

**PRESS STATEMENT:**

**NCPE's Seminar *Putting the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023 into action***

*“Even if progress is visible and the legal status of women in Europe has undoubtedly improved during recent decades, effective equality between women and men is far from being a reality”* states the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018 – 2023. The enhanced commitment for the achievement of substantive gender equality was addressed during a seminar by the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE).

The seminar focused on where Malta stands in relation to the objectives of the *Council of Europe (CoE) Gender Equality Strategy 2018 - 2023* and the way forward in this regard. The strategy addresses the main obstacles that are hindering the achievement of gender equality, and is aligned with the vision and framework for the CoE member States including Malta. The six strategic objectives focus on preventing and combating gender stereotyping and sexism; preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence; ensuring the equal access of women to justice; achieving balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making; protecting the rights of migrant refugees, asylum-seeking women and girls, and achieving gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures.

The Minister for European Affairs and Equality, Hon. Dr. Helena Dalli addressed the seminar highlighting that the aim of the Council of Europe Strategy, the achievement of gender equality, is indeed a priority of Malta. The government is committed to implement further measures to safeguard equal opportunities for women and men, as well as to strengthen the legal framework on equality to ensure that equality is translated in reality in the everyday life of everyone.

Minister Dalli pointed out that various initiatives carried out by the government in the past years are in line with the CoE strategic objectives. Particularly, in order to strengthen the protection and prevention of violence against women the Gender-based violence and domestic violence Act was enacted so that the provisions of the Istanbul Convention became enforceable as part of the Laws of Malta. In addition, the Council of Women's Rights was launched to improve dialogue between the government and civil society to continue strengthening women's rights. Moreover, the 2017 Migrant Integration Strategy and Action Plan seek to ensure that migrants learn about the country's values, standards and culture, which is crucial for the structured integration of women and men.

NCPE Commissioner Renee Laiviera opened the seminar by focusing on the importance of gender equality as defined by the Council of Europe's Strategy. Gender equality entails equal rights, visibility, empowerment, responsibility and participation of women and men in all spheres of public and private life. Despite significant progress, gender gaps, structural barriers, discrimination and violence persist, hindering the achievement of gender equality.

Ms Laiviera highlighted how NCPE is committed to continue working to strengthen gender equality and to address the remaining obstacles. NCPE investigates complaints of alleged discrimination, works to promote the integration of a gender perspective in all policies and programmes, and raises awareness through various campaigns and initiatives, including the Directory of Professional Women and the Equality Mark. NCPE also started working on a new project *Preparing the Ground for Economic Independence* (PGEI) that will focus on addressing the gender gaps in pay and pensions over the life course.

In a video-message, Ms Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni, the Council of Europe's Deputy Secretary General, introduced the CoE Gender Equality Strategy 2018 - 2023. After which a critical approach on the situation in Malta in relation to the strategic objectives of the CoE Strategy was presented by respective speakers: Dr JosAnn Cutajar, Dr Marceline Naudi, Dr Lara Dimitrijevic, Prof Carmen Sammut, Dr Katrine Camilleri<sup>1</sup> and NCPE Commissioner Renee Laiviera. The state of play on these strategic objectives, outstanding challenges and the way forward were then discussed with participants in workshops.

Relevant issues raised during these workshops will be taken on board by NCPE as part of its regular consultation process to strengthen its work to promote gender equality in Malta.

Further information can be accessed from [www.equality.gov.mt](http://www.equality.gov.mt)

**Thursday 4th October 2018**

---

<sup>1</sup> Dr Josann Cutajar, Dr Marceline Naudi & Prof Carmen Sammut – University of Malta. Dr Lara Dimitrijevic – Women's Rights Foundation. Dr Katrine Camilleri – Jesuit Refugee Service.