



CRoLEV ‘Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Justice Series’

The Gender Pay Gap in the Legal Profession in Cyprus – The Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence for the Rule of Law and European Values CRoLEV at UCLan Cyprus participates to the ‘Women in Law’ Conference, organised by the Cyprus Bar Association with the support of UCLan Cyprus as academic partner, 5th April 2023, Larnaca, Cyprus

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Gender-driven discrimination in the workplace has been a persistent feature of modern societies. While some steps towards addressing inequality have been taken in the past decades, these have often been far too slow, undecisive, and small. As of November 2022, the European Union (EU) reported that women in Cyprus earn, on average, 9% less than men who have the same achievements and work in the same job role. These figures are considerably higher than in the EU’s best performing member state, Luxembourg, where women earn 0.7% less than their male counterparts. In a survey on the perceptions of young lawyers on issues related to their profession, including but not limited to pay gap, conducted under the auspices of the Young Lawyers Committee of the Cyprus Bar Association in 2021, it was found that in the upper salary scales, male lawyers are 4.5 times more likely to receive a monthly salary of 3000 euros or more compared to their female counterparts.¹ That is despite the growing gender equality trend in the broader field of justice in the Republic of Cyprus.² According to latest data from the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) of the Council of Europe, whereas for judges, female representation is still below

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<https://crolev.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Report-The-Gender-Pay-Gap-in-the-Legal-Profession-in-Cyprus-Final.pdf>

² See European Judicial Systems, CEPEJ Evaluation Report, Part 2 Country profiles (CoE, 2022) 37-9 available at <https://rm.coe.int/cepej-fiche-pays-2020-22-e-web/1680a86276> and the CEPEJ Study for the EU Justice Scoreboard for Cyprus available at <https://rm.coe.int/cyprus-2021-data-/1680ab89b2>.

EU median (even if above the 50% threshold), the female representation of prosecutors and of lawyers in Cyprus appears to be both above the EU median and above 50% of women in the professions. Turning to the provision of legal services in the private sector, one more characteristic of lawyers in Cyprus is their high number, well above the EU median, which could contribute to lower salaries, particularly those of women in the profession. Upholding the Rule of Law and European democratic values demands gender equality before the law. Equality of pay for equal or equivalent work is fundamental to achieving gender equality. Indeed, women are essential in the upholding of justice, as the predominant servants of justice. Especially in a world of ‘backsliding’ of the Rule of Law,³ women must play a crucial role at all stages of the administration of justice and contribute actively to the determination of fair and non-biased delimitations to it.

Beyond the lifting of any objective barriers to professional development and career progression, female and male lawyers must also feel that perceptions are evolving. In this respect, the following perceptions have been recorded in the 2023 survey conducted by CRoLEV regarding the gender pay gap in Cyprus. An overwhelming majority of participants highlighted significant differences in pay between women and men who have similar qualifications, experience, and duties, and further indicated that women are offered considerably fewer development and advancement opportunities, which effectively impede them from achieving meaningful positions. When asked about the reasons for the existence of the gender pay gap, survey respondents mentioned the preponderance of patriarchal ideologies and sexism, which lead to inequalities in the distribution of care-provision and domestic duties, and thus result in gender-led hierarchical structures which permeate the legal profession. Participants highlighted the enduring prevalence of stereotypes about women’s ability to perform well outside the family unit, in a professional capacity. It was noted that women are often indiscriminately regarded as necessarily having a desire for having children and, as a result, are expected to request fewer working hours, be absent from work for extended periods of time, and overall dedicate less time and effort to their professional duties. The effects of the gender pay gap are extensive. According to survey respondents, they range from feelings of disappointment, injustice, anger, resentment, and discouragement, to the effective loss of autonomy and powerlessness. Differential pay does not only leave women feeling unmotivated, lacking ambition, and having less drive to perform well; it also has an effect on their ability to be financially independent, diminishes their autonomy, and concomitantly increases their dependency on a spouse or their family. This can have devastating effects, especially given that the gender pay gap increases with age throughout the career and alongside increasing family demands, leaving women at a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion at an older age.

Time for more cultural change in the legal profession in Cyprus has come. It was felt in the past few years, with several awareness raising events being held under the auspices of the Cyprus Bar Association and the local Bar Associations, in collaboration with other stakeholders such as the Ministry of Justice and Public Order of the Republic of Cyprus and the Gender Equality Commissioner of the Republic of Cyprus. The urgent need for the full recognition of the contribution by the growing share of female lawyers to the profession, but

³ See A. Marcou and K. Kalaitzaki, Rule of Law and European Values: Beyond the state-of-the-art analysis Work Package 3—Deliverable 1 (CRoLEV, 2022) <https://crolev.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/CRoLEV-Deliverable-D.3.1-31-August-2022-FINAL.docx.pdf> and S. Lahlé Shaelou et al, ‘CRoLEV Scoping Paper’ (CRoLEV, February 2023) https://crolev.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/CRoLEV_Scoping-Paper_D4.2.pdf

also to justice and society more generally, was highlighted on multiple occasions. Most importantly, the first *Women in Law* Conference was successfully held on the 5th of April 2023 by the Cyprus Bar Association (CBA), with support from UCLan Cyprus as education partner, at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Larnaca. The aim of this Conference was the development of topics on the challenges faced by women in the legal profession in Cyprus. Distinguished and renowned speakers and guests from Cyprus and abroad attended the Conference. Among them was the President of the House of Representatives, Mrs. Annita Dimitriou, the Minister of Justice and Public Order, Mrs. Anna Koukkidis-Prokopiou, the President of the Cyprus Bar Association Dr. Christos Cleridis and Rt Hon Lady Justice Nicola Davies who was the first Welsh woman to become a QC, the first female Presiding Judge of the Circuit in Wales and the first Welsh female Appeal Court judge.

At the Conference the prominent speakers developed key themes pertaining to the difficulties faced by the female lawyer in Cyprus today in the practice of their profession and to issues to be tackled, so that the female lawyer may pursue a career ‘to its fullest’, in a traditionally demanding field such as the legal profession. Issues of human rights for working women, the wage gap that exists in Europe and Cyprus, and issues of technology and innovation in law, were raised, as well as the contribution of women to all these fields and to society more generally. The topic of gender discrimination in the workplace was also discussed and relevant studies were presented that demonstrate and tackle gender discrimination in the workplace, potentially of much relevance to legal practice. Finally, the issue of women in leadership roles was discussed in relation to the multi-layered crises society is called upon to manage today and address, as well as the special characteristics that women can offer through their own leadership and role models.

Among the speakers of the Conference was Prof. Stéphanie Laulhé Shaelou, Professor of European Law and Reform, Head of the School of Law and Director of the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence for the Rule of Law and European Values CRoLEV, at UCLan Cyprus. Prof. Stéphanie Laulhé Shaelou presented the newly conducted research by CRoLEV on the gender pay gap in the legal profession in Cyprus, upon the kind invitation of the President of the Larnaca Bar Association, Mr. Christakis Mouscos, as well as the Cyprus Bar Association. The presentation of the CRoLEV findings which Prof. Laulhé Shaelou highlighted at the Conference can be viewed here (with the kind permission of the CBA): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PfBs-n1MLWU>, the slides here https://crolev.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Prof.SLaulheShaelou_slides.pdf, and the full report of the study here: <https://crolev.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Report-The-Gender-Pay-Gap-in-the-Legal-Profession-in-Cyprus-Final.pdf>

With a dual acknowledgement that one’s gender continues to permeate all aspects of mundane life, including the remuneration one is offered for their work, and that recent publications have shown that one of the largest gender pay gaps perhaps is found in the legal profession (private sector), the CRoLEV survey sought to investigate the effects of the pay gap on legal professionals in the Republic of Cyprus, irrespective of their specific job role or gender. The survey was primarily concerned with grasping the extent to which individuals are affected by the gender pay gap, the specific repercussions of experiencing differential remuneration, and the ways in which such a pay gap can be effectively addressed (and eventually closed) so as to minimise its effects.

UCLan Cyprus and CRoLEV would like to thank all those involved in the design, organisation, delivery, dissemination and actual attendance at the *Women in Law* Conference across multiple organisations and institutions.

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References:

CRoLEV 2023 Survey on the Gender Pay Gap in the Legal Profession in Cyprus, press release, available at <https://crolev.eu/the-gender-pay-gap-in-the-legal-profession-in-cyprus-report-findings/>

CRoLEV 2023 Survey on the Gender Pay Gap in the Legal Profession in Cyprus, final report, available at <https://crolev.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Report-The-Gender-Pay-Gap-in-the-Legal-Profession-in-Cyprus-Final.pdf>

CRoLEV 2023 Survey on the Gender Pay Gap in the Legal Profession in Cyprus, video capture of the presentation (with the kind permission of the Cyprus Bar Association), available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PfBs-n1MLWU&t=326s>

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