



PRESS RELEASE:

Equality Beyond Gender Roles

The importance of men's role in gender equality and in work-life balance is the focus of a new project – *Equality Beyond Gender Roles* - that is being implemented by the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE). This is a two-year project spanning from January 2016 until December 2017. The main objectives of the project are to:

- Increase awareness on the importance of men's role in gender equality;
- Increase knowledge through various training and outreach initiatives;
- Inform the target groups and society at large about the significance of men's role in gender equality, breaking down stereotypes tied to traditional gender roles, highlighting the benefits of sharing family and domestic responsibilities through the uptake of various incentives by both men and women;
- Increase the awareness of various types of family-friendly measures and the benefits and responsibilities of making use of such initiatives.

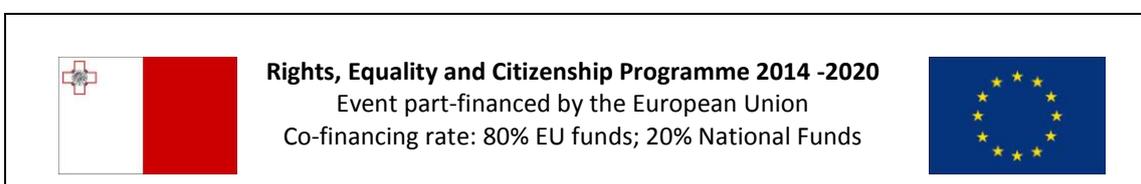
In an opening video message, Minister for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties Helena Dalli remarked how in spite of the fact that government has introduced measures for parents to be able to participate in both the public and the private spheres, the percentage of men who benefit from these family-friendly measures is still very low when compared to that of women.

"We need to move away from a society where it is generally accepted that family-friendly measures are for women and where men are often looked down upon when they ask, according to their rights, to follow suit" stated Dr Dalli.

Minister Dalli said that we need to ensure that children do not internalise gender norms that we adults know are damaging to their development.

Creating a fairer society where men and women alike can achieve their full potential is an important goal stated NCPE's Commissioner, Renee Laiviera, during her presentation on why the role of men is important for gender equality. Equality of opportunity can only be achieved if both men and women actively engage in making it a reality as both men and women have much to gain from gender equality.

Commissioner Laiviera opined that men are often reluctant to enter 'feminised' spaces for reasons of fear of ridicule, fear of becoming 'tainted' by femininity, and genuine concern that it is not appropriate for them to speak out about gender equality. This is the result of





how cultural and social spaces are gendered. Restrictive gender roles and stereotypes harm not only women and girls but also men and boys. Men often miss out on the benefits derived from a whole range of emotions and experiences that are immensely rewarding and socially valued.

Gender stereotypes, Ms Laiviera pointed out, have to be challenged both in the education sector as well as in the labour market. Ms Laiviera emphasised that further action is needed to enable women and men to reconcile the demands of remunerated work with the demands of non-remunerated work related to the home and the family. In this context, the use of family-friendly measures should be further encouraged particularly for take up by men.

Engaging men as change agents for gender equality can be challenging said Commissioner Laiviera; however working with men is essential to make gender equality a reality in society.

Ms Annalise Frantz, Senior Projects Executive at NCPE, gave an overview of the activities under this project. One such activity will be a Business Breakfast focusing on employers and employees. Employers will be offered two-day training to increase their awareness and knowledge on family-friendly measures aiming at diminishing perceived obstacles of employers when offering such arrangements.

Students and youths will be targeted through various activities, namely the online social media campaign, the roving van in various post-secondary and tertiary locations, and the on-campus event for all post-secondary and tertiary students. Younger students, aged 14-16 years, will be targeted through interactive drama sessions entitled 'Theatre in Education' with the aim to break down the stereotypical notions tied to the traditional roles of men and women and to encourage them to challenge such notions.

The general public will be mainly targeted through a public event that will address stereotypes. An on-going online social media campaign as well as media adverts on TV and radio will support the process.

NCPE's Commissioner, Renee Laiviera, concluded by stating that the promotion of gender equality remains one of the main aims of NCPE and that its achievement can only be reached with the collaboration of all stakeholders in society.

The project, *Equality Beyond Gender Roles*, is co-financed by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme 2014 – 2020.

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