of 424 referrals for presumed THB-victims were submitted between 2017 and 2020, the vast majority of whom are women and girls (236 victims, 55.7 per cent). Sexual exploitation was reported for 317 victims (74.7 per cent of the total number of trafficking-victims). According to latest available data of the Mechanism (first semester of 2022), the total number of cases was 134, out of which 113 (92 women and 21 men) were adult victims and 21 (14 girls and 7 boys) were children. Of these, nine were unaccompanied, three boys and six girls. The majority of victims were women (92) and girls (14).

128. The Penal Code (as amended to date) introduced changes that significantly strengthened legislation in the field of combating trafficking. New forms of exploitation, including slavery and similar practices as well as forced criminality, have been added. Forced marriage was already recognized as a distinct trafficking typology according to the relevant provisions of the Istanbul Convention. Perpetrators are punished by a fine and imprisonment of up to fifteen years. In case the victims are children, higher penalties may be imposed. Stricter punishment is imposed to persons who knowingly use THB-victims (imprisonment of at least 3 years and a fine). Where the act at issue results in the death of a person, it is punishable by life imprisonment.

129. A Memorandum of Understanding between the National Rapporteur Office and UNICEF Greece devotes special attention to the protection of young girls and women from trafficking.

130. A Working Group of legal professionals and criminal justice practitioners specialized in trafficking, within the Ministry of Justice with the support of the National Rapporteur and the National Referral Mechanism, prioritizes the adoption of the gender perspective throughout the identification regime, and the protection and integration of presumed trafficking-victims.

131. For the effective investigation/assistance in trafficking cases, the Hellenic Police has set up Departments and Teams: a special Directorate of the Hellenic Police Headquarters specially handles issues of trafficking and guides the regional operational Services since September 2020, and twelve Anti-Trafficking Teams and two Anti-Trafficking Departments within the General Police Directorates of Attica and Thessaloniki, whose personnel have received specialized training in approaching (potential) victims and investigating trafficking cases.

132. Hellenic Police officers have been constantly trained, with the ultimate goal of further improving cooperation with all relevant bodies and building a holistic approach to relevant cases. THB thematic unit is included in the curriculum of the Police Academy.

133. For trafficking data see tables 14–17.

134. As regards prosecution of trafficking offences, the Public Prosecutor at the Supreme Court transmitted to all the Public Prosecutors' offices guidelines and the Memorandum drafted by the National Rapporteur on dealing with THB cases. The Public Prosecutor asked the first instance Courts' to report every four months on the number of the trafficking victims they have officially recognized.

135. Public Prosecutors have also participated in various training seminars on trafficking issues. In the curriculum of the National School of Judges, twelve and twenty four additional hours of courses have been included for prosecutors and judges, respectively, on criminal law issues with particular emphasis on trafficking offences.

136. In addition to State support structures for victims of trafficking, there are NGOs that undertake hosting, empowerment and Counselling activities. Some examples include CSR Hellas (2014 – Memorandum of Understanding with the National Rapporteur for the Fight on THB, 2015 & 2016 – Participation and support of the “Break the Chain” festival against human trafficking) and PRAKSIS (bilateral cooperation with NGO A21 for trafficking via the use of an emergency support apartment in Athens for trafficking survivors; protected shelter for girls at risk (2016–2017), interpretation, needs assessment/investigation/risk (Athens, Thessaloniki, Samos, Chios, Lesbos), accompanying of beneficiaries, intervention in the street/street work/mobile units (Athens, Thessaloniki), housing support through specific programmes (Athens), psychosocial and material support, medical care, legal advice, support and escort, support in the context of finding a job through specific programmes).

## **Paragraph 12**

137. As Greece is one of the entry points for mixed migration flows into Europe, potential trafficking victims may be identified amongst irregular migrants and refugees entering the country. According to the data by the National Referral Mechanism, female asylum seekers represent the majority of the trafficked adult victims, though mostly in their country of origin or along the migration route. According to National Referral Mechanism Standard Operating Procedures, protection is provided to all identified victims of trafficking regardless of their status.

138. Through continuous and effective coordination of all relevant partners, considerable progress has been achieved in identifying potential victims of THB at Reception and Identification Centres. Human trafficking indicators are applied to the unified vulnerability assessment of all those registered in the Reception and Identification Centres. The National Referral Mechanism, in cooperation with the National Rapporteur, International Organization for Migration Greece and the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors play a crucial role in training Reception and Identification Centres' personnel. With regard to integration, the Ministry of Migration and Asylum is planning, in co-operation with the National Rapporteur, to implement an integration programme benefiting migrants and asylum seekers residing in accommodation centres in the mainland. The programme adopts a gender-sensitive approach, aiming at offering alternatives to women and girls and tackling, inter alia, cases of “survival sex”.

139. A working group of experts, with the participation of the National Rapporteur, has been set up in the Ministry of Citizen Protection to address challenges relating to prostitution. The working group has been mandated to carry out an in-depth consultation process with all competent stakeholders and to elaborate a legislative proposal regarding the amendment of Law 2734/1999 on sex workers.

140. Integration services described by the National Referral Mechanism Standard Operating Procedures include, inter alia, assistance in finding a job, language lessons, vocational training, school enrolment and rehabilitation programmes. All services are delivered either by Public Services or by NGOs. The Memoranda of Understanding signed between the National Rapporteur and the Regional Prefectures of Attica and Thessalia provide for vocational training and social entrepreneurship support for victims of trafficking.

141. Various prevention measures have been implemented aiming to address the “demand” for exploitation of women and girls. In 2019, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport, in cooperation with the National Rapporteur and civil society representatives, a large-scale awareness-raising campaign, which consisted in projecting anti-THB messages on the Athens Metro and public buses for a month. “Break the Chain” and “Raise your Voice” festivals brought together civil society and the cultural sector into a strategic partnership with the anti-trafficking community in Greece. The National Rapporteur coordinates also with the General Secretariat awareness-raising campaigns to combat trafficking and prevent gender-based violence.

142. In addition, “Human Rights for Beginners”, a training project for teachers of Council of Europe member states, has been expanded to include topics related to trafficking. The first such training took place in January 2020 with the participation of approximately 130 teachers of Secondary Education.

143. A Memorandum of Understanding for the promotion and implementation of actions aimed at awareness-raising, prevention and tackling THB was signed in November 2021 by the National Rapporteur and the Centre for Social Action and Innovation. The Memorandum of Understanding provides for the joint implementation of a number of initiatives in areas such as prevention, timely detection, protection and assistance of victims of trafficking, justice, punishment of perpetrators and the strengthening of stakeholders’ cooperation.

### **Paragraph 13**

144. On temporary measures that enhance the participation of women in political and public life see para. 7.

145. General measures on enhancing participation of women in political and public life are included in both current and previous Gender Equality Action Plans, apart from the legislative work, e.g. awareness-raising e-material and regular communication and consultation with regional and local authorities. The Research Centre for Gender Equality conducted awareness-raising campaigns for the motivation of women to actively participate as candidates in the European and the local and regional elections and also a research titled “The right to elect and be elected – Studying and reporting perceptions on the participation and representation of women in political decision making”.

146. For the representation of women in parliament and government after the last two electoral procedures (2015, 2019), see tables 18–19.

147. As regards the representation of women in decision making positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, out of 890 persons, 390 are women (43.8 per cent) and 500 men (56.2 per cent). Furthermore, recognizing the need for gender-equal representation in various United Nations bodies, Greece encourages the submission

of candidatures by women. In this regard, four candidates have been elected as independent experts at United Nations bodies,<sup>14</sup> all of whom are women.

148. According to data by the Ministry of Interior, high level positions at public administration entities, are very close to being gender balanced (47,5 per cent women in top positions) (table 21).

149. Her Excellency Ms Aikaterini Sakellaropoulou, the first woman to serve as President of the Council of State, the country's highest administrative Court and a human rights advocate was elected, on January 2020, as the first female President of the Hellenic Republic with 261 votes (out of 300). Her Excellency the President of the Hellenic Republic is also an active member of the UN Circle of Leadership Initiative.

150. The Project "Gender Public Debate", run by the General Secretariat during 2019–2021, aimed at addressing existing barriers for journalists and women at public debate. 120 media stakeholders were trained in identifying, responding and preventing sexism and gender discrimination at public debates through targeted workshops for journalists, media practitioners and students of media faculties. In addition, 100 women politicians and candidates were able to enhance their skills in election-procedures and in identifying and responding to sexism and gender discrimination in public debates.

151. On supporting Roma women to actively and equally participate in public life and decision-making, see point 246.

152. The Ministry of Interior has also taken measures with regard to implementing and monitoring gender participation in the collective bodies of the administration. The Ministry regularly issues reminder-circulars stipulating that care should be given to respect gender balance in accordance with the Civil Servants Code, in particular in the context of the selection of Department Heads. Female candidates who were absent from their duties on maternity and/or child-upbringing leaves, while being Department Heads, should receive points corresponding to worktime in a responsibility post.

153. For gender-disaggregated statistical data regarding Greek regions and municipalities see tables 18–20.

154. For gender equality training in the public sector by the National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government see table 21.

## Paragraph 14

155. Law 4443/2016 extended the protection of persons experiencing discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics in the field of education. Law 4604/2019 provides for gender mainstreaming in curricula and teaching materials, career guidance and teacher training. The General Secretariat has already developed cooperation with the Institute of Educational Policy on these topics.

156. Statistical data (tables 23–24) confirm that the gender gap in school enrolment and graduation has narrowed in all levels of the Greek education system. Girls represent the majority of graduates in general education (i.e. 53.2 per cent in 2020)

<sup>14</sup> Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment-SPT (for the period 2019–2022), Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination-CERD (for the period 2020–2024), Human Rights Committee (for the period 2019–2022), UN International Institute for the Unification of Private Law-UNIDROIT (for the period 2019–2023).

but not in vocational education (i.e. 37.3 per cent in 2020). Women continue their studies and gain higher education qualification; from 2015 to 2020 the share of women completing their studies at ISCED4 to ISCED7 levels is higher than that of men. As for doctoral studies, there is a slight upward trend regarding female participation, which reached 47.9 per cent in 2020, whereas the same year the percentage of female graduates was 51.5 per cent.

157. However, “horizontal/subject matter” segregation continues to exist. Since 2015, the number of women studying science, technology, engineering and mathematics has been increased in all levels except for ISCED3VOC. The proportion of women studying and/or graduating follows an upward trend. The percentage difference between female and male students is reduced as the education level increases; in 2018 women consisted 30.7 per cent, 40.5 per cent and 61.5 per cent of the students in STEM field at the bachelor, master and doctoral level, respectively. In the same year, the corresponding percentages of female graduates were 39.1 per cent, 44.2 per cent and 40.4 per cent showing that women’s presence is dynamic but still less than equal. This segregation appears more intense at the information and communication technologies field. Men, students and graduates, are dominant both in the ISCED3VOC and ISCED4 levels. The situation is different in tertiary education where the share of women equals – even supersedes at the master’s level – that of male students. This scheme, however, shifts at graduates’ level where the proportion of women during 2015–2020 reached 37.2 per cent. In the same period, the percentage of women completing studies in ICT has been reduced; the widest gaps can be found in ISCED3VOC and ISCED4 levels (see Tables 25–30).

158. Attracting more women and girls to ICT was one of the pillars of the Action Plan 2015–2017 entitled “Women and Girls Go Digital”, which was established in 2014 with the participation of public and private sector stakeholders. In this context, five scholarships for postgraduate studies were awarded to female students. The General Secretariat provided its aegis to activities by non-governmental organizations in the field of female digital empowerment. See also points 283 and 284.

159. The General Secretariat participated in the “R&I PEERS – Pilot experiences for improving gender equality in research organizations” project that sought to eliminate conditions hindering the participation and career development of women in Research & Innovation in the Mediterranean region through the design and implementation of Equality Action Plans in research organizations and universities. The project was completed in 2022.

160. Sexual education involves educational activities on understanding and critical thinking, as well as life-skills activities on issues of gender, rights, mental and physical health, safety, security, protection, respect for sexual dignity and equality and it has been integrated to all levels of compulsory education (4–15 years). Relevant themes are included in the “Flexible Zone of Experiential Activities” in primary school, on the “Platform 21+:21st century Skills Labs” and in “Health education Programmes”. “Skills Labs” is an initiative used to design and implement activities to, inter alia, promote gender equality and human rights by applying experiential, participatory methods.

161. The Educational Policy Institute (a scientific agency that provides support to the Minister of Education, Research and Religious Affairs) established a special Workgroup in March 2021 whose aims include the collection, evaluation of educational programmes along with recommendations and other relevant material concerning sexual education, the generalization of the curriculum of the Skills Labs with regard to sexual education, and special training of teachers of primary and secondary education on these themes.

162. The initiative for the development of sexual education in schools, available at the website of the Educational Policy Institute, contains material of relevant educational programmes and Manuals/Guides, which help professionals, teachers and other practitioners recognize the signs of sexual aggression and deal with it. More information can be found on the Institute’s website on ways to report such incidents to competent bodies, etc.

163. From September 2020 to February 2021, 130 teachers of Secondary Education and 58 of Primary Education were trained in programmes relevant to sexual education. Sixty Action Plans were submitted benefiting 1,130–1,300 pupils of kindergarten, primary and secondary schools.

164. Another ongoing initiative is the General Secretariat’s collaboration with the Regional General-Maternity Hospital “Elena Venizelos” and Athens’ Health Education Office for Secondary Education in conducting the “Awareness of secondary school students on sexual and reproductive health issues” programme (see table below). Awareness-raising activities on gender issues are conducted in the framework of the “Thematic Week” (point 80), as well as in separate programmes implemented in cooperation with relevant NGOs.

<i>School year</i>	<i>Number of students</i>
2018–2019	1 850
2019–2020	890
2020–2021	50
2021–2022	2 223

*Source:* The General Secretariat (2023)

165. Law 4589/2019 established a “Gender Equality Committee” at each university as an advisory body for the promotion of equality in academic life (upgraded with Law 4957/2022). All universities and Research Institutions have already set up gender equality committees which are active, inter alia, in developing action plans, organizing working groups, carrying out various awareness-raising activities and interventions on gender issues, preventing and combating gender-based violence, etc. These committees have formed an informal Pan-Hellenic Network of Gender Equality Committees, in collaboration with the Greek Association of University Women.

166. Over the last five years women and men have a similar share in lifelong learning ranging from 4 per cent to 4.7 per cent, with women gaining another 0.5 percentage lead in 2019, which was, however, reversed in 2020. Promoting gender equality in lifelong learning has been dealt within the Gender Equality Action Plans 2016–2020 and 2021–2025. Training programmes for women, mainly linked with the objective of professional integration have been implemented by NGOs (table 31).

167. During the last five years, the percentage of girls with disabilities and/or special educational needs attending Special Education Schools ranges from 33 per cent to 34 per cent, while the corresponding percentage of those attending general schools ranges from 30 per cent to 31 per cent, which is in line with the gender distribution of the total student population with disabilities and/or special educational needs. In terms of educational levels, the general nursery school has the lowest percentage of female pupils, while the special vocational high school has the highest percentage of female pupils. As for tertiary education, in 2021, there were 4,564 female students, 44 per cent of the total student population with disabilities and/or special educational needs, which rises to 47.3 per cent also including students with learning difficulties.



168. Law 4547/2018 provides for support structures in the educational community towards the promotion of inclusive education. The Educational Policy Institute has been implementing projects – both at national and European levels – to the enhancement of inclusive education. In 2020, a “National Action Plan for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities” was published. Two of its objectives refer to “Women with disabilities” and “Education and training for all”. As an extension of this, the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs has developed a Strategic Action Plan for Equal Access to Education for Students with Disabilities, which comprises 13 objectives and has special provisions for students with disabilities who may experience discrimination (complaint and investigation procedure is established) (table 32).

169. The General Secretariat for Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs is responsible for Schools of Religious Education, both Ecclesiastical and Islamic, providing the opportunity of equal access for boys and girls to the religious schools, where, in addition to the general education programme, all students, attend also religious specialization courses. Both kinds of Religious Schools (10 Ecclesiastical schools in various regions of Greece and 2 Islamic schools (Medresses) in the Regions of Komotini and Xanthi in Thrace) belong to the secondary education system (lower and upper) and upon completion thereof, students are eligible for access to the tertiary education system.

170. In order to promote the religious and spiritual cultivation of the Muslim Minority in Thrace, 240 positions of Islamic Religion teachers were allocated in Muftiates in Thrace. Their salary is paid exclusively by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and their task is to teach the Quran in the mosques of Thrace, as well as in public schools of primary and secondary education in Thrace, to students-members of the Muslim Minority who wish to do so having been exempted from the course of Religious Education. In addition, if they so wish and provided that they have the necessary qualifications, they may teach religious specialization courses, as well as Arabic language in the Medresses of Thrace. It is noted that women are included among Islamic Religion teachers.

## **Paragraph 15**

171. The gender pay-gap has decreased by two points since 2015 (12.5 per cent) to 10.4 per cent in 2021. Measures to reduce it were included in the earlier and current Gender Equality Action Plans.

172. Greece has a clear legislative framework (Law 3896/2010 as amended to date) for the implementation of the principle of equal treatment of all in employment in the private and public sectors.

173. Law 4604/2019 introduces the concepts of gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting and includes specific articles on the drafting of “Equality Plans” by companies, on social dialogue and the introduction of Equality Labels and Gender Awards for companies that adopt corporate gender equality policies (pay transparency included).

174. In the last years, the National Gender Equality Action Plans include measures to increase women’s participation in the labour market, as well as to enhance the importance of reducing the wage and pension-gap by setting a separate package of measures.

175. The “PEGASUS” project on addressing the Gender Pension Gap in Greece (2018–2020) examined the issue of gender pension gap on a multifaceted basis, and

made policy proposals, which are incorporated to the current Gender Equality Action Plan. A tool was created on the project's website to calculate future pensions.

176. Statistical data on women's employment rate, unemployment rate, activity rate, part-time employment by age group and other factors are depicted at tables 33–40.

177. Measures taken to address women's unemployment and work-life balance include the following (see also points 190–199 for support to women and men with parental responsibilities):

- The Employment Service implemented an 8-month public works and work of social value programmes within municipalities aiming at enhanced protection of maternity, (special maternity leaves, leaves for school visits, reduced working hours etc), including the official minimum wage and all required social security contributions;
- The Employment Service offered employment and entrepreneurship programmes support to unemployed women who are victims of GBV (point 68).

178. The Employment Service implemented special 12 or 9-month public employment programmes to tackle unemployment and under-employment with an emphasis on long-term unemployed, youth and older women, mothers of minors (years 2017–2018).

179. Every year since 2008, there are work-life balance programmes offering childcare services to unemployed/self-employed/employed in the private sector mothers that fulfil low income criteria (they are co-funded by the EU and support Early Childhood Care and nurseries for children).

180. A Financial Support Programme for Families of Preschoolers (Law 4704/2012) provides supplementary financial support to families with pre-school children. The programme includes families of civil servants, Public Legal Entities servants and Local Government Agencies servants. It also increased the number of private sector beneficiaries. The programme is State funded and implemented by the Hellenic Agency for Local Development and Local Government.

181. A legal framework covering pre-existing unregulated gaps concerning surrogacy and adoption rights (maternity leaves, maternity benefits and allowances, protection from lay-offs) and also establishing the use of parental leave by both parents alternatively (biological, adopting, foster parents) regardless of their working status (Laws 4342/2015 and 4488/2017).

182. The “SHARE” Project” (period 2020–2022), aimed to tackle traditional gender family roles and promote reconciliation of work and private life, emphasizing companies' working environments by capacity-building and awareness-raising on the role of men to achieve work-life balance.

183. With Law 4722/2020, which was adopted during the pandemic, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs aimed at protecting vulnerable groups (by teleworking, change of workplace, etc.) and determined that pregnant women belong to vulnerable groups.

184. Law 4808/2021, ratifying the ILO Convention 190, amends the general provisions of the Code of Laws for Health and Safety of Employees so that violence and harassment in the workplace are explicitly included among occupational risks obliging the employer to take measures.

185. The National Confederation of Disabled People's Observatory on Disability Issues, at the 2nd Bulletin of Statistical Data entitled “Employment Indicators and population with disabilities, part A”, issued on 2018 refers to data regarding the access of women with disabilities to the labour market. According to the Bulletin,

women with disabilities face significant barriers and challenges in obtaining access to the labour market, compared to men with disabilities, where the severity of their disability is an important constraint on their non-participation in the labour market. The 2nd Bulletin of Statistical Data Dissemination “Employment Indicators and population with disabilities, part A” is available here.

186. The National Confederation of Disabled People has developed and published an Entrepreneurship Guide for Young Persons and Women with Disabilities aiming to provide women and young persons with disabilities with useful information on the existing support and funding tools on entrepreneurship, bodies providing consultation, business programmes, funding sources as well as the basic steps that a person should take to start his/her business. The Guide is available online here (in Greek).

187. See paragraph 20 on the two projects that the National Confederation of Disabled People is implementing in rural areas of Greece.

188. The impact of pregnancy and discrimination against mothers and pregnant women in relation to hiring, career advancement, conditions of employment, pay, leaves are issues that the Greek Ombudsman investigates every year. The Ombudsman examines a large number of labour disputes, in collaboration with the Labour Inspectorate, dealing with violation of labour legislation, in particular with the protection of pregnancy and maternity and with regards to the termination of their employment contract or late accrual payment. In many cases, the dispute was settled amicably, while in others the Ombudsman suggested the imposition of administrative sanctions to the employer by the Labour Inspectorate.

189. In the public sector, relevant complaints concerned the loss of a position, liability after returning from maternity leave, general maternity leave, allegations of sexual harassment or sexist/harassing boss behaviour, even exercise violence by a male co-worker. The complaints that were investigated by the Greek Ombudsman, under its special mandate as Equality Body for promoting equal treatment and combating discrimination, included discrimination against women (also see point 49).

190. A programme for the Harmonization of Family and Professional Life providing access of preschoolers and school-age children to child protection structures (such as childcare centres, infant/child day-care centres, Creative Centres) continues to be implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The objectives of the programme are, inter alia, the increase and maintenance of the employment of women with low family income, as well as their support, so that their equal access to work is ensured. Additional support is provided to single-parent families.

191. Other measures to support parents are child allowance, childbirth benefit and allowance for mountainous and disadvantaged areas that also include single-parent families, depending on specific criteria.

192. Child Allowance: Introduced by Law 4512/2018 (as amended by Law 4659/2020), it is a single allowance replacing various allowances granted until then. It is granted to parents or persons who have the custody of children born in Greece, given that they live legally and permanently in the country. The amount of the allowance depends on the number of the dependent children, the equivalent family income and the category of equivalent family income. The child allowance is entirely financed by the State budget.

193. Childbirth Benefit: Introduced by Law 4659/2020. It is a lump-sum benefit of €2,000 and is given for every child born in Greece in two equal instalments of €1,000; the first one is paid the first month after the child is born and the second one after five months. The benefit is granted to all mothers residing legally and permanently in

Greece, provided that the equivalent family income is less than €40,000 per year. The childbirth benefit is entirely financed by the State budget.

194. Allowance for Mountainous and Disadvantaged Areas: Introduced by Law 3016/2002 to support low-income families that live in such remote areas. Specifically, the annual income support is granted to families, including single-parent families, whose members live permanently in mountainous and disadvantaged areas, as follows: €600, if the annual family income does not exceed the amount of €3,000 and €300 per year, if the annual family income ranges between €3,000.01 and €4,700.

195. In terms of policies that support families, labour, work-life balance and access to quality care for children, Law 4808/2021 introduced, for the first time, paternity leave and the legal framework of parental leave and other facilitations for parents and carers. The Law also provides protection from dismissal of parents who use the leave and flexible working arrangements for the upbringing of their children. Specifically, the new Law stipulates the following: 1) Fathers have a right to paternity leave (14 paid days) and are protected against dismissal for 6 months from the child's birth, 2) both parents have a right to a 4-month parental leave, 3) parents with children up to 12 years old have a right to flexible arrangements (e.g. teleworking, flexible hours, part-time), 4) caregivers have a right to a five-day leave for a relative in need of care, 5) each worker has the right to time off work (2 days per year) for urgent family matters. See also point 21 on Law 4997/2022.

196. The "Nannies of the Neighbourhood" programme (enacted by Law 4837/2021) was designed to support working mothers to take care of their babies, aged from 2 months to 2.5 years by giving them access to accredited caregivers. The programme provides financial support to working mothers to cover a percentage of the childcare cost through a voucher. The programme aims to support and facilitate women mothers and guardians, after having a child, to achieve their full reintegration into the labour market, the continuation of their professional career, and to reduce undeclared work by encouraging the unemployed women, upon certification, to work as caregivers.

197. In 2020, the tax on infant care goods was reduced from 24 per cent to 13 per cent and the tax-free amount for every child was increased.

198. The "Gender Equality Label" for companies (implemented in a pilot phase through the SHARE Project) is in line with Law 4604/2019 which provides for drafting of "Equality Plans" (point 174). This is further enhanced with Law 4837/2021 for social protection support providing for a "Diversity Label" for public and private companies implementing equal treatment and anti-discrimination policies in the workplace.

199. Financial support to companies in order to create childcare units: The programme provides funding for childcare units inside large companies (enabled by Law 4921/2022), as well as the subsidy of childcarers. Funding can be allocated to up to 120 companies, including shopping malls throughout Greece. The budget is around 16 million Euros and it began February 2023.

200. The "Diversity awareness" project, aiming at integrating a culture of openness and adaptability to diversity, encouraging organizations to recruit executives belonging to vulnerable groups, thus developing extroverted and innovative governance and entrepreneurship. The goal is to provide training on diversity issues to 1,600,000 employees by the end of 2024, with priority given to those employed in front office positions and managerial roles. The budget is around 47 million Euros.

201. The work of NGOs on work promotion programmes is also worth mentioning.<sup>15</sup>

### Paragraph 16

202. With social security Law 4387/2016, the National Social Security Fund/eEFKA is the single social insurance fund in Greece, unifying all previous social security funds. According to the same Law, retirement pensions are provided through a public scheme, where the pension is comprised of the national pension and an earning-related contributory pension. The national pension is financed directly by the State budget. The contributory pension depends on the insurance years and the contributions paid starting from the year 2002 until application for pension. The abolition of the special solidarity contribution tax for all income (Law 4972/2022) and the 7.75 per cent rise in pensions as from 1/1/2023 is estimated to benefit a significant number of pensioners.

203. In accordance with provisions of Law 4336/2015, the general pension age is 67 for both men and women having at least fifteen years of insurance (4,500 days of employment), whereas persons insured for forty years can retire at the age of 62. The minimum retirement pension requires fifteen years' insurance contributions. A reduced pension is possible for men and women at 62 reduced by 1/200 until the age of full pension (67 years). A reduced old-age pension can never be converted into a full pension. There are differentiations (early reduced pensions) for people who work in arduous or unhealthy occupations and for caretakers of disabled children.

204. Disability pensions are also composed of national and contributory parts. The amount of the national pension is set at €384/month for at least twenty years of insurance. This amount is further reduced according to the degree of disability (severe, partial, normal). The contributory pension depends on the insurance years and the contributions paid starting from the year 2002 until application for pension. The cause of disability determines the entitlement to the pension as long as the degree of disability is over 67 per cent (due to common disease, due to an accident at work or occupational disease, due to a non-work-related accident). The Centre for Certifying Invalidity Health Committees are responsible for determining one's degree of disability for a disability pension.

205. On measures taken to ensure access to formal employment for marginalized groups of women the Gender Equality Action Plan 2016–2020 included specific actions on disadvantaged groups of women regarding social inclusion and

<sup>15</sup> Since 2016, the NGO Mexoxo has educated 3,000 Greek women on how to create their own businesses with the support of The Coca-Cola Foundation. Additionally, Mexoxo has been educating 670 women on technology through a certified programme offered by Inco-Academy supported by Google.org, called WIT. 50 per cent of women attending the WIT will be finding employment due to the 15 partner-companies that have joined these efforts. The positions are tech experts and customer IT support employees. The programme aims to tackle the Digital Gender Divide and the Tech Glass Ceiling for Women in Greece. The NGO Praxis has been implementing work promotion programmes on all vulnerable groups ([www.employment4inclusion.eu](http://www.employment4inclusion.eu)). The NGO Women on Top since 2015 trains women in skills camps and dedicated seminars focusing on interpersonal, leadership, digital, entrepreneurial, and employability skills that women are most likely to need in their careers. Workshops are provided free of charge or at a low cost to female beneficiaries, with additional childcare services for those who have children and do not have other childcare arrangements. Since 2020 Skills Camps are implemented online, due to COVID pandemic, thus engaging and empowering more women from rural and remote parts of the country. WoT also offers mentoring opportunities and moral and practical support to women in case of unemployment, gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, lack of work/life balance, change of professional orientation and many other issues.

employment. The 2021–2025 Action Plan takes also into account the needs of marginalized groups of women in employment issues.

### Paragraph 17

206. The Ministry of Health over the last five years has implemented the following actions which are specifically targeted to improve the sexual, reproductive and general health of women: In the context of the National Public Health Strategy, enacted by Law 4675/2020, at the level of secondary prevention, the National Screening Programme includes preventive actions such as diagnostic tests for early detection of cervical cancer and breast cancer. Vaccination against the human papillomavirus is provided through the National Vaccination Programme for children and adolescents, without any payments by patients. For the early detection of cervical cancer, annual PAP tests for all women and tests for the detection of high risk types of HPV-DNA, every five years from the age of twenty one until the age of sixty years, are provided. Diagnostic tests for women are also organised with the cooperation of NGOs. Law 5043/2023 (Art. 96) extends the right to one day's paid leave for gynaecological check-up to women working at the private sector.

207. On actions and programmes about sexual education see para 14.

208. The rate of caesarean sections performed in Greek public and private hospitals remains high as seen in the following table:

<i>Maternity hospital</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>2021</i>	<i>2022</i>	<i>Total</i>
Public	18 126	17 544	9 676	45 346
Private	24 353	27 466	24 490	76 309
<b>Total</b>	<b>42 479</b>	<b>45 010</b>	<b>34 166</b>	<b>121 655</b>

*Source:* Ministry of Health

209. In 2021, 52.7 per cent of total deliveries in Greece were via caesarean, which means that about 5 out of 10 women give birth by caesarean. The Greek Ministry of Health is aware of the situation and is trying to amend it.

210. Law 4486/2017 on the reform of Primary Health Care provides for measures in favour of gynaecological and obstetric health and upgrades the role of midwives through the creation of a network of midwives.

211. The Hellenic Society of Obstetrics and Gynaecology regularly issues clinical guidelines on obstetrics and gynaecological health issues for the continuous information of doctors and professionals. Directive no. 44 (March 2021) includes recommendations on performance of vaginal birth after a caesarean section. More specifically, evidence-based time criteria for vaginal delivery are suggested to reduce the incidence of first caesarean section, and recommendations for pre-operative preparation are provided in detail, operative times and perioperative management of pregnant women. In addition, the above-mentioned Society undertakes the organization of seminars and conferences for the training of doctors and the exchange of good practices in matters of obstetrics and gynaecology.

212. Awareness-raising campaigns for the promotion of natural birth have also been conducted by NGOs.

## Paragraph 18

213. The Penal Code introduces important amendments to the procedure for terminating pregnancy as well as regarding physical damage of the foetus or newborn and women in labour. The Law elongates the point of pregnancy termination for severe diseases of the foetus or the pregnant woman after the 24th week of pregnancy. The extension of the legal pregnancy interruption limit for serious diseases of the foetus or of the pregnant woman beyond the 24th week of pregnancy is a positive development, since a small but significant rate of foetal abnormalities or complications of pregnancy may appear in the third trimester of pregnancy. Therefore, the new provision strengthens the human right of the pregnant woman to choose whether to terminate the pregnancy, which can be done safely in an organized nursing institution. On number of abortions:

<i>Maternity hospital</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>2021</i>	<i>2022</i>	<i>Total</i>
Public	4 223	3 822	2 425	10 480
Private	11 923	12 380	11 829	36 132
<b>Total</b>	<b>16 156</b>	<b>16 202</b>	<b>14 254</b>	<b>46 612</b>

*Source:* Ministry of Health

214. Improving perinatal care is included in the Ministry of Health’s strategic objectives for 2021–2023. To ensure children’s care and women’s autonomy, the Ministry has issued decisions regarding: a) the establishment of written consent of the mother for the provision of breast milk to newborns in hospitals and maternity hospitals and b) the terms and conditions of recognition, development procedures, criteria, indicators and evaluation process, and supervision of “Baby Friendly Hospitals”. It has also issued a circular informing of the nutrition recommendations concerning women during their reproductive years, pregnancy, lactation and menopause. Moreover, in recent years, a number of joint ministerial decisions, circulars, information and educational material have been issued with the aim of increasing breastfeeding rates and improving the nutrition diet offered to infants and toddlers in public and private nurseries and kindergartens. Actions to support pregnant women have also been conducted by NGOs.

215. Law 4554/2018 sets out a process for the identification of mothers without proof of identity and child registration, permitting the admission of the parturient woman to the hospital without identification documents, solely on the basis of the data she declares.

## Paragraph 19

216. In recent years, Greece has been experiencing a severe economic and migration/refugee crisis, followed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated some negative effects on women. To provide assistance to women disproportionately affected by the crises, the Gender Equality Action Plans since 2016 included measures to alleviate these effects. Additionally due consideration was given to women belonging to vulnerable social groups facing multiple discrimination (single parents, refugee and asylum-seeking women, older women, women with disabilities, Roma women, etc).

217. Both Gender Equality Action Plans since 2016 included measures to support women entrepreneurs, aiming at enhancing women’s economic empowerment.

218. In Greece, microcredits were first introduced in 2014 by the “Action Finance Initiative”, a Civil-law Non-Profit Company aiming at funding entrepreneurs who do not have access to credit from mainstream banks. It offers access to micro-loans up to €12,500 with the help of banking partners. In the period 2014–2021, 543 micro-loans were dispersed, female employability (jobs created occupied by women) is around 55 per cent and 42 per cent of their clients are women (female entrepreneurship).

219. Greek leading banks, under a European Investment Bank project, have provided approximately 550 million Euros worth of loans for new business investment, including dedicated financing for companies across the country that actively support youth employment and the empowerment of women in the workplace. This financing initiative represents the first dedicated support action taken by the European Investment Bank for Greece for companies that support female entrepreneurship and female corporate leadership and contribute to the greater professional empowerment of women.

220. Law 4701/2020 on “Microcredit provision” introduces a new regulated non-banking entity, the Microcredit Institutions and provides the option of raising capital up to the total amount of €25,000. Eligible borrowers can be micro-sized entities and individuals intending to establish a micro-sized entity, running a private business activity or being part of a socially vulnerable group.

221. The Institute of the Hellenic Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen, and Merchants, having integrated the gender perspective in all its actions and initiatives, continues to produce scientific work on issues of gender equality and combating discrimination (production of relevant scientific texts on issues such as tackling the gender pay gap, the digital gap as a factor of gender inequality, work-life balance and the case of women entrepreneurs and self-employed, etc.), which are published on its website. It also participates in the implementation of similar projects through the signing of Cooperation Memoranda with relevant stakeholders, like the General Secretariat in the framework of the work-life balance - SHARE project.

222. Initiatives on capacity building for women entrepreneurs are also undertaken by NGOs.<sup>16</sup>

223. Elderly women have been a target-category in the Gender Equality Action Plans since 2016. In Greece, during the period 2013–2016, the gender impact of the economic crisis urgently necessitated the inclusion of gender equality in a more concrete and direct manner in all government political and economic plans in order to overturn the negative effects of the crisis, but also to open up new development prospects for the whole of society while reducing poverty. On levels of poverty affecting women for 2020 there is no significant difference between working women and men (women 33.1 per cent-men 30.7 per cent), whereas for older people (65+) the difference is noteworthy (women 22.9 per cent-men 16.3 per cent). On the rates of people at risk of poverty from 2016 to 2021, see table 41.

224. Indicative of the General Secretariat’s focus on vulnerable women is the fact that in 2017, a special organizational unit was established in the General Secretariat, namely the Department for Social Protection and Combating of Multiple

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<sup>16</sup> The NGO Mexoxo has created financial, career and sponsorship opportunities for 3,000 Greek women entrepreneurs that receive an amount of 700,000 Euros either in direct monetary support or growth occasions. In Fall 2020, the NGO Women On Top ran its first Financial Literacy capacity building initiative, by creating a Financial Literacy guide for trainers and one for trainees and implementing the corresponding workshops. As a result, 16 women were trained in delivering financial literacy workshops and another 40 women participated in workshops covering personal budgeting, debt and loans, investments, and retirement planning.



Discriminations. The Department is responsible, inter alia, for the elaboration and promotion of measures to tackle gender discrimination faced by persons belonging to vulnerable social groups (migrant women, refugee women, single-parent families, Roma women, older women etc.) with a view to their social inclusion and social cohesion.

## **Paragraph 20**

225. In 2016, women accounted for 34.8 per cent of farm/livestock holders showing a slight upward trend.<sup>17</sup> In the same period, they appear to own 66.3 per cent of all registered land.

226. The same year, the General Secretariat and Ministry of Rural Development & Food signed a Protocol of Cooperation, aiming at the improvement of the situation of women in rural areas. As a result, the General Secretariat has been registered at the National Rural Network and submitted concrete proposals in favour of rural women incorporated in the adopted Law on agricultural cooperatives. Publicity actions and awareness-raising campaign on the situation of rural women were organized. A study of Greek farmer women published in 2017 has identified dominant gender perceptions related to women farmers, recorded the obstacles and difficulties they face and established proposals for increasing women's participation in the rural economy.

227. Law 4763/2020 on women's farming cooperatives offers the possibility to develop positive actions for them (e.g. information, networking, promotion and exchange of know-how and good practices).

228. On issue 20b see reply to para. 23.

## **Paragraph 21**

229. Law 4443/2016 introduces the concept of "multiple discrimination" in the Greek legislative framework. The Gender Equality Action Plan 2016–2020 dedicated its first axis on "Social Inclusion and Equal Treatment of Women facing Multiple Discrimination". In 2017, the "Department for Social Protection and Combating of Multiple Discriminations" was established within the General Secretariat. In this context, the target group of the Network structures for women victims of violence has been expanded to further include women facing multiple discriminations, providing them with psychosocial support, job Counselling and legal Counselling.

230. The empowerment of vulnerable social groups and their participation in the social, economic, political and cultural life are among the primary objectives of the National Action Plan against Racism and Intolerance 2020–2023, while beneficiaries of International Protection, migrants, Roma, people with disabilities and/or chronic diseases constitute target-groups for dedicated support actions across its Priority Axes. In January 2022 the National Strategy for Inclusion has also been adopted by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, including actions on women and persons with disabilities.

## **Paragraph 21 (a)**

231. Under Law 4939/2022 on international and temporary protection (replacing Law 4636/2019), actions undertaken by the staff of Reception Centres regarding the

<sup>17</sup> Hellenic Statistical Authority data.

handling of cases of refugee and asylum-seeking persons, the gender factor is taken into consideration.

232. On the protection of migrant women who are at risk of becoming victims of violence see answer to para 9.

233. The Hellenic Police Headquarters strictly adheres to the Principle of Non-Refoulement; relevant orders and instructions have been given to all competent Services of the Hellenic Police for the respect of human rights and the dignity of all migrants entering Greece. The Ministry of Citizen Protection declares that no foreign national applying for International Protection is repatriated until her/his individual application has been considered. In order to fully ensure the Principle of Non-Refoulement, expert at the Ombudsman cooperate with the Hellenic Police to carry out external inspections of planned readmission's operations under the EU-Turkey Statement of March 2016. In particular, they visit pre-removal detention facilities, supervise service files, talk to returning foreign nationals and oversee the entire process, with a view to ensure their rights until they are handed back to the Turkish authorities.

234. On measures regarding the gender-related dimension of refugee status, Law 4939/2022 provides for the general framework. It stipulates that asylum seeking women shall be housed separately from men, unless the latter are family members. During pregnancy and for three months after childbirth, women accommodated in appropriate facilities.

235. The Reception and Identification Service cooperates closely with the Hellenic Police, at both central and regional levels, to prevent the detention of women asylum seekers. Accommodation is provided to women within the accommodation facilities and structures of the Service, when non-custodial measures can be applied, while at the same time the situation of vulnerable female residents, who do not have the necessary legal documentation but have been issued a decision on suspension of removal, is being monitored.

236. Within Reception Centres, special care is given to the protection and support of unaccompanied girls, as well as women heading their single-parent families or women with any type of vulnerability. Single women stay in separate and protected areas, within the relevant Centres/Structures. All structures provide separate protected areas for women recreation or support activities (women safe spaces and mother - baby areas). Special care is also given during the transfer of women (especially vulnerable ones and those who have suffered gender-based violence) from the islands to appropriate structures in the mainland in order to provide them with appropriate hosting conditions.

237. Pregnant women, single-parent families with minor children, victims of human trafficking, persons who have been subjected to torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence, such as victims of genital mutilation, are among those categorized as "vulnerable" that receive access to special protection. The Reception and Identification Service has appointed focal points dealing with vulnerabilities, who monitor cases of women in need of special care due to vulnerability characteristics.

238. When applying for International Protection, gender is taken into account throughout the procedure (e.g. during medical examinations, referral to accommodation, conducting the interview). The interview is personal and, where a woman is involved, it is conducted by a female operator, in the presence of a female interpreter, if requested. In cases of persecution on the basis of gender, sexual orientation or gender identity and/or age, a separate decision shall be issued for the

person concerned – and not a common one for all members of a family – in order to prevent the disclosure of the particular situation of the applicant.

239. The staff of the Reception and Identification Centres and Temporary Reception Structures receives dedicated training on issues of gender equality and GBV and cooperates with various stakeholders at local level to promote actions to the benefit of women. Some examples include: information to third-country nationals about their rights, including on GBV issues, medical examination and psychosocial support by specialized staff, set up of empowerment groups, women's activity groups and awareness-raising activities on issues related to gender equality, available to all residents of the facilities.

240. Adult women can participate in training and integration programmes to facilitate their access to the labour market, as well as in key skills programmes organized within the Accommodation Structures and Reception Centres. Such examples are the initiatives implemented in the Structures of Volos and Koutsochero and the Structure of Pyrgos, hosting mainly single-parent families.

241. Emergency Support to the Integration and Accommodation-ESTIA programme consisted of accommodation and cash assistance. The accommodation scheme offered housing in urban areas, comprehensive support tailored to people's specific needs, while promoting the communication with the local communities. 73,000 asylum seekers benefited from the accommodation scheme, half of them being women. In 2020, ESTIA's accommodation component was transferred to the Ministry of Migration and Asylum and so did the cash assistance scheme.

242. The Hellenic Integration Support for Beneficiaries of International Protection-HELIOS project has been implemented in collaboration with Greek authorities and civil society organizations since 2019 to enhance the integration of beneficiaries of International Protection in Greece. Focusing on five areas of integration, it includes integration courses, accommodation support, employability support, integration monitoring and sensitization of local communities. From July 2019–July 2020, 12,519 beneficiaries were enrolled in the HELIOS project, the women-to-men ratio being 45 per cent to 55 per cent.

243. Civil society organizations have an important role in managing the needs of asylum seekers/beneficiaries of International Protection. Their actions extend to all sectors (housing, basic needs, health, education, psychosocial support, legal support, employment).

244. Law 4939/2022 provides for the right and the obligation of both minors and adults to be part of the primary and secondary compulsory education. Reception School Annexes for Education of refugees have been established at public primary and secondary schools in districts where Reception and Accommodation Facilities exist. The curriculum includes Greek language courses, mathematics, foreign language courses, computer science, and physical education as well as art classes, including support by psychologists. Early childhood education is provided within the Accommodation Centres in specialized facilities. Refugee children living in residence programmes within urban settings have been attending regular morning classes of local schools, with the support of reception classes, operating in "Educational Priority Zones".

245. According to Law 4638/2016, migrants, applicants and beneficiaries of International Protection have the right of free access to public healthcare facilities and are entitled to nursing and medical care. Asylum seekers, in particular, receive a temporary number of insurance and health care so that they can enjoy the aforementioned provisions.

**Paragraph 21 (b)**

246. The General Secretariat for Social Integration of Roma of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (established by Law 4430/2016) was responsible to formulate guidelines for each policy area related to social integration of Roma. In 2019, its responsibilities were transferred to the General Secretariat for Social Solidarity and the Fight against Poverty of the same Ministry.

247. This Secretariat, as the EU National Contact Point for Roma issues, implements projects aiming at the integration of Roma people: i) Romplat 2019 project, which started July 2020 for twelve months, included trainings in Athens, Patras and Thessaloniki with the participation of Roma, the staff of Roma Branches of Community Centres and other stakeholders to tackle school dropout, early marriages, empowerment and motivation for equal participation in society. ii) Roma Platform 2020 project, focusing on training of twenty young Roma scientists and funding two of them for an internship at the General Secretariat for six months in the context of monitoring, planning and implementation of the actions of the new National Strategy for Roma Social Inclusion (2021–2027). The programme aims to ensure gender balance with the aim to empower beneficiaries and involve them in public life and decision-making. Finally, enhancing Roma’s political and public participation is the aim of the Project “Roma Political School”, launched by the Association of Roma Women of Dendropotamos in September 2021.

248. The previous National Strategy for Roma Social Inclusion 2011–2020 and Action Plan 2017–2021 included four pillars: housing, health, employment, education (dealing with school drop-out with special reference to Roma girls etc.). The new National Strategy for Roma Social Inclusion for the period 2021–2030 includes measures to combat discrimination, prevent and fight poverty and social exclusion, empower Roma and enhance their participation in social, economic and political life. In this context, emphasis is placed on the areas of housing, employment, education and health, taking into account the gender dimension horizontally.

249. According to recent mapping, 3,916 Roma women live in settlements (57.7 per cent of the total number of Roma are living in settlements). The Action Plan for Roma’s Social Inclusion 2017–2021 included various measures to promote housing and living conditions of Roma: temporary relocation to organized premises, improving living conditions, mainly hygienic infrastructure, environmental conditions and basic infrastructure development (the aforementioned measures have been specified by Law 4483/2017), and rent subsidy.

250. In 2020, the Programme “Social Integration and Inclusion of Roma” was launched with one of its central actions being the relocation of a specific Roma settlement. This pilot housing project included integrated housing, educational, health, employment and empowerment measures. Roma women are included among the beneficiaries. The Project includes small grant schemes for the empowerment of Roma youth and women.

251. Information on gender and human rights issues is part of the training and education of police officers. Under the JUSTROM programme, police officers have been trained on non-discrimination, gender and Roma issues.

**Paragraph 21 (c)**

252. Law 4488/2017 sets the guiding provisions for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and designates the Minister of State as the coordinating body for its implementation. The adoption of the concept of

multiple discrimination by Law 4443/2016 and Law 5023/2023 (point 28) has enhanced the legal framework for the protection of women with disabilities.

253. The National Action Plan for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities published in 2020, includes actions related to the horizontal integration of the disability dimension in all policies. The majority of these actions are intertwined with the Gender Equality Action Plan 2021–2025. To this direction, a Cooperation Protocol was signed in 2021 between the General Secretariat and the National Confederation of Disabled People. A research on the situation of women with disabilities and the needs of parents and guardians of children with disabilities has been conducted in cooperation with the Research Centre for Gender Equality, especially in the light of work-life balance.

254. Regarding education of girls/women with disabilities see para. 14.

255. According to 2018 data, the employment rate of women with disabilities (26.7 per cent) is significantly lower than both the rate of women without disabilities (50 per cent) and men with disabilities (36.1 per cent), while the reverse stands for unemployment rate (35.3 per cent, 26.3 per cent, 30.6 per cent respectively). Converging inequalities are reflected in the share of women with disabilities in the economically active population, which reaches 41.3 per cent of all women with disabilities. To promote their participation in the labour market, women with disabilities can benefit from measures targeted at people with disabilities (e.g. job subsidy schemes, recruitment quotas in the public sector).

256. Of particular importance is the issue of refugees/asylum seekers with disabilities, which is reflected both in the National Action Plan for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Cooperation Protocol mentioned above. The Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs and of Migration and Asylum have signed a Memorandum of Cooperation for the implementation of an employment programme for beneficiaries of International Protection with disabilities, both women and men.

257. The National Confederation of Disabled People has developed and published an Entrepreneurship Guide for Young Persons and Women with Disabilities aiming to provide women with disabilities and young persons with useful information on the existing support and funding tools on entrepreneurship, bodies providing consultation, business programmes, funding sources as well as the basic steps that a person should take to start his/her business. The Guide is available online here in Greek.

258. Women with disabilities, like all persons with disabilities, have the right to lodge a complaint to the Ombudsman, as well as to the Special Committee for the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Psychosocial Disabilities, when they face obstacles in accessing justice.

259. Women with disabilities were among beneficiaries of the General Secretariat's Network of structures for combating violence against women in the 2014–2020 programming period. All structures must be accessible to people with disabilities. During 1.1.2012 to 22.5.2019, 172 disabled women were supported by the Network (6.8 per cent of all beneficiaries). Since 2016, the Gender Equality Action Plans place particular emphasis on combating GBV against women with disabilities by providing information/training actions for women, training of professionals and strengthening of services provided, while the current Action Plan provides for the amendment of the legal and regulatory framework on abortion and sterilisation regarding disabled women who are under judicial representation.

260. Women with disabilities face an increased risk of poverty or social exclusion compared to men with disabilities and women without disabilities. They are therefore

eligible for all measures that combat poverty (e.g. minimum guaranteed income, disability allowances).

261. In 2019, a Joint Ministerial Decision established the organisational framework for the operation of Sheltered Housing for Persons with Disabilities over the age of 18. Sheltered Housing contributes to deinstitutionalisation and promotes independent living for disabled women and men. The “Personal Assistant for people with disabilities” introduced by Law 4837/2021 goes at the same direction and will be piloted for 2.000 persons, with the pilot phase officially beginning in April 2023.

## **Paragraph 22**

262. Greek legislation, as well as any programmes pertaining to the rights of women, are equally applied without exception in Thrace, where the Muslim minority resides. Law 4964/2022 on upgrading and modernising the institution of Muftiates in Thrace provides for a gender-balanced participation in the Mufti’s selection process. Further to this, the three Muftiates –at the cities of Xanthi, Komotini and Didimotihō – according to the aforementioned Law, offer the possibility to Greek Muslims, residents of Thrace, to regulate, on a voluntary basis, their family and inheritance affairs in conformity to certain provisions of the Islamic Law. Therefore, matters of family law concerning members of the Muslim minority in Thrace are ruled by the common civil law provisions and only exceptionally fall within the jurisdiction of the Muftis, provided that both parties agree to submit the case to their jurisdiction.

263. Matters of inheritance are also ruled by the provisions of the Civil Code, unless the testator draws a declaration of last will expressing his wish to submit his succession to the Islamic law.

264. Judgments of the Muftis are not enforceable unless they are declared so by local Civil Courts. The latter shall, first, examine whether the judgment falls within the jurisdiction of the Mufti and, second, whether the provisions applied violate the Greek Constitution, and especially Article 4 (2), as well as the European Convention on Human Rights.

265. The Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights, in its judgment in the case of *Molla Sali v. Greece* delivered on 19 December 2018, found that the compulsory application of the Islamic law to the above mentioned matters constituted a violation of the European Convention of Human Rights and «note[d] with satisfaction that on 15 January 2018 the law abolishing the special regulations imposing recourse to Sharia law for the settlement of family-law cases within the Muslim minority came into force. Recourse to a Mufti in matters of marriage, divorce or inheritance is now only possible with the agreement of those concerned”.

266. Presidential Decree 52/2019<sup>18</sup> sets out all necessary procedural rules on: i) the hearing of the case before the Mufti, ii) the issuing of his judgments, iii) the procedure of lodging an application and serving a notice to the other party, iv) the legal representation, v) operational matters concerning the competent Directorate of the Muftiates. The same Presidential Decree aligns the conditions for the conclusion of a marriage before the Mufti with the general provisions of the Civil Code.

267. Polygamy is not practiced in Greece. According to the Civil Code, the existence of a valid marriage is an impediment to the celebration of another. The Penal Code punishes bigamy as a criminal offence. The relevant civil and criminal law procedures have been amended as to also include the cohabitation partnership introduced in the Greek legislation in 2015. The abovementioned provisions apply to all persons under

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<sup>18</sup> [Presidential Decree 52/2019](#) in English.

Greek jurisdiction, with no exception whatsoever. As to third-country nationals, if the sponsor already lives with one wife in Greece, his family reunification with another wife is not allowed. The family reunification of the sponsor's minor children from another wife is not allowed, except in cases where the sponsor has been given legal custody.

268. The Greek legislation (family and succession law) recognizes three forms of relationships between couples: marriage only between persons of the opposite sex, registered partnership/union between persons of the opposite or same sex and de facto union or cohabitation between persons of opposite or same sex.

269. The provisions concerning the legal effects of marriage apply only to registered partners (Laws 3719/2008 on cohabitation agreements for heterosexual couples and 4356/2015 on cohabitation agreements for both same and opposite sex individuals), whereas de facto union/cohabitation is up-to-date not subject to any particular legal provision.

270. De facto union – a cohabitation outside marriage and registered partnership – is not legally defined as a form of family union in Greece and no rights of succession exist. However, some family rights are extended ex lege to de facto unions as well. The Civil Code provides that issues relating to assets acquired after the beginning of cohabitation are dealt with under the general provisions on unjustified enrichment (Art. 5-6 of the Law 4356/2015).

271. The default matrimonial property regime is the separation of the property, while the spouses may contractually agree on community of property. In the event of death of one spouse, dissolution of property communion takes place prior to inheritance procedure. The provisions governing the matrimonial property regime and successions also apply to registered partnerships. Under the (default) statutory matrimonial property regime, in case of marriage dissolution (through divorce or death) or annulment or separation that lasted more than three years, if there has been an increase in the property of one spouse since the celebration of the marriage, the other spouse is entitled to claim the increase that is due to her/his contribution, provided that she/he has contributed to such an increase.

272. Law 4800/2021 on family law, whose last substantive revision dates back to 1983, reformed the relations between parents and children after the termination of cohabitation, divorce, annulment of marriage or dissolution of the cohabitation agreement. The purpose of the Law is to serve the best interest of the child through the active presence of both parents in its upbringing and the fulfilment of their responsibilities towards the child. The new provisions apply to both new and pending cases on which an irrevocable court decision has not been issued.

273. The most innovative and crucial provisions of the above-mentioned Law refer to:

- The so called “joint and equal custody” following a divorce. The new Article 1510 of the Civil Code stipulates that parental responsibility is exercised “jointly and equally”, although one parent will still be considered as the “resident” parent after the divorce/separation/dissolution of agreement;
- The establishment of alternative procedures for resolving family disputes, like the selection of qualified mediators from a special register of family mediators;
- The introduction of specialized training for judges in cases of family disputes, through the National School of Judges;
- The presumption of communication is introduced, with 1/3 of the total time for parent-child contact spent with the parent with whom the child does not reside;

- The criteria for the bad exercise of parental care: i) Default in the payment of alimony; ii) Non-compliance with court decisions and/or agreements between divorced parents; iii) The rupture of the minor's relationship with one of the parents.

### **Paragraph 23**

274. In Greece, public consultation on draft legislation, including legislation on climate change adaptation, is compulsory by law and is taking place, among various ways and means, through the open government portal "<http://opengov.gr>". Moreover, in 2018 and 2019, stakeholder and public participation was carried out for the elaboration of the Greek National Energy and Climate Plan, the National Strategy for Climate Change Adaptation in 2019, as well as for the thirteen Regional Climate Change Adaptation Plans (currently being finalized), in line with the Aarhus Convention provisions for participatory governance. Any person or organisation (including women's organisations) can freely participate in the above public consultation processes.

275. The same consultation process was followed for the first National Climate Law 4936/2022. The Law establishes a National Observatory for the Adaptation to Climate Change aiming to facilitate the dialogue and exchange of information among public authorities, scientific and academic institutions.

276. However, there is not yet a clear gender perspective in environmental and climate policies design or implementation.

277. On mainstreaming gender in environment, the General Secretariat is conducting, for the first time in collaboration with the OECD, a study on the empowerment of women in the transition to green development/green jobs in Greece. National environmental policies and strategies are reviewed with a gender perspective, as well as national gender equality policies with an environmental lens, highlighting gaps and possible synergies, which could support women's economic empowerment in the green economy and women's leadership in environmental sectors. The outcome report proposes a series of recommendations that support integrating the gender-environment nexus into Greece's national policies. The study was presented in 2022.

### **Paragraph 24**

278. Over the last years, the Greek Government has endorsed a number of National Action Plans and Strategies that mainstream the concept of leaving no one behind in public policies and reform measures, placing emphasis on targeted measures which support the most vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities, women and children and promote human rights, gender equality and social inclusion.

279. The process of coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals is assigned (by Law 4622/2019 on the Executive State) to the highest political level, the Presidency of the Government. In fact, the Presidency of the Government through its competent agency, the General Secretariat of Coordination, is responsible for operating and managing a robust and comprehensive monitoring and review mechanism, which measures progress towards the effective implementation of government work and evaluates strategic public policies, including those that are linked to the Sustainable Development Goals.

280. The General Secretariat of Coordination is in charge of coordinating the government policy cycle and supports the ministries to formulate their annual action plans. The whole monitoring process is performed by using a special Management



Information System, called “MAZI”, in which all the implementation details, including responsible parties, deadlines, deliverables and intermediate milestones, are stored. The evaluation of public policies involves, among others, setting target values for key performance indicators measuring the immediate output or long-term outcome of the policy goals that have been set by the Government programme.

281. So far, Greece has submitted two Voluntary National Reviews on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in 2018 and in 2022. The second one encompasses eight overarching National Priorities linked to the Sustainable Development Goals. The eight National Priorities deal with all 17 Goals. Gender equality and the elimination of discrimination against women is mainstreamed in all National Priorities. The Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals established within the Presidency of the Government cooperated closely with the Hellenic Statistical Authority which has developed a set of national indicators on the Goals, aimed at monitoring the quantitative progress made towards the achievement of the 17 Goals at national level. These national indicators are subject to regular revisions, based on the available official statistics and data.

282. The gender perspective in the implementation of the Goals is included in the actions of most governmental policies and is ensured by the horizontal implementation of the Gender Equality Action Plan 2021–2025. The Plan includes a total of 67 actions. For the first time, targeted proposals with specific actions from seventeen ministries are integrated, while a structured process for monitoring its implementation at the central, local and regional level is foreseen by adopting a set of measurable indicators. In order to better coordinate its monitoring, contact points have been designated by the Ministries, so that actions can be implemented jointly and with the aim of the horizontal implementation of the principle of gender equality in public policies. The General Secretariat has regular meetings with these contact points in an effort to mainstream gender into other ministries’ policies.

283. In addition, pursuant to Law 4604/2019, the National Council for Gender Equality (para. 6) in collaboration with the General Secretariat of Coordination monitors the progress of the implementation of the actions of the Gender Equality Action Plan, ensuring the dimension of gender equality in all ministries’ policies.

## **Paragraph 25**

284. The Greek Innovation Lab for Women #GIL4W was inaugurated in February 2022 as an initiative of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The Lab aims to contribute to ending the digital divide and building an e-inclusive society on the basis of the United Nations model for sustainable development. It is a partnership of Ministries, Agencies, Research Centres, Academic Institutions, Chambers and Private Sector organizations. It intends to become the leading Greek ecosystem to adopt a gender-sensitive approach to innovation and entrepreneurship, integrating female talent to the sustainable, green and digital post-Covid recovery plan for the Greek economy.

285. The “Digital Gender Equality Map” was launched by the General Secretariat as a digital tool to serve as information and communication hub on actions of the Municipal, Regional and University Gender Equality Committees.

286. Since March 2023, the General Secretariat has established a Helpdesk for direct contact with competent regional and municipal authorities on gender equality policies on this level of administration.

287. Since 2020, the General Secretariat is issuing annual reports on violence against women available in English for the year 2020, 2021 and 2022.

288. Despite COVID-related difficulties in 2020, gender equality remained an area of interest for the Greek Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which co-hosted a high-level online seminar on “Advancing Gender Equality: The Role and Situation of Gender Equality Mechanisms in the Context of Covid-19” (October 2020). The seminar provided a high-level forum for participants to discuss the impact of Covid-19 on gender equality and women’s rights.

289. Law 4622/2019 on “The Executive State” includes gender equality among the “principles of good legislation” that guarantee the quality of any legal document that contains general legal rules.

290. Law 4359/2016 ratified the Council of Europe’s European Social Charter (revised), one of the most important European instruments for the protection of gender equality in the field of economic and social rights.

291. Greece was among the countries that supported in political level the EU-wide assistance number 116 016 for victims of violence against women.

292. Training courses are included in the curriculum of the National School of Judges regarding “Racism and Xenophobia” and “Special Penal Law” where emphasis is given on crimes concerning trafficking in human beings. Moreover, the Prosecutor’s Office of the Supreme Court has been organizing and attending training seminars and conferences in the reporting period with a view to capacity-building in matters of trafficking in human beings and gender equality issues.

293. The Ministry of Justice is currently preparing a bill on updating the terminology of the basic codes of the Greek legislation towards a disability-inclusive language.

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