

PRESS RELEASE:

Using communications to tackle under-reporting of discriminatory cases

The use of communications to tackle under-reporting of discriminatory cases was discussed throughout a training workshop organised in Malta by the European Network of Equality Bodies (EQUINET) together with the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE). The two-day event represented a valuable learning opportunity for over 50 European equality bodies' staff members who have an interest and/or role in communications strategies and activities.

During the opening address, NCPE's Executive Director Dr Romina Bartolo referred to research carried out in 2010 by NCPE on the under-reporting of discriminatory incidents in Malta which was based on all the six grounds of discrimination. Dr Bartolo explained that the main aim of this research was to determine the reasons why instances of discrimination go unreported. It was essential to determine which bodies are responsible for investigating cases of discrimination while the research needed to identify the reasons why people chose not to file a report or complaint. Dr Romina Bartolo outlined how a very important element to this research that needed to be taken into consideration was establishing the victim's knowledge of discrimination.

The training aimed to secure that participants:

- gain practical knowledge and understanding of strategic issues surrounding communication activities that responds to the challenge of under-reporting of discrimination;
- gain practical knowledge on the best ways to reach vulnerable groups and potential victims of discrimination, build trust and deliver the right messages;
- and exchange experiences and practices in devising communication strategies and implementing communication activities that contribute to building a wider culture of rights.

Presentations were delivered throughout the sessions by expert speakers from different equality bodies, NGOs and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). Sessions were held on concepts and practices for tackling under-reporting and how equality bodies can raise awareness on their existence and role within society and with potential victims of discrimination. Ideas and experiences were shared on the key challenge in tackling under-reporting through communication which is the building a culture of rights.

A plenary workshop facilitated remotely by Richard Hawkins from the United Kingdom on 'Common Cause' explored a values-based approach to contributing to a culture of rights. 'Common Cause' is an initiative of a number of UK based NGOs who came together to discuss the inadequacy of responses to a range of social and environmental issues.

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