

**PRESS RELEASE:**

**Where Next for Equality? ...  
A Conference discussing myriad aspects of equality and discrimination**

As part of the project *VS/2010/0569 Think Equal*, during the past year the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) implemented a programme of actions designed to deepen the understanding of equality, to strengthen the promotion of equality, and to communicate about equality with young people and the general public.

Throughout a Conference which brought to conclusion the *Think Equal* project, discussions were held on the activities organised as part of this project and insights were identified from these activities for a more effective promotion of equality. The Conference also focused on what was done during the year, what was learnt from this work and what steps are now required to build on this work for a more equal society.

In an overview of this project, NCPE's Projects Executive Ms Lara Bezzina outlined the various initiatives undertaken throughout the span of time of this project targeting youths, professionals and academics. The Conference brought together the project's researchers contracted by NCPE to carry out research among youths, public employees, persons of race minorities and persons from the LGBT community.

Dr Suzanne Gatt gave an overview of the survey carried out among public employees and highlighted that those who responded claimed very few instances of discrimination experienced and the most common forms of discrimination were those on the basis of age and gender. Respondents expressed a wish to learn more about equality and discrimination.

Presenting the qualitative study on LGBT discrimination, Ms Gabi Calleja highlighted how the majority of the interviewees reported incidents of discrimination in the field of employment. The report also shows that being in a same-sex relationship increases the likelihood of harassment and discrimination in the fields of housing, healthcare, social security benefits, access to and provision of goods and services and in enjoyment of public spaces. More than half of the interviewees had experiences of homophobic and transphobic bullying in educational institutions.

Highlighting the main findings of the qualitative study on racial discrimination in Malta, Dr Marceline Naudi said that notwithstanding the protective measures in place in relation to discrimination on the grounds of race and ethnic origin, minority ethnic groups within the Maltese society experience discrimination and harassment to some extent or another in its various forms in all areas of their lives. Furthermore, Dr Naudi explained that the perpetrators of the discrimination and harassment appear to suffer no penalty partly due to non-reporting of incidents.

Dr Suzanne Gatt explained how the study measuring discrimination among youths reports the results of a quantitative study carried out with youths about their level of understanding and sensitivity to equality and discrimination. The study included youths in post-secondary and tertiary level of education and other youths between the ages of 16 and 30. This research found that respondents declared a good degree of knowledge on equality and discrimination

while expressed a limited degree of knowledge on Maltese laws related to the same subject. Respondents experienced very few instances of discrimination and the most common were on the basis of age and gender. The study also showed that respondents who did not report instances of discrimination witnessed was often due to lack of knowledge of what to do and where to go, as well as lack of self-confidence.

In addition, Dr Neil Falzon presented the compilation of Case Law targeted at professionals working with persons who have experienced discrimination and the Information Booklet which is a measure of first assistance to persons who feel they have experienced discrimination.

Ms Therese Spiteri and Ms Francesca Dayal, both from NCPE, addressed the potential of focusing on multiple discrimination and how young people perceive and speak about discrimination respectively. Mr Niall Crowley, the independent expert of *Think Equal*, explored what initiatives could be taken following this project outlining how further dialogue on equality could be made possible with politicians, local administration and young people.

In her concluding comments, NCPE's Executive Director Dr Romina Bartolo, encouraged the spurring of further debate and the stimulation of further action on issues related to equality and discrimination.

**Wednesday 14th December, 2011**