



Athens, 4th of July 2022

Press Release
Online conference

“Gender Perspectives of the Pandemic: Women in Research and Governance”

On the 16th of June 2022, the Centre for Gender Studies of Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences organized the **final online conference** of the [ProGender](#) project regarding the two thematic areas “Women and Gender in Science” and “Women in Governance”.

Thomas Kavvoura (Coordinator of ProGender) presented the purpose, the activities, the results of the project and the communication tools used for the better publicity of the actions. The presentation continued with a brief presentation of the [website](#) and the sections it is divided.

Elín Björk Jóhannsdóttir (Project Manager at RIKK Institute for Gender Equality and Difference) referred to the Institute's contribution to the project. The pandemic and the resulting problems were issues that were focused on, such as the #metoo movement. With the participation of Icelandic women speakers in the Online Policy Discussion Panels, the problems faced by women, even in a country with a high equality index, were mentioned.

Sofia Moratti, (Senior Researcher at the Centre for Gender Research of the Norwegian University of Science and Technology “NTNU”), reported on the sections they had directly contributed to, "Women and Gender in Science" and "Gender and communities", through the online lectures, the online policy discussions and the seminar they organised.

In the first session, the ProGender report on the thematic area **Women and Gender in Science** was presented by **Nelly Kambouri** (Senior Researcher at the Centre for Gender Studies, Panteion University). Results of a literature review on the impact of the pandemic on women researchers and scientists through the stereotypes that emerged were presented. Indicatively, women's difficulty in remaining focused and committed to uninterrupted research, especially when they were mothers, the increase in the amount of time women spent on unpaid care work at home, feelings of guilt and sense of failure both professionally and personally, the assignment of care for children and elderly and the housework to women, gender inequalities within academic institutions, the idealization of overwork and the simultaneous silencing of the family and private needs of academics and students, and the representations of women scientists in public discourse on COVID-19. To

overcome these, research institutions should consider the value of invisible academic work that is unrecognized and unrewarded, such as teaching and student support.

The report was discussed by:

- **Ioanna Tzooulaki** (Associate Professor of Epidemiology, Faculty of Medicine, University of Ioannina), who emphasized that at the beginning of the pandemic there was a strong interest in the medical field to study the phenomenon, but stereotypes and practices appeared that slowed down the progress of women scientists compared to men. Women were not given their deserved place in health committees, instead their role and scientific value was devalued through misrepresentations.
- **Sophia Moratti** mentioned the multiple roles of female scientists with young children and the constant barriers women face in supposedly flexible forms of work at home.

The second session included the presentation of the ProGender report on the thematic **Women in Governance** by **Manina Kakepaki** (Principal Researcher at the National Centre for Social Research). She presented comparative tables on the perceptions of political decision-making between men and women in Greece, Iceland and Norway, as well as graphs on women's participation in Governance, in Parliament and in Local Government, compared to the other two countries. She referred to the establishment of the Health Committees Experts that have raised gender inequalities, at European level. Despite the fact that in 24 European countries women constitute 70% of health professionals, only 20% of national health committees were composed of women.

The results of the pandemic on Women in Governance were to transfer part of political debates online, which made women politicians more vulnerable to online harassment, the reliance on informal practices that reinforce male political dominance, to reduce women's visibility and media representations and perpetuate patriarchal perceptions and to reduce women's time and income, elements associated with participation in politics. However, good practices were also observed with the visibility in public discourse of women in governance and the response to the first wave of the pandemic.

The report was discussed by **Irini- Eleni Agathopoulou** (Member of the Greek Parliament at SYRIZA, Member of the Parliamentary Committee on Equality, Youth and Rights), who highlighted that in Greece during the pandemic the presence of women was almost absent. The government party didn't develop policies on the gender dimension of the pandemic, instead stereotypical perceptions of women were observed in the Health Expert Committee and also the media representation of protection against Covid which reinforced already widespread social stereotypes about gender roles. Nevertheless, during the pandemic, discussion of gender-based violence became a priority and also the remote meetings of Members of Parliament proved helpful in some cases, especially for new mothers.

Keynote speaker of the conference was **Brynhildur Heiðar - og Ómarsdóttir** (President of "Fræðagarður", the Labour Union of University Graduates and Senior Advisor at the

Icelandic Women's Rights Association), her speech entitled "Gender Equality in the times of COVID", referred to the economic challenges during the pandemic and the restriction of transport, the policies implemented by the government and the structure of the parliamentary body.

Due to the decrease in tourism, there was a direct impact on the economy between 2020 and 2021. Unemployment of women and the migrant population increased rapidly due to the fact that they were mainly employed in the tourism sector and travel companies. The government already from the beginning of the pandemic (March 2020) implemented a recovery package, which although high in cost, did not respond to the economic requirements of the country, the tourism sector, but to construction and infrastructure. Following the criticism that followed, the government implemented a second recovery package focused on gender and vulnerable groups of the population. However, 85% of the new jobs created in Iceland in 2020 employed men.

She then referred to European countries that during the pandemic approved legislation that didn't correspond to their democratic constitution (Hungary, Poland). In contrast, she referred in two policies implemented by Iceland that helped the transition through the pandemic. The *first* was maternity/paternity leave (of six months each) which helped by increasing men's participation in domestic work while allowing women to return to work more quickly. The *second* was the availability of daycare of children even from the first year of their age. Finally, she referred to the Cabinet. In 2022, women in parliament constitute 48% and 51% in local government. In addition to the Prime Minister, Ministries related to sectors affected by the pandemic are led by women.

The conference concluded with a comprehensive overview of the contribution of reCollective, project partner, presented by **Saskia Fischer** (Researcher, Educator and Media Maker and member of the Research and Education Collective "reCollective"). There was a detailed report on the online workshops, the methods and activities applied for their implementation, the podcasts they implemented and the educational materials in which they summarized the experience of the workshops and related activities that seemed helpful for the understanding of the respective area. At the end, a detailed description of the video workshop on the thematic area "Gender, care and labour", the participants, the difficulties and the process needed to complete it was given. The video is available at the following link <https://vimeo.com/725153402>.

The video of the event is posted on Facebook [@ProGenderproject](#) and on the website <https://progender.panteion.gr/video/>.

ProGender: A Digital Hub on Gender, the Covid-19 Crisis and its Aftermath, is funded by the Bilateral Fund of the European Economic Area (EEA) Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 (EEA Grants 2014-2021).

In the ProGender project the [Centre for Gender Studies of Panteion University](#) cooperates with the [RIKK- Institute for Gender, Equality and Difference of University of Iceland](#) and the [Center for Gender Research of Norwegian University of Science and Technology \(NTNU\)](#), the [AMKE Research and Education Collective \(REC\)](#) and the [Social Cooperative Enterprise KOINSEP STIN PRIZA](#)