

National Review
of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration
and Platform for Action (1995) on Gender Equality
and the Empowerment of Women

REPUBLIC OF BELARUS

Minsk, 2019

Introduction

This report has been prepared by Belarus towards the implementation of the United Nations Economic and Social Council Resolution 2018/8 of June 12, 2018 and for the effective preparation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) region's review report, which will be examined in October 2019 in Geneva, as well as for the subsequent successful preparation of the Beijing+25 Global Review, which will be examined in September 2020 in New York.

The document is presented as answers to a list of questions contained in the Guidance Note for Comprehensive National-Level Reviews jointly developed by UNECE and UN Women.

The Review was prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with the Ministries of Labor and Social Protection, Health, Education, Internal Affairs, Information, Economy, Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, National Statistical Committee, and other partners whose remit includes gender equality and elimination of discrimination against women.

The National Report was endorsed at a meeting of the National Council on Gender Policy under the Government.

Belarus understands that when the answers to the following questions, where specific priorities in promoting gender equality should be selected, do not indicate other priorities, it means they are inapplicable to Belarus (for example, indigenous women) or are provided for under applicable law and policies and do not require any additional measures (for example, the reinforcement of the right to land).

1. What have been the most important achievements, challenges and setbacks in progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women over the past five years?

The year 2015 was marked by a landmark event of global importance when the United Nations General Assembly endorsed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (hereafter, the "2030 Agenda"). The purpose of its fifth sustainable development goal is to promote gender equality and empower women. Belarus expressed its commitment to the 2030 Agenda and established the post of National Coordinator and the Council for Sustainable Development to ensure its implementation. Since then, both the National Council on Gender Policy under the Government¹ and the Council for Sustainable Development have been focusing on the achievement of SDG 5. The activities of these two Councils have been coordinated and complementary.

In 2017, Belarus joined the Group of Friends for Gender Parity², which was founded at the United Nations to promote gender parity and women's leadership.

The efforts Belarus is taking make it possible to make progress towards addressing the issues of equal rights and opportunities within the country and at international level. Belarus is ranked 26th in the Gender Gap Index³ and 31st in the Gender Inequality Index⁴. At the same time,

¹ The Council coordinates the design and implementation of gender policies. The Council is led by the Minister of Labor and Social Protection. It includes representatives of the State authorities and public associations as equal members. The implementation of the 2020 National Action Plan for Gender Equality aimed at achieving the fifth sustainable development goal is under way.

² <https://www.universal-rights.org/nyc/blog-nyc/the-gender-parity-strategy-and-un-reforms/>

³ Gender Gap Report 2017, World Economic Forum

⁴ Human Development Report 2017

a number of pressing challenges remain to be tackled, including ensuring gender parity in family relations, reducing the life expectancy gap between men and women, and others.

Major achievements over the past five years include:

1) Development of an institutional mechanism to ensure gender equality

The current National Plan for Gender Equality, in contrast to the previous ones, aims to integrate a gender perspective into the process of designing and implementing public policies in all fields by developing such mechanisms as gender-based legislation review, gender sensitivity in the development of national programs and strategies, incorporating anti-discrimination provisions into legislation, etc. For each activity of the Plan, a result or indicator has been set in consonance with the SDG 5 objectives.

2) Economic empowerment of women and their participation at decision-making level

Positive developments have taken place in promoting greater economic autonomy for women and creating conditions for them to achieve their potential in the socio-economic sector. For example, the 2020 State Program for the Development of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Belarus already outlines women's entrepreneurship support measures. The allocation of grants for starting their own business became an effective tool for promoting women's business development. An increasing number of unemployed women are receiving subsidies for setting up their own business (34.8% in 2009, 44.3% in 2018).

The registered unemployment rate among women is lower than among men. In 2018, men accounted for 63.2% of all unemployed, while women's share was 36.8%. Current female unemployment amounts to 3.6% (male 5.9%) according to International Labor Organization criteria, compared to 4.2% (male 7.5%) in 2016.

The Act on the Employment of the Population was amended in 2016. Women looking after children under the age of 3 have been provided with the opportunity to receive free vocational training, retraining and development, and to receive grants at the same time. Concurrently, it is proposed that a chapter on remote employment be added to the Labor Code, which would enable the development of flexible career pathways for women with children.

The list of strenuous jobs and those in harmful and/or hazardous conditions which are off limits to women has been reduced to 181. Today, it is not the name of a profession or post that defines working conditions but the technological process, equipment, and labor organization in a particular workplace.

In view of the gradual increase in the retirement age of women from 55 to 58 in 2022, older women are no longer limited in their career development opportunities and professional fulfillment. The 2030 National Active Longevity Strategy⁵, which is being developed in Belarus, will contain measures to support elderly women.

Women's participation in decision-making is increasing. The proportion of female deputies in parliament is 32.5% of the total number⁶, compared to 29.7%. five years ago. There are even more women in the local councils of deputies accounting for 48.2% of the total number. Female public officials at all levels of leadership stand at 67.4%, including 56.2% in organization manager and deputy manager positions.

⁵ Working title subject to change

⁶ According to the National Statistical Committee of Belarus (Belstat)

The environment that has been created enables women to reach senior posts in business. For example, a woman from Belarus⁷ was included on the Forbes Europe's Top 50 Women in Tech list in 2018.

3) Development of international cooperation for addressing gender equality issues

Belarus structures and implements its domestic gender policies based on the analysis of international trends, expertise and best practice. Dialog with international organizations is a useful tool in the effort to meet international commitments. Their recommendations are incorporated into the implementation of the National Action Plan for Gender Equality.

In 2016, Belarus submitted its eighth periodic report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women⁸. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women noted the progress the country had achieved in this field.

At the 2017 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, Belarus submitted its voluntary national report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda⁹ covering the situation concerning gender equality, among other issues.

Belarus has been actively collaborating with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). From 2015 to 2018, the country carried out joint projects to create mentoring networks to promote women's economic empowerment and to foster female leadership and women's participation in political and social life. The International Conference on Gender Equality in Social Life was held jointly with OSCE in 2015, as were international forums of female leaders in 2016 and 2018.

In March 2019, Minsk hosted the second meeting of the delegation of the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (ODIHR OSCE) with Belarusian women parliamentarians to address the issue of gender-sensitive legislation. The third meeting is scheduled for September 2019.

A sociological survey on the subject of family relations and birth rate in the evolving socio-economic living conditions of the people of Belarus, conducted according to the Generations and Gender international methodology, was a significant outcome of collaborative work with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in 2018. The results of this survey have been actively used in the implementation of national gender policies.

4) Improvement in public policy for preventing violence against women

In 2014, amendments were made to the Act "On the Basic Principles of Crime Prevention Activities" that comprise a number of progressive measures ensuring the protection of victims of violence, including such preventive measures as a protection order and the perpetrator's obligation to temporarily leave the place of residence occupied jointly with the victim of violence. A protection order has become one of the most effective measures in combating violence against women.

The pressing challenges of gender policy in Belarus include the following:

1) Developing mechanisms for gender equality: introducing gender budgeting and the gender evaluation of laws¹⁰

2) Facilitating gender parity in family relations, reducing the dual employment of women for the benefit of their personal capacity building

⁷ <https://www.belta.by/society/view/beloruska-voshla-v-spisok-forbes-uspeshnyh-predprimatelnic-iz-evropy-320976-2018>

⁸ http://www.mintrud.gov.by/ru/8_doklad

⁹ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/16357Belarus.pdf>

¹⁰ In Belarus, gender evaluation is periodically carried out in the context of mandatory due diligence. Conducting it independently is not always possible, however, it will be part of mandatory due diligence.

3) Reducing the gender gap in the life expectancy of men and women

4) Developing gender-responsive education and awareness

5) Reducing the pay gap between men and women

6) Eliminating violence against women and girls

2. Which of the following have been the top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in your country over the past five years through laws, policies, and/or programs?

Access to health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health care, as well as reproductive rights

Pregnant women are guaranteed medical observation at public healthcare facilities and in-patient pre- and post-natal medical assistance under the Health Care Act of Belarus. 100% of women have access to pre- and post-natal medical care. 100% of women giving birth are attended by qualified medical staff and almost all pregnant women (99.1%) give birth in a healthcare facility.

Availability of all types of medical care for women and girls regardless of their place of residence is the basic condition of gender equality.

Eliminating violence against women and girls

In Belarus, comprehensive 24-hour assistance is available to victims of domestic violence. A framework for cooperation has been established between all the institutions (healthcare, education, internal affairs, social care authorities and public associations). There is a growing network of “crisis” rooms providing temporary shelter to women and girls affected by domestic violence. Their number has almost doubled from 74 in 2014 to 132 in 2018.

Since 2018, victims have had an opportunity to check into a “crisis” room at the place of application (irrespective of their place of registration/place of residence) and without proof of identity. This makes it possible to help a greater number of women. Thus, while 175 people stayed in these rooms in 2014, there were 679 in 2018, including 457 victims of domestic violence (274 women, 49 men and 134 children).

Under Belarus law, 139 social and educational centers provide social assistance to children between the ages of 3 and 18 who are victims of violence (most of them girls). 127 of such centers have a children’s social shelter.

The centers provide free 24-hour rehabilitation to children, offering medical, psychological and legal assistance. Rehabilitation is also available to children between the ages of 3 and 15 who are victims of human trafficking . Children under 3 undergo rehabilitation in infant care centers. Children remain in social shelters until they return to their families or until their future placement is decided.

Collaboration between the Government, public associations and UNFPA resulted in establishing a national domestic violence hotline in 2012. This free service provides information, social, psychological and legal assistance to adult citizens on a daily basis. The hot line is administered by the Gender Perspectives public association. It received more than 12,000 calls from 2012 to 2019. 94% of victims of violence are women.

Women’s entrepreneurship and women’s enterprises

In 2018, the Government adopted the 2030 Strategy for the Development of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise. It contains measures to promote women's economic empowerment. The operational framework for the development of women’s entrepreneurship comprises business fundamentals training for unemployed women, methodological support and grants for setting up their own business. Over the past five years, 3,522 unemployed women have received

financial assistance from the State Extrabudgetary Fund for the Social Protection of the Population to start their own business. Of those who received a subsidy, 1,953 women have been trained in business fundamentals.

During the period from 2014 to 2018, 3,021 unemployed women started a business with the assistance of labor, employment, and social care agencies, including 481 in crafts, 50 in private unitary enterprises, 20 in agro-and-ecotourism and 10 in smallholdings.

Unpaid care and domestic work / work-family conciliation (e.g. paid maternity or parental leave, care services)

In Belarus, both parents of children under the age of 3 enjoy equal rights to parental leave and receive state benefits. The father is eligible for parental leave when the mother returns to work, continues full-time education to obtain qualifications or carries out the activities of an individual entrepreneur, attorney, notary public or craftsperson. In order to promote gender parity, in 2018 a bill was approved in the first reading, introducing the following new concepts into the Labor Code:

- short-term paternity leave after childbirth;
- the right of fathers (stepfathers) raising a disabled child under 18 to opt for leave in summer;
- the term “single mother” has been replaced with the term “single parent”.

Gender-responsive social care (e.g. universal health insurance, remittances, pensions)

In order to ensure a guaranteed source of livelihood in case of disability, Belarus offers occupational (insurance) pension (contributory) and social pension (non-contributory) programs. Elderly women are, in fact, fully covered by the occupational pension program. In 2017, the proportion of women above working age who receive this type of pension stood at 96.7% of the total number of women in this age group, whereas men accounted for 89.4%. There is virtually no gender gap in the level of pension provision in Belarus. The ratio of women’s average pension to men’s was 98.9% in late 2017.

3. Over the past five years, have you taken specific measures to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination?

Women living with HIV

In 2016, the United Nations certified Belarus to have eliminated mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis, and this certification is confirmed each year. The collaborative efforts of the Government and public associations of Belarus are focused on combating HIV/AIDS as part of the State Program “People’s Health and Demographic Safety” for the period until 2020. It contains a subprogram for HIV control and prevention. While tackling medical challenges, the most important element of the collaborative work is to establish in the public consciousness a sense of responsibility with regard to HIV/AIDS and eliminate the stigma and discrimination of people living with HIV, including women. The Country Coordinating Committee has been successfully collaborating with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. This collegiate body includes representatives of government authorities and international organizations, as well as people living with HIV and other vulnerable groups, as equal members (Committee members include 17 women and 15 men).

Women with disabilities

In 2016, Belarus ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and began the implementation of its provisions on the basis of the National Action Plan for 2025.

The Inter-agency Council for the Problems of the Disabled¹¹, the function of which is to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities, has been operating since 2009. It is composed of the heads of state agencies and representatives of public associations for the disabled.

The Government is currently reviewing a bill on the rights of the disabled and their social integration. This document introduces new terms and concepts that do not exist in national law, such as discrimination on the basis of disability, reasonable adjustment, universal design, etc. The bill places the emphasis not on the medical component but on the social aspect – the obstacles that persons with disabilities face in conducting their lives on an equal basis with other people. It declares their full rights and freedoms and bans discrimination on the basis of disability.

The Ministry of Education has adopted a number of documents aimed at promoting the rights of the disabled with regard to raising children and fulfilling their parental responsibilities. The Ministry of Transport and Communications has drafted amendments to legislation pertaining to road transport rules. The Ministry of Health has allowed persons with disabilities to drive category B motor vehicles, regardless of employment. This means that the hearing impaired and deaf, as well as a significant number of persons with locomotor disability may work as drivers. The procedure for organizing medical rehabilitation of children with disabilities has been improved. The quality requirements for social services provided to the disabled and their families have been revised.

As of 2018, families in which either both parents or a single parent are disabled are granted the right to nanny services (at socially low rates) for up to 20 hours per week in order to assist them with childcare. In practice, this disabled parent, most commonly a single parent, is a woman.

In Belarus, it is very common to reserve jobs for the employment of vulnerable citizens, primarily single mothers and mothers of large families with underage and disabled children. Thus, 5,199 unemployed individuals from this group were employed in 2018 in reserved jobs on referral from the labor, employment, and social care authorities.

Elderly women

Given the high mortality rate among men in Belarus, the number of women aged 65 and older is twice the number of elderly men¹²: there are 2070 women for every 1,000 men in this age group. The majority of elderly women, especially in rural areas, are widowed and living alone.

An occupational or a welfare pension remains a guaranteed source of livelihood for elderly women. Disabled pensioners and those who have reached the age of 80 receive an additional care allowance on top of their occupational pensions. Statistics show that these allowances are mostly received by elderly women: 61% of the former category and 77% of the latter.

Home-based social services are in high demand among the elderly, especially those in rural areas. Elderly persons, mostly with disabilities, are assisted with preparing food and eating, house cleaning grocery and medication shopping, hygiene, etc. These services are provided to low-income citizens free of charge.

In Belarus, there are 72 nursing homes for the elderly and persons with disabilities. In 2018, the innovative concept of "substitute families" was introduced – these are families that

¹¹ Under Government Resolution No. 129 of February 2, 2009, pursuant to Article 10 of the Law on the Prevention of Disability and Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities

¹² In 2018, women's life expectancy was 79.4 years, while men's was 69.2.

adopt elderly people. People over 50 whose adult children live separately provide primary care for the elderly.

Being a progressively aging country¹³, Belarus is developing a national active longevity strategy. This is a long-term planning instrument for the country's socio-economic transformation with regard to the needs and capabilities of an aging society.

4. Has the increasing number of humanitarian crises – caused by conflict, extreme weather, or other events – affected the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in your country?

Not applicable.

5. Which of the following does your country consider to be the top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in your country for the coming five years through laws, policies, and/or programs?

Quality education, vocational training and life-long learning

Vocational training for the unemployed and other categories of citizens complements the existing vocational education system and facilitates the implementation of public employment policies aimed at developing human resources and improving the quality of workforce. Vocational training for the unemployed, including women, is provided in over 100 professions that are in demand on the labor market, including the possibility of future self-employment. About 20% of these professions are integrated, which means they combine two or several professions. This contributes to enhancing the competitive advantage of the unemployed on the labor market.

In addition to the unemployed, women looking after a child under 3 (excluding citizens on maternity leave until the child reaches the age of 3) may also receive training, under the law on the employment of the population. Their education is provided in accordance with the procedure and under the conditions established for the unemployed (see Answer 1). Scholarships and financial assistance are available to these women during their training. The training period counts towards their length of service.

Gender-responsive social care (e.g. universal health insurance, remittances, pensions)

Women are provided with free medical services during pregnancy, statutory maternity leave and allowances associated with childbirth and childcare for children under 3.

Despite raising retirement age, the five-year difference in retirement age between men and women will remain until 2022. The prospect of equalizing the retirement age for men and women is under consideration, as an opportunity to extend women's active life and lift restrictions on professional fulfillment.

Gender-responsive budgeting

In Belarus, one of the indicators on the national list of Sustainable Development Goals is the existence of mechanisms for monitoring and publicizing government funding to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Currently, there is no methodology for gender-responsive national budgeting. In 2017, the Labor Research Institute of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection carried out a study, the results of which will enable the development of gender-responsive government programs and strategies. The gender-responsive elements will be tested on the basis of 2 or 3 government social programs that are being developed for the period until 2025.

¹³ According to World Bank classification

Digital inclusion for women

New and emerging technologies are of particular importance in addressing contemporary challenges, including those related to gender. This aspect is reflected in the 2030 Agenda, which justly recognizes digital technologies as a catalyst for achieving the SDGs. The national objective of digital transformation is simultaneously a social change factor and a way to develop economic and public relations in the context of global digitalization. Belarus understands the scope of the challenge and takes practical steps to tackle it.

In Belarus, the proportion of contributions by medium- and high-technology industries to the total value added in 2017 accounted for 38%, and it is expected to increase up to 40% by 2020. In 2017, the number of personnel involved in high-tech and knowledge-based activities was slightly over 10%, with the educational field (as knowledge-based) not exceeding 25%. The Government of Belarus and businesses have made substantial efforts towards developing the IT sector, leading to new jobs in this industry¹⁴. The problem of gender imbalance may either escalate or receive added impetus to its resolution. For instance, UNECE predicts a shortage of 500,000 employees in the IT sector throughout Europe by 2020¹⁵. It will be impossible to address this issue without closing the gender gap in the IT industry.

The education sector, which is the primary channel for engaging women in the digital economy, is characterized by gender imbalance. The proportion of women graduates from specialist secondary education institutions in the field of technology and engineering accounted for 23.2% in 2017. With respect to higher education, the ratio is similar. Among those who graduated from universities in 2017 with a degree in technology and engineering, 28.2% are women. The proportion of women graduates specializing in natural sciences – physics and mathematics, biology and chemistry stands at 52.4%. However, women account for 70% of graduates in chemical and biological sciences, meaning that men dominate in physics and mathematics¹⁶. The proportion of women among highly qualified specialists in the area of science and research has not changed significantly over time and accounts for 17%. 5-7% of them have a higher doctorate. Women make up 17% of those holding a higher doctorate in natural sciences and 43% of higher doctoral candidates.

Belarus values the matter of establishing collaborative work on forecasting developments in society due to technological progress and responding primarily to social changes, including in the interests of women and girls. Along with improvements, new technologies lead to drastic social transformations, which not everyone is ready to embrace and which may be perceived in a negative manner. Structural changes will affect not only the labor market and the education sector but also many other areas, including family relations, security (issues concerning to combating crime), etc.

It is imperative to take action now to consolidate piecemeal efforts by countries and international bodies in search of a global solution to large-scale social changes, with the United Nations being the platform for such consolidation. UNECE may have an important role to play in this process. The Commission could pay particular attention to the impact of technology on sustainable development, social changes in society and on the situation of women and girls in particular. It could and should assist states in designing effective response models with a view to fulfilling the 2030 Agenda pledge "to leave no-one behind".

¹⁴ Science and Innovation in the Republic of Belarus. A statistical Compendium. 2018

¹⁵ [Women in the Digital Age](#). Final report. 2018. By the European Commission, Directorate-General of Communications Networks, Content & Technology

¹⁶ Men and Women. Statistical Compendium. 2018.

Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work

6. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to advance gender equality in relation to women's role in paid work and employment?

Strengthened / enforced laws and workplace policies and practices that prohibit discrimination in the recruitment, retention and promotion of women in the public and private sectors, and equal pay legislation

In accordance with the Constitution of Belarus, women are provided with the same opportunities as men in education and training, employment and promotion, in social, political, cultural and other areas of activity, as well as conditions ensuring their safety and health. Citizens of Belarus have the right of equal access to any positions in the State authorities based on their abilities and vocational training.

The Labor Code prohibits any discrimination, such as restrictions on labor rights or preferential treatment on any grounds, including gender. Discriminatory conditions of collective agreements and contracts are of no force or effect.

However, any distinctions, exceptions, preferences or restrictions required by the Government in order to provide special assistance to citizens in need of increased social and legal protection are not regarded as discrimination. Women fall under this category.

Those who believe they have been subjected to discrimination at work are entitled to take legal action. In this case, they are exempt from legal fees.

Today, many women in Belarus have successful businesses, create jobs, and hold mid- and top-level executive positions. Women account for 49.7% of CEOs and 73.9% of specialists. In Belarus, it is common for women to have a higher level of education than men. 38% of employed women have a university degree, and 27% completed specialized secondary education. For men, these proportions stand at 27% and 18%, respectively.

The salary level of employees does not depend on their gender or age. If equally qualified, men and women have the right to perform the same type of work with similar pay given other equal conditions.

Having a higher level of education, women apply it in the least paid industries leading to the feminization of low-wage professional groups in the labor market. It is also notable that women are less competitive when applying for new jobs.

The pay gap between men and women persists. In 2018, women's average monthly salary was 72.7% that of men. Women's lower level of income compared to men's is linked to the fact that they choose easier jobs with normal working conditions and convenient hours. Moreover, women prefer flexible or part-time working¹⁷ due to the need to balance their professional and family responsibilities, motherhood, child rearing and care for elderly family members.

These types of jobs are usually available in such fields as education, culture, trade, catering, etc. Therefore, Belarus traditionally has a higher proportion of men employed in the industrial, construction, transport and communications sectors with potentially harmful and hazardous conditions, high labor intensity, and consequently a higher remuneration.

One of the steps taken in 2019 towards reducing the gender gap was an increase in the salaries of public-sector employees¹⁸. A further pay rise is planned for these categories of workers between 2020 and 2025.

¹⁷ <http://www.belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/indikatory-dostoyrnogo-truda/>

¹⁸ Government Resolutions No. 632 of August 31, 2018 and No. 36 of January 19, 2019 establishing an increase in salary of teachers, medical workers and pharmaceutical professionals

The National Center of Legislation and Legal Research is conducting a study which will result in proposals on how to implement international legal instruments promoting equality and non-discrimination in the legislation of Belarus.

Introducing / boosting gender-responsive active labor market policies (e.g. education and training, skills, subsidies)

Employment issues are addressed within the context of the State Program for Social Protection and Employment of the Population for the period until 2020¹⁹. Under this Program, a number of measures is being taken to improve the position of women in the labor market, assisting them with job placement, developing the territorial mobility of the workforce, providing career guidance and vocational training, facilitating business initiatives, supporting the self-employment of unemployed women, creating new jobs, expanding the public works system, reserving jobs in enterprises and organizations, ensuring first jobs for graduates of state educational establishments whose education is financed through public funds, helping unemployed women find subsidized temporary jobs to acquire practical work skills, and providing social assistance.

As a result of the measures taken to promote employment, the number of women registered at labor, employment and social care agencies regarding various job placement issues has been falling. In early 2018, there were 22,900 registered unemployed, including 8,200 thousand or 36% women (in 2014, 24,200 were unemployed, including 9,100 or 37.6% women). Women's duration of unemployment in 2018 was 3.1 months.

7. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to recognize, reduce and/or redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, and promote work-family conciliation?

According to a one-time sample survey of households by the National Statistical Committee conducted in 2014-2015 to study the population's use of daily time , the total workload of employed women amounts to an average of 70 hours 21 minutes per week, including about 44 hours 6 minutes of professional workload and 26 hours 15 minutes of housekeeping. The total workload of employed men is almost 7 hours less (62 hours 53 minutes) than women. On average, men spend almost 49 hours per week at work and about 14 hours per week engaged in household tasks.

The ratio of paid (working hours) to unpaid labor (hours spent doing household tasks) in 24 hours is 63% to 37% for employed women and 77% to 23% for employed men, respectively.

Belarus is taking the following measures to eliminate this imbalance.

Increasing childcare services or making existing services more affordable

Belarus keeps a record of various categories of families with children. 104,000 families with multiple children and 29,500 families raising children with disabilities were registered with local social care centers as of January 1, 2019.

One of the measures to aid child rearing is nanny services. They are available to families with two or more children under 3 who were born simultaneously, and, starting from 2015, to families raising children with disabilities under the age of 18. In 2018, nanny services were used by 2,369 families, including 262 families having children with disabilities (in 2014 the figure was 889 families, including 14 families with disabled children).

As of 2018, families in which either both parents or a single parent are disabled are eligible for nanny services

¹⁹ Approved by Government Resolution No. 73 of January 30, 2016

Social patronage services are provided in Belarus. This is assistance to families experiencing crises and hardship and unable to independently cope with their challenges and emotional burden. 3,584 families resorted to these services in 2018, compared to 1,611 families in 2017.

Families raising children with disabilities are offered respite care services to give parents time off caring for their disabled child in order to recuperate and attend to household matters. This service was provided to 73 families in 2018 (82 families in 2017).

On January 10, 2019, the Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection and the Ministry of Education approved a joint action plan to prevent disability and safeguard the rights of children and young adults with disabilities and their parents.

Increasing support for frail elderly persons and others needing special forms of care
allowances are available in Belarus to care for people with disabilities and persons over 80. They are usually paid to relatives forced to leave employment to look after family members and left without an income. These allowances are mainly paid to women. In 2018, these allowances accounted for approximately 0.9% of the total pensions expenditure.

Introducing or increasing maternity/paternity/parental leave and other types of family leave

Information on this is provided in Answer 2.

Awareness campaigns and events to encourage the involvement of men and boys in unpaid care and domestic work

The Government and the society preserve, promote, and make every effort to support traditional family values in Belarus. One of the core values is the family consisting of mother, father and children. In order to consolidate efforts to publicize family policies, the Government adopted the 2020 Plan for Outreach and Awareness Raising on Demographic Development in Belarus.

Under the National Action Plan for Gender Equality in Belarus, a range of activities are carried out, including conferences, round tables, training events and, educational workshops on the subjects of informed parenthood and the equal participation of both parents in raising children.

The Belarusian-Swedish project to engage fathers in raising and caring for their children is progressing successfully (completion due in 2021).

Society tends to have a distorted perception of both parents' role in raising and caring for their children and the allocation of family roles. Concrete steps in this direction include the introduction of paternity leave, conducting the Family of the Year Contest and organizing media coverage of equality in the family.

A sociological study carried out in Belarus revealed that the majority of the population believes that family and children are equally important to both men and women (56% of the respondents). In response to the question "Who is responsible for taking care of the house and children: men or women?" most respondents (58%) indicated that this is the task of men and women equally, and only 38% considered this to be mostly women's responsibility. 84% of men and 78% of women noted that they are equal with their partners in making decisions about parenting.

8. Has your country introduced austerity/fiscal consolidation measures, such as cuts in public expenditure or public sector downsizing, over the past five years?

Yes, it was decided in 2016 to optimize and cut down consolidated national budget expenditure²⁰, primarily by reducing non-priority capital investment costs, the maintenance of State and local authorities through optimizing their functions and size, refunds (compensation) of interest on loans and subsidies.

The impact of these measures on women and men has not been assessed. However, the impact on the vulnerable categories of the population (those on low incomes, retired or disabled) has been evaluated. The Government has provided for mechanisms of targeted state social assistance for those citizens and has increased benefit payments.

9. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to reduce/eradicate poverty among women and girls?

Introducing or strengthening social care programs for women and girls (e.g. remittances to women with children, public works/employment guarantee schemes for women of working age, pensions for elderly women)

An occupational and social pension program is available in Belarus.

With a view to increasing the social protection of women,

- they are entitled to receive pension 5 years earlier than men. Women's earlier retirement age does not result in a lower pension vis-à-vis men (due to the pension formula parameters);
- given their earlier retirement age, they can combine their pension with income from employment over a longer period of time than men;
- for the purposes of calculating pension, the total length of service includes periods of care for young children and incapacitated persons;
- despite the fact that women have a considerably longer life expectancy than men, Belarus does not apply an actuarial pension reduction to women due to the longer expected pension period;
- Women who gave birth to 9 or more children, as well as women holding state awards receive higher pensions.

In Belarus, low-income citizens are provided with targeted social assistance from the state. As of 2017, it has been provided in the form of monthly and lump-sum allowances and social benefits to reimburse the cost of diapers and food for children during their first two years of life. The main recipients of this support are families with multiple children and single parents raising underage children (67% of all the recipients of these benefits).

Belarus has a system of state support for families with children (this information is provided in Answer 2).

10. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to improve access to social care for women and girls?

Introducing or developing social care for unemployed women (unemployment benefits, public works programs, social assistance)

In order to promote the inclusion of unemployed women in active working life, the labor, employment, and social care authorities organize paid public works in collaboration with employers. Such works do not require any additional training and have a socially useful

²⁰ Presidential Decree No. 78 of February 23, 2016 [“On Measures to Enhance the Effectiveness of the Socio-Economic Structure of Belarus”](#)

significance. 26,500 unemployed people participated in public works in 2018. The majority of unemployed in all age groups are men.

Social assistance has been provided to unemployed women in the form of benefits, scholarships, financial aid and cash allowances when moving to a new place of residence and work. By the end of 2018, unemployment benefits were issued to 5,800 unemployed persons, including 2,500 women (43.5%).

Introducing or developing non-contributory social pensions

Under the social pension program, social pension amounts were increased by 30% for disabled pensioners including disabled children and children who lost their breadwinner increased²¹.

Reforming contributory social care schemes to improve women's access and benefit levels

In Belarus, the occupational (insurance) pension program has a high degree of coverage: state pension insurance is mandatory for all employees (including those in agriculture) and individual entrepreneurs. Self-employed people participate on a voluntary basis. With the development of new forms of employment and self-employment, as of 2016 state pension insurance also covers foreign nationals who work in Belarus²², with new categories of self-employed citizens added in 2019²³ (139 types).

Taking into account women's childcare responsibilities, the contributory period required to be eligible for a pension (from 17 years in 2019 to 20 years in 2025) has been reduced to 10 years for certain categories of especially socially vulnerable women (e.g. those providing long-term care for children and disabled persons) and to 5 years (e.g. mothers of 5 or more children and mothers of children with disabilities)²⁴.

11. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to improve health outcomes for women and girls in your country?

Providing gender-responsive training for health service providers

Under the 2020 State Program for People's Health and Demographic Safety, a national model of family planning and male health services has been designed in Belarus. The purpose of this service is to help families prepare for planned pregnancy and avoid unwanted pregnancy. It comprises advice to women, specialist advice rooms, men's health rooms, as well as 48 teenage- and young people- friendly centers. Residential and day-patient centers are available to persons with disabilities.

Modern methods of reproductive health education have been introduced, covering pre-abortion counseling by family planning service specialists, physicians, obstetricians and gynecologists, physician assistants, psychologists, and psychotherapists. Clinical protocols in obstetrics and gynecology have been brought into conformity with the standards and recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO).

In Belarus, healthcare institutions offer pre-abortion counseling for women seeking to terminate their pregnancy. The methodologies of providing pre- and post-abortion counseling to married couples are being revised.

²¹ Decree No. 327 by the President of Belarus dated July 26, 2011

²² Decree No. 534 by the President of Belarus dated December 31, 2015

²³ Decree No. 500 by the President of Belarus dated December 27, 2018

²⁴ Decree No. 233 by the President of Belarus dated June 29, 2017, Act on Pension Provision.

Medical workers collaborate with public and religious organizations to preserve and strengthen family values and ensure responsible parenting. The “For Life” campaign takes place every year, when abortions are not available on women’s requests for several days. A national children’s helpline providing emergency psychological help to minors operates around the clock.

Healthcare professionals conduct workshops for teachers to create a healthy lifestyle for students through a particular set of actions if there are signs of violence in the family.

12. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to improve education outcomes and skills for women and girls?

Developing educational curricula to promote gender equality and eliminate bias at all levels of education

In Belarus, general secondary education institutions offer an optional study program entitled “The Individual and Family World”. It prepares students for family life and responsible behavior in marriage and parenting and raises awareness about the role of the family in society and personal life, relationships between young women and men and psychological patterns in family life, and educates children about the law in this field.

Specialist secondary education institutions address gender policy issues as part of the “Fundamentals of Social Sciences and Humanities” course. Technical and vocational education institutions and secondary education institutions also have an optional program for developing family values, taking into account the cultural and ethnic traditions of the people of Belarus and gender equality principles.

Students at higher education institutions in Belarus undergo a family education program²⁵. The program is designed to prepare young people for family life and informed parenthood. These programs include outreach and awareness-raising activities aimed at enhancing the image of the family and fostering a gender-sensitive culture.

Freedom from violence, stigma, and stereotypes

13. In the last five years, which forms of violence against women and girls, and in which specific contexts or settings, have you prioritized for action?

Trafficking in women and girls

Speaking from the UN rostrum at the 2005 Summit of Heads of State and Government, the President of Belarus proposed an initiative to step up efforts to combat human trafficking. As follow-up to the initiative of Belarus, the United Nations General Assembly has adopted a Global Action Plan and declared July 30 as World Day against Trafficking in Persons.

In accordance with the Anti-Human Trafficking Law and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, in 2015 Belarus launched a national identification and referral mechanism for victims of human trafficking²⁶. The process involves not only public authorities, but also international and non-governmental organizations. In the regions, these activities are carried out by working groups composed of representatives of the police, the border service, education, health care, labor and social protection, the

²⁵ The program is based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Constitution, the Education Code, the National Demographic Safety Program, the Continuous Education Program for Children and Young Learners and the National Action Plan for Gender Equality.

²⁶ Approved by Government Resolution No. 485 of June 11, 2015

prosecutor's office, the courts, the Investigation Committee, the Bar, international organizations and public associations, as well as the media and clergy (as observers).

The typical victim of human trafficking is a single young woman between 18 and 25 years of age without a stable source of income. Over the past five years, 593 female victims of human trafficking have been identified, including 122 under the age of 18. From 2015 to 2018, the law-enforcement authorities in Belarus shut down 707 channels of human trafficking abroad for exploitation.

Belarus has legislation in place to provide unlimited free rehabilitation assistance to victims of human trafficking. They are provided with temporary housing, food, legal, medical and psychological help, employment assistance and financial support. Minors who are victims of human trafficking are offered help in finding and reuniting with their families. In criminal proceedings, under a court order victims receive compensation from traffickers for damage caused by the crime (civil litigation).

An extensive outreach campaign against trafficking, in particular in women and girls, has been launched jointly with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and other international organizations. Non-governmental organizations in Belarus are important partners in this campaign.

In addition to combating human trafficking, measures are also taken to fight child pornography, which is regarded in law as a crime related to human trafficking.

The International Training Center on Migration and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings has been operating in Belarus since 2007. It is the primary institution providing specialist training to professionals from CIS countries. Over 2,300 people have been trained at the Center. Since 2011, it has been offering specialist courses for those in law-enforcement agencies combating child pornography on the Internet.

Intimate partner violence/domestic violence, including sexual violence and marital rape

Countering gender-based violence remains one of the key objectives of the State authorities, with a focus on domestic violence. Women prevail (77%) among victims of domestic and intimate partner violence.²⁷

According to the Criminal Code and the Code of Administrative Offenses, any form of violence is a criminal and/or administrative offense in Belarus. Punishment for such offenses is gender-neutral in this country.

Issues concerning prevention of domestic violence are set out in the crime prevention law²⁸. Individual crime prevention measures are key tools against domestic violence. The most effective among them are record-keeping and protection orders.

As of January 1, 2019, the internal affairs authorities have registered 7,700 people who committed domestic violence. 6,777 protection orders were issued against them in 2018, the majority of which (89.4%) obliged the offender to leave his or her place of residence shared with the victim or victims of domestic violence and banned them from disposing of shared property.

²⁷ http://www.mintrud.gov.by/ru/profilaktika_dom_nasiliya/

²⁸ Act of Belarus of January 4, 2014 "On the Fundamentals of Crime Prevention Activities". The elements establishing liability for domestic violence and providing for action against citizens who have committed such violence, as well as elements regulating the provision of assistance to victims are contained in the Criminal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure, the Code of Administrative Offenses, the Procedural Code of Administrative Offenses, the Education Code, the Law of June 18, 1993 "On Health Care," the Law of January 7, 2012 "On Psychiatric Care," the Law of July 1, 2010 "On Psychological Care" and the Law of May 22, 2000 "On Social Services".

The most effective measure for preventing serious and very serious domestic offenses is to initiate criminal proceedings for preventive purposes. In this category, 2,089 cases were launched in 2018. A total of 49,677 administrative offenses were committed throughout 2018 in the area of family relations.

Since 2016, Belarus has been actively cooperating with UNFPA in combating gender-based violence, with a focus on domestic violence. A number of research projects²⁹ have been carried out, the results of which are being actively implemented in practice.

14. What actions has your country prioritized in the last five years to address violence against women and girls?

Introducing or developing services for survivors of violence (e.g. shelters, helplines, dedicated health services, legal assistance, justice, counseling, housing)

This information is provided in Answers 2 and 13.

15. What strategies has your country used in the last five years to prevent violence against women and girls?

Perpetrator programs

In 2015, a group of Belarusian psychologists, supported by UNFPA developed and started to apply a national model of integrated work with male aggressors. It comprises special educational programs and training for professionals in counseling and correcting the behavioral patterns of male aggressors, their spouses (partners) or family members, including children. The model identifies the requirements, mechanisms and standards to be included in the program and met by the aggressors, as well as organizations and professionals specializing in domestic violence. The Duluth Model (United States) serves as an example recommended by UNFPA experts.

A part of the national model is a correctional program for men who use violence in intimate relations. Its purpose is to create a male aggressor's behavioral pattern that excludes physical violence and ensures respectful behavior towards his spouse (partner) and family members.

The experimental testing of the national model in pilot cities (Minsk, Brest, Kobrin, Grodno) started in 2015. 103 men participated in the correctional programs, with only 40 completing the program in full.

Shifting the representation of women and girls in the media

The media in Belarus have been actively promoting the image of a modern woman who is a leader with equal rights actively participating in all social and political activities, a loving wife and a caring mother. They foster intolerance towards violence, prevention of human trafficking, advancement of women's social status and women's increased ability to compete on the labor market. They advocate women's rights and legal remedies available to them. The press has been addressing the issues of responsible parenting, achieving equality in family relations and enhancing the prestige of family.

Thematic events and campaigns are carried out every year, such as the "Woman of the Year" contest, the "Home without Violence" campaign and others. The Ministry of Information,

²⁹ "Analysis of Belarus law in the field of domestic violence and the mechanisms of its application", "Analysis of national legislation and organizational capacity to determine Belarus' readiness to take the actions necessary for signing the Istanbul Convention", "European countries' legislation countering domestic violence and application mechanisms", "Comparative analysis of legislation in Belarus, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, and Moldova against domestic violence"

in collaboration with the Women's Union of Belarus, has been conducting a creative competition among the media for the best coverage of issues concerning a healthy and strong family, entitled “Strong Family – Strong Nation”.

Various specialist periodicals and columns³⁰, thematic stories³¹, news reports and analytical broadcasts³² address women’s position in politics and business, women’s rights and the role of the family in raising the young generation.

These awareness-raising events focus on identifying the stereotypes about women’s and men’s roles and responsibilities in the family and society and underscore the significance of women’s equal participation in the decision-making process.

16. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls facilitated by technology (online sexual harassment, online stalking, non-consensual sharing of intimate images)?

Implementation of awareness-raising initiatives targeting the general public and young women and men in educational settings

With Internet crime on the rise, a specialist service with the Belarus internal affairs authorities has been created to combat it. It comprises two operational units that focus on countering human trafficking and pornography and on fighting against drug trafficking. These units place particular emphasis on the issues of child pornography production and distribution.

As a result of measures taken promptly in Belarus, the activities of several international organized criminal groups manufacturing and distributing child pornography, including via the Internet, have been suppressed.

In cooperation with the IOM, video public service announcements have been prepared in order to raise awareness in society about the problem of sexual violence against children and the possibility of protecting minors from sexual abuse by calling a toll-free hotline. Central and regional television and radio companies started to broadcast them in September 2018.

17. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to address the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination and/or gender bias in the media?

Introducing mandatory regulation of the media, including advertising

³⁰“As Equals”, “Woman and Business”, “A Woman’s Business”, “Law and Order”, “Law”, “Success Formula”, “Faces of the Country”, “About Me”, “Society”, “Our Psychologist”, “Today”, “Culture”, “Law”, “Community” (SB. Belarus Today), “In the Ranks”, “The Work of the Master”, “Sports” (“Republic”), “Surprised!”, “Headwaters”, “Two Views”, “Sports Arena”, “District Department” (“Village Newspaper”); “50+: Interesting Life”, “Man and his Business”, “Open Forum”, “Enough Time for Everything!”, “Notes to Dad”, “An Outpost of Calm” (“Star”), “Alesya”, “Culture”, “Our Mothers”, etc.

³¹“Ladies Club” (SB. Belarus Today), “Village Woman” (“Village Newspaper”), “Local Government”, “Family Newspaper”, “Chyrvonka. Chyrvonaya Zmena” (“Star”).

Thematic stories are published on the www.belta.by website: “Women’s Summit ‘You can!’”, “Own Business”, “Improving Business Conditions”, “Social Government at Work”, etc.

³²“Panorama”, “Prime Time”, “News”, “Good Morning, Belarus!”, “In the Spotlight” (Belarus 1), “Regional News” (Belarus 2), “Our News”, “Our Morning”, “Contours” (ONT), “24 Hours”, “The Week”, “Minsk Region”, “Minsk and Its Residents”, “Big City” (STV), “Belarus News” (Russia-Belarus), “Ours!”, “Culinary Diplomacy” (Belarus 1), “Big Breakfast”, “Minsk and Its Residents” (STV), “Post Factum”, “Radio fact”, “Topical Microphone”, “Accents”, “Dialog”, “Open Platform”, “Fathers and Sons”, “For Those at Home”, “Morning with Belarusian Radio”, “Spiritual Word”, “Catholic Sermon”, “Light of the Soul” (First National Channel of Belarusian Radio) and others.

TV reports: “Belarus leading the promotion of women’s involvement in the economy” (Belarus 1), “Is Beating a sign of love? Drafting a bill against domestic violence” (ONT), “Men in family and society. What are the trends?”, “Only for women or only for men: how do gender stereotypes affect the choice of profession?” (STV) and others.

Under the laws on the media³³ and on advertising³⁴ it is illegal to publicize violence and cruelty, as well as to promote and encourage the cult of violence and brutality or to incite acts of violence and cruelty, including those against women and girls.

Promoting women's participation and leadership in the media

Detailed information on this subject is provided in Answer 15 “Shifting the representation of women and girls in the media”.

Supporting the media industry in developing voluntary codes of conduct

Professional journalist associations of Belarus have developed and are now implementing relevant codes of conduct.

18. Has your country taken any action in the last five years specifically tailored to combating violence against specific groups of women subjected to multiple forms of discrimination?

Detailed information is provided in Answer 3.

Gender-responsive institutions

19. What actions and measures has your country taken in the last five years to promote women's participation in public life and decision-making?

Implementing capacity building, skills development and other measures

Providing opportunities, mentoring and training in leadership, decision-making, public speaking, assertion of one's rights and political campaigning

There are 30 registered women's public associations in Belarus and one international association of women's public organizations.

The largest public women's association is the Women's Union of Belarus which has over 141,000 female members (over 4,200 organizations). The Union includes the “Village Woman” organization which unites women from the regions of Belarus, and has thematic clubs for women managers, scientists and doctors: “Business Women”, “Credo”, “Lady” (creative women), “Suzorye” (seamstresses).

The key objectives of the Union is to protect the rights and lawful interests of women, ensure women's decent social status, strengthen their role in the society, advance women at decision-making level and to introduce and implement gender equality principles in public life.

The Women's Union of Belarus conducts the annual “Woman of the Year” contest, with the purpose of enhancing women's social status and raising awareness about their importance to the community, to demonstrate women's role in contemporary society and their contribution to the country's development, strengthening the family, raising children and the health of the nation.

The Women's Union of Belarus has been actively collaborating with international organizations. During the international forum of female leaders that took place in 2018 in Minsk, the Union hosted a thematic workshop called “Strengthening Networks and Creating Coalitions of Female Leaders”.

In cooperation with OSCE, a training workshop was held in 2018 aimed at establishing mentoring networks. It was attended by representatives of women's public associations and non-profit social educational and awareness-raising organizations. A number of public associations

³³ Law of Belarus No. 427-Z of July 17, 2008, Article 38, para. 1.3 “Information dissemination of which is prohibited in the media and on the Internet”

³⁴ Law No. 225-Z of May 10, 2007, Article 10, para. 8 “General requirements for advertising”

are already applying the OSCE methodology. In 2019, a project was launched under the auspices of the Belarusian Young Christian Women's Association, with the purpose of reinforcing the leadership potential of young active women of Minsk, Baranovichy and Gomel in social activities and business through solidarity and mutual support. Similar initiatives have already been carried out in Barysaw, Babruysk, Minsk, and Pinsk.

20. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to increase women's access to expression and participation in decision-making in the media, including through information and communication technologies (ICT)?

Measures taken to improve access to and the affordability and use of ICT for women and girls (e.g. free wifi hubs, community technology centers)

Belarus takes steps to improve access to and the use of ICT for all citizens, including women and girls. In the last five years, there have been certain positive results in this area.

In 2018, Belarus was ranked 38th by the United Nations in the development of e-government³⁵, up 11 places within two years.

For the first time in its history, the country became one of the top 40 countries with a very high E-Government Development Index³⁶. This is the result of implementing the 2030 National Sustainable Development Strategy, which includes ICT development initiatives, as well as the 2022 National Informatization Development Strategy and the 2020 State Program for the Development of a Digital Economy and Information Society. Belarus' composite ranking index is 0.7641. The Human Assets Index received the highest score of 0.8681. The online services development index is 0.7361 and the ICT infrastructure index is 0.6881. In addition, Belarus has significantly improved its ranking in the E-Participation Index³⁷, from 76th to 33rd. This indicator reflects the development of active communication services between citizens and the State.

Belarus became one of the top 20 countries with the most convenient e-government services³⁸. It is ranked 18th in this Index.

In 2017, Belarus had the 7th lowest cost of broadband Internet in the world³⁹. The average monthly cost of subscription amounted to \$12.77.

In 2018, over 90% of Belarusian children aged six and older used the Internet⁴⁰. In this, Belarus is ahead of all upper-middle-income countries. In Belarus, the proportion of Internet users aged between 15 and 24 accounted for over 90%.

21. Do you track the proportion of the national budget invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women?

No.

22. As a donor country, does your country track the proportion of official development assistance (ODA) invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women?

³⁵ United Nations E-Government Survey 2018

³⁶ Very High EGDI

³⁷ E-Participation

³⁸ Based on the estimates of the Artezio software company.

³⁹ Survey by the independent consulting company BDRC Continental and the British provider, Cable.co.uk.

⁴⁰ National Statistical Committee of Belarus (Belstat)

Not applicable.

23. Does your country have a valid national strategy or action plan for gender equality?

Yes, Belarus is already implementing its fifth National Action Plan for Gender Equality, for the period until 2020.

24. Does your country have an action plan and deadline for implementing the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (if a State party), or the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review or other United Nations human rights mechanisms addressing gender inequality/discrimination against women?

Belarus regularly submits its reports on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

In 2016, Belarus provided the eighth periodic report on the implementation of CEDAW. On the basis of the report submitted, the concluding observations of the United Nations Committee have been examined at a meeting of the National Council on Gender Policy under the Government with respect to their acceptability and implementation by Belarus, and have been made publicly available alongside the report⁴¹.

Observations acceptable for the country have been adopted by the State authorities for implementation. In 2018, Belarus submitted its report to the United Nations Committee on action taken to implement some of the recommendations.

A progress report on the implementation of CEDAW will be submitted to the United Nations Committee by the statutory deadline.

Belarus is carrying out an inter-agency plan for implementing the recommendations adopted by the country following the second cycle of the universal periodic review at the United Nations Human Rights Council and the 2016-2019 recommendations addressed to Belarus by human rights treaty bodies⁴². The plan contains a Gender Equality section.

25. Is there a national human rights institution in your country?

No. Based on the recommendations of the universal periodic review at the United Nations Human Rights Council and of the United Nations treaty bodies, including the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Belarus considers whether it is feasible to establish a national human rights institution.

The National Council on Gender Policy under the Government plays an important role in monitoring the situation and designing public policies to advance gender equality and to protect and promote women's rights.

Peaceful and inclusive societies

26. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and implement the women, peace and security agenda?

⁴¹ http://www.mintrud.gov.by/ru/8_doklad/

⁴² Approved by Government Resolution No. 860 of October 24, 2016

*Adopting and/or implementing a National Action Plan on women, peace, and security
Implementing the 2030 Agenda*

Belarus is committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda and has taken a number of important steps to carry it out at domestic level. The President of Belarus has decided⁴³ to appoint Marianna Schetkina, Deputy Chair of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly, as National Coordinator of Sustainable Development Goals⁴⁴. Under her stewardship, the Council for Sustainable Development has been established.

The National Coordinator arranges within the framework of the Council for an examination of various aspects of SDG implementation, including gender issues and Belarus' performance against SDG 5. She reports progress annually to the President and the Government and makes recommendations to make this work more effective.

In November–December 2017, experts from United Nations agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, DESA, UNFPA, ILO, WHO, and the World Bank) visited Belarus as part of the MAPS Mission (Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support). Based on the work performed by the experts and the Council for Sustainable Development, gender equality was determined to be one of the elements (accelerators) that could provide the country with integrated support in achieving all the objectives of the 2030 Agenda and building a peaceful, inclusive society. This approach is being introduced into state policy documents relating to various aspects of sustainable socio-economic development. It will also be considered in the 2035 National Sustainable Development Strategy, the development of which should be completed before the end of 2019.

Two milestone international events took place in Minsk under the auspices of the National Coordinator and Council for Sustainable Development: the Regional Forum for SDG Coordinators in February 2018 and the National Forum on Sustainable Development in January 2019. The Forums included public discussions on gender equality, and their final documents reaffirmed that gender equality is a true catalyst for achieving all the SDGs because investment in women will produce a multiplier effect.

27. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to increase the leadership, representation and participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, peace building, humanitarian action and crisis response at decision-making levels in situations of armed and other conflicts, and in fragile or crisis settings?

Not applicable.

28. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to enhance judicial and nonjudicial accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and violations of the human rights of women and girls in situations of armed and other conflicts or humanitarian action and crisis response?

Not applicable.

⁴³ http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/kommentarij-k-ukazu-181-ot-25-maja-2017-g-16287/

⁴⁴ https://twitter.com/SDGs_BY

29. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to eliminate discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child?

Implemented policies and programs to eliminate violence against girls, including physical and sexual violence and harmful practices

Measures to address sexual violence against girls are taken in the context of countering crimes against the sexual inviolability and the sexual freedom of minors. Although this is not a type of crime related to human trafficking, it is often inextricably interrelated with the use of children for pornographic films and sexual exploitation. In the light of these factors, operations to detect and investigate facts of pedophilia, in particular those associated with manufacturing child pornography, are as of 2012 carried out jointly by internal affairs anti-trafficking units, the criminal investigation service, and the juvenile affairs inspectorate.

Throughout this period, 2,258 pedophilia-related crimes have been detected, including 1,356 offenses in the serious and very serious category. Similar to the case with pornography, the statistics for these crimes has increased (by 22 times), mainly due to more active efforts of internal affairs bodies. In the last five years, 1,167 girls have been found to be victims of crimes against sexual inviolability and sexual freedom, including 463 minors.

Since 2015, Belarus has reinforced criminal accountability for sexual relations and other sexual acts against children under the age of 16 as the most frequently detected act of pedophilia. A more severe punishment for such crimes is provided for someone who has already committed similar acts before or is responsible for raising, supporting and ensuring the safety and health of a minor, or for a group of persons.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs, in collaboration with Parliament, are working on introducing criminal (administrative) accountability for collecting child pornography and “grooming” (psychological preparation of children for sexual relations via the Internet). Once these new provisions enter into force, it will become possible to detect and stop these crimes early, ensuring a more effective prevention of physical and sexual violence against children, including girls.

Belarus has established monitoring at healthcare facilities, educational institutions and orphanages to prevent and detect infringements of the sexual inviolability and sexual freedom of children, primarily by employees of those institutions.

Preventive measures have been introduced with regard to citizens with a criminal record in this category, especially those recently released from prison. Adolescents prone to vagrancy are particularly monitored in order to detect sexual offenses against them.

Interpol provides assistance in the active study of software programs used in practice by law-enforcement agencies in foreign countries for countering human trafficking, child pornography, and pedophilia.

Belarus considers pedophilia and the circulation of pornography, in particular child pornography, to be a dangerous challenge to society, posing a threat to national security. A public opinion survey revealed that the problem of sexual violence against children remains a pressing concern for the country. Citizens of Belarus support the initiatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs on a comprehensive approach to countering pedophilia.

Environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation

30. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to integrate gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies?

Belarusian environmental law does not separate the gender perspective. Under the Law on Environmental Protection, each citizen of Belarus has the right to a healthy environment and compensation for damage caused by violation of this right.

Supporting women's participation and leadership in environmental and natural resource management

Taking steps to ensure that women benefit equally from decent jobs in a green economy

In Belarus, the number of women employed in the field of environmental management fluctuates from 40% to 70% of the total number of employees, depending on the type of organization. There is a significant number of women who are in charge of environmental policies. Men's and women's pay in the environmental industry is calculated depending on the position and years of professional experience. Along with men, female employees of environmental agencies receive training and development and participate in conferences, campaigns, and events relating to the subject of environment.

31. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to integrate gender perspectives into policies and programs for disaster risk reduction, climate resilience and mitigation?

Introducing or strengthening and implementing gender-responsive laws and policies related to disaster risk reduction, climate resilience, and mitigation

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection will apply the Guidelines for Integrating Gender Perspectives developed by the United Nations Development Program, the Global Environment Fund and the UN Environment Program in the preparation by Belarus of the seventh national report on the implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the third biennial report. As part of this work, a study is planned including the analysis of the role of gender in climate change adaptation and mitigation activities, policy development and knowledge acquisition. The findings of this study will underpin the final recommendations of the reports.

Institutions and processes

32. What is your country's current national machinery for gender equality and the empowerment of women? Please name it and describe its position within Government.

In Belarus, the national mechanism for designing and implementing gender policies has been established and is operational. Its components include:

- The National Council on Gender Policy under the Government;
- The Council of the Republic of the National Assembly Permanent Commission for Education, Science, Culture, and Social Development;
- The House of Representatives of the National Assembly permanent commissions for Health Care, Physical Education, Family and Youth Policies and for Labor and Social Issues;
- The Government staff Directorate of Education and Socio-Cultural Sector.

Gender equality falls within the purview of all government agencies.

The Department of Population, Gender and Family Policies operates under the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection. It ensures performance against the Ministry's objectives in the implementation of public gender policies, and functions as the secretariat of the National Council.

Expert working groups for gender policies operate at regional level. They are composed of representatives of legislative, executive and judicial authorities and non-governmental organizations.

The National Council has been a permanent body for state gender policy since 2000⁴⁵.

The Council is headed by Minister of Labor and Social Protection Irina Kostevich. It comprises representatives of legislative, executive, and judicial authorities, local executive and administrative bodies, scientific organizations, public associations and international organizations. The Council meets at least twice a year.

In its activities, the National Council seeks to provide timely and accurate information on the status of women in Belarus. It remains in constant contact with key institutions and organizations dealing with gender-related issues.

At its meetings, the National Council considers the most pressing issues of promoting gender equality, including the improvement of legislation, the findings of scientific and sociological studies, as well as concepts and expert evaluations carried out with the purpose of examining the situation concerning gender equality.

33. Is the head of the national machinery a member of the institutional process for SDG implementation?

Yes. The activities of the National Council on Gender Policy are closely related to the work of the Council for Sustainable Development chaired by the National SDG Coordinator. Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Protection of Belarus Valeriy Kovalyev serves as Vice-Chairman of the National Council on Gender Policy and leads a working group on social issues as part of the Council for Sustainable Development. Elena Kukharevich, a member of the National Committee on Gender Policy, leads a sectoral group on monitoring SDG progress as part of the Council for Sustainable Development. The Council for Sustainable Development, or a partner group under it includes members of the National Council on Gender Policy – Deputy Minister of Education Raisa Sidorenko, Director of the International Public Association Irina Alkhovka, Head of the Main Directorate of Multilateral Diplomacy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Larisa Belskaya, Vice-Chair of the Women’s Union of Belarus Antonina Morova and Head of the Belarus Office of UNICEF Rashed Mustafa Sarvar.

34. Are there formal mechanisms in place for different stakeholders to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

Yes. Such mechanisms are the National Council on Gender Policy under the Government and the Council for Sustainable Development.

a) The National Council on Gender Policy⁴⁶ comprises civil society organizations and women’s rights foundations, the scientific community, religious organizations, the Parliament, the private sector and the United Nations system. In addition to the groups listed in the questionnaire, there are also representatives of local authorities and trade unions.

The Council for Sustainable Development includes all the groups listed in the questionnaire. Outside the list, representatives of the local authorities and young people also participate in the activities of the Council.

⁴⁵ Established pursuant to Government Resolution No. 698 of May 17, 2000

⁴⁶ The composition has been approved by Government Resolution No. 148 of February 17, 2017.

b) Civil society organizations represent the interests of women and girls from marginalized groups in the activities of both Councils.

c) This draft Review has been prepared using information provided by members of the National Council on Gender Policy. It is subject to discussion and approval by all members at a regular session of the Council prior to its submission to UNECE (in May 2019).

35. Is gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls included as a key priority in the national plan/strategy for SDG implementation?

Yes. The 2030 National Strategy of Sustainable Socio-Economic Development of Belarus⁴⁷ addresses gender equality as one of its priorities. Gender equality issues are also reflected in the analytical report on the implementation of this strategy⁴⁸ during the period from 2016 to 2017 and will remain paramount in the revised 2035 Sustainable Development Strategy, which the Ministry of Economy is currently developing.

36. What are the top three areas in which your country has made the most progress over the past five years when it comes to gender statistics at national level?

Enacted laws, regulations, or statistical programs/strategies setting out the development of gender statistics

Establishing an inter-agency coordination mechanism on gender statistics (e.g., technical working group, inter-agency committee)

Conduct of new surveys to produce national baseline information on specialist subjects (e.g., time use, gender-based violence, asset ownership, poverty, disability)

The National Statistical Committee of Belarus (Belstat) implements public policies in the field of statistics, including gender equality. Decision-making by governmental and non-governmental organizations is underpinned by gender statistics as regards the implementation of equal rights and opportunities for the country's citizens and prevention of gender-based discrimination. Gender-related information is provided to these organizations in the form of various data and analytical materials, statistical publications and via Belstat's official website⁴⁹.

The statistical classifier SK 00.010-2017 “State Statistical Activities” has been operating since 2019. It distinguishes “Gender Statistics and Statistics on Certain Groups of the Population” as a standard subject area for which state statistical data should be provided.

The development of statistics production and the official statistical methodology in Belarus for a five-year period is set out in the 2022 Strategy for the Development of State Statistics of the Republic of Belarus⁵⁰. Gender statistics development provides for increasing the range of statistical indicators through thematic surveys and creating the “Gender Statistics” module on the official website of Belstat.

The development of gender statistics in Belarus follows the global gender-sensitive SDG indicators.

Measures to improve gender statistics are taken in two areas: introducing and developing new indicators that enable comparative analysis of women's and men's position in the context of implementing the 2030 Agenda, as well as systematizing and presenting broader gender-based statistical data.

⁴⁷ <https://www.economy.gov.by/uploads/files/NSUR2030/Natsionalnaja-strategija-ustojchivogo-sotsialno-ekonomicheskogo-razvitiya-Respubliki-Belarus-na-period-do-2030-goda.pdf>

⁴⁸ <http://economy.gov.by/ru/news-ru/view/o-prezentatsii-analiticheskogo-otcheta-o-realizatsii-nsur-2030-44691-2019/>

⁴⁹ www.belstat.gov.by

⁵⁰ Approved by Order No. 178 of the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus of November 15, 2017

Existing state statistical observation programs are modified and special sample surveys are carried out in order to expand the set of gender indicators.

With the support of UNFPA and UNICEF, in 2014-2015 Belstat conducted a one-time sample survey of households to study the population's use of daily time. The survey provided the national system of gender statistics indicators with information on the structure of daily activities, the degree of pressure on daily time, the ratios of time spent by women and men on paid and unpaid work, and other indicators that characterize gender differences with regard to the use of time.

In 2016, the household sample survey program was complemented by a module studying the population's attitude towards a healthy lifestyle, which examined the motivation of women and men to sustain health and their commitment to a healthy lifestyle.

In 2018, a one-time sample survey of households was carried out with the support of UNICEF for a comprehensive assessment of the situation regarding disadvantaged persons. The survey helped evaluate the incidence of limitations on life and health among various population groups and the living standards and conditions of persons with disabilities, their access to social infrastructure and their participation in social life. A number of gender-specific indicators were obtained based on the survey findings.

In 2019, with the support of UNICEF, the World Bank, and the European Union, Belstat is conducting a one-time multi-indicator cluster sample survey to assess the situation of children and women (MIKS 6).

The survey will examine indicators in the field of maternal and child health and indicators demonstrating women's reproductive behavior, women's and men's perception of domestic violence, their satisfaction with life, the feeling of happiness and other aspects.

The subject of women's entrepreneurship is relevant to the development of gender statistics. Based on a sample survey of households, data are being assembled on women's employment in business in order to study employment issues nationwide.

In collaboration with the International Finance Corporation, Belstat has prepared and posted infographics on its official website characterizing the profile of female entrepreneurship⁵¹.

Gender statistics indicators are presented in the statistical compendium "Women and Men of the Republic of Belarus"⁵² published once every two years. The compendium is based on a system of gender statistics indicators developed by Belstat using a set of UNECE gender indicators and taking into account the national specifics and suggestions from members of the National Council on Gender Policy under the Government.

In 2018, the compendium "Women and Men of the Republic of Belarus" was published for the first time in two languages (Russian and English)⁵³. A section containing gender-specific SDG monitoring indicators was added to the program of the 2018 compendium.

Gender-specific indicators are published on the Belstat website as part of the interactive databases of the data analysis system for distributing official statistical information and the national platform for submitting reports on SDG indicators⁵⁴. The platform was launched in 2018 and remains an essential tool for monitoring and disseminating data on SDG indicators,

⁵¹ www.belstat.gov.by

⁵² http://www.belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/publications/izdania/public_compilation/index_5079/

⁵³ http://www.belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/publications/izdania/public_compilation/index_9283/?special_version=Y

⁵⁴ <http://sdgplatform.belstat.gov.by/sites/belstatfront/home.html>

including gender disaggregation. It is multi-functional and user-friendly. It will be used for evaluating the progress of Belarus in achieving the SDGs at national and international level.

As part of the 2017-2021 National Action Plan for Improving the Situation of Children and Protection of Their Rights, Belstat has established, with the support of UNICEF, the information portal: “Universal Data Portal of Child-Related Statistics”. The portal represents a disaggregated electronic database of statistical indicators related to the situation of children in the main areas of public life: demographics, health, education, justice and social care. Over 25% of indicators on the portal are disaggregated by gender and enable the monitoring and evaluation of children’s gender equality at national level. Certain indicators characterizing violence have been obtained based on the findings of the 2012 multi-indicator cluster survey evaluating the situation of children and women (MIKS 4).

Belstat is currently working on conducting a one-time sample survey of households relating to the prevalence of domestic violence, taking into account international recommendations.

The system of gender statistics indicators is being constantly updated with international experience, national requirements, and in the context of SDG indicators. Belstat has been collaborating with UN Women on the development of gender-sensitive SDG indicators that are not accessible at national level.

37. Out of the following, which are your country’s top three priorities in the development of national gender statistics over the next five years?

Conduct of new surveys to produce national baseline information on specialist topics (e.g., time use, gender-based violence, asset ownership, poverty, disability)

Developing centralized web-based database and/or dashboard on gender statistics

Developing user statistical skills to to promote the evaluation and use of gender statistics (e.g., training, statistical evaluation seminars)

Using targeted measures, effective strategies and significant resources, Belarus seeks to fill the gaps in SDG monitoring indicators with regard to gender. The issue of obtaining information on violence against women remains unresolved. A survey of the population is being considered as part of the sample survey of households as one of the sources of such information. In 2019, methodological approaches will be developed to studying the prevalence of violence against certain groups of the population, taking into account international experience and recommendations.

In order to study trends in the change of indicators characterizing the attitude of men and women to a healthy lifestyle and the prevalence of health-saving behavior among the population, Belstat is planning conduct a modular household survey one more time to study the attitude of the population to a healthy lifestyle.

One of the pressing challenges specified in the 2020 National Action Plan for Gender Equality and the 2022 Strategy for the Development of State Statistics of the Republic of Belarus is to establish a web resource for the dissemination and visualization of gender statistical data. It would the possibilities of gender analysis required for making informed decisions and planning effective measures and the monitoring and evaluation of equitable policies concerning women and men.

One of the key priorities for national statistics is to provide users with information in a convenient and comprehensible format. User needs for statistical data are constantly changing and growing, while the information and communication technologies are rapidly evolving. These trends require constant effort on the part of statistical bodies in all areas of statistics,

including gender statistics, in search of new distribution formats and channels. Alongside the traditional methods for promoting and publicizing statistics such as publications, posting data on the official Belstat website and holding conferences, seminars and round tables, it is planned to introduce new techniques, including competitions among young people, hackathons and other events.

New forms of cooperation with users will promote greater use of data on gender statistics and contribute to its proper interpretation.

38. Have you defined a national set of indicators for monitoring progress on the SDGs?

Yes.

If YES, how many indicators does it include and how many of those are gender-specific?

There are 225 indicators on the national list of SDG monitoring indicators, including 70 gender-specific indicators.

If YES, how many of the gender-specific indicators are additional country indicators (i.e., not part of the global SDG monitoring and indicator framework)?

Of the total number of national gender-relevant SDG indicators, 5 indicators are not on the global SDG list, or the global list does not provide for their gender disaggregation (see Annex).

39. Has data collection and compilation on SDG 5 indicators and on gender-specific indicators under other SDGs begun?

Yes.

If YES, please describe which indicators have been prioritized

Gender and gender-relevant SDG indicators are equally significant for the country.

40. Which of the following types of disaggregation is routinely provided by major surveys in your country?

- Geographic location
- Income
- Sex
- Age
- Education
- Marital status
- Race/ethnicity
- Migratory status
- Disability
- Other characteristics relevant in national contexts

Additional gender indicators of the country

1.3.1.1 The proportion of the population at the generally established retirement age and older who receive pensions in the total population that has reached the generally established retirement age (disaggregated **by gender**);

1.b.1.1 Maternity benefit expenditure (pregnancy and childbirth allowances, as well as benefits for women registered at healthcare institutions before the 12th week of pregnancy) and the proportion of such allowances in the total cost of state benefits to families with children;

3.5.1.1 Total number of patients who requested medical assistance in healthcare institutions due to substance abuse (persons);

8.5.1.1 Average wage ratios between **women** and men (per cent);

10.3.1 The proportion of people who reported acts of discrimination or persecution personally experienced in the last 12 months on grounds prohibited by international human rights law.