

PRESS RELEASE:

Giving all women the opportunity to achieve their full potential is at the heart of the Government's approach to economic growth

Speaking during the annual conference of the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE), Minister for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties, Dr Helena Dalli, said that giving all women the opportunity to achieve their full potential is at the heart of the Government's approach to economic growth.

The minister said that while some results have been achieved in recent years, this is far below the European standard, and far below what is expected. She said that the employment rate of women in Malta is still the second lowest in the EU, after that of Greece, the gender pay gap still exists, and family-friendly measures are still widely unavailable and inaccessible to women with children.

Dr Dalli said that tackling these inequalities is therefore not just crucial for our generation but for future generations of women.

Speaking about the government's commitment to address these inequalities, she said that one of the first things she did as Minister responsible for equality was to issue a government circular on more transparency on the uptake of family-friendly measures in the public sector and the public service.

Speaking about women in decision-making roles, Minister Dalli said that this government has launched a project which will seek to enhance the utilisation of the labour potential of everyone by addressing the under-representation of women in decision-making positions.

Dr Dalli said that in the coming weeks the NCPE will set-up again the 'Directory of Professional Women' which will enable the government to better identify qualified women in the various fields.

Keeping in mind that last year the remit of the NCPE has been extended to cover other areas other than gender, the government has to make a greater emphasis on combating discrimination.

Citing various research, Dr Dalli said that discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity and race is widespread in Malta.

Minister Dalli said that recently the NCPE has launched a project which will address discrimination through training. She said that the NCPE has an important role to play to counter discrimination on all grounds and promote diversity.

Concluding, Dr Dalli said that "In the NCPE I see a strategic partner in our challenge to move forward the government's agenda and work towards achieving an open

society where people are aware of their rights, can meet their personal aspirations and live happily. “

During the conference, the NCPE Executive Director, Dr Romina Bartolo, gave an extensive overview of the initiatives and measures carried out by NCPE in 2012. Throughout last year, the Commission's remit was extended to include not only discrimination based on gender and family responsibility, but also discrimination based on race and ethnic origin in employment as well as access to vocational and professional training, or banks and financial institutions. The NCPE also works on discrimination based on race and ethnic origin, and gender in the provision of goods and services.

In 2012, the NCPE received requests for information on various issues related to equality, while complaints were lodged on a regular basis. Some of the complaints lodged with NCPE included sexual harassment cases, discrimination on the basis of gender and family responsibilities, unfair dismissal due to religious beliefs, discrimination on the basis of age, discrimination in the access to an interview; and racial discrimination.

While giving an overview of the training that NCPE conducted in 2012 and the EU co-funded projects carried out, Dr Bartolo also explained that in 2012 NCPE intervened in 60 cases of gender discriminatory adverts, of which 55 contained discriminatory text and 5 non-balanced gender images. These adverts were related to employment and educational opportunities.

As regards to the Equality Mark Certification, 19 companies/entities were certified in 2012, representing 2,021 employees. An additional two organisations – *Simonds Farsons Cisk plc* and *Food Chain Ltd* - were certified during the said conference as true equal opportunities employers in relation to gender and hence will be using the Equality Mark logo on their publications and documentation. NCPE's Senior Policy, Mainstreaming Training and Legal Executive, Ms Maria Borg Filletti, explained that although the ESF project through which the Equality Mark was funded ended in December 2012, the NCPE has continued auditing companies leading to the awarding of the Equality Mark. Since 2010, 53 companies/entities have been certified with the Equality Mark.

Following the Equality Mark Certification, a presentation and discussion on NCPE's complaints was delivered by the NCPE Commissioner, Ms Renee Laiviera. Investigating complaints is one of the core functions of NCPE. Anyone who believes that he or she is being discriminated against on the basis of gender and family responsibility, gender identity, religion, age, sexual orientation and race/ethnic origin in employment as well as access to vocational or professional training, or banks and financial institutions, and also discrimination on the basis of race and ethnic origin, and gender, in the provision of goods and services may submit a complaint with the NCPE. Throughout 2012, there were 17 complaints lodged with NCPE.



National Commission for the Promotion of Equality

For more information about the work performed by the NCPE, or to report any discrimination, the general public is invited to contact the NCPE on equality@gov.mt or on 2590 3850.

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