



Giving visibility: NCPE's online directory to tap professional women

A report issued by the European Commission in March 2014 brings to light the under-representation of women in senior positions in the EU and confirms that Malta, at just 2.1 per cent, sits at the lower ranks in percentages of women occupying decision making positions among the member states.

The present situation of under-representation of women denotes an untapped potential of skilled human resources. Barriers to women's empowerment spring from gender-based stereotypes, which hinder women from contributing to the economy, both at national and EU levels. UK research findings in 2011 reveal that a gender balanced board is more likely to pay attention to managing and controlling risk combined with strong organisational and financial performance. Moreover, gender equality enables women and men to contribute to and benefit from political and social participation.

The European Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, Viviane Reding, called on member states to set themselves a target to voluntarily increase the number of women, being the under-represented sex, on boards to 30 per cent by 2015 and 40 per cent by 2020. These voluntary initiatives include governance codes, charters, training, mentoring and databases promoting female candidates. Other initiatives to increase women on boards include the introduction of gender quotas, where women who are as equally qualified as men would be given the opportunity to occupy decision-making positions. In November 2012, the European Commission proposed to introduce legally-binding gender quotas, in which publicly-listed companies would be requested to raise their proportion of women on company boards to 40 per cent.

In order to address this challenge of gender imbalance on boards, the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality

(NCPE) embarked on a project entitled 'Gender Balance in Decision-Making', which is co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF). The aims are to increase the number of women in decision-making positions and to empower and enable women to take up top level positions. In this context an online Directory of Professional Women is being developed as one way to reach such targets. The aim of the Directory is to give visibility to professional women and their competences.

What is the Directory of Professional Women?

This Directory shall be an online database with profiles of professional women from various fields and backgrounds. It will include information about the qualifications, experience, skills and areas of interest. The main aim of the Directory is to enhance the opportunities of women to assume decision-making positions. Moreover, the Directory aims to highlight the women's achievements in the various fields of specialisation and occupations as well.

Who can benefit from the Directory?

- This Directory shall empower and give more opportunities to women to be appointed to senior positions in the public and private sectors or to assume decision-making positions in the labour market and elsewhere. In addition, the Directory can also provide a window for women to contribute and participate in politics.
- The Directory is a service for all those who are looking for a qualified and experienced female professional. This could be a very

useful tool for the employer to find a fully qualified professional to appoint on a decision making board/committee. The online Directory will give the possibilities to locate a professional woman in the relevant field by saving both time and money as this service is free of charge.

- The Directory can be a powerful networking tool for women to identify and find other professionals in Malta and Gozo.
- The Directory is accessible to the general public and can be used by every company, business and enterprise.

Who is eligible to apply?

Since the Directory is aimed at professionals, women with the below criteria will be eligible to register as users on the Directory:

- Have five (5) years' experience in a decision-making/management position AND/OR
- Have ten (10) years specialised expertise in a particular field/s. Fields include finance, entrepreneurship, banking, accounts, architecture, engineering, politics, social wellbeing, tourism, sciences, education, humanities, health and law among others.

Those interested to be included in the 'Directory of Professional Women' are invited to register their interest and send their contact details together with the area/s of expertise to the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) by sending an email on equality@gov.mt or by contacting our offices on 2590 3862.



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