



PRESS RELEASE:

Violence and specifically gender-based violence disproportionately affects women. This was laid out in a survey published recently by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). Conscious of the need to address this situation, Ms Renee Laiviera Commissioner of the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) spoke of a set of initiatives aimed at raising further awareness on different forms of violence on women and girls. Through these initiatives, NCPE is committed:

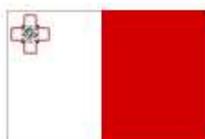
- to further spread the message on zero tolerance to violence against women and girls;
- to provide further information to policy makers on the current situation on violence on women and girls, and the respective circumstances and needs at a national level;
- to sensitise professionals who work with victims or perpetrators of such violence;
- to further encourage victims of violence to take action to combat or prevent violent experiences; and
- to raise awareness and disseminate more information on female genital mutilation (FGM).

These initiatives will be carried out as part of an EU co-funded project entitled *Forms of Violence in Malta – A Gender Perspective*, which NCPE is implementing.

In her opening address, Minister for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties, Dr Helena Dalli, referred to her participation as main speaker in the FRA conference held in March to launch the study of violence against women, when Dr Dalli announced the first reading in Parliament of the Bill to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). Dr Dalli described the launch of these initiatives as another step forward in the Government's commitment to combat all forms of violence amongst women whilst strengthening the work carried out so far. Such work is fundamental not only to raise further awareness on violence against women, but also to further empower victims of violence to report their cases and seek redress.

NCPE's manager, Ms Therese Spiteri gave an overview of the research to be carried out on female genital mutilation (FGM) in Malta which is expected to shed more light on the needs of women who experienced FGM, as well as the needs of the healthcare providers working in these fields. Research will also delve deeper into violence and abuse of older women and men to look at the factors and consequences of the violence suffered by older persons highlighting the gender perspective as well as on violence, harassment and bullying in schools aimed at preventing violence from a young age.

In addition, promotional material will be developed on various facets related to violence against women and girls which, alongside the awareness raising campaigns, will promote the value of zero tolerance on violence against women, and further encourage victims of violence to take action to combat and/or prevent such violence. Moreover, training sessions will be



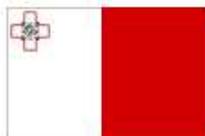
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held with multidisciplinary professionals and with legal experts on this subject matter to further sensitise them on the circumstances and needs of victims of violence. Concluding the conference, NCPE's Commissioner Renee Laiviera stressed that the prevention of violence against women is essential to further safeguard the promotion of gender equality, given that violence against women is caused by the historical imbalance of power between women and men in society. In this regard, the Commissioner reiterated NCPE's commitment to enhance the prevention and protection of women and girls from different forms of violence through initiatives that range from research studies on various forms of violence, awareness raising campaigns as well as training sessions and a seminar that will be organised for young persons to sensitise them on this area of concern.

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