

**PRESS RELEASE: The challenges in the field of equality discussed with HE US Ambassador to Malta, Prof. Douglas Kmiec**

The challenges that the field of equality in Malta is going through were discussed between the Ambassador for the United States of America, Prof. Douglas Kmiec, and representatives from the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE). During a courtesy visit at NCPE's offices at Blata l-Bajda, Prof. Kmiec was briefed on NCPE's role and duties in relation to its remit of promoting equality and combating discrimination.

NCPE's Executive Director, Dr Romina Bartolo, explained that currently one of the toughest challenges for equality is to address the low female participation rate in the labour market. Dr Bartolo emphasised the importance of the provision of family-friendly measures, such as flexible hours and telework. These should be accessible to both males and females at the workplace and both genders should be encouraged to make use of them. Dr Bartolo also mentioned the need of opening more child-care centres which are accessible and affordable to all.

HE Ambassador Kmiec emphasised that the participation of women in the labour market is highly important. Prof. Kmiec described the EU co-financed projects that NCPE is currently undertaking as "excellent projects". *VS/2010/0569 Think Equal* targets youths through a Symposium on multiple discrimination, art and photo competition and exhibition. Another project – *VS/2010/0819 Gender Mainstreaming – in Practice* aims at establishing a network of persons working within National Ministries empowered to implement gender mainstreaming, on the job training; a Symposium on good practices; and training workshops.

HE Ambassador Kmiec was highly interested in the Equality Mark initiative whereby NCPE is identifying and awarding organisations that demonstrate a commitment towards gender equality, certifying them as true equal opportunities employers. The Equality Mark forms part of another co-financed EU project entitled '*ESF 3.47 - Unlocking the Female Potential*'.

Other challenges that were discussed with the Ambassador for the United States were the role of the father in family responsibilities; work life-balance; and discrimination in the access of goods and services for persons of different race and ethnic origins.

**Friday 18<sup>th</sup> February, 2011**