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What made you study Accounting?

What was your original goal?

When I graduated with my BA degree in Economics, I had three options: To study Economics (I had been accepted as a postgraduate student at the University of London), to study full time for the ACCA qualification (I had been accepted for this, too) or to work and study to become an Associate Chartered Accountant (ACA), having received offers from two London audit firms to do so.

After much deliberation, I opted to become a Chartered Accountant and signed a traineeship contract with a London audit firm so I could say that, in the end, Accounting won me over!

GOLD: Are there particular barriers that women have to overcome in order to reach the upper echelons of the accountancy profession nowadays? How difficult was it for you to get to where you are today?

R.G.: Upon my return to Cyprus after qualifying as an ACA, I applied for work in various organisations, one of them being the Treasury of the Republic but I first took up the role of Financial Manager in a public company operating in the hotel industry. A year later, I was called for an interview by a Committee headed by the then Accountant General. As a matter of fact, on the date of the interview I gave birth to my first child, so my career in the public sector is, more or less, the same age as my firstborn! I joined the Treasury in 1987 and have now been there for 33 years. Growing up professionally in the Treasury of the Republic has equipped

me with a wide array of skills which, in turn, have enabled me to experience an incredibly varied career in the public sector. I served for nine years as Chief Accountant of the Ministry of Health. During that period, I worked closely with the expert consultants who undertook the task for implementing our current National Health Scheme. I was then transferred to Treasury Headquarters to lead the Accounts Section of the Treasury. In 1999 I was appointed Deputy Accountant-General by President Glafcos Clerides and, in 2010, President Demetris Christofias appointed me Accountant-General, making me the first woman to ever hold these two posts in Cyprus.

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GOLD: Is there a gender pay gap in the accountancy profession in 2019/20?

R.G.: In the public sector, the salaries of all government posts are prescribed by the Law, hence there is no gender pay gap whatsoever.

GOLD: Are there major differences for female accountancy profession-

als working in the public and private sectors? What made you choose your specific sector?

R.G.: The accountancy profession is a multidisciplinary one, irrespective of gender, covering a wide spectrum of fields, including Audit and Assurance, Taxation, Accounting, Banking, Financial Advisory, Corporate Governance, Forensic Accounting and others. Over the last 30 years, public sector accounting has undergone a wave of reforms worldwide, one result of which has been a more efficient and effective management of public resources. The cornerstone of these reforms is the adoption of the accrual basis of accounting, which we have also decided to follow, the expectation being to fully

introduce this accounting basis to public accounting in Cyprus on 1 January, 2022. By working in the public sector, you are given the opportunity to provide a service to all citizens, acting in the public interest and, thus, improving people's livelihood as the end-result. The range of areas that you are called to deal with while being an accountant in the public sector is very diverse, interesting, challenging and fulfilling at the same time.

GOLD: What are the main challenges facing the profession today?

R.G.: The immediate challenges for the accountancy profession, in view of the current coronavirus pandemic, are tremendous. The economic impact is very evident and emergency measures are being implemented by governments worldwide. COVID-19 is adversely impacting the GDPs and economies of virtually every country in the world. It is of paramount importance that guidance is furnished to all accountancy disciplines by regulators, standard-setters and professional bodies, so as to enable all accounting practitioners to successfully adapt to this new economic reality.