

10 years Equality Commission... developing our vision

The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) is marking the 10th Anniversary since its inception; ten years that were characterised by numerous initiatives through which equality has been placed and steadily maintained on the national agenda. The momentum has reached another milestone this year, since the Prime Minister, Dr Joseph Muscat, has stated that *'2014 will be the year of equality in Malta'*. The presentation of the Civil Unions Bill in September 2013 by Minister for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties, Dr Helena Dalli, also highlighted the importance and significance of such a statement.

Over the past ten years, NCPE has sought ways to raise awareness on rights and responsibilities related to equality and non discrimination, as well as on the equal treatment of persons. During these ten years, the Commissioners for Equality have processed 361 complaints alleging discrimination in the context of the grounds of non-discrimination that fall within NCPE's remit. NCPE has also introduced initiatives, such as the Equality Mark, to provide a mechanism which promotes equal opportunities and recognises good practice. To date 53 companies have obtained this certification.

NCPE has also sought to engage with key stakeholders including government, national and local authorities, employers' organisations, trade unions, civil society and NGOs as well as international organisations. Gender mainstreaming, now broadened to include equality mainstreaming has been very much on the NCPE's agenda.

Various research studies shedding further light on current circumstances related to equality have been carried out. These include those which delved into various facets related to the labour market and the perceptions of youth on equality and discrimination as well as on underreporting of cases of discrimination. These studies enabled NCPE to develop tools for various stakeholders and materials that raise awareness on equality rights and responsibilities.

In order to be able to carry out its work, NCPE had EU funding opportunities. €5.7 million have been obtained (of which €1.3 million to run till 2015) to implement various key actions identified by NCPE.

As stated in the last budget speech, the Government is envisaging a further widening of NCPE's mandate and re-structuring to encompass all human rights. These are very challenging times with the equality landscape changing, thus enabling NCPE not only to build on work which has already been identified but also to expand and strengthen its work and responsibilities in the field of human rights and equality.

All this has been possible thanks to the hard work and commitment of the past and present Commissioners, Commission members and staff.

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