

Gender imbalance in decision-making positions

Despite signs of improvement in recent years, women remain under-represented in decision-making positions that shape politics, economics and society as a whole.¹ In Malta, a gender balanced representation was achieved in 2019 elections for the European Parliament. However, currently, the percentage of women in the national parliament is 14.9% as opposed to the European average of 31.7%.²

Over the years, many efforts have been made in Malta to achieve a more democratic society with equal participation of women and men in the political sphere. Indeed, in March 2019 a green paper ‘*Gender Balance in Parliament Reform Consultation Document*’, drafted by a technical committee following intensive research, was launched for public consultation. The green paper proposes various positive measures to promote and enforce equality amongst men and women in parliament to address current hurdles. This initiative was a step forward in tackling the gender imbalances in the political sphere particularly as government and opposition have reached agreement on the proposed measures.

Moreover, the under-representation of women on corporate boards and in management positions also remains an important challenge. This year, the proportion of women on the boards of the largest publicly listed companies registered in the EU Member States reached 29.2% whereas in Malta, women account 11% of board members.³

In order to address this growing concern in this area, during the Maltese Presidency (2017) of the Council of the European Union, Malta worked to ensure that the Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on improving the gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges and related measures, which was a

¹<https://eige.europa.eu/news/women-decision-making-why-it-matters>

²https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/sdg_05_50/default/table?lang=en

³ https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/indicator/wmidm_bus_bus_wmid_comp_compex/bar/year:2020-B1/geo:EU28,EU27_2020,IPA,EEA,BE,BG,CZ,DK,DE,EE,IE,EL,ES,FR,HR,IT,CY,LV,LT,LU,HU,MT,NL,AT,PL,PT,RO,SI,S K,FI,SE,UK,IS,NO,ME,MK,RS,TR,BA/EGROUP:COMP/sex:M,W/UNIT:PC/POSITION:EXEC/NACE:TOT

priority for the Presidency, was placed on the Council's agenda whereby it was re-examined in a working party and a Progress Report was presented.⁴

The under-representation of women on corporate boards and in management positions was also addressed by the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) in 2013 when it implemented a project entitled '*Gender Balance in Decision Making*', co-financed by the European Social Fund. The aims were to increase the number of women in decision-making positions and to empower and enable women to take up top level positions. As part of the project, an Online Directory of Professional Women was developed in 2015 as one way to reach such targets.

Currently, there are a total of 265 professional women from different sectors on the NCPE's Directory. The aim of the Directory is to give visibility to professional women and their competences in the various fields in order that they may be considered for appointment on boards, committees, representations or any other decision-making positions. The registrants of the Directory are reminded to update their information regularly. This positive initiative should also strengthen gender equality in both public and private sectors.

Equal opportunities for women and men are important in all areas of life, including decision-making positions. Bringing more women into decision-making positions would enable any political party, public or private organisation "*to use all the resources at its disposal and help ensure everybody, regardless of gender, is able to help shape society*".⁵

The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) can be contacted on: 2295 7850 or equality@gov.mt or our Facebook page.

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⁴https://ncpe.gov.mt/en/Documents/Our_Publications_and_Resources/Annual_Reports/Annual_Report_2017.pdf

⁵ <https://eige.europa.eu/news/women-decision-making-why-it-matters>