

PRESS STATEMENT:

The Civil Unions Act – a landmark for Equality in Malta

The final approval by the House of Representatives of the law introducing civil unions between two persons of the same or of different sex in Malta is a landmark for Equality that is welcomed by the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE).

The 14th April 2014 will be remembered as the day when same-sex couples in Malta were granted the same legal recognition by the State on a par with heterosexual couples.

NCPE thus recognises that this law further promotes the enjoyment of equal rights in various spheres of society, including the social and legislative spheres.

The Civil Unions Act will bring about the necessary momentum that will enable all citizens to be treated equally and without discrimination because of their sexual orientation.

The approval by Parliament of the Civil Unions Act makes Malta the twenty second European country to legally recognise same-sex unions and the tenth country in Europe to allow same-sex couples to jointly apply for child adoption.

NCPE also recognises the other significant and important development that occurred on Monday in relation to Equality, with the unanimous approval by the House of Representatives of the constitutional amendment that will protect people from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. Malta has thus become the first European country to include protection on the basis of gender identity in its Constitution.

These developments are links in the chain to further promote equality in Maltese society. On the EU level, the NCPE recognises the efforts of the Maltese Government as evidenced by its support of the joint declaration by a number of EU ministers on the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHO) 2013. The Declaration, signed by the Minister for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties, Dr Helena Dalli, on behalf of Malta, called for the EU to adopt a comprehensive approach at EU level to improve the fundamental rights situation of LGBT people. The NCPE also supports the IDAHO Conference that will take place in Malta next month and will be co-hosted by Sweden and Malta.



NCPE remains committed towards supporting and empowering persons to speak out when faced with situations where individuals are being discriminated against, as well as addressing underreporting, an issue that is a reality across Europe and in Malta as confirmed through an NCPE study in 2010.

NCPE embraces an inclusive society based on respect for diversity and the upholding of the human rights of all individuals.