

# Bulgaria



Women in decision-making: **0.71/5**  
Socio-economic position of women: **1.42/5**  
Violence against women: **1.5/5**

## Highlights

**23%**

women in parliament

**13%**

women presidents of the largest companies

**6.6%**

gender gap in full-time employment rates

**37.2%**

of women over 65 are at risk of poverty

**7%**

of infants under 3 in formal childcare

**0.15**

shelter places for women victims of violence per 10,000 inhabitants

Abortion is legal but not free of charge

## TRENDS:



In 2011, the Bulgarian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy launched a campaign to increase the number of women on company boards, which currently stands at 16%. In 2012, the ministry disseminated and encouraged companies to sign up to the European Commission's pledge for self-regulatory measures for parity in decision-making. Bulgaria provided the largest number of signatory companies for that pledge.

In 2009, a governmental fund with a yearly value of EUR 250,000 was established for NGOs providing services to women victims of domestic violence.



Despite national efforts to address the paucity of women on boards, in September 2012 the Bulgarian government decided to pre-emptively oppose EU legislation on this topic.

The disbursement of funds for service providers to victims of domestic violence, initiated in 2009, stalled in 2012, causing cuts in the availability and quality of services offered.

Institutional mechanisms for women's rights and gender equality have suffered setbacks. The National Council on Equality between Women and Men was downgraded in 2012 from a consultative to a declarative body. In 2012, funding for the implementation of the National Action Plan on Gender Equality was withdrawn.

## UNDERSTANDING BULGARIA

Bulgaria faces many challenges in implementing international commitments for women's rights and gender equality. The lack of legislation for parity in decision-making hampers progress on this front. However, the representation figures are average for an EU country: women are 23% of parliamentarians, 24% of senior ministers and 16% of corporate board members. With 13% women company presidents, Bulgaria's performance on this score is second only to the 20% EU high of Slovakia.

Bulgaria's gender pay gap is average at 15.7% but the full-time gender employment gap is comparatively low at 6.6%. Still, only 55.9% of women are engaged in full-time paid work. Only 7% of infants under 3 and 54% of children between 3 and school-age are in formal care – some of the lowest figures in the EU.

Equally, a very low 12% of dependent elderly persons receive formal care. Bulgaria has the highest poverty rates for elderly women (37.2%) and men (24.9%) in the EU. The gender gap in this area is also one of the largest, showing the impact of policies through the life-cycle.

The National Action Plan against violence has no gender analysis and only covers certain forms of violence experienced by women. Only 0.15 places in shelters for women victims of violence are available per 10,000 inhabitants. Women's associations estimate that 1 in 4 Bulgarian women has been a victim of physical or verbal abuse. According to the Alliance Against Domestic Violence (a coalition of 11 NGOs), the number of women asking for help doubled two-fold over the first 6 months of 2012 compared to 2011. Over the month of November 2012, more than 2,600 women received help from the Alliance.