

PRESS RELEASE:

NCPE's Budget 2012 reactions

Following the Budget Speech 2012, the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) acknowledges the Government's commitment to enhance equal opportunities and the inclusion of persons who are underrepresented in economic and social spheres.

NCPE deems that in the proposals put forward in this Budget, gender should be mainstreamed to further take into account the different circumstances and needs of women and men in employment, entrepreneurship, environment, education, health as well as within their families. In this regard, the proposals of this Budget are to ascertain that the gender or family responsibilities of individuals do not inhibit their inclusion or representation in any economic or social sphere. In addition, the characteristics and vulnerabilities of various women and men who are at higher risk of poverty and exclusion are to be taken into account throughout the implementation of these proposals.

To this end, NCPE commends the Government's commitment to make better use of the talents, skills and potential of human resources. In particular, NCPE endorses the commitment to enhance the accessibility and flexibility of lifelong learning courses as well as to empower more persons, particularly women, to increase their participation in the labour market. In light of this, fiscal incentives encourage more women to enter or return in employment, alongside the proposed 'parent computation' of the income tax.

Moreover, further awareness on work life balance and respective measures facilitate the reconciliation of professional and private responsibilities. Work-life balance is essential not only to the increase the female participation in the labour market but also to further safeguard equal opportunities to both men and women. NCPE reiterates that support structures for persons with caring responsibilities further assist these persons to reconcile their responsibilities. To this end, NCPE commends the investment proposed in childcare centres, night shelters and day care centres for older persons, respite care for persons with dementia and other measures that support the independence of persons with caring needs.

Besides, NCPE deems that the extension of maternity leave contributes to enhance the health and safety of pregnant women, women who have recently given birth, as well as their babies. In light of this, NCPE acknowledges this extension, and the contribution of the Government in financing the expenditure related to it.

NCPE also fosters the Government's commitment towards the prevention and early identification of breast cancer through the Breast Screening Programme reiterated in this Budget.

Wednesday 16th November, 2011