

## **Positive measures can effectively address gender inequality and Malta's democratic deficit**

The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) welcomes the proposals outlined in the *Gender Balance in Parliament Reform* consultation document. The NCPE has been insisting for many years on the pressing need to address the current democratic deficit resulting from an acute and persistent gender imbalance in Parliament. Several EU member states such as Ireland, France and Slovenia, have recognised the need to address this deficit and enacted positive measures for the balanced representation of women and men in politics.

This consultation document puts forward several positive measures in a multi-tiered approach, acting on both the causes and consequences of gender inequality in the political sphere, whilst taking into account the political and social specificities of the Maltese context. The document proposes the setting up of a Commission tasked with developing a more gender-sensitive Parliament, incentives to political parties enabling them to recruit more women candidates, periodic gender equality audits for political parties, a gender balanced Electoral Commission and legal and Constitutional reform aspiring to reach at least 40% representation of each sex.

Such positive measures aimed at accelerating *de facto* equality between women and men are enshrined in Art 45 (11) of the Constitution of Malta which '*provides for the taking of special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women, and in so far only as such measures, taking into account the social fabric of Malta, are shown to be reasonably justifiable in a democratic society.*'

The implementation of this wide-range of measures would constitute a historical turning point towards the achievement of gender equality in practice, making Malta a more democratic society with the full and equal participation of women and men in the political sphere.