

***Press statement by the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE)***

**NCPE's E4D Online Launch Conference**

Given the significant legislative advances related to LGBTIQ+ which came about in a relatively short time span, the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) in partnership with Allied Rainbow Communities (ARC) has identified the need to address the societal and cultural impact of such changes through a set of initiatives as part of the EU co-funded project 'Empowerment for Diversity' (E4D). This project which started in April 2020 and will run until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, focuses on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, sex characteristics and gender expression.

Opening remarks were made by Minister for Justice, Equality and Governance Hon. Dr Edward Zammit Lewis during which he underlined that substantial progress was achieved in the past years particularly in the legislative field. This included the enactment of the Civil Union Act in 2014, the enactment of the Marriage Equality Legislation in 2017, the setting up of the Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Unit (SOGIGESC) within the Human Rights Directorate in 2018, and the adoption of the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy & Action Plan (2018-2022) amongst others. Following the recent LGBTIQ+ legislative advancements taken in the past 6 years, Malta has been placed at the forefront of LGBTIQ+ rights in Europe.

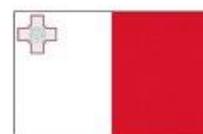
These achievements have resulted in Malta consistently ranking as one of the most LGBTIQ-friendly countries in the world and has ranked top of the ILGA Europe Rainbow Index for the past five years, with a score of 89%.<sup>1</sup> Hon. Dr Zammit Lewis said that despite such

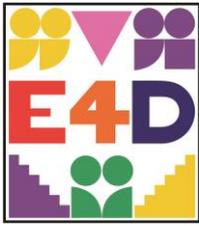
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<sup>1</sup> <https://rainbow-europe.org/#8647/0/0>



This Project was funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020)





achievements, more efforts are needed to ensure that every person is fully respected regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics. Hon. Dr Zammit Lewis maintained that the NCPE's set of initiatives, as part of the E4D project, are in line with the Government's commitment to continue working to strengthen equality by raising awareness on the negative effects of discrimination on individuals and society at large.

In her address, NCPE Commissioner Ms Renee Laiviera stated that since 2015, the NCPE has also been empowered by Chapter 456 of the Laws of Malta to investigate complaints of alleged discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics in employment, education and vocational training as well as by banks and financial institutions.

Despite such legislation to ensure that the Maltese society is a society free from any form of discrimination, 20% of the Maltese still disagree that gay, lesbian and bisexual people should have the same rights as heterosexual people, and 80% believe there is something wrong in a sexual relationship between two persons of the same sex.<sup>2</sup> Ms Laiviera highlighted that in this context, the E4D project aims to address the current situation in Malta regarding LGBTIQ+ discrimination through awareness-raising initiatives, strengthening capacity, and carrying out a qualitative research study.

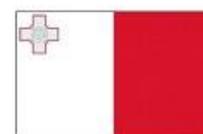
Ms Joana Micallef, the project's Coordinator, gave an overview of the activities that will be carried out. These include a qualitative research study on LGBTIQ+ discrimination covering both a comparative analysis with a similar research study conducted by the NCPE in 2011, entitled 'LGBT Discrimination Research Report', as well as updates following the recently adopted legislation. Three workshops will be hosted with members of the LGBTIQ+ community to discuss the issues being faced by the community. An awareness-raising

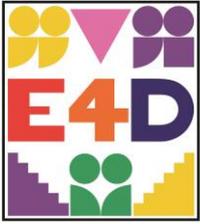
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<sup>2</sup> Ibid



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Empowerment for Diversity



campaign will be carried out to inform the public on how to seek redress through the NCPE. Moreover, the NCPE staff increase their capacity on LGBTIQ+ laws and on how to address underreporting, mainstreaming LGBTIQ+ policies, and outreach, amongst others.

Mr Clayton Mercieca, Community Manager at ARC, gave a presentation on the role of ARC in the E4D Project, the benefits of such a partnership, and the relevance of such a project in light of the legislative advancements introduced in the last 6 years. Mr Mercieca also mentioned the effects of these laws on the LGBTIQ+ community and the general public.

This webinar served to launch the project and inform the general public, relevant stakeholders and target groups about the aims, objectives, expected results and the initiatives to be undertaken through this project.

**27<sup>th</sup> April 2021**



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