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# The MeToo movement: its presence and impact at the Greek universities

A case study at one of the Greek universities

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## **Abstract**

This master thesis aims to examine the MeToo as a global movement by focusing mainly on the developments in Greece, from a historical and legal perspective. The main research question is whether the Greek MeToo movement has an impact on the Greek universities and especially on the students' life. I will attempt to answer to this question by an empirical research, implemented in the form of in-depth interviews with students of one of the Greek universities.

In the first part of the thesis, the history of the MeToo will be presented by analyzing the specific forms local manifestation of the movement in different countries. Then, I will explain the relevant legal instruments and documents concerning the protection of gender equality and the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence based on gender on the international and on the European level. Afterwards, a historical record of the Greek MeToo movement and an overview of the relevant Greek legislative developments will be provided, relating to gender equality, and to combatting sexual harassment and violence. I will discuss the results of the qualitative analysis and arrive to the conclusions that will be presented in the final chapter.

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## **Introduction**

This master thesis aims to examine the MeToo movement as a worldwide movement by focusing mainly on the Greek MeToo movement through a historical and legal perspective [Throughout the thesis, I will spell the name of the movement without # character, unless where I discuss survey results on the use of the hashtag, #MeToo.]. The main research question of the thesis is whether the Greek MeToo movement has an impact on the Greek universities and especially on the students' life. By conducting empirical research, I will attempt to answer whether the Greek MeToo movement had influenced the students at Greek universities to speak about and to reconsider their own past traumatic experiences, including discrimination, sexual harassment or/and rape experiences. It is important to take into account that the MeToo has evolved over the time, and it supports not only the victims of sexual harassment or/and rape but also the victims of every kind of discrimination and harassment, for instance people who suffer from workplace bullying.

In the first chapter, I will attempt to explain how this global movement begun and when it became popular since the time of appearance is different from its peak time, by highlighting the most important historical moments and presenting the main characteristics of the movement. Additionally, by analyzing the specific forms that MeToo took in certain countries, I will try to find the similarities and differences. These countries were chosen based on the availability and accessibility of relevant literature. Finally, I will briefly examine the relationship between the French MeToo and the May 68' movement.

In the second chapter, an analysis of the legal system on the international and on the European level will be presented, concerning the protection and promotion of gender equality and the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence based on gender, given that these issues constituted the principal and primary requests of the MeToo movement when it came to the light. By highlighting the most important regional document relating to this issue, namely the Istanbul

Convention, I will try to understand why it contributes to the protection of women against gender-based violence and why it would be necessary to be ratified by all the member states of the Council of Europe.

In the third chapter, a historical record will be provided of the Greek MeToo movement which began after Sofia Bekatorou's rape complaint against his former sailing coach. By analyzing the Greek MeToo movement, which is still on-going, since its start in late 2020, I will present the main features of it.

In the fourth chapter, I will examine how gender equality is protected and promoted and how the gender-based violence and harassment is prevented and combatted within the framework of the Greek legal system. I will also focus on the relevant fora at the Greek universities and specifically on the role of Gender Equality Committees which were established in 2019. This chapter constitutes one of the four thematic sections of my qualitative research.

In the fifth chapter, the results of the qualitative research, which was conducted at one of the Greek universities, in the form of in-depth interviews with 6 students, will be presented, and analyzed. With this research, I aim to find out whether the Greek MeToo movement had an impact on universities and especially on the life of students, whether the students are aware of the existence of the Gender Equality Committee and if the Committee is active and impartial. Finally, I wanted to examine whether the universities are gender-inclusive since in my point of view gender equality can be achieved not only by the legal but also by the education system, as the latter also plays a major role in the development of a democratic society. In the final part of the chapter, a presentation of several good practices of promoting gender equality, implemented at two Greek universities, will be provided.

Through the discussion of the research questions, I will come to the conclusions that will be presented in the last chapter of my thesis. In addition, I will raise several concerns that emerged in me after writing the theoretical part of thesis, stemming from the interviews regarding the future of the MeToo as a movement and regarding its potential to end harassment and discrimination in general, and rape culture specifically.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical background of my thinking about the issue of my thesis which consists of feminist theories, the theory of intersectionality and theories of social movements will be presented in this thematic section.

### *Feminist theories:*

Political scientist professor Tzanaki refers to feminist philosopher Silvia Federici who claimed that rape had been a common practice in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. According to Tzanaki, it was a time period that the hegemonic power was trying to control the poor social class through sexism and consequently through rape of the impoverished people. (Tzanaki, 2021) Angela Davis also emphasized the power relations within a society regarding the phenomenon of sexual harassment and sexual assault, where white women were initially credited with the creation of the MeToo slogan, whereas black women or women of color are marginalized by a large part of the society. As she states, “early work of black feminism and radical women of color feminism consisted of attempts to correct the historical record, pointing out that white women were not only the women who challenged misogyny and patriarchy, and that oftentimes women of color engaged these challenges in a more complex and intersectional way”. Davis claims that the system can be changed only with radical changes within the structure of a problematic society’s institutions, such as police which is characterized by racism. According to her, “it is important to break down ideological and cultural structures that legitimize gender violence and sexual violence”, such as the concept of marriage where violence is considered as a “domestic work”. (Davis, 2020)

The second wave of feminism highlighted violence against women issues as rooted in patriarchal oppression, a notable contributor is Catharine MacKinnon who has welcomed and supported openly the MeToo movement. She believes that “sex inequality is both complex and unstable”. It is complex due to its intersectional nature [race, ethnicity, class etc.] and unstable

because “it is based on a lie that women are inferior to men”. (MacKinnon, 2020) According to Walby, male violence has a social structure nature. She believes that men use violence as a form of power over women and that that the educational system has enhanced those power relations between men and women. (Walby,1989)

### Intersectionality

According to Yuval-Davis, the term intersectionality was introduced by Crenshaw in 1989, when she discussed black women’s employment. (Yuval-Davis,2006) Yuva-Davis suggests that intersectionality must be used as an analytical tool and not as an identity marker for the people, as the EU or the UN do in their official documents. (Yuval-Davis,2006) Through the concept of interesectionality, we examine the interrelationships of gender, class, race, ethnicity and other social divisions. As my professor Lída Balogh states intersectionality as an analytical tool “would not only deepen our understanding regarding the situation of those marginalized people who ‘live in an intersection’ [for instance in an intersection of race, sex, and class] but it would also broaden our interpretation regarding a number of social dynamics”. According to Lída Balogh, “an identity-centered conceptualization of intersectionality” can impose a risk to the solidarity networks, among the people who face an intersectional oppression. (Balogh, 2022)

### Social movements theory

During the history, mainly in Latin America but also in Europe, social movements contributed to the democratization of authoritarian regimes and to more participatory approaches of representative democracies. As della Porta and Diani state, a social movement emerges and develops, when a feeling of dissatisfaction disseminates and the responsible institutions are unable to respond. The collective identity of social movements can vary, in some cases, like in case of the women’s movement, it is stronger, while in other cases, for example in cases of youth movements it is weaker, according to della Porta and Diani. Collective identity is usally based on the shared orientations, mindsets, attitudes and shared experiences of action by the participants. They believe that when movements disappear from the sociopolitical scene, they would leave a “cultural or organizational trace behind”. (della Porta and Diani, 2006)

## 1. History of the MeToo movement

As for the origins, the MeToo movement was founded in 2006 by Tatiana Burke, an African American civil rights activist, who decided to use the phrase “me too” through “Myspace” [which is a social networking service and used to be very popular at that time] in order to address sexual harassment against women of color. Even though the MeToo movement started by focusing on women of color, white women finally became the leaders of this movement. More specifically, the MeToo movement turned out to be a global phenomenon on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October 2017 when the white American actress, Alyssa Milano posted on Twitter in which she asked from people to reply to her tweet by writing “me too” if had been sexually harassed or assaulted. (Milano,2017) Therefore, people usually associate the beginning of the movement with this time point.

Burke was born in the Bronx, and her childhood was difficult. She grew up in a violent environment in which she was raped and sexually assaulted. Her mother encouraged her to participate and to get involved in the community for supporting black women survivors of sexual violence. (Worthen, 2018) The reason why she decided to create this movement comes from her own past. In 1997 she worked for an organization in Alabama that ran a youth camp in which there was a girl who was 13 years and was sexually abused – Burke publicly call her Heaven every time she shares that story. One day this girl wanted to talk to Burke privately, and to share her the story: that her “stepdaddy”, or rather her mother’s boyfriend, had committed sexual violence against her. Nevertheless, she was not ready to hear her story, thus she rejected her and sent her to another female counselor. (Santiago and Criss, 2017). Heaven never came to the camp again, and Burke does not even know what happened to her. She felt guilty for her own behavior, and she started asking herself why she did not say to the little girl “me too”. That story, that inaction concerning this girl motivated her to start this campaign that become a movement. (Olhheiser,2017)

The aim of Burke was to empower women of color and to enhance their self-estimation through empathy. In addition to this, she wanted to demonstrate how sexual assault is prevalent everywhere either it is workplace or not. In 2006 Burke, created the Just Be Inc., a nonprofit

organization that helps victims of sexual harassment and assault and she gave to her movement a name: “MeToo”. On the one hand, this name indicates for her a “bold declarative statement that ‘I am not ashamed’ and ‘I am not alone’, as she states. On the other hand, it points out a “statement from a survivor to survivor that ‘I am here for you’. (Santiago and Criss, 2017) While she was working there, she noticed that the girls who were sharing with her their personal stories of sexual assault were not totally aware of the fact that they are victims. In addition to this, she realized that the girls were not taught how to recognize sexual violence or/and most of them would not have the courage to report sexual violence. Therefore, she decided to start a MySpace page for her project so as to become more visible and to attract a larger audience. She wanted people to see the work of her organization. (Stuart, 2019) Adult women began responding the MySpace page. One woman designer donated 1,000 “Me Too” T-shirts. Another movement supporter took the initiative to make the website. Burke did not expect that Me Too will gain such a great attention. (Olheiser, 2017) As Burke said, “it is not a viral campaign for me it is about a movement and that movement began in the deepest, darkest place in my soul”. (Santiago and Criss, 2017)

Later, as we will see, white women played an important role to popularize the movement. More specifically, it was Alyssa Milano, who posted on Twitter on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2017: “If you’ve been sexually harassed or assaulted write ‘me too’ as a reply to this tweet”. (Milano, 2017) Within 24 hours there were 55.000 of people who replied, commented, and retweeted this post among them who responded were the pop singer Lady Gaga, the American actress Viola Davis, the American actor Javier Muñoz, who is also a sexual violence survivor, and the American actress Evan Rachel Wood. One of the achievements of that movement was that people, and mostly women, who were not celebrities, became encouraged by Alyssa Milano and shared through Twitter their own stories of sexual harassment. (Pflum, 2018) Milano was inspired by a message from her friend, Charles Clymer who sent her a screenshot: “Suggested by a friend: if all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote ‘me too’ as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem”. (Sayej, 2017) Although, Milano credited Burke with creating the movement and posted on Twitter: “The origin story is equal parts heartbreaking and inspiring”, the whole attention was about white women’s personal stories. (Santiago and Criss, 2017) Many celebrities, inspired by the power of Milano to share her personal story publicly, decided to report Harvey Weinstein, who is a film producer, for rape and sexual abuse over a

period of at least thirty years. These accusations were published in the “New York Times” (Kantor and Twohey,2017)

The Pew Research Center found out that the #MeToo hashtag has been used more than 19 million time on Twitter from the date of Milano’s initial post through 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2018. That works out to an average of 55.319 users of hashtag per day. It is worth to mention that, according to their research data, 65% of adults in United States who use social media claim that at least some of the content that they are exposed to on these platforms concerns sexual harassment or assault. (Anderson and Toor,2018)

Professors Roe Levy and Martin Mattsson at Yale University examined the MeToo movement’s intensity in the countries of the OECD [Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development] by measuring the number of Google searches for MeToo related terms immediately after the movement launched: in terms of this measurement the movement was strong in Sweden, Canada, France, Finland the United States and in Netherlands, whereas was weak in Japan, Mexico, Colombia, and Slovenia, (Roe Levy and Mattsson, 2020)

### 1.1 The MeToo movement in France, Italy, Sweden, Spain, and Greece:

The MeToo movement quickly spread internationally. Although it took different forms the goal remained the same which is to encourage women and girls [as it evolved over the time, it included also the LGBTQI+ community] to share or/and report sexual abuse and to empower them. For instance, MeToo movement spread also in France. The French version of the #MeToo digital hashtag activism is called- “#Balance ton porc” which means “denounce your pig”. In general, one of the main differences between the MeToo and the #Balancetonpork is that the second one encouraged woman to share details, the name of the offender and the situation in which the sexual assault took place.

This French movement was created by Sandra Muller, a French journalist who urged women to share their stories. It became a viral hashtag and there is also a related website where the survivors had the opportunity to talk publicly about their experiences and to get legal advice and psychological support. (Nielsen, 2018)

However, the French version of reSeMeToo has been criticized from the very beginning by a considerable amount of people with an entertainment industry background. There were 100 celebrities from the 1968 generation, who stepped up against this movement by co-signing an open letter, published in the “Le Monde” in which they advocate for the “right to bother” (Nielsen, 2018) The letter argues that the two movements, #MeToo and #Balance Ton Pork have created a totalitarian climate by denouncing private experiences through social media. As they claimed the new movements had led to a new puritanism, something what they had tried to eliminate in 1968 by demonstrations. However, according to the women, who had signed the open letter “rape is a crime” but “the insistent or clumsy flirting is not a crime nor is gallantry a chauvinist aggression”. (Safronova, 2018) Among the signees was the French actress, Catherine Deneuve, one of the members of “the revolutionary generation” of the French feminists, who along with Christine Delphy, the French sociologist, signed a declaration in 1971 claiming that she had had an abortion when it was not legal. According to Deneuve, the #MeToo movement hampers sexual freedom for which she fought for during the May 1968 revolution. (Mchugh,2018)

It is noticeable that there is a “battle” between the generation of the French May ’68 who protested for sexual freedom and for control over their own bodies and the #MeToo generation who fall victims to sexual assault or/and harassment and who could not exercise, eventually, their rights over their bodies. According to Simon Kuper, author of the Financial Times, “the soixante-huitard” rejection of #MeToo was also a rejection of the US. He added that the “Parisian artistic elite had long defined itself by contrast with its transatlantic rival”. Therefore, the conflict between those two movements may be beyond the definition of sexual harassment and sexual freedom and may concern more cultural differences. (Kuper, 2021)

The historian Philippe Artières states that there was, actually, no sexual liberation in May ’68, the society remained “macho” in which the “girls were expected to make the sandwiches while the boys demonstrated”. As he argues, the social changes came only years after May ’68. (Chrisafis, 2018)

The Spanish version of Me Too is #YoTambien [which means literally: “me too”] launched by Estefanía Palomino, Spanish lawyer who made the same post on Twitter as Alyssa Milano, but it was written in Spanish. The #YoTambien hashtag gathered support not only from Spain but also from Latin America. Furthermore, the Italian version of Me Too is #quellavoltache, which means

“that time when”, was launched by Guilia Blasi, Italian blogger on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October three days before Alyssa Milano’s first post and after Asia Argento, an Italian actress and director, revealed that she had been raped in 1997 by Harvey Weinstein. Unfortunately, the Italian press was trying to belittle her and underestimate her personal experience by denouncing the abuse. As Lorella Zanardo, an Italian activist, states there is a strong sexist culture in Italian society that promotes a “rape culture” [meaning: an environment where rape is prevalent and sexual harassment or/and violence is normalized and excused by the social and traditional media] and the victim blaming. In contrast to Sweden, Spain and France, Italy had the lowest MeToo impact on local digital society. More concretely, according to the analysis of the Foundation for European Progressive Studies, the lowest number of relating tweets and users that tagged the MeToo recorded in Italy. (Foundation for European Progressive Studies, 2019)

In Sweden, the MeToo movement named as “sistabriefen”, [meaning: “the final brief”] was focused on sexual harassment at the workplace. The Swedish movement was launched in November 2017 and called for a change within the communication industry. (Foundation for European Progressive Studies, 2019) An important element of this initiative was a more collective awareness raising campaigns and specific measures that were taken to combat sexism: organizing petitions and filling group complaints.

In Greece, the MeToo movement arose in December 2019, when Sofia Bekatorou, a former Olympic champion revealed that she had been sexually assaulted by the Hellenic Sailing Federation (HSF) executive, Aristedes Adamopoulos, who was the vice Chairman of the Hellenic Sailing Federation Board at that time. She shared her personal story of sexual assault at an online event concerning the protection of children from sexual harassment in sports organized by the Ministry of Culture and Sport. During the next days, after Bekatorou’s accusation, there was an extremely high number of sexual assault and sexual harassment accusations disseminated through social media, mainly coming from the entertainment industry. The following months after the Olympic champion’s allegation, there was an increase in sharing sexual harassment and discrimination stories that occurred in the universities and workplaces and also cases of domestic violence were discussed through social and traditional media. In contrast to the countries that we mentioned before, Greek society did not change the name of movement by replacing with a Greek one. In addition to this, the MeToo hashtag was used through Greek social media and especially

Twitter after Bekatorou accused her offender. (Michael, 2021) However, the Greek case and especially the issue of sexual harassment at university campuses is going to be extensively analyzed in the next chapters.

According to the Foundation for European Progressive Studies the highest number of Tweets and users that tagged the MeToo (excluding those written in English, since tweets cannot be geo-tagged, the geographic origin of a tweet is proxied by the language) occurred in France and the lowest number in Italy in accordance with the population of each country separately. One of the reasons for this may be is the fact that Italian press tried to underestimate the significance of the MeToo. Despite the viral nature of the MeToo hashtag, local hashtags such as #Balancetonpork gained a significantly higher engagement. According to the sentiment analysis, which is a computational study of people's opinion, sentiments, emotions, appraisals and attitudes towards entities such as products, conducted by the Foundation, is that the tweets labelled #yotambien are those which triggered the most positive emotions, which is also logical as the Spanish legislation is more effective concerning the prevention and elimination of gender-based violence. (Foundation for European Progressive Studies, 2019)

Besides the globalization of the movement, MeToo is also important from the perspective of intersectionality. I use the term "intersectionality" as an analytical tool and not as an "identity marker," as Yuval-Davis suggested. According to my professor Lída Balogh, intersectionality as an analytical tool "would not only deepen our understanding regarding the situation of those marginalized people who 'live in an intersection' [for instance in an intersection of race, sex, and class] but it would also broaden our interpretation regarding a number of social dynamics". According to Yuval-Davis "intersectional analysis is relevant to all people".

MeToo gave voice not only to the cis [a person whose gender identity corresponds to their sex assigned at birth] straight women but also to LGBTQI+ people who are also victims of patriarchy. Many LGBTQI+ people were encouraged by this movement, to share and to report their sexual assault. For instance, in Greece after years of silence several LGBTQI+ people decided to report Dimitris Lignadis, who was the artistic director of Greece National's Theater, and he is accused of raping teenager boys and young adults. Furthermore, black women who are underrepresented in the dominant political scene were finally able to express their experiences of

intersectional oppression and consequently they were heard globally through the movement which is in line with Burke's initial motivation to launch it.

### 1.2 The main features of the MeToo movement:

In general, the MeToo constitutes mainly a grassroot online social movement, which took advantage of the digital tools to promote its demands. It started by giving attention to the cause women of color, then there was a shift to turning the attention [ in 2017, when the actress Milano posted the tweet regarding the MeToo] to the situation of women in general. Hashtag activism is one of its main features, that uses a hashtag to anchor the online conversation related to an online movement. Hashtags introduced by Chris Messina who is an American blogger. (Muller, Wood-Doughty, Amir, Dredze, and Nobles,2020). Many people that were usually excluded from the previous movements, they felt now that they can be represented. For example, due to the fact the MeToo is an online movement, many disabled people can protest without struggling with physical barriers and that constitutes one more proof of its inclusivity. In addition to this, people from around the world may be connected, they may have understood that they are not alone thus they have become stronger, and consequently the movement got more popular. According to della Porta and Diani new technologies contribute "to ease the communication between worlds once distant" using a language that "defies the censorship". The main method of the MeToo initiative, that is mostly used, is storytelling: the participants reveal their personal stories.

MeToo also became an offline movement manifested in many demonstrations. One of the landmarks in MeToo history was the Women's March in 2018 that took place in New York, in which women's organizations and groups coordinated mass rallies in order to show support for the growing movement against the rape culture, which is widespread in every sector of private and public life. Apparently, MeToo was a "galvanizing force at many of those rallies" (King, Castillo and Agrawal,2018). As we are going to examine in the Greek case, various rallies organized by feminist organizations took place when the court hearings relating to the case begun, in front of the Athens First Instance Court to support the victims who were sexually assaulted by Dimitris Lignadis. (see Picture No 1. and No 2. in Annex)

According to della Porta and Diani, “a social movement develops, when a feeling of dissatisfaction spreads and insufficiently flexible institutions are unable to respond”. (della Porta and Diani, 2006) As highlighting by the MeToo, the police is often unable to deal with sexual harassment and rape incidents and mainly is rather unable to create a safe environment to the victims, as reflected by the high proportion of unreported incidents across the EU, according to the survey of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. (FRA, 2014) One of the main features of social movements is the involvement in cultural or/and political conflicts either to resist to social transformations or to promote social change. (della Porta and Diani, 2006) Therefore, according to Leonidas Oikonomakis, the social movements that fight for social transformation has to take the important decision which “road to choose” to achieve their goal. We can already understand that the MeToo is a social movement promoting transformation, aiming for a society which is more gender-inclusive by promoting and protecting gender equality and by denouncing all forms of gender-based discrimination and violence.

As Tatiana Burke stated “it is beyond a hashtag. It’s the start of a larger conversation and movement for a radical community healing. (Burke, 2017) The MeToo movement also influenced a group of more than 300 women in Hollywood to create the “Time’s up” movement which works to preventing sexual harassment at the workplace. The aim of the Time’s up movement is to achieve fairness, safety, and equity in the professional realms. (Langone, 2018). It is generally accepted that MeToo has been evolved over the course of time by including all the people regardless their race, ethnicity, class, age, ability, religion, gender identity and sexual orientation. However, patriarchy still constitutes a major social problem, and more effort needs to be done in order to deal with it.

## **2. The relevant legal instruments and documents of the United Nations, Interamerican Human Rights system and of the European Union system**

### 2.1 The relevant legal instruments and documents of the United Nations

In the following paragraphs, I will provide an overview of provisions aimed at preventing and prohibiting gender-based violence, harassment and discrimination against women, and protecting gender equality in the relevant legal instruments and documents of the United Nations.

#### 2.1.1 The relevant UN documents on violence and discrimination against women and on the principle of gender equality

On 18<sup>th</sup> of December 1979, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**. On 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 1981, it entered into force as an international treaty. There are 189 states that have ratified or acceded to the treaty. (UN General Assembly, 1979) However, the United States have signed but not ratified the treaty. The convention was the “culmination of more than thirty years of work by the United Commission on the Status of Women [a global intergovernmental body with the aim of promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment, established by the **Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations resolution 11 (II)** of 21<sup>st</sup> of June 1946] (ECOSOC resolution 11(II), 1946) as it is stated in the introduction of the Convention. The Commission played a key role in detecting the areas in which women do not have equal rights with

men. The Convention is based on the “faith in fundamental human rights in the dignity and worth of human person and in the equal rights of men and women”. (UN General Assembly, 1979)

In the preamble, the Convention expresses concerns about that “extensive discrimination against women continues to exist” and recalls that discrimination against women constitutes an obstacle to the women participation “on equal terms with men in the political, social, economic, cultural life of their countries and to the society development. Article 2 of the Convention declares that the States Parties are obliged to “embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their national constitutions or in other appropriate legislation if not yet incorporated” and to take all appropriate measures in order to eliminate discrimination against women so they can be equal with men. (UN General Assembly, 1979)

The implementation of the Convention is monitored by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which is a body of 23 independent experts [who are nominated by their governments and elected by the States parties] on women’s right from all over the world. In accordance with the **Optional Protocol to the Convention** [which is adopted on 6<sup>th</sup> of October 1999], the Committee is authorized to receive communications from individuals or groups of individuals who submit claims of women rights violations and initiates inquiries regarding situations in which the rights of women are violated systematically or gravely. In addition to this, the Committee makes recommendations to the States Parties on women’s rights issues that they have not yet dealt with. (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) (UN General Assembly, 1999)

In 1992, the Committee issued for the first time a General Recommendation for violence against women [General Recommendation No 19]. In 2017, it adopted the **General Recommendation No 35** which provides “more comprehensive guidance” to eliminate in an effective way gender-based violence against women and girls. (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2017) Despite the fact that General Recommendation No 35 provides an “updated road map for preventing and combating violence against women” has disseminated in a limited way across the United Nations. (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2017)

In 1993, the World Conference on Human Rights took place in Vienna. One of the pivotal moments was the **Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action** which recognized that all

“human rights are universal, indivisible, and interdependent and interrelated”. It recognized “the human rights of women and of the girl-child are inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights”. One of the most important points was the focus on the elimination of violence against women in all fields of life and the eradication of all forms of sexual harassment. Additionally, it welcomed the decision of the Commission on Human Rights [which was replaced by the Human Rights Council in 2006] regarding the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on violence against women and called the UN General Assembly to adopt the draft declaration on violence against women. (The World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, 1993)

The **Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women** was adopted by the General Assembly on 20<sup>th</sup> of December in 1993 in its **resolution 48/104**. In Article 4 it urges the States to adopt “measures directed towards the elimination of violence against women” and to be accountable for the situation on women’s rights by submitting reports to the “relevant human rights instruments of the United Nations” about the steps [for instance, measures in the education field to reduce prejudices about women’s and men’s behavior] that have taken on that. (UN General Assembly, 1993)

On 4<sup>th</sup> of March in 1994 in the **Resolution 1994/45**, the UN Human Rights Council (formerly known as the Human Rights Commission) appointed a Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and its consequences constituting the first independent human rights mechanism on the elimination of violence against women. The mandate was extended by the Commission on Human Rights in 2003. (About the mandate-Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences) The Special Rapporteur seeks and receives information on violence against women, its causes and consequences from several bodies, for instance from governmental bodies and specialized agencies. Moreover, the Special Rapporteur transmits urgent appeals and communications to the States about the alleged cases of violence against women. (Annual Thematic Reports)

In September 1995 the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in China, adopted the **Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action**. It constitutes an agenda for the advancement of women rights and considered the “key global policy document” on gender equality. The Platform for Action covers 12 critical areas of concern, one of which is the ending violence against women. For each critical area of concern, strategic objectives are defined. As the former

Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile stated: “Gender equality is a shared vision of social justice and human rights”. The Beijing conference was the result of the three previous global conferences on women in Mexico City in 1975, in Copenhagen in 1980 and in Nairobi in 1995. (The Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995) (World Conference on Women)

### 2.1.2 The role of the UN Women

In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly created the **UN Women** which is the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. The main responsibilities of the UN Women concern the support of intergovernmental bodies, assistance to Member States to implement policies regarding the protection of women’s rights by providing technical and financial means to them. It holds the United Nations accountable for its own commitments regarding the achievement of gender equality. One of its priorities focuses on the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls. The UN Women works systematically on the follow-up to the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, which was adopted in 2015 by the world leaders. One of its 17 Sustainable Development Goals [SDG 5] concerns the gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls at all levels. (About UN Women) According to the UN surveys undertaken between 2005 and 2016 in 87 countries, 19 per cent of girls and women aged between 15 and 49 claimed that they had experienced physical or/and sexual violence by an intimate partner during the 12 months prior to the survey. According to UN surveys undertaken between 2005 and 2016 in 87 countries from Oceania, Sub-Saharan African, Central and Southern Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern Africa, Western Asia, and Europe, the prevalence of intimate partner violence against women is the lowest in Europe with levels of less than 10 per cent in most of the 29 countries with available data. (UN report, 2017) The UN Women has launched its **Strategic Plan 2022-2025** “with an eye toward the 2030 deadline to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). One of its thematic areas concerns the ending violence against women and girls by giving attention on the prevention of online violence

against women and on the investment in innovations and technologies that would promote gender equality. (UN Women, 2021)

The UN Women responded immediately to the MeToo movement which was gaining global attention and consequently to the sexual harassment incidents that came to light. On 19<sup>th</sup> October 2017, [four days after Alyssa Milano's post on Twitter about the MeToo] Phumzile Mlambo- Ngcuka, the Executive Director of the UN Women pointed to the journalists that this “online outcry is important because it is giving voice to acts that are public, but that are silenced and neutralized by convention”. She also highlighted the importance of women's participation in society, in politics and in the workplace. According to her, there must be an end with “casual indifference” and the men should be on the women's side in this struggle for gender equality. At the end of her speech, she saluted all the women “who have been fighting against all violations of women's and girls' rights”. (UN Women, 2017)

The UN Women has launched several initiatives concerning the prevention of harassment and abuse based on gender. For instance, **the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces** initiative was launched in 2011, soon after the establishment of UN Women, and was implemented with the support of local governments, UN partners, grassroots women's organizations, and women's rights organizations. It was focused on five cities [Cairo, Delhi, Kigali, Port Moresby, and Quito] in an effort to prevent and confront sexual harassment against women and girls in public spaces. The **UN Women Youth Council** was established in 2018 and consists of young professionals with the object of streamlining the youth focus in the internal policy of the UN Women and to also contribute to the 2030 Agenda. This Council raises awareness of the barriers that prevent young people from file a complaint of sexual harassment and it advocates for zero tolerance of sexual harassment in the workplace. Another initiative of the UN Women is the creation of the **UN Feminist Network (UNFN)** which was founded in 2016 to provide an “informal space” for feminists who work in the UN or in civil society organizations to network and to assist the UN in meeting its commitments to gender equality and women's rights. When the MeToo movement arose, the Network convened a meeting of more than 100 feminists to discuss the issues of sexual harassment, sexual assault and abuse of power that took place in multilateral development organizations at that time. Moreover, the UN Women published a **Global Guidance on Addressing School-Related Gender-Based Violence** (with UNESCO), a **Handbook on**

**Violence against Women and Girls on Sports** (with UNESCO), a **Handbook on Violence against Women in the World of Work** (with ILO), a **Handbook on Violence against Women and the Media** (with UNESCO) and a **Guidance Note on Addressing Violence Against Women in University Campuses**. In general, the UN Women follows a survivor-centered and human rights-based approach in their policies. (UN Women, 2018)

The UN Women also manage the **UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women**, which was established in 1996 by UN General Assembly Resolution 50/166 and is the only global grant-making mechanism that is working exclusively on addressing all forms of violence against women and girls. This UN Trust Fund awards grants to initiatives demonstrating the message that gender-based violence should be eliminated. (UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, About us) It also launched its Strategic Plan 2021-2025 which aims, among others, to strengthen partnership with civil society organizations (CSO) and women’s rights organizations (WRO). The focus of grant-giving for CSOs and WROs will remain on improving access for women and girls to essential, specialized, safe and multisectoral services, on improving prevention of violence against women and girls and on increasing the effectiveness of international and national legislations. (UN Women, 2021)

### 2.1.3 The role of the ECOSOC and the ILO

The Economic and Social Council [ECOSOC] adopted the **Resolution 2020/15** on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2020. A new multi-year work programme of the Commission on the Status of Women from 2021 to 2024 is included in the Resolution. The full and effective participation of women in the public sectors “as well as the elimination of violence for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls”, is one of its priorities. (Economic and Social Council, 2020)

The International Labor Organization [ILO] was formed in 1919, in the context of the League of Nations [which was the first worldwide intergovernmental organization with the aim of maintaining peace, formed after the WW1 and replaced by UN in 1946], and functions as a specialized agency of the UN]. The ILO issued a single overarching **Action Plan for Gender Equality**, in 1999 (Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Branch [GEDI]) (Foundation of the

League of Nations), and adopted several resolutions regarding the protection of women's rights, such as the Resolution concerning the promotion of gender equality, pay equity and maternity protection in 2004 and the Resolution on gender equality at the heart of decent work in 2009 which was proposed by the Committee on Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Branch (GEDI).(ILO, 2004) (ILO,2009) The Committee is part of the ILO office aiming to eliminate discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, indigenous status, disability and HIV status. (Committee on Gender Equality-International Labour Conference)

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of June 2019, the General Conference of the ILO adopted the **Violence and Harassment Convention**, which entered into force on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June 2021. This Convention urges the Member States to take all the appropriate measures and to adopt an “inclusive and gender-responsive approach” for preventing and eliminating violence and harassment [including gender-based violence and sexual harassment] at the workplace. It is binding only to those Member of the ILO whose ratification has been registered with the Director-General of the International Labor Office. (General Conference of the ILO, 2019)

#### 2.1.4 The contribution of the Geneva Group of Friends to Eliminate Sexual Harassment:

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of March 2021, the launch of the **Geneva Group of Friends to Eliminate Sexual Harassment** was announced during the 46<sup>th</sup> Human Rights Council in Israel, on behalf of Argentina, Canada, Estonia, France, Kenya, the Netherlands, Republic of Korea and Greece, in an attempt to promote awareness on sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse issues. It is a member state-led platform that organizes discussions and coordinates actions in different multilateral fora towards the eradication of the social phenomena of sexual harassment. In addition, it supports the ongoing efforts of international organizations, agencies, and programmes in this regard and urges the UNCHR [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees] to continue conducting training and awareness-raising on sexual misconduct. (Joint Statement of the Geneva group of friends to eliminate sexual harassment, 2021) (Permanent Mission of Greece in Geneva, 2021)

## 2.2 The relevant legal instruments and documents of the Inter-American Human Rights system

In this sub-chapter, an analysis of the relevant legal instruments and documents of the Inter-American Human Rights system aimed at preventing and eliminating violence against women and promoting gender equality will be provided.

### 2.2.1 The role of the OAS and CIM:

The **Organization of American States** (OAS) constitutes the world's oldest regional intergovernmental organization. The First International Conference of American States, which was held in Washington D.C between October 1889 and April 1890, established the International Union of American Republics [today is known as "Organization of American States"]. (Who We Are) The OAS came into force in 1948 with the signing of Charter of the OAS in Bogota, Colombia at the Ninth International Conference of American States. The Charter has been ratified by 34 independent states of the Americas [including USA] who are members of the OAS. As stipulated in the Article I of the Charter, "the American States establish by this Charter the international organization, that they have developed to achieve an order of peace and justice, to promote their solidarity, to strengthen their collaboration, and to defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity, and their independence". (Charter of the Organization of American States[A-41])

In 1928 the **Inter-American Commission of Women** (CIM) was established with a resolution of the Sixth International Conference on American States. It was the first intergovernmental body with the purpose of guaranteeing the recognition of women's rights. There are 34 Delegates, one for each OAS Member State. Since the time of its creation, it has become the principal forum for debating and formulating policy on women's rights and gender equality in the Americas. The main mission of the Commission is the formulation of a public policy agenda

“from a rights-based perspective for the full citizenship of women” and the eradication of violence and discrimination against them. (CIM Mission and Mandate)

In 1994 the OAS adopted the **Convention of Belém do Pará**, the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women which constituted the first international instrument on violence against women and has been ratified by 32 states. The USA have not yet ratified the Convention. The Preamble of the Convention affirms that: “violence against women constitutes a violation of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. Article 7 of the Convention urges the States Parties to take all the appropriate measures to “prevent, punish and eradicate” violence against women. (OAS, 1994)

The effective implementation of the Convention requires a systematic and independent evaluation process, which led to the establishment of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará (MESECVI) in October 2004 by the General Assembly of the OAS. MESECVI analyzes how the States Parties implement the Convention and is based on technical cooperation between the Parties and a Committee of Experts. MESECVI is the guardian of the Convention by monitoring that States comply with the obligations derived from it. (Historical Background) (About Monitoring)

In 2000, the OAS adopted the **Inter-American Program on Women’s Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality** (IAP) which obliges the States Parties of the OAS to take all the appropriate means to ensure the protection of women’s rights and to “systematically integrate a gender perspective in all organs, organizations and entities of the Inter-American system”. One of the responsibilities of the Inter-American Program on Women’s Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality, and of Inter-American Commission of Women is to ensure that women’s right issues are considered at the Ministerial meetings and other fora organized by the OAS. This process is known as SEPIA. SEPIA works on the sectors of labour (SEPIA I), justice (SEPIA II), education (SEPIA III) and science and technology (SEPIA IV). (Follow-up to the IAP)

### 2.2.2 The role of the IACHR

In 1994, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), which is a principal and autonomous organ of the OAS, created the Rapporteurship on the Rights of Women with the mission of examining the extent to which laws and practices on women’s rights in the OAS

member States comply with the general obligations defined in the regional human rights instruments, such as the Belém do Pará Convention, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. (Mandate) The Rapporteurship on the Rights of Women, which is one of the eight thematic rapporteurships of the IACHR, prepares specialized reports on women's right issues. For instance it prepared the thematic report on Access to Justice for Women Victims of Sexual Violence: Education and Health (-2011), which concerned the phenomenon of sexual violence in the educational and health institutions in the Americas. In addition, it assists the Commission to respond immediately to petitions and other reports concerning the women's rights violation cases in the region. (IACHR,2011)

In 2018, one year after the MeToo became widespread globally, the IACHR and other relevant United Nations, European and African Union's instruments called on all States and the responsible stakeholders to "end the global epidemic of gender-based violence against women". They claimed that the MeToo movement has managed to break the silence on sexual harassment and other forms of violence. However, the States must comply with their international and regional obligations by "closing gaps" in the elimination and prevention of gender-based violence on a global level, as they stated. (IACHR, 2018)

I decided to give attention on the Inter-American Human Rights System since the MeToo began in that region. Nevertheless, I recognize the importance of the other regional human rights systems outside Europe, such as the African Union and consequently the Maputo Protocol on Women's Rights which entered into force in 2005 and aims to eliminate of discrimination against women. (African Union, 2005)

### 2.3 The relevant legal instruments and documents of the European Union

In this sub-chapter I will attempt to provide an overview about the instruments and the documents [for instance treaties, reports and a charter] that address violence against women in a broad sense in the European Union context, given that the focus of my thesis is on a EU member state, Greece.

### 2.3.1 The principle of gender equality in general

The **Treaty on the European Union** (TEU) which entered into force in 2009, with the mission of designating the purpose of the European Union is one of the documents that recognizes the principle of gender equality. Article 2 of the Treaty points out that equality between women and men must “prevail” in a democratic society. (Official Journal of the European Union, 2012)

The **Charter of the Fundamental Rights of the EU** became legally binding after the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force in December 2009. The Charter covers the following six main topics: dignity, freedoms, equality, solidarity, citizen’s rights, and justice. (“Why do we need the Charter?”) Article 23 of the Charter states that the equality between women and men must be guaranteed in all areas “including work, employment and pay”. It adds that “the principle of equality shall not prevent the maintenance or adoption of measures providing for specific advantages in favor of the under-represented sex”. (Official Journal of the European Union, 2012)

One of the 20 principles that are defined in the **European Pillar of Social Rights**, presented by the European Commission, concerns gender equality. The principle of equal treatment of men and women must be guaranteed in all areas. (The European Pillar of Social Rights in 20 principles)

### 2.3.2 Resolutions

The European Parliament has adopted several resolutions regarding the phenomenon of gender-based violence. The first relevant resolution [**Resolution on violence against women**], was adopted on 11 June in 1986. In this document, the European Parliament calls all the Member States to recognize legally the offence of rape within marriage and call for “same treatment by the law of forced sexual acts within and without marriage. “It also called to broaden the concept of non-discrimination by adding discrimination on the basis of sex in the relevant legislation. Moreover, it urged national authorities to organize training programs for police officers on how to treat victims who report cases of sexual violence so that they “receive a serious hearing”. (European Parliament, 1986)

On 26<sup>th</sup> of November 2009, the European Parliament adopted the **Resolution of the elimination of violence against women**. It called upon the European Commission to propose a Directive on action to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women. It urged the Member States to “introduce a coherent system for collecting statistics on violence against women” and to raise awareness of young people on that issue by providing education campaigns for them. (European Parliament, 2009)

**The Resolution on priorities and outline of a new EU policy framework to fight violence against women**, was adopted on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2011 by the European Parliament. It proposed to create a “new comprehensive policy approach against gender-based violence” by including among them training courses for judges, criminal police officers, health and education professionals and staff who support the victims. (European Parliament, 2011)

By the **Resolution of 26 October 2017 on combating sexual harassment and abuse in the EU**, the European Parliament calls the Commission and Member States to “speed up the ratification of the Istanbul Convention” [European Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence]. The Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence [**Istanbul Convention**] was adopted by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers [which is an international organization, founded in 1949] on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2011 and it was opened for signatures on 11 May 2011, during the 121<sup>st</sup> Session of the Committee of Ministers in Istanbul. It entered into force on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2014. Article 1 of the Convention states that the purposes of the Convention are “to protect women that are victims of all form of violence, to prevent and eliminate such violence, to prosecute the perpetrator(s)”. Article 14 declares that States must take all the necessary measures to “include teaching material on issues such as equality between women and men, non-stereotyped gender roles, mutual respect, non-violent conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships, gender-based violence against women and the right to personal integrity adapted to the evolving capacity of learners, in formal curricula and at all levels of education”. One of the innovate points of the Convention, defined in Article 36: “sex without a consent constitutes rape”. According to this provision, “consent must be given voluntarily as the result of the person’s free will assessed in the context of the surrounding circumstances.(Council of Europe, 2011) According to Amnesty International, the Istanbul Convention “is the most far-reaching international treaty” that is specifically designed to combat

violence against women and domestic violence, by condemning all forms of domestic violence, including acts of psychological and economic violence, according to the Article 3 of the Convention. (Amnesty International, 2021) (Council of Europe, 2011) In addition, the Convention contributed to enhance the State parties' legislations regarding the protection of women's rights, such as the Greek legislation, as it will be presented in the following chapters. Another significant element of the Convention is that it obliges the Parties to create protection and support services for victims, such as psychological counselling, medical care, telephone helpline, free of charge, and safe accommodation for the victims and for their children. (Council of Europe, 2011) As Amnesty International pointed out, "the key element of that Convention" is that it obliges the States parties to implement its provisions without discrimination on any grounds. (Amnesty International, 2021) As we can understand, the Istanbul Convention expresses the voices of all women who may face intersectional discrimination. GREVIO is the monitoring mechanism for the implementation of the Convention. GREVIO is a group of experts on action against violence against women and domestic violence and is independent from the Council. (Council of Europe, 2011)

Turning back to the relevant initiatives of the European Parliament, it "welcomed" in a resolution, initiatives as the #MeToo movement". (European Parliament, 2017) It calls on the President of Parliament and Parliament's administration to straighten the role of its Advisory Committee [which deals with harassment complaints from Accredited Parliamentary Assistants and Members of the European Parliament] as well as its Staff Advisory Committee [which cope with harassment complaints from Parliament staff with the prevention of harassment at the workplace]. It supports and encourages victims to report their accounts of sexual harassment to the responsible Committees or/and to the police. (European Parliament, 2017)

On 16<sup>th</sup> September 2021 the European Parliament adopted the **Resolution on identifying gender-based violence** as a new area of crime listed in Article 83(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). (Official Journal of the European Union, 2012) It highlights that during the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a "worrying increase" in the number of women and girls who became victims of gender-based violence. It "welcomes the MeToo movement" as it "symbolizes the voices of women breaking the wall of silence" concerning their personal stories of sexual harassment and sexual violence. In addition, it condemns femicide [which is the intentional killing of women or girls by men because they are

female] as the most severe form of gender-based violence against women and girls highlighting that the European Union must create a plan on preventing and combating violence, detecting situations of risk, and supporting victims. It reiterates its call to the European Commission to conclude the Union's accession of the Istanbul Convention. It requests the Commission to submit, based on Article 83(1) of TFEU, a third subparagraph identifying gender-based violence as new area of crime that meets the criteria specified in that Article.

On 14<sup>th</sup> December 2021, the European Parliament adopted the **Resolution on combatting gender-based violence: cyberviolence**. It welcomes the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, created by the Commission to tackle violence against women and to promote gender equality in all levels. It highlights the importance of the media and social media in raising awareness on preventing and combatting gender-based cyberviolence. It calls Member-States to cooperate with online platforms with a view to securing the online safety of women to protecting women's privacy on Internet. It urges the Commission and the Member States to develop specific services for victims of cyberviolence, for instance helplines and legal assistance. (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2021)

In the resolution on **MeToo and harassment-the consequences for the EU Institutions**, adopted on 10<sup>th</sup> of December 2021, the European Parliament recognizes the significance of the MeToo movement and its impact on EU institutions. However, it points out that there is still a lot of steps to be taken towards an end to sexual harassment. It "repeats its call for the Council to conclude the EU's ratification of the Istanbul Convention on the basis of a broad accession without any limitation". In addition, it calls the services of the Parliament to "make anti- harassment training available in all official languages or with interpretation and to target outreach activities at individual delegation and political groups". (European Parliament, 2021)

### 2.3.3 Directives

Besides the resolutions, the European Parliament and the Council adopted several directives, one of which is **the Directive 2006/54/EC on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation**. The Article 26 of the Directive calls the Member States to encourage "employers and those responsible for vocational training" to take the appropriate measures in order to prevent all

forms of discrimination, based on sex, including harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace. (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2006)

The Council of the European Union and the European Parliament adopted **the Directive 2012/29/EU on establishing minimum standards on the rights, support protection of victims of crime and replacing Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA**. Article 8 and article 9 of the Directive provide that Member States should provide “free of charge and confidential specialist support services” to the victims, such as emotional and psychological support, and “integrated support” for victims of sexual violence. (Council of the European Union and European Parliament, 2012)

On 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022, the **proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and the Council of European Union on combatting violence against women and domestic violence** was launched, aiming to effectively tackle the gender-based violence [including cyberviolence] throughout the EU by proposing measures of criminalization of and sanctions for relevant offences, of protection and support victims by facilitating access to justice and concrete prevention measures. (European Parliament and Council of European Union, 2022)

#### 2.3.4 Strategies

The European Commission presented on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 2020 the new **EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025**. (Gender Equality Strategy: Striving for a Union of equality, 2020) The main goal of the Strategy is “a Union where women and men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, are free to pursue their chosen path in life, have equal opportunities to thrive and can equally participate in and lead our European society”. One of the key objectives of the Strategy concerns the eradication of every form of gender-based violence. It attempts to include the gender perspective in every EU policy and process [this approach is known as gender mainstreaming]. Under the new Strategy, the Commission will publish in 2023 an improved data collection from an EU survey on gender-based violence and on other forms of interpersonal violence. One of the most important objectives of the Strategy is ratification of the Istanbul Convention by the EU. Moreover, it proposes a Digital Service Act with the mission of addressing illegal and harmful content. It launches an EU-wide communication campaign to tackle gender-based stereotypes.

(Questions and Answers: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, 2020) Furthermore, the Commission committed to stop gender stereotypes in the education area and to address other specific problems based on gender, for instance bullying, online violence, and sexual harassment of girls. To achieve these goals, the Commission created 7 working groups [including representatives of international organizations, Member-States and NGOs] with the aim to identify the challenges in the education area and to detect good practices. In 2021, the Commission published education toolkits for teachers and students in primary and secondary school to identify and fight gender stereotypes (European Commission, 2022) (Educational toolkits to help to fight gender stereotypes) According to Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission since 2019, “with the Gender Equality Strategy, we are pushing for more and faster progress to promote equality between men and women”. (European Commission,2020)

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of November 2020, the European Commission and the High Representative for the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy presented the **Gender Action Plan III** (GAP III) with the mission of “promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment through all external action of the European Union”. One of the five pillars of the Plan concerns the fight against gender-based violence. In addition, the Plan attempts to mainstream gender equality in all policies and actions of the EU by challenging the gender norms and stereotypes. (Gender Action Plan-putting women and girls’ rights at the heart of the global recovery for a gender-equal world, 2020)

The **first Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Development** was adopted by the EU in 2010. By 2015, about 50% of the money of EU Official Development Assistance contributed to gender equality and women’s empowerment. In November 2015, **the Gender Action Plan II, “Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020 (GAP II)** was adopted. (Gender Equality and empowering women and girls)

The **EU’s Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024** “reaffirms the European Union’s strong commitment to further advance the universal values for all”. One of the key objectives is the promotion and reinforcement of gender equality across the EU by eliminating inequalities and all forms of discrimination against women and girls. (European Council,2020)

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of June 2020, the European Commission adopted its **first-ever strategy on victim's rights for the period 2020-2025**. It pays specific attention to the victims of gender-based violence: according to the Strategy, the EU will take all the necessary measures to support and protect the victims of such crimes, and the Commission will encourage the Member States to establish Family Houses for protecting the victims. (European Commission, 2020)

### 2.3.5 Surveys and Studies

**The Fundamental Rights Agency of the EU (FRA)** conducted a survey in 2014 to examine the prevalence of violence against women in the EU. The survey was based on interviews with 42.000 women across the 28 Member-States of the EU. According to the findings, at least one in three women has experienced physical or/and sexual violence since the age of 15. According to the research findings, one in four victims of sexual assault by either a partner or a non-partner did not contact the police or any other organization with regards to the case, because of shame or embarrassment. Another important finding of the FRA survey was that “one in five women have experienced unwelcome touching, hugging or kissing since the age 15”. Of those women who have been victims of this form of harassment since the age of 15, 32% indicated a colleague, a boss, or a customer as the perpetrator(s). (FRA,2014)

**The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)** is an autonomous body of the European Union, established in 2007. Its main missions include the promotion of gender equality by including gender perspectives in all EU policies and the fight against of all forms of discriminations. (About EIGE) EIGE has published several studies on gender-based violence, including a report on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States. (EIGE, 2020) It has published a strategic framework on violence against women for the period of 2015-2018, highlighting the steps to be taken by the EU institutions and the national authorities of the Member States. (EIGE's work on gender-based violence)

### 3. The MeToo movement in Greece

The MeToo movement in Greece was belated. The global social movement against sexual harassment and sexual abuse arose in December 2019 when the Olympic athlete Sofia Bekatorou in an interview posted on YouTube with the Marie Claire magazine, decided to be the first who breaks the silence and reveals publicly her personal story of sexual assault. On 14<sup>th</sup> of January 2021, she shared in detail her story of sexual abuse by a member of the Hellenic Sailing Federation at an online event concerning the protection of children from sexual harassment in sport, organized by the Ministry of Culture and Sport. (Marie Claire, 2020) Bekatorou was sexually assaulted in 1998, when she was 21 years old by the responsible man at that time for preparing the national team of Hellenic sailing, whom she saw as a “father figure” as she stated. (Ekdilosi tis GGA- "Start to Talk ,2021) After that event, the Hellenic Sailing Federation (HSF) stated that they had not received any complaint or letter from her and asked her to reveal more information about that. (Deltio typou,2021). Bekatorou as she alleged to the media, she felt disappointed for Hellenic Sailing Federation’ reaction. (“Apantisi Mpekatorou: Oloi katalavenyme giati den milisa”,2021) The next day, the Hellenic Sailing Federation requested and received the resignation of Aristedes Adamopoulos, who was the vice Chairman of the Hellenic Sailing Federation Board at that time, from the position of Representative of Hellenic Sailing Federation (Deltio typou, 2021). On 20<sup>th</sup> of January the Olympic sailing athlete filed a complaint to the prosecutor that Aristedes Adamopoulos was her sexual abuser. (“Sofia Bekatorou: Katathetei ston eisagelea gia tin ypotesi tis sexualikis parenoxlisis”,2021) Bekatorou, as she claimed in the online event, she was afraid of accusing him because he had a prominent position in the field of sports.

The Greek President, Katerina Sakellaropoulou invited Bekatorou to her office and praised her for having the courage to speak out for her sexual assault. Sakellaropoulou posted on her personal Facebook account that Bekatorou helped her to feel empathy for all the women “who have been verbally or physically abused” (Sakellaropoulou, 2021), “to all those who carry their trauma silently for years, not daring to denounce it, because they know inwardly that they will be

treated at best with pity or suspicion and at worst with contempt, ridicule, and even social stigma”. She added that “It is time to build a value system in which women will not be treated as potential prey, their weakness will not be seen as consent and their silence will not be criticized as quasi-complicity,” (Kokkinidis, 2021)

The Olympic athlete also had the support of Greek Prime Minister, Konstantinos Mitsotakis of “Nea Dimokratia” party who posted on his personal account on Facebook that “Bekatorou’s decision to denounce the sexual violence that she experienced as a young adult constitutes a very important act that awakens consciences and motivates the society for taking action”. He also urged the people to not be afraid of reporting. (Mitsotakis,2021)

Despite of the Bekatorou’s accusations, Adamopoulos, who was also a member of the ruling party “Nea Dimokratia” has still not admitted what he did to her. He denies that he raped her. (ToVimaTeam,2021) (“I grapti apantisi tou Aristidis Adamopoulos gia tis katangelies tis Sofias Bekatorou,2021) Although, that crime is statute-barred because it occurred 24 years ago, Bekatorou case led to the resignation of all Offshore Committee members [13 members] from the Hellenic Sailing Federation by sending a “letter of resignation” to its President. According to them, “Federation's reaction to the Sofia Bekatorou’s complaint is far from the basic principles of sports protection, recognizing their rights and encouraging the denunciation of any abuse of power”. (Spanea, 2021)

Another important element of this case was the fact that the Bekatorou encouraged Amalia, a young woman sailing athlete to report her sexual offender. After the reveal of Bekatorou’s story of sexual abuse, Amalia texted her and shared with her that she was sexually abused by her coach when she was 11 years old. As she stated in an interview, at the age of 14 she decided to share it with her parents. (OPEN TV, 2022) According to the police officer who was called as a witness by the court, her parents went to the police and ask for explanation the complaint procedure. However, they never reported the incident to the police. (“Diki proponiti gia viasmo 12chronis: Ti katethese synathlitria tis katangellousas”,2022) Amalia added in an interview that her parents “were afraid of the stigma, thus “they did not take legal action”. As she mentioned, “my parents reported this incident only to the council of the Sailing Group. Nevertheless, as she stated, “the members of that group hid the issue” and belittled her. (OPEN TV, 2022) One of the witnesses, who was a fellow athlete with Amalia argued that Amalia was in love with their coach. (“Diki

proponiti gia viasmo 12chronis: Ti katethese synathlitria tis katangellousas”,2022) However, even Amalia was in love with him as the witness argued, she was 11 years old at that time meaning that she was not mature enough to understand that she was seduced by him. Despite of the accusations, the coach did not admit that he had harassed sexually and raped her. In addition to this, he claimed that he had been in love with her, that they had been about to get married and that her mother had agreed to this plan. (“Rape of an 11-year-old athlete: The coach's confession is creepy -" We had a relationship, I wanted to marry her”,2022) The trial in which Bekatorou is one of the witnesses begun on 12 of January 2022 and constitutes the first trial of the Greek MeToo. (Xekinise i proti diki MeToo stin Ellada,2022) Bekatorou claimed to the court that Amalia’s coach used manipulation methods, known as ‘grooming’ [takes place when the perpetrator sets a plan for abusing another person, such as child] which is very common in the sports field, to seduce and consequently to rape her. (“Viasmos méso grooming”e katethese i Bekatorou sti diki tou proponiti istioploias,2022) (Urban Dictionary)

On 14<sup>th</sup> of June 2022, the Mixed Jury Court of Athens found unanimously the coach guilty of abusing a minor athlete in 2011. Although the district attorney had proposed the guilt of the accused for continuous rape and abuse in continuous indecency, the Court did not accept the district attorney’s proposal. The Court’s decision on the request for recognition of mitigators is awaited. (“Enochos gia aselgia, alla ochi gia viasmo o proponitis tis Amalias”,2021)

Zeta Doyka who is a Greek actress, was the second person after Bekatorou who shared in a TV show her personal story of psychologically and physically abuse by the Greek director and actor, George Kimoulis. According to her, when they were working together there were many times in which he belittled her. She admitted that she was a victim of workplace bullying. She added that one time before the theatrical play begins, he kicked her. Doyka mentioned the ‘victim blaming’ which is widespread in society and constitutes a barrier for every kind of violence survivors to report their offenders as they are afraid that they will be held responsible for the harm. The following hours after Doyka’s statement, the Greek actresses, Katerina Geronikolou and Evdokia Roumelioti also accused Kimoulis for verbal and physical assault. More specifically, Geronikolou posted on her personal account on Instagram that she was afraid of speaking out and that Doyka helped her to find the courage to accuse him. (Geronikolou, 2021) Roumelioti shared in a TV show that when she was 25 years old, Kimoulis had verbally abused her while they were

working together. She was afraid to defend herself since he had a strong reputation in the entertainment industry. (“Pame Danai”, 2021) There are at least 10 other actors, both female and male who came forward to accuse Kimoulis of workplace bullying, among them is the actress Katerina Papoutsaki who stated that she faced vocal problems when she was working with him. (Katerina Papoutsaki gia tis katagelies tis Zetas Doyka, 2021)

Nevertheless, Kimoulis rejected those accusations, as already Adamopoulos and the sailing coach had done. After those incidents, the organizers of the Athens and the Epidaurus Festival removed him from a play which was about to be staged at the ancient Epidaurus theater in the summer of 2021. (Kitsantonis, 2021) On 29<sup>th</sup> of January 2022, the board of Directors of Hellenic Actors Union decided the referral of Kimoulis to the Disciplinary Board [it is an independent of the Union and democratically and legally elected] to examine the public complaints that coming from more than 10 actors against him. Currently he is seeking compensation from Doyka, the other alleged victims and from the Hellenic Actor’s Union. He blamed the Hellenic Actor’s Union for humiliating him and for destroying his career. On 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2022, the Board of Directors made a proposal before the General Assembly to remove Kimoulis from the Union after his reaction to this. As the Union stated the Disciplinary Board has still not taken a decision (“Anakoinosi gia tin agogi tou G. Kimouli”, 2022) On 10<sup>th</sup> of April 2022, the General Assembly decided the final removal of Kimoulis from the Union. (Chrysikou, 2022) However, Kimoulis was lucky concerning the time of the accusations arose, because there were more serious accusations that came after it. Therefore, there was a shift of public attention from Kimoulis to the Greek actors and directors Filipidis and Lignadis, as it is going to be analyzed below.

On 29<sup>th</sup> of January 2021, Jenny Botsi, Aggeliki Lampri and Loukia Mihala who are Greek actresses published on their personal account on Instagram that Kostas Spiropoulos ,Greek actor and director, he sexually abused them.(Botsi,2021) The lawyer of Spiropoulos claimed that “his client sincerely regrets if he had ever offended someone or had ever made someone to feel uncomfortable” (“Kostas Spyropoulos: I proti apantisi meta tis katangelies gia sexualiki parenochlisi”, 2021) The following days, 14 actors [including the above mentioned actress] filed a complaint to the Hellenic Actors Union against Spiropoulos who sexually abused them between 1994 and 2005. According to the announcement of the Union General Assembly posted on its personal account on Facebook, the Disciplinary Board could not launch a disciplinary procedure

since Spiropoulos is not a member of the Union. However, the Disciplinary Board submitted those complaints to the prosecutor so as the criminal procedure against him to be initiated. They also notified to the Ministry of Culture, to the professionals Associations that the offender may take part in, to any public body that finance productions where he may be involved in and to committees in which he is a member of. According to this statement, there were also 11 official complaints against Alexandros Kakavas who is the President of Screen Writers Association. Kakavas by luring actresses with promises of career advancement, had sexual abused them during the period of 2004 -2017. (“SEI - HAU, Somatio Ellinon Ithopoion - Hellenic Actors Union”, 2021)

On 4<sup>th</sup> of February, Anna-Maria Papaharalampous, Pinelopi Anastasopoulou and Lena Drosaki, Greek actresses, reported the Greek actor and director Petros Filippidis to the Hellenic Actors Union for sexual harassment and workplace bullying. As Drosaki alleged Filippidis who was already a famous person at that time, threatened her several times while she was a student in a drama school by telling her that if she does not have sexual intercourse with him he will do anything to not pass the final exams of “becoming officially” an actress.(Drakontidis, 2021) After those complaints the Greek channel ERT announced that Filippidis will no longer participate in the shootings of the TV show called“ Chaireta mou ton Platano”. (“ERT: Ektos gyrismaton tis seiras «Chaireta mou ton Platano» o P. Filippidis ”, 2021)

On 10<sup>th</sup> of April 2022, the General Assembly of the Hellenic Actors Union decided the final removal of Filippidis from it (Chrysikou 2022) and submitted those complaints to the prosecutor, so as the criminal procedure against him to be initiated. The trial of the Filippidis case finally begun on 18<sup>th</sup> of March. (“Xekinise me dilosi apochis tis eisangeleos edras i diki tou Petrou Filippídi - Apon o ithopoulos”,2022) One of the victims, who claimed that Filippidis had raped her in 2008 in a dressing room, was asked by Filippidis’s lawyer to present how the rape occurred. This is a very sensitive question to ask from the alleged victims who feel vulnerable to speak about their traumatic experiences, even if the rape has not been proved yet. The court rejected his request. (“Anaparastasi viasmou zitise i yperaspisi Filippidi”,2022) Currently, Filippidis is detained in Tripoli’s prison. (“O Petros Filippidis odigithike stis fylakes Tripolis-Ton thermometrisan stin eisodo”2021) On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July the Mixed Jury Court of Athens, accepted the request of Filippidis’s lawyer regarding the release from his pretrial detention, while the trial is still on-going.(Mandrou, 2022)

On 6<sup>th</sup> of February in 2021, Eliana Aravi alleged during an interview in a TV show that the Greek actor and politician Pavlos Haikalis sexually harassed her when she was a student at a drama school. After that, Haikalis apologized for his behavior by publicly announcing that he “feels sorry if this had ever happened”. (Open TV, 2021) Aravi had already reported that incident to the Hellenic Actors Union, which on 10<sup>th</sup> of April in 2021 decided to remove Haikalis from the Union. (Chrysikou,2022) The following days 4 women accused Haikalis of sexual harassment and assault. As Christina Z. - one of his victims, stated in an interview that Haikalis tried to rape her in the late 1980s, when she was 25 years old. (ERT TV show,2021) Haikalis rejected those accusations by stating that “he cannot be presumed as guilty without being proved”. (Arneitai kai tis 5 katagelies o P. Haikalis, 2021)

One of the most important cases of Greek MeToo is the Dimitris Lignadis case. More specifically, the former director of National Theater of Greece has been detained of rape. Lignadis, who is a “powerful cultural figure” well-known for his acting and directing (Smith, 2021) had been accused of sexually assaulting at least 4 men when they were young adults or teenagers. Accusations first surfaced on 6<sup>th</sup> of February in 2021 when one of his victims, Nikos S., shared in an interview on the online platform “20/20” his extremely violent experience of sexual abuse with Lignadis. In 2005, when Nikos was 19 years old, Lignadis invited him to his house under the pretext of helping him to become a good actor by presenting a monologue from the “Glass Menagerie”, a very famous screenplay of Tennessee Williams. Nikos was enthusiastic that Lignadis, who is one of the most famous Greek directors, would help him. Nevertheless, Lignadis never helped him with the monologue and obliged him to have sexual intercourse with him and with another young boy who was also there. After the traumatizing experience Nikos, was very shocked and decided to “give up” his dream of becoming an actor. (Hatziantoniou, 2021) Although, the crime is statute-barred, the victim pointed to the prosecutor’s office as a witness in the case of a young Egyptian man whom he met, as he reported on social media. The Egyptian man testified to the prosecutor that he had been raped by Lignadis in 2015 at Epidaurus not long before his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. After that accusation, Lignadis resigned from the position of director. (Kokkali, 2022)

The second accusation to the police came from another young Egyptian man who currently lives in Sweden and was raped by Lignadis, in the Lignadis house, when he was 16 years old in

2011. As the victim alleged to the “Uncover podcast”, Lignadis is a “professional criminal” and “many lives have been saved since the Greek director and actor is detained in the prison”. After that accusation, on 20<sup>th</sup> of February 2021, the prosecutor ordered the imprisonment of Lignadis. (Marketos and Nassopoulos, 2022) The third victim was sexually abused in 2018 after Lignadis dragged him. The fourth victim was 17 years old in 2015 and faced many problems in his life because his family did not accept his sexuality [same sex attraction]. Lignadis was trying to be a “father figure” to him and to take advantage of his vulnerability. Lignadis hosted to his house for 7 months and he sexually abused him 4 times. (ERT TV, 2021) As he stated to the court, Lignadis while psychologically supporting him, was manipulative to him, for instance he obliged to commit sexual acts with him and also with other also people. (LignadisTrialWatch) There are many witnesses who defend the alleged victims, among them is the trans activist and actress Tzef Montana who was sexually harassed by Lignadis. Montana was subjected to a transphobic attack during the trial by Lignadis’s lawyer, Kougias. As Tzef Montana claimed in the interview for the ‘Uncover podcast’ “the root of the problem was the patriarchy and we had to come up with radical ideas to change the situation”. According to her, it is important to have a legal system that protects the victims and empowers them to report their personal stories of abuse in general.

Moreover, Lignadis was blamed for sexual abusing unaccompanied refugee children who were supported by the NGO “Solidarity Now”. Neighbors of Lignadis alleged that many children from different countries had been invited to Lignadis’s house several times in 2017 and 2018 with the excuse of offering them theater classes. (Lampropoulos,2021) The “Solidarity Now” denied publicly those accusations by claiming that the organization “has never been involved with the theater, theatrical play or activities in which the Greek director participated”. (Deltio Typou & Diapsefsi, 2021) However, there are no testimonies submitted to the prosecutor concerning this issue.

In March 2021, a letter was found among the personal belongings of Lignadis confiscated by the police. The letter is unsigned and addressed to “Mr President”. It denounces “love stories” of Lignadis with schoolgirls and calls the “President” to take actions. Although, the letter still constitutes a mystery as the identity of the author is not known. Apparently, the letter was meant to be addressed to Georgios Babiniotis, who was the President of the “Society for the Promotion of Education and Learning [also known as Filekpaideftiki Etaireia, a non-profit education

organization that administrates the schools in Greece under the name of “Arsakeio”] during the period of 1993-2001 when Lignadis was the head of the theatrical workshops in these schools. Babiniotis rejected those accusations by claiming that he “had not received any complaint regarding Lignadis’s behavior” and if he had known about this incident, he “would have taken immediately action”. The following days, 399 people who are alumni of Arsakeio schools during the period of 1994-2018, expressed through a letter addressed to the Filekpaideftiki Etairia their support to the students who may had been victims of any kind of harassment committed by their professors and the urgent need of investigating the real facts behind that case. They also added that they are aware of harassment incidents had taken place in their school. (Hatziantoniou, 2021) They recommended creating an anonymous system of reporting in which the students will feel free to denounce any kind of offense committed by the professors and to establish a code of conduct that will regulate the relationships between students and professors. (Drakontidis,2021)

On 26<sup>th</sup> June of 2022, several alumni of Arsakeio schools who were members of Arsakeio theater group during the period of 1996-2002, they anonymously sent a letter to the 20/20 magazine. They refuted the defense witnesses’ testimony of Lignadis about the fact that there was a supervisor in his theater group lessons. As they stated, “the supervisor was present only at the theater plays and at the trips that were organized by the theater group”. According to them, Lignadis had inappropriate, seductive, and harassing behavior during and after the lessons and he had sexual intercourse with some of his students. (Kefala, 2022) On 28<sup>th</sup> of June Niki Papagianni, who graduated from Arsakeio schools in 2008, she claimed in the 20/20 magazine that Giannis Lignadis, Dimitris Lignadis’s brother, who was a professor at Arsakeio schools had sexual relations with some of his students. She personally knows the women that they had sexual intercourse with Giannis Lignadis at that time. As she argued she felt uncomfortable when Giannis Lignadis asked from her to go out for a drink to discuss about one of her friends who wanted to pass the exams of the National Theater [as she had previously confessed to him] where Dimitris Lignadis was involved in. Although, Papagianni wanted to testify to the prosecutor about these stories, she had never been included to the list of people who were called by the court to testify, as she mentioned in the interview with 20/20 magazine. (Tahtsidis,2022)

Lina Mendoni who is the Greek Minister of Culture and Sport in the cabinet of Kyriakos Mitsotakis appointed Lignadis as Director of the National Theater of Greece in August 2019 by

announcing at the Parliament that she “would withdraw the previous job advertisement for that position”, which had been published by the previous government party and which is also established by the relevant legislation. She claimed that she reacted in that way for reasons of public interest. When the first accusation of Lignadis surfaced, the Greek Minister claimed at the Greek parliament that she “was deceived” by him. Although, she had appointed him without following the typical procedures that defined by the law [publishing a job advertisement] she denied the accusations of the opposition party “SYRIZA” of having personal relationship with him. (I kivernisi exei yposhethi to “Ethniko” ston Lignadi prin apo tis ekloges”,2021) In addition to this, she stated that he is a “dangerous man”. The Prime Minister was also accused by “SYRIZA” of having close relations with him since there are many photographs proving that they already known each other before the incidents. Nevertheless, the Prime Minister denied that he would be a friend of Lignadis but made a counter-accusation against the former Minister of Culture and Sport, Koniordou by claiming that the latter was aware about Lignadis’s abusive behavior. (Ioannidis, 2021)

Lignadis rejected all those accusations. Kougias characterized the alleged victims as “professional gay” (ANT1 TV, 2021) who try to “use” their sexuality to achieve “political goals” in a TV show. There are 887 people who are coming from entertainment industry and media, and who signed an open letter denouncing the targeting of actors and journalists by Kougias and expressing their concern about the homophobic way in which Kougias expresses himself. They also denounced him for trying to identify homosexuality with pederasty. (“Fouskonei o katalogos ton ypografon enantion ton praktikon stochopoiisis tou Kougia kata tin yperaspisi tou Lignadi”,2022)

The trial begun on 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 2022 after it was delayed by the court upon the request of Kougias. (Dimitris Lignadis / Xekinise i diki tou gia tous tesseri viasmous - Arneitai tis katigories, 2022) The trial is recorded by the “Lignadis Trial Watch” which was created on the initiative of “Reporters United” [a network of reporters that aims to support the investigative journalism in Greece]. (“An introduction to Reporters United”) Each time when there is a hearing related to Lignadis’s trial, there are a lot of people gathering outside the court and supporting the victims by singing slogans in favor of them and against the sexual abuser. Among the organizers of these demonstrations is the Open Orchestra, which was created in 2021 with the aim of

addressing the current social problems and expressing solidarity to those who are affected. (See Picture No 1. in the Annex) (Anoikti Orhistra, ekei pou ginomaste ena, 2022)

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of July 2022, the Mixed Jury Court of Athens found Lignadis guilty in two out of four cases of rape. Although the district attorney had proposed the guilty of the accused in three out of four rape allegations, the court did not accept the attorney's proposal. Lignadis was acquitted for insufficient evidence in a third case, and in a fourth case. (Nellas, 2022) However, the victim in the third case, had publicly accused Lignadis of raping him at the age of 16. In addition, as he alleged to the Uncover podcast, he left from Sweden, where he was working, several months ago to come to Greece and to testify to the court.(Marketos and Nassopoulos, 2022) After that accusation, there were three more victims who filed complaints of rape against Lignadis to the police. In my point of view, they may be encouraged by him to report their traumatic experiences. The victim of the fourth case never appeared to the court to testify. (Nellas, 2022) The court imposed a total prison sentence of 12 years to Lignadis for the rape crimes. (LignadisTrialWatch) It is really worrisome, the court's decision to grant to Lignadis a stay of execution of his sentence, pending the hearing of the appeal, since Lignadis has been accused of two rapes of minors and there are several allegations[for instance students from Arsakeio allegations] against him, which have not been submitted to the court. In my point of view it is difficult for the victims and for the audience who watched the trial to feel safe after the courts's decision, whether they know that Lignadis is now outside of the prison. (LignadisTrialWatch)

Nevertheless, Lignadis case has still great importance for two reasons. Firstly, it is the only MeToo case in Greece in which there were several prominent figures from the political scene who have been accused of hiding that issue. Secondly, there is a high number of accusations and testimonies that came to light against Lignadis comparing to the other cases which complicates sometimes the trial procedure as it is reasonable. This trial showed that even if the accused person is one of the most important cultural figures of the countries, there are people[such as people who were gathering outside the court and supporting the victims during a hearing related to Lignadis trial,and people who signed the letter against the lawyer of Lignadis, Open orchestra] who will believe and support the victims by creating a network of solidarity and trust.

It is considerable that in the most aforementioned cases, the alleged perpetrators categorically denied all the complaints against them and try to belittle the victims through their

lawyers, such as asking from victims to present the rape scene in front of the court or having a homophobic and sexist discourse.

As we understand the MeToo movement in general has evolved dramatically since it arose. It concerns not only the cases of sexual harassment or/and abuse but also the cases of workplace bullying, such as the Kimoulis case. The intersectionality of the MeToo is obvious, it supports women, men, and non-binary people regardless of ethnicity, sexuality, gender identity and other social status. It is interesting how many people encouraged by Sofia Bekatorou to share their personal traumatic experiences and then to report them to the prosecutor.

In general, the Greek MeToo movement influenced not only the actors and in general people who enjoy public recognition but also those who are coming from different fields, for instance students, as we are going to analyze in one of the next chapters. However, it is reasonable why in the cases that concern famous people, it is easier to gain more public attention than in those that do not.

#### **4. The relevant Greek legal documents on combatting sexual harassment and violence and promoting gender equality**

In this chapter, I will highlight the significance of two international conventions, in which Greece is a state party, that played an important role in improving Greek legislation relating to harassment and gender equality.

The CoE Istanbul Convention urged the national government to initiate the amendment of the Penal Code relating to the offences of sexual harassment or/and sexual assault and by giving specific attention for victims of domestic violence. Greece ratified the Convention on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June 2018, and when it entered into force, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2018, Greece became the 32<sup>nd</sup> State to ratify the Convention. (Treaty Office, 2018) An important point is that for the first time the Greek legislation provides that sex without consent is rape, which is an outcome of the Istanbul Convention's implementation and of the efforts of civil society organizations, including Amnesty International which had imposed pressure on the responsible stakeholders. Therefore, there is now a broader definition of what constitutes rape than before.

Moreover, the implementation of the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention led to the amendment of the Greek Civil Code by prohibiting in every form of violence and harassment in the workplace. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of August 2021, Greece became the 55<sup>th</sup> member State that has ratified the Convention. (ILO, 2021)

In the last parts of the chapter, I will focus on the higher education system by providing information about the relevant regulations and good practices that are implemented at several Greek Universities concerning the elimination of all forms of discrimination, harassment and violence based on gender, and aiming for the promotion of gender equality.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of March 2019, the former Greek Minister of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights Mihalis Kalogirou from the “Syriza” [coalition of the Radical Left] party, presented a new Draft Penal Code for public consultation. Article 336 of the proposal, according to the Amnesty International-Greek Section, “adopts a legal definition for rape which is unacceptable with regards the country's formal commitments and human rights conventions” with regards the “political

obligations of the government”. (Amnesty International-Greek Section, 2019) More concretely, the draft provision failed to recognize that sex without consent is rape. The proposed amended Article 336 stated that: “Whoever with corporal violence or threat of great and imminent danger to a person’s life or bodily integrity coerces another to attempt or tolerate a sex act is punished with incarceration”, whereas “a sex act is intercourse and acts of equal gravity to this”. According to the Amnesty International-Greek Section’s assessment, the proposed amendment “was focused on resistance and violence rather than lack of freely given consent”, thus the proposed draft version of Article 336 constituted a step backwards since it included the phrase “corporal violence” and “threat of great and imminent danger” in the legal definition of rape. The draft provision did not cover cases in which the victim could not perform resistance because of “freezing” or “involuntary paralysis” which are very common reactions to a sexual assault according to the experts. (Helström, Möller and Sondergaard,2017) In addition to this, the Amnesty International-Greek Section stated that the draft provision did not cover cases in which “the victims acquiesced to sex under pressure by the perpetrator” for instance when the perpetrator blackmailed the victim or used non-violent means of pressure.

Moreover, the organization argued that the proposed amended Article 336 did not list extensively the types of sex acts but mentioned only sexual intercourse which meant the physical union of male with female genitalia according to a decision from the Greek Supreme Court (Decision 291/2015, 2015) and acts of equal gravity [without defining more concretely the phrase “equal gravity”].

Another provision in the proposed draft version of the Penal Code, Article 338 stated that “Whoever abuses the mental or physical disability of a person or incapacity to resist caused by any cause and conducts a sex act with that person is punished with up to ten years’ incarceration”. The Amnesty International-Greek Section criticized the draft provision for not recognizing this form of abuse as rape and for setting low criminal sanctions [10 years’ incarceration]. According to assessment of the Greek Section of Amnesty International, the offence as it was described in the draft provision “should be considered as an aggravating circumstance of rape” in accordance with the Istanbul Convention”. (Amnesty International-Greek Section, 2019)

Amnesty International and several feminist organizations/collectives/groups, among them “Diotima Centre” [a women’s rights organization], “Kamia Anohi” [a feminist collective],

“Kiouri@” [a feminist and LGBTQ+group], and “WithoutConsentItsRape” [a feminist group] turned to the parliament to protest, on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June 2019, the draft which was to be voted that day. According to the protesters, the legal definition of rape was to be based on the absence of consent: “sex without a consent is rape”. (Feministikes Organoseis enantia stis diataxeis gia to viasmo,2019)

The next day on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June 2019, the new Penal Code has been passed, with including an amended version of Article 336 which is based on the notion of consent [paragraph 4].

**Article 336** of the New Penal Code, provides that:

Whoever by physical violence or by threat of serious and imminent danger to life or physical integrity, forces another person to take part or tolerate a sexual intercourse is sentenced to at least 10 years imprisonment.

Sexual intercourse is penetration and acts of the same gravity/significance.

If the act of paragraph 1 was committed by two or more perpetrators who collaborated or resulted in the death of the victim, it should be sanctioned with life sentence or imprisonment for at least 10 years.

Whoever, [in cases not described in paragraph 1], attempts sexual intercourse without the consent of the victim, is sanctioned to imprisonment of at least 10 years.

The innovative part of Article 336 is that it provides a broader definition of rape and defines sexual intercourse in a way that it refers not only to penetration but also acts of the same gravity, consequently the perpetrator shall be sentenced to at least 10 years of imprisonment in both cases [penetration and acts of the same gravity]. However, it is worrisome, that the law still does not define more concretely “the acts of the same gravity”. (4619/2019 Law, 2019)

**Article 337** of the New Penal Code is important from the perspective of protecting the victims of sexual harassment, because it includes a wide range of sexual acts and provides that:

Whoever, by gestures of a sexual nature, with proposals that refer to sexual acts, by sexual acts performed in front of another or by displaying male/female genitals, brutally insults the honor of another person, shall be punished with imprisonment of up to one (1) year or a fine. Prosecution requires a complaint unless the victim is a minor.

The act that is provided in the previous paragraph shall be punished with imprisonment of up to two (2) years or a fine, if the victim is younger than twelve (12) years.

An adult who, through the internet or other media or information technologies, contacts a person who has not reached the age of fifteen (15) years and with gestures or suggestions, insults the honor of the minor relating to minor's sexual life, shall be punished with imprisonment of at least two (2) years old. If an encounter is ensued, the adult shall be punished with imprisonment of at least three (3) years

There is a paragraph in Article 337 which is vital for the cases discussed in the context of MeToo, since a high number of victims shared sexual harassment stories that had happened at the workplace. According to this provision: "Whoever makes sexual gestures or makes proposals for sexual intercourse to a person who is dependent on him for work or taking advantage of the position of a person who is involved in a recruitment process, shall be punished with imprisonment of up to three years". Supposedly, this provision may help victims to find the courage to file a complaint against their colleague or employer. (4619/2019 Law,2019)

**Article 338**, which was also redrafted in 2019, provides that:

Whoever abuses the mental or physical inability of another person or by any reason the person's incapacity to resist to sexual intercourse, shall be sentenced to imprisonment of up to ten years.

As reported by Eirini Gaitanou, Amnesty International Greece's campaigner at that time, "this is a historic victory, not just for the campaigners who have fought long and hard for this but for all women in Greece" This new provision of the amended Penal Code [**Act 4619/2019**] recognizes "that sex without consent is rape and makes it clear that physical violence is not required for the crime to be considered rape". (Amnesty International, 2019)

**Article 339** provides that "sexual intercourse between minors under fifteen years of age is not punished, unless the age difference between the minors is more than three years, in the latter case only remedial or therapeutic measures can be imposed". In addition, it provides that "whoever expels or abducts a minor, who is under fourteen years of age, to subject to a sexual act, among others, without participating in the act itself, shall be punished by imprisonment of at least two years and a fine. It provides also that the perpetrator shall be punished for up to three (3) years by imprisonment or a fine if the victim is fourteen years of age". [The age of consent in Greece is 15 years of age, according to the jurisdiction]. (What is the Greece age of consent?)

**Article 342** concerns also minor forms of abuse, by sanctioning the adult who have a sexual intercourse with a minor or/and "makes gestures, suggestions or present sexual acts to a minor". As we have seen there are several articles [including Article 348 which concerns pornography

involving minors] that give special attention to the protection of minors from sexual harassment and/or sexual assault. (4619/2019 Law, 2019)

Act **3500/2006** on the Civil Code concerns domestic violence. **Article 6** sanctions with imprisonment the acts that cause bodily injury to a family member or damage to a family member's health. **Article 7** is sanctioning those forms of behavior that cause "terror or anxiety", including threats of violence or other forms of illegal acts. **Article 9** prohibits those acts which aim to insult the dignity of a family member. (3500/2016 Law, 2016)

Act **4604/2019** initiated by the Ministry of Interior is aimed at promoting the substantive gender equality and at preventing and combating gender-based violence, which is prevalent everywhere. In addition, this act provides for gender mainstreaming [which is a strategy that promotes the equality between sexes in public policies] in every sector of public life. **Article 25** declares the establishment of counselling centers for women victims of violence or/and discrimination, with the responsibilities of providing psychosocial and support services, counseling regarding the rights of female victims, legal services, and labor counselling. **Article 26** provides for the establishment of shelters for women victims of domestic violence. According to paragraph 3: "The shelters provide safe accommodation, psychological and social support by specially trained staff and facilitate access to legal advice by referring the victims to the Women's Counseling Centers of General Secretariat for Demography and Family Policy and Gender Equality which are legal entities for equality issues supervised by the Ministry of Interior and by the municipality of each region respectively, and operate every day, on a 24-hour basis and throughout the year".

**Article 27** concerns the 15900-SOS telephone line, which is maintained by the General Secretariat for Demography and Family Policy and Gender Equality and serves women victims of gender-based violence. It is operated nationwide, 24 hours a day. The line is staffed by psychologists and social workers who provide immediate assistance to the victims. (4604/2019 Law, 2019)

Act **4808/2021** ratifies the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 of the International Labor Organization (ILO). **Article 4** of this act 4808/2021 prohibits every form of violence and harassment at the workplace, including gender-based violence and harassment. **Articles 7, 9 and 10** urge the employers to take all the necessary measures to tackle sexual harassment, gender-based

violence and discrimination at the workplace. **Article 12** defines the rights of employees who are victims of sexual harassment or/and gender-based violence. Paragraph 3 of the article 12 provides that “any person who is victim of that violence or/and harassment has the right to leave the workplace for a reasonable period without deprivation of salary or other adverse effect”. **Article 16** provides for the establishment of an Independent Department within the Labor Inspection Body, tasked with monitoring the phenomena of violence and harassment at the workplace.

The General Secretariat for Demography and Family Policy and Gender Equality launched a **National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2021-2025**. One of its priorities is combatting domestic violence

#### 4.1 The relevant regulations on gender equality at Greek universities

In this sub-chapter, an analysis of the relevant regulations on protecting and promoting gender equality, implemented at Greek universities, will be presented by raising several concerns about the role of the Gender Equality Committees.

The paragraph 5 of Act **3549/2007** states that one of the aims of the Greek universities is “to contribute to the consolidation of gender equality”. (3549/2007 Law,2007)

**Article 33** of Act **4589/2019** claims that “by decision of the Senate, it is recommended to establish at each higher Education Institution (HEI) an unpaid Committee for Gender Equality (CGE) as an advisory body of the Senate and the administrations of the schools and departments for the promotion of equality at all levels of operation and in all of academic life activities”.

The Gender Equality Committee is composed by 7 members of the academic staff, 1 member of the administrative staff and 1 student. The candidacies are evaluated by a committee formed by the Senate, which compiles a ranking list and submits it as a proposal to the Senate. However, there is no mechanism, that is independent from the university, to evaluate the impartiality of the Committee members. Moreover, there is no regulation concerning conflicts of interest. It is also worrisome, that the act does not provide training programs for the members of the Committee on issues relating to victim support.

One of the responsibilities of the Gender Equality Committee at a higher education institution is to prepare action plans with the aim of promoting and assuring equality in the fields of academic research and administrative procedures, and to prepare an annual report, to be submitted to the

Senate. In addition, the Committee proposes measures to the competent bodies for advancing gender equality and combatting sexism, for example training programs to the members of the academic community on gender-related issues. An important point, that is going to be discussed in the next paragraph, is that the Committee provides mediation services in cases of discrimination or harassment complaints. (4589/2019 Law,2019)

The Committee has a mediation role between the perpetrator and the victim. It facilitates communication between the parties by guiding them to reach a solution. It does not have the competence to deal with criminal issues, for instance with rape. Therefore, it cannot investigate such incidents. The Committee can only work on discrimination and harassment cases. However, mediation raises moral questions, namely whether it is appropriate to request the victims to discuss their traumatic experiences with their perpetrators, especially in cases where the perpetrators are in power positions, like professors are compared to the students. Therefore, it can be more difficult for victims to speak out in front of their abusers knowing that they may be stigmatized, or they may get a lower grade as a consequence of the procedure, while the perpetrator may escape sanctions. Moreover, the student victims may not feel comfortable to share their own personal experiences with the Committee, given that most of its members are professors who have power over them and are not trained on creating a safe space for victims.

#### 4.2 Good practices in higher education

Several universities across Greece have adopted policies to combat violence against women and to promote gender equality at the campuses, that may be considered as good practices. Due to the implementation of the Act 4589/2019, that provides on the establishment of committees for gender equality (CGE), consisting of unpaid members at every Greek university, surveys on gender equality issues were also conducted.

##### 4.2.2 The policies at the University of Crete (UoC)

The team that created the “Gender map” of the Gender Equality Committee of the University of Crete (UoC) included a student, a professor, and an administrative staff member. The Map was published in 2021, for the time period 2018-2019. It is based on a survey and includes a quantitative analysis regarding the proportion of men and women among students, academic and

administrative staff at the UoC, by using openly accessible data. (Gender Equality Committee, 2021) Additionally, the Committee created a Guide to using non-sexist language in the academic curriculum. (Chrisi mi sexistikis glossas)

The Committee attempts to mainstream the gender perspective by launching undergraduate and post-graduate courses concerning the issue of gender and gender relations. In 2021, approximately 50 of such courses were provided by the UoC. (Gender Equality Committee, 2021) The Committee also published a Guide on how to deal with sexual harassment cases [for instance about the actions to be taken if someone is a witness of a sexual harassment incident] and distributed it to the students and to academic and administrative staff of the University. (Gender Equality Committee, 2021)

In 2022, the Committee published the Gender Equality and Diversity Plan for the period 2022-2024. One of its priorities is to advance the existing institutional procedures for dealing with discrimination and sexual harassment cases and the victim support services. The Plan declares commitment to prevent “negative behaviors in a more effective way”. The Plan includes the implementation of an empirical research to investigate the prevalence of different forms of discrimination and sexual harassment at the UoC by collecting qualitative and quantitative data with the aim of better combatting these phenomena. The Plan provides for awareness raising and training programs for the academic and administrative staff on dealing with sexual harassment and discrimination. (Gender Equality Committee, 2022)

#### 4.2.3 The Aegean University

The Gender Equality Committee of the Aegean University has organized various events with the aim of informing the academic community on gender-related issues. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of March 2022, an awareness raising event took place on the existence of gender inequality at campuses. (Gender Equality Committee, 2022) Moreover, the Committee, organized a memorial event for Eleni Topaloudi [a female student who was raped and then killed by two male peers in 2018]. (Gender Equality Committee, 2022) (Eleni Topaloudi: To chroniko tis agrias dolofonias, i diki kai oi poines, 2022) In addition, the Aegean University offers approximately 70 courses related to gender studies. (Mathimata Fylou)

## **5. Empirical research and findings**

### 5.1 Methodology

In this chapter, I will present the findings of an empirical study relating to the research question of my thesis, namely whether and to what extent the MeToo movement has an impact on the Greek universities and especially on the students's life. For that reason, I conducted qualitative research, based on semi-structured, in-depth interviews, including open-ended questions, aiming to study the perspective of students on this issue in depth. According to Tsiolis, professor of research methodology in social science, the qualitative research process contributes to better understanding the research data since it examines social phenomena and social life through the perceptives of the interviewees and through emphasizing their own semantic frames. Qualitative research creates a close communication relationship between the researcher and the interviewees. It is important to mention that researchers cannot be completely impartial, since they carry social experiences, attitudes, views that affect the interviews process and the data analysis. (Tsiolis, 2014) The data gathered from the interviews were processed through thematic analysis. (Tsiolis, 2018) The interviews were conducted in Greek.

#### 5.1.2 Sample

The selection of the interviewees was carried out through a mixture of purposive and snowball sampling. (Babbie, 2010) I gathered a sample of 6 interviewees: students [2 men and 4 women] at one of the Greek schools of fine arts [hereinafter: School of Fine Arts], for the sake of anonymity, I do not disclose the name of the city where it is located. The main reason that I decided to focus on the School of Fine Art is its activist background on social issues. For instance, the School of Fine Art has hosted several anti-racist events and its students have organized various events relating to social justice issues. Again, due to the sensitivity of the addressed issue, I will not include the real names of my interviewees. It was important to me to find at least one student who has an active role at the university: who participates at the general student assemblies and is familiar with students' activities relating to the MeToo movement and with gender-related issues

in general. The interviewees were between 21 and 25 years of age and they have shown great interest and willingness to get involved in this research and our discussions were very productive. Before taking the interviews, I asked their permission to record our discussions.

A list of the interviewees is presented below [I avoid using their real names, due to the sensitivity of the issue]:

- Alexia is a female student and 21 years old
- Konstantina is a female student and 21 years old
- Vasilis is a male student and 22 years old
- Maria is a female student and 25 years old
- Eirini is female student and 21 years old
- Costas is male student and 22 years old

### 5.1.3 Interview Structure

The four thematic sections of the interviews are:

- The students' perspective at the MeToo movement
- MeToo Movement at the School of Fine Arts
- The role of the Gender Equality Committee at the School of Fine Arts
- Gender dimension at the School of Fine Arts

## 5.2 Findings

In the following paragraphs the findings of the empirical research will be presented and analyzed, according to the thematic sections of the interviews.

### 5.2.1 The students' perspective of the MeToo movement

In this thematic section, I present the students' view on the MeToo and whether they have been influenced by this movement, so as to examine if the MeToo movement had an impact on them.

All the interviewees told me that the MeToo movement and especially the Greek MeToo movement had an impact on them. When the Greek MeToo movement arose, Eirini realized that “It was not only me and my friends who share the same concern on gender-based violence and sexual harassment issues”. She noticed that “there was a greater support from more people than I expected”. Most of the interviewees pointed out that the MeToo helped them to review their past personal experiences and to recognize that in some of these situations they were victims of sexist or offensive behavior. Alexia mentioned that, compared to the past, she has a “longer list of ‘red flags’ [which are warning signs of a problematic behavior of your partner that make you feel uncomfortable] than before”, for instance she said that the “‘love bombing’ [which occurs mainly in relationships when someone ‘bombs’ you with extreme attention, admiration and affection] was not included in the collective consciousness as a problematic attitude before the MeToo”. Since MeToo began in Greece, Alexia “somehow relived her personal traumatic experiences on harassment”. Nevertheless, the relations of solidarity with others that were developed on a common ground of experiences and concerns led to the creation of the Gender student group [which is presented below in the chapter]. For Maria and her friends, it “became easier to understand the reasons why some personal stories of the past constituted sexual harassment”. Costas “acknowledges sexist attitudes by others more easily than before MeToo”. Konstantina, who had been involved in the field of sports for several years, where she had received many sexist comments by her coaches, started to be more conscious of related issues when the Greek MeToo appeared. She noticed that one of her coaches behaved weirdly with a girl. “He was hugging her; he was offensive to her, and he always drove her home on his motorcycle”. She “felt uncomfortable by being a mere witness to these incidents”.

According to Alexia, the MeToo movement does not have an impact on the workplaces. When she graduates and starts looking for a job, she has “no hopes of the situation getting better”. She believes that she “may face the same problems as now”. For instance, she “may have to deal

with sexual harassment incidents unless the sociopolitical system is radically changed”. Konstantina shares the same opinion with Alexia she believes that “the working conditions have not been ameliorated since the MeToo movement came to light”. The other day, as she stated, she had a job interview and the prospective boss asked her to give him her Facebook account. In the following night, the boss sent her messages concerning her physical appearance and made her feel uncomfortable. According to her, “since the employers are old people with a very stereotyped mindsets, they cannot understand the young people and the steps that have been taken on gender equality and sexual orientation issues”.

One of the points that really concerns me is that all the interviewees had experienced sexual harassment or/and delinquent behavior because of their gender or/and sexuality. Eirini had experienced inappropriate behavior from one of her male professors at the School of Fine Arts. Vasilis said that he “had received several inappropriate comments and weird looks” because of his appearance. When a passer-by reacted verbally to him because of his look, he felt “intimidated”. That incident took place on the street. The other day, as he recalled, some people took photos of him and his friend without asking their permission. In general, he feels unsafe when he has to deal “with these homophobic attacks”. Costas mentioned that he “had been followed by another person” while he was walking, and he “had been a victim of sexual harassment in the past”. Maria noted that in everyday life she “avoids walking in areas with no streetlights”. She feels annoyed that “it has been something common” for her “to receive weird looks from passengers in the subway”. Konstantina who is a ballet dancer and has also been a victim of sexual harassment by her ballet teacher, claimed that this movement helped her to “understand in depth who are the people who guide us in our career”. She thinks that these people behave in that way “because of the austere system where they were trained”.

As the interviewees were sharing their personal experiences of harassment, one of them regretted not noticing the inappropriate behavior early on. She mentioned that “I was stupid for I did not notice it” but then immediately realized that she mistakenly blamed herself for the harassment. That statement raises concerns about how often the victims of such behavior blame themselves for not having noticed its early signs. However, it is remarkable how self-conscious the interviewee was since she immediately reflected on herself, namely that it was self-blame to call herself “stupid”.

It is obvious that all the interviewees were influenced by the movement. Although, the MeToo affected each of the interviewees differently, most of them admitted that this movement helped them to review their past experiences in a more mature way and consequently to acknowledge the problematic aspects of those experiences.

### 5.2.2 The MeToo Movement at the School of Fine Arts

In this thematic section, the discussion with interviewee Alexia is mainly quoted, since Alexia is one of the members of the “Gender group” of the Student Association [“Omada fylou”] founded in the winter of 2021 -immediately after the arise of the Greek MeToo movement. The group aimed at gathering all the complaints which were submitted anonymously by students against the professors at the School of Fine Arts and publishing those complaints in social media in the winter of 2021. However, the contribution of the other interviewees to this thematic section was equally important for me and helped me to further understand the issue. From what I learn from the interviews, I will analyze the students’ as well as the professors’ reactions to the Greek MeToo movement when it arose at their campus.

#### i) Students’ reaction

According to Alexia “when MeToo started in Greece, an anonymous Instagram account started publishing a high number of anonymous complaints against people who either used to or still teach at the School of Fine Arts”. She believes that “the Greek MeToo inspired many students to speak out about their personal experiences of sexual harassment”. Then, “a Facebook page named: “Initiative for Harassment cases in the School of Fine Arts” was launched in order gather the complaints and then it made a request to the Student Association for a gender group to be founded to handle these complaints.

As Alexia mentioned, “the idea of the establishing the Gender group was finally passed by the General Assembly of the Student Association”. According to her, the main role of the group was to manage the complaint file and then to submit it to the police prosecutor”. Nevertheless, “it is at the prosecutor’s discretion whether to investigate the case or not, since all the complaints are

anonymous, and the prosecutor has not initiated yet the investigation procedure. The Gender group has organized many events to raise students' awareness on gender equality issues. As Alexia stated, "we have organized collective readings on gender topics" and we have created zines [meaning magazines] on these issues". She added that "we set up a series of discussions concerning the power relations and gender oppression in the artistic and academic field", and they had invited "a researcher, a member of a feminist collectivity, a female director and an art academic" to talk about these issues. According to her account, there was a considerable turnout of people at those events. As she mentioned, "some professors have shown support to the Gender Group by telling us that: 'if you need any help with organizing an event, we are here for you any time.'" According to her, when those complaints came to light, "we pinned posters on the walls of the Schools of Arts and in other places outside the campus with the slogan 'In the workshops of fine arts, we have been harassed'. (See Picture No. 1 in the Annex) At the time of conducting two of the interviews, the posters were still on the walls. Notably, all the interviewees have noticed these posters and knew that the Gender group created them. As Alexia pointed out, "the Gender group is comprised of two assemblies, a closed and open one. The students who participated in the closed assembly are responsible for coordinating the whole group". She shared that "the complaint file has been read by a few members of the closed assembly, so we know exactly what we are dealing with at the School of Fine Arts". As she mentioned, "we have created a safe space, we are here for every person, and we will support them in whatever they need".

According to Konstantina, "the Gender group has created an environment in which I feel safe and comfortable". She believes that "if something happens to you, the Gender group and many students in general will support you". She also mentioned that one of the students at the School of Fine Arts had a performance concerning those sexual harassment incidents that came to the light. (See Picture No. 2 in the Annex.) Konstantina described a sexual harassment incident that occurred a few months after the Greek MeToo started where a professor "was talking to a student with sexual implications". As Vasilis told me, "After that incident, around twenty people decided to withdraw from that professor's workshop and to choose another workshop. That caused a technical issue to the secretary office, for they did not know how many students to assign to which workshops, because the massive withdraw occurred in the middle of the school year," He estimates that "there were more than 70 complaints that were posted on social media". According to Eirini "COVID-19 quarantine played an important role to the extent of that issue; there would have been

more actions taken from students, had the School of Fine Arts not been closed because of COVID-19”. Nevertheless, she thinks that even if the School of Arts was closed during that period of time, the students eventually managed to organize many events to support the victims. That is a considerable point that highlights how the quarantine shaped the course of events.

## ii) Professors’ reactions

Most of the interviewees told me that the professors who hold an institutional position at the School of Fine Arts have not done anything regarding the complaints but most of the professors try to be more careful when they are talking about relating issues. As Alexia argued, when those complaints were posted on social media, “the professors held an assembly and most of them voted in favor of making an official announcement that said: ‘those accusations of sexual harassment are slanderous with the aim of tarnishing the School of Fine Arts reputation.’ This announcement was published at the site of School of Arts. Additionally, she mentioned that “some of them were interviewed by the media, where they were arguing that they have already taken steps to deal with it, but that was not true”. Despite the Gender group’s effort to pressure the professors to act on this issue, “they either hide this issue or they claim to have already taken measures to deal with it” as she claimed. According to Vasilis, a female professor “blamed the victims for making those complaints anonymously”. He noted, that “this incident constitutes internalized sexism” and that “this professor does not have empathy for the victims”. He also added that there are still several professors who continue to misbehave with students. For instance, “there is a male professor who is always talking in a sexist way to female students”. As Vasilis shared, he had received sexist comments by a male professor that made him feel “uncomfortable”. Costas noted that one of his professors “behaves in a weird and inappropriate way in the classroom, despite the fact that there have been published complaints against him”. Konstantina pointed out that “one of her male professors denied those allegations, which were published in the social media against him, during the course, without mentioning something more on the subject”. As Eirini emphasized, these professors continue to show sexist attitudes even after the complaints came to light because “they grew up in a society where they had never been taught how to control their sexual urges”. According to her, “they have not been influenced by the new generation’s progress on gender equality issues”.

For the interviewees, the situation is getting better on general terms. Most of the professors are more careful when they are addressing the students. As Costas claimed, “male professors avoid analyzing this issue, because they do not want to be exposed and they think that the reaction to the issue is too much”. There are still steps to be taken, since the sexist jokes by professors, although less frequently than before, are still prevalent in the workshops, according to Alexia and Vasilis. The perpetrators of sexual harassment incidents are still teaching at the School of Fine Arts without any penalty being imposed on them, as Konstantina underlined.

### 5.2.3 The role of the Gender Equality Committee at the School of Fine Arts

In this thematic section, I wanted to examine two things; the first one was whether the students know about the existence of the Gender Equality Committee at the university and secondly, whether it is active. As we already mentioned in the chapter concerning the legal system in Greece, this committee was established due to a law adopted in 2019, to mediate between victims and perpetrators. Nevertheless, the members of the Committee are permitted to act only if they are approached by the victim.

According to Alexia the Gender Equality Committee of the School of Fine Arts was created several months ago and has come in touch with them already [the Gender group] by claiming that “they are by our side in whatever we need”. Nevertheless, she claimed that “we have set a boundary regarding the relationship between us and the Committee because we are students’ gender group for the students, we are students for students” As Alexia mentioned, “the Gender Equality Committee is now concerned about how to handle the issue of the allegations against professors who have sexually harassed the students”. She believes, “that it is difficult for a victim to feel comfortable to speak out to the Committee, which cannot act without the consent of the victim”. In addition, she mentioned, that the Committee has made several general announcements. One of the questions that I asked from Alexia was whether the Committee has requested to get access to the complaints file, and she replied that: “no, but even if they had requested that, we would not have allowed them, since the file is private and only very few people from the group have access to it”.

An interesting point to consider is that three out of the six interviewees stated that the Committee did not play an active role in the life at the School of Arts. Konstantina claimed that “the members of the Committee did not do anything regarding a harassment incident that happened some months ago”. However, she still believes that the existence of the Committee “is something nice that has happened”. Costas argued that this Committee “has been marginalized”. Although Maria had heard about them, she “does not know how the Committee is working and how she can report a complaint to the Committee”. Additionally, as she mentioned, she has read “some ironic comments on Facebook made by students about the role of the Committee”. Another point that needs to be thought about is the fact that one of the interviewees, Vasilis did not know about the existence of the Committee and another interviewee, Eirini had a quite negative view on, claiming that the Committee never functioned the way, as it was supposed to function.

Most of the interviewees believe that the Committee is not active. As we can understand from these responses, that the Committee have not yet managed to reach out to the students. This conclusion derives from the fact, that five of the six interviewees shared the impression that the Committee is either inactive or does not exist at all. Although Alexia was the only one who mentioned more information on the Committee, she claimed, eventually that it was difficult for the victims to share their personal stories of harassment with the Committee. That is the reason why this thematic section is less extensive compared to the other three thematic sections presenting the research findings. While all the interviewees knew about the Gender group, at least all of them were knowledgeable about its existence, there is apparently not enough information about the role or/and the existence of the Gender Equality Committee.

#### 5.2.4 Gender dimensions at the School of Fine Arts

In this thematic section, it is going to be examined whether the environment of the School of Fine Arts is, and especially the question whether professors are gender sensitive. It will also be inquired whether the interviewees have taken part in an activity organized by the School of Fine Arts relating to gender issues or/and whether the curriculum includes gender courses. The last question might be answered by desk research, for instance by looking for the curriculum on the

School of Fine Arts' website, rather than by interviewing the students. Nevertheless, it is important to draw a conclusion as to if the students are aware of any gender-related courses in the academic curriculum.

In my point of view gender equality can be achieved not only by the legal but also by the educational system, as the latter also plays a major role in the development of a democratic society. That is the reason why I focus on it in this thematic section, in order to examine if the professors include a gender perspective in their courses or/and in other activities organized by the School of Fine Arts.

Most of the interviewees mentioned that there are several professors who are gender sensitive when they are teaching in the classroom. Vasilis mentioned that one of his professors uses the gender-neutral pronoun when he addresses them [Greek language is characterized by using male and female pronouns and adjectives]. I found it very interesting when Vasilis told me that “this professor started to use this pronoun when a student, who is a member of the Gender group and is identified by the gender-neutral pronoun, told him to do so” because we may say this professor had the willingness to learn and to become more inclusive in his lesson. As he said, “after this student left from his class [passed the exams], he continued to use the pronoun, even when that student was not attending his lesson”. According to Vasilis, the MeToo raised the awareness of several professors for issues that are although, “beyond the principal idea of the MeToo”, still concern the gender oppression.

According to Konstantina “most of the professors at the School of Fine Arts are very concerned with the gender issues and especially with how the person wants to be identified”. For Alexia “there are a few professors who are influenced by the Gender group and have recently formulated a feminist and inclusive discourse; most of the professors either do not formulate this discourse or they had already formulated it before the group was created”. Maria highlighted that “during the workshops we are having conversations with the professors about social issues, there are lot of artists who raise concerns about those issues and especially about feminism”. Eirini pointed out “that feminist movements constitute an integral part of the history of art; thus, we learn about that movement”.

Konstantina mentioned that she attended a queer art exhibition with the School of Fine Arts. After the exhibition “we had a productive discussion with the professor about it,” she stated.

She believes that the School of Fine Arts organizes many visits or/and activities that concern the concept of gender in general. According to Vasilis, one of his male professors organized an art exhibition that was focused on women. Vasilis took part in the exhibition as an artist. That helped him “to express his thoughts on how patriarchal society is experienced through art”. He added that he expressed “the toxic masculinity which is omnipresent”, and that he “had been repressed by it”. As Eirini argued “there are many times when the professors invite artists who are concerned about feminist or/and LGBTQI+ issues and they have discussions with us”. Nevertheless, there are some professors who were not aware of these issues and underestimate the value of women. She also highlighted that “most of the professors at workshops are men, and their assistants are mostly women”. That is something, that we need to take into consideration, how men usually have a dominant role in the workplace. According to Vasilis, there are professors who support LGBTQI+ students, for instance, he witnessed a homophobic incident, and he stated, “during the class, there was a female student who behaved in a homophobic way against another one, and when the professor realized this, he was pissed off and warned the girl to not do it again”. As he stated, “at the end of the semester, the professor referred to this incident again by claiming that ‘I will not accept if this kind of behavior happens again in my class’. Nevertheless, he claimed that, according to his information, this professor had behaved also in a sexist way. That was very a contradictory point to me and made me consider how can somebody support LGBTQI+ people and be sexist in the meantime.

According to Alexia, “a gender course began this year, which concerns the concepts of genders and especially the history of feminist theories”. She also thinks that “this course was not a result of the impact of the Gender group on the School of Arts since the professor of this course is new to the school”. However, most of the interviewees noted that they are not aware of the above-mentioned class.

In general, we may conclude that there are professors at the School of Fine Arts who attempt to be more sensitive during their class. On the one hand, one can notice that there may be only one gender course whereas they organize several exhibitions or/and visits to raise awareness about gender and sexual orientation. On the other hand, we understand that women in the field of arts have an inferior position, even to this day, as there are more male professors than female professors and women usually have subordinate roles such as the role of an assistant. Even though

there are still several professors who behave in an inappropriate way towards the students, there are also others who want to be inclusive and to pay attention to gender, gender identity and to sexual orientation during their lessons.

#### 5.2.5 General Comments from the interviewees

In this section, several interviewees' comments are quoted which are not related to any of the thematic sections above, whilst they raise concerns for future research.

Two of the interviewees are worried that sexual harassment or/and sexual violence will occur in a more subtle and insidious way in the future, in the post MeToo era. According to Alexia "MeToo revealed incidents that occurred in a sneaky way in the past. I am afraid that if a next generation of MeToo emerges, it will have to face new challenges because of incidents that will take place insidiously". Vasilis shared Alexia's opinion. He believes that "it is the same as with fascism, fascists nowadays act insidiously in contrast to the past. As we understand, dangers relating to MeToo issues may lurk in a more hidden way in the future compared to the old days. It is noticeable that both interviewees are pessimistic about the future, even though some progress has already been made in the relevant fields. Nevertheless, the progress may not be enough to end sexual harassment and violence. They expect that the sexual harassment and gender-based violence will stay prevalent.

Alexia thinks that MeToo has started to weaken over time. She highlighted that "every movement works that way. Every movement has peak moments when coming to light but then it starts to lose the power that it initially had". In her opinion, this is happening because "people either lose their interest about it or think that the demands of the movement will finally be satisfied". Konstantina held the same opinion as Alexia She believes that "the MeToo reached its peak moment last year and by now has lost the strength".

A last comment that is equally important to previous ones was made by four of the interviewees. As they mentioned, they had heard rumors about professors who behave inappropriately when they entered the School of Fine Arts for the first time as freshmen, long before the complaints come to the light. The fact that there was such a taboo subject for such a

long time between the students and professors, before the students took the initiative to share publicly and anonymously their personal stories of sexual harassment, is rather worrisome.

## Conclusions

While writing of the theoretical part of the thesis and the interview process, I was thinking about the future of the MeToo movement and if the movement is enough to combat the phenomena of sexual harassment, discrimination, and gender-based violence incidents taking place in public and in private life. Most of my interviewees are pessimistic about the future, they believe that these problems will remain with us. One of the interviewees expressed the view that the situation could be improved only by radical changes of the sociopolitical system. I support this view, given the problems with the institutions that are responsible for dealing with these issues. For instance, it is worrisome that most of those stories that came to light due to the Greek MeToo movement, have never been reported to the police. A significant proportion of gender-based violence victims would not feel safe to file a complaint to the police or believe that the police would not do anything about them, according to the results of FRA survey, conducted in EU member states. (FRA,2014)

All of my interviewees admitted that the MeToo movement had an impact on them. Some of them have reconsidered their past traumatic experiences and they are now more aware than they were before to understand the characteristics of a delinquent behavior. Many of their fellow students were encouraged by the MeToo to speak out publicly against their professors about their personal traumatic experiences. As I already mentioned, the MeToo as an initiative begun by expressing the voices of the women of color. It became widespread across the world, when a very famous white woman actress accused publicly her offender who had a prominent position in the entertainment industry at that time. Currently, the MeToo movement expresses the voices of all the people who are oppressed by the patriarchal system.

The MeToo is certainly not a radical movement since it tries fighting for gender equality withing the existing political system and to exert pressure on the responsible institutions to adopt policies that would eliminate all forms of discrimination, harassment, and violence. Considering the theoretical claim of Della Porta and Diani, namely that social movements explicitly demanding “increased equality and protection for minorities, promote democratic development” (Della Porta and Diani, 2006), the MeToo movement may be regarded as an advancer of democratization.

In general, through the MeToo people expressed the claim that “our bodies belong to us” and that no one was entitled to touch their bodies without their consent. This claim reminds me the French film “La haine” where the immigrants living in France in ghettos, who were oppressed by the government and the police, expressed a similar slogan: “the world belongs to us”. We may claim that now the MeToo generation is fighting for a future of equality by increasing their visibility in the society, in which they were ignored in the past and their traumatic experiences were hidden. The MeToo also pointed to the power relations between the perpetrator and the victim. In the Lignadis’s case, we observed that the perpetrator who was characterized as a “powerful cultural figure” (Smith, 2020) took advantage of his power position and abused the victims by promising them a future career in the theater or/and by supporting them emotionally, since his victims were vulnerable because of their personal problems. In all the Greek MeToo cases that surfaced, the perpetrator had a power position by being either the director or the coach or the professor. The victims were in a “lower” position by being either the athlete who had oblige to the instruction of the coach or by being the student who had to pass the exams assessed by the professor, or by being the actor who had to follow the director’s instruction about the play. As we already have seen, the responsible people in the power positions are mostly men. Therefore, steps need to be taken, addressing not only the surfacing problems, harassment, and violence, but also the root causes of these manifestations, namely gender equality, that women still not have same opportunities with men, and they are treated less favorably than men.

Another point that we need to take into account is the silence culture [when people become witnesses of incidents, such as rape, and they choose to remain silent instead of speaking out and supporting the victim]. Using the example of a concrete case, we may say that since there are a lot of complaints against Filippidis and Lignadis, there were maybe people who witnessed those incidents, but they chose to remain silent instead of taking action because they were either afraid of speaking out or they just did not want to get involved in the case. Therefore, rape, silence culture and toxic masculinity [which is a social term that defines masculinity with traits such as being violent and unemotional] are social phenomena that need to be addressed and we must figure out the way in which we will overcome those.

To conclude, I believe that many people and especially students in Greece have been encouraged to share publicly their traumatic experience because of the MeToo. Although I cannot

prove the relevance of my research question, namely the impact of the MeToo on universities and on student's life, since an impact like this is difficult to measure, I am confident that this is plausible hypothesis because of the results of my empirical research. It is obvious that the Greek legal system has been improved in the second half of the 2010s, due for instance the Istanbul Convention established that: "sex without consent is rape" and obliges state parties to criminalize all non-consensual acts of a sexual nature. (Secretary General of Council of Europe,2020) In 2019, Greece finally transposed the rape definition based on the lack of consent, in the Penal Code., Nevertheless, there are still a lot of steps to be taken in order to deal with every form of harassment and violence in general. For instance, policies should be adopted concerning the provision of training programs for police staff dealing with victims, courses should be launched at universities promoting gender equality, and laws prohibiting harassment and gender-based violence should be properly applied, and the gender equality campaigns should be implemented. In my point of view the most significant impact of the MeToo movement was the solidarity network that was created among people who have experienced manifestations of patriarchal oppression and who are fighting for an equal world for all. Lastly, I would like to mention the slogan of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Antiracist Festival that took place in Athens at the beginning of July 2022: "The world changes only when you share it". (Antiracist Festival, 2022)

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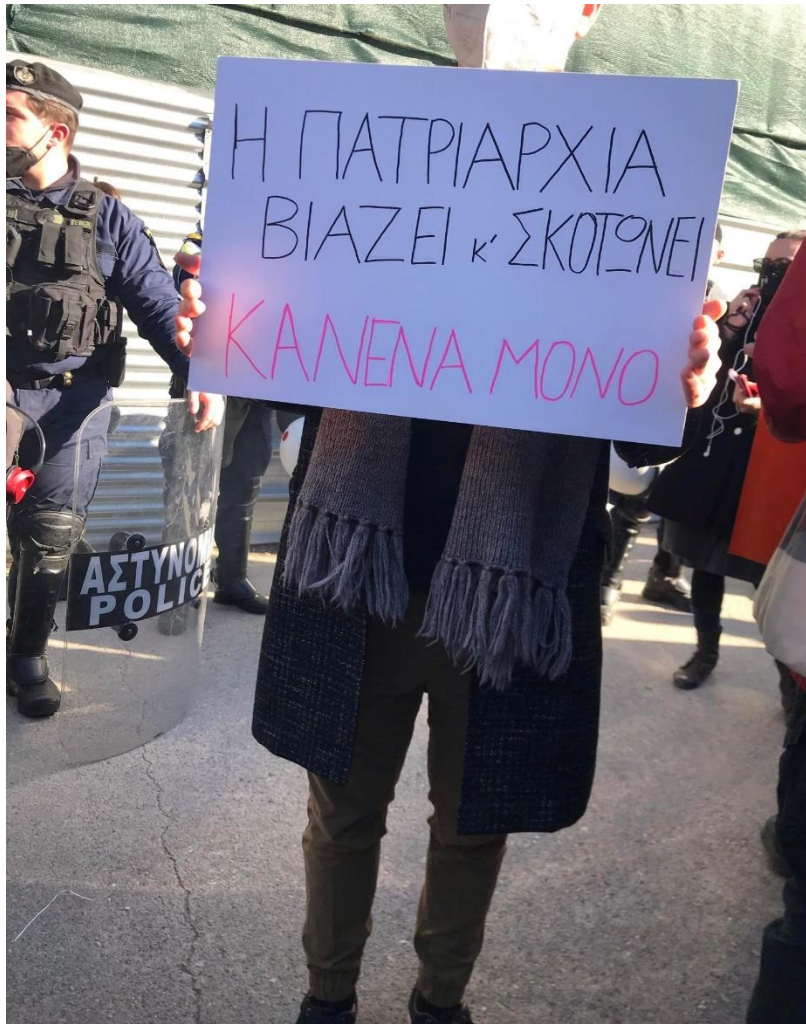
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## Annex



Outside, the Mixed Jury Court of Athens, during one the hearings of Lignadis' trial on the 11<sup>th</sup> of February in 2022.

[Translation of the sign: “Patriarchy rapes and kills. No one is alone.”] This slogan is inspired by the Latin-American feminist slogan: “ni una menos” [meaning: no woman alone].

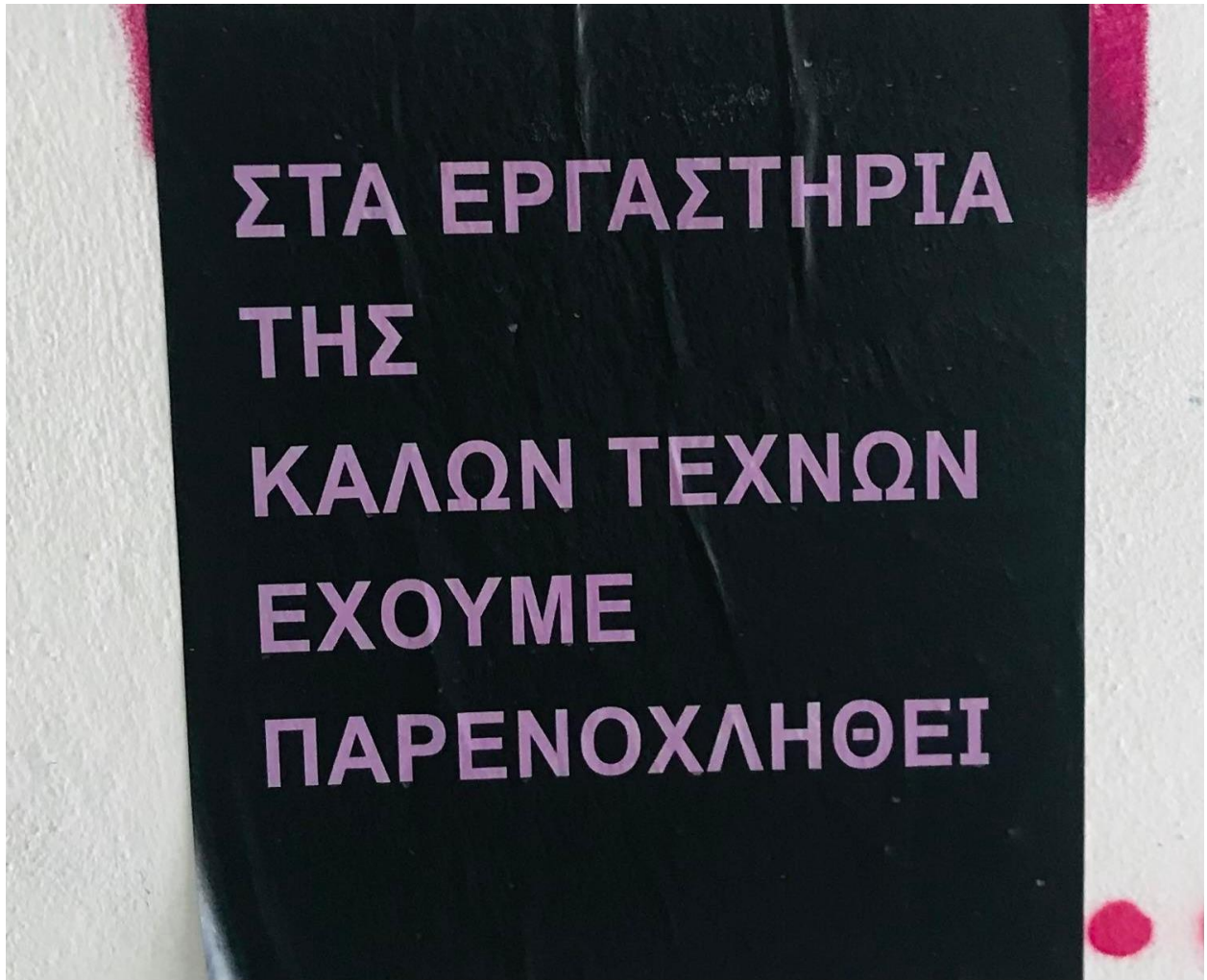
(Photo taken by the author)



Outside, the Mixed Jury Court of Athens, during one the hearings of Lignadis’ trial on the 11<sup>th</sup> of February in 2022, the representatives of the “Open Orchestra”.

[Translation of the sign: “I am not afraid anymore”.]

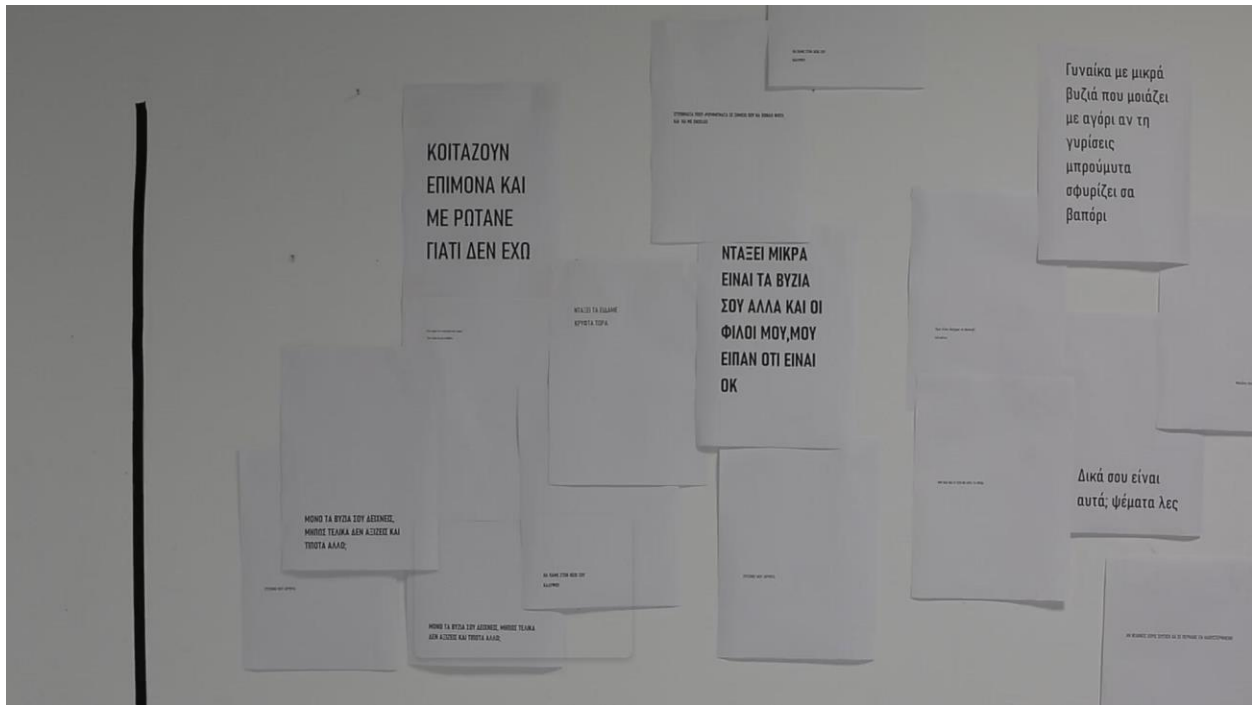
(Photo taken by the author)



The members of the Gender Group of the School of Fine Arts pinned posters to the walls of their university to show support to the victims of harassment.

[Translation of the statement: “We have been harassed during fine arts workshops”.]

(Photo taken by the author)



As mentioned in one of the interviews, students organized a performance about the sexual harassment incidents: during the performance, body-shaming comments made against women were pinned to the walls.

(Photo taken by one of the performers)