

THE LONG JOURNEY TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY



The Commission for Protection against Discrimination, Bulgaria (CPD) is an independent specialized public body vested with significant powers for prevention, protection against discrimination and promotion of equal treatment. The Commission is a national equality body in terms of EU antidiscrimination law, established and functioning in accordance with UN Paris Principles and ECRI General Policy Recommendation N°2. CPD is an active member of EQUINET, the European Network of Equality Bodies.

CPD functions by virtue of the Protection against Discrimination Act whose Article 4 lists explicitly 19 protected grounds, gender including.

The Commission is a quasi-judicial body ruling legally binding decisions; furthermore, it carries out preventive activities aimed at eliminating the causes and consequences of discrimination - a phenomenon with deep social and psychological roots that vexes even most democratic societies. In its trainings

and information campaigns targeted at wider society and specific groups (police officers, trade unions, educators and youth), CPD tries to denounce gender stereotypes.

Despite progress made, discrimination against women prevails in many areas of life. It takes various forms due to cultural specifics but has similar manifestations.

Each country implements both individual and integrated approaches to ensure gender equality. In Bulgaria, state makes efforts to protect the rights of women and men, promoting equal chances in employment, pay, social security, vocational training and career growth, reconciliation of private and professional life, parental leave entitlement, etc. Although drastic cases of gender discrimination are rare, some outdated stereotypes on gender roles persist.

Gender Discrimination in Bulgaria survey, commissioned by CPD, showed that women have good positions in society,

labour market and career ladder. The share of women who are unpaid domestic workers is among lowest in Europe.

Looking at the results of EP and National Elections in 2009, due to 50/50 Campaign for Democracy, promising results were achieved in Bulgaria - 45% ladies MEPs. However, that trend did not repeat at the national elections: women in the 41st National Assembly are 22%, far below the former term (27%). Minority women represent less than 1% in the Parliament. On the other hand, for the first time in Bulgarian history, we have a lady for Mayor of Sofia and a lady for Chair of the Parliament.

On April 7, 2010 CPD Chairman, Mr. Kemal Eyup, spoke at the EP Public Hearing on Social integration of women belonging to ethnic minorities. He emphasized on access to education, healthcare and employment as crucial conditions for inclusion. Awareness on cultural specifics is important for achievement of EU targets for growth, employment and social cohesion, stressed Mr. Eyup.

CPD has interesting case-law on gender discrimination. Here, several strategic cases will be presented.



In 2010, Ms. Gergina Tzenova, military police officer from Sofia, filed a complaint with the Commission, claiming she has not been promoted to officer because of gender discrimination, despite being on the force since 1992, being an excellent graduate of Bulgaria's Military Academy, having successful scores on the exam at the Ministry of Interior Academy for specialty "Preserving Public Order and Combating Crime" and



graduating with honour. Moreover, she had three Master Degrees in military affairs, law and international relations.

CPD launched investigation and on 3rd December its Five-member panel pronounced final decision No. 275, establishing that sergeant Tzenova was discriminated on grounds of gender and education. The Commission instructed the respondent, the Head of Military Police Regional Office in Sofia, to terminate the discriminatory treatment and to inform CPD within 30 days on the steps taken in compliance to its judgment. A fine has been imposed, too.

In January 2011, Ms. Tzenova was promoted to lieutenant's rank in her department, Control and Security. 24 Chasa, one of the largest-circulation Bulgarian daily newspapers, followed and covered the case in detail, dedicating it an article in its issue dated February 1, 2011.

On complaint of a teacher with impressive experience and skills, CPD established that he was made redundant illegally and ruled his reinstatement in office. The plaintiff emphasized that feminization of teacher's vocation was a major challenge for Bulgarian education. Interesting: the ratio male-female plaintiffs of gender discrimination is 9 to 7.

At present, the Commission investigates a couple of complaints of sexual

harassment of female employees, a bank clerk and a security officer.

A lady member of an orchestra recently lodged a complaint, alleging gender-based harassment and discrimination. Instead of being honed for her talent, she was assigned with chores - carrying the bags with music scores of her male colleagues and taking care of rehearsal hall's hygiene...

CPD Sitting Panel on Gender Discrimination is to rule decisions on those cases soon.

In future, the Commission intends to improve its cooperation with EU and international bodies active in gender policies and to transfer its knowledge on EU and domestic legislation and gender mainstreaming to public bodies and local governments.

Commission for Protection against Discrimination
Sofia, 1125 Bulgaria, 35 Dragan Tzankov Blvd.
Tel. + 359 2 807 3030
Fax + 359 2 870 8448
www.kzd-nondiscrimination.com
Email: kzd@kzd.bg

