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## Press Statement

### Seminar: Gender Pay Gap and Gender Pension Gap

Gender stereotypes, segregation in education and the labour market, lack of women in decision-making positions, the unequal distribution of unpaid care work between women and men and pay discrimination fuel the gender pay gap, which leads to the gender pension gap and other inequalities in the labour market. In light of this, NCPE organised a seminar on this topic as part of the EU co-funded project 'Prepare the Ground for Economic Independence' on 18<sup>th</sup> November.

In his opening speech, Minister for European Affairs and Equality Hon. Edward Zammit Lewis held that equal economic independence is not only a requisite for self-fulfilment, but it is also a prerequisite for women and men to be in control of their lives and to make genuine choices. He highlighted that in general women are less economically independent than men even though women's participation in the labour market increased significantly in the last six years. Minister Zammit Lewis underlined that various measures were developed to support equal economic independence to empower more women to join or rejoin the labour market.

Minister Zammit Lewis also reiterated the government's commitment to ensure that the principle of equal pay for work of equal value is safeguarded in practice to continue combating gender discrimination in employment. In conclusion, Minister Zammit Lewis recognised the importance of addressing the gender pay gap not only to minimise its impact on the gender gap in pensions during retirement, but also in order to foster economic growth and more importantly to make full use of available talent and human resources for the benefit of all.

NCPE Commissioner Renee Laiviera stated that women in Malta earn on average 12% less than men, a gender pay gap that is lower than the EU average (16%) that is gradually increasing in the context of the rising participation of women in the labour market. NCPE has been working to address the gender pay gap through various outreach initiatives, including a conference, awareness campaigns, and the Equality Mark. Ms Laiviera also referred to NCPE's function to investigate complaints of alleged discrimination in pay. NCPE concluded such an investigation in 2015 whereby equal pay was not given for equal work on the grounds of gender, which then resulted in a substantial increase in the salary of the complainant.





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Ms Laiviera mentioned that in September 2018, NCPE launched a set of initiatives to address the gender gaps over the life course that hinder women's economic independence as part of an EU co-financed project called 'Prepare the Ground for Economic Independence', which will run until August 2020. This project seeks to disseminate information on the gender pay and pension gaps, empower young students to make wise choices in school subjects, sensitise union representatives through further knowledge on equal pay for women and men and develop an equal pay tool for the national context and the Equality Mark.

Ms Joana Micallef, NCPE Project Promoter presented the context of the gender pay gap in Malta and the EU, and explained how gender segregation in education leads to segregation in the labour market contributing to the gender pay gap.

The seminar consisted of two panel discussions moderated by Junior Manager, Production News and Current Affairs of PBS, Mr Mario Xuereb. During the first panel discussion, academics and stakeholders discussed the correlation between educational choices and the gender pay gap and factors that students consider when making their subject choices as well as how these choices impact their careers.

Then, Ms Joana Micallef gave a presentation focusing on the gender inequalities that lead to the gender pay gap and the gender pension gap. She pointed out that women are at a higher risk of poverty or social exclusion than men across the life course, with such risk increasing in old age. This was followed by the second panel discussion with representatives from trade unions and an employers' association as well as an academic and NCPE Commissioner. This panel examined the causes and consequences of the gender pay and pension gaps and how these gaps can be addressed.

This seminar was an opportunity to further scrutinize the challenges that still need to be addressed in relation to the gender pay gap, inactivity and the gender pension gap, in order to establish equal economic independence that is a prerequisite for gender equality.

**18<sup>th</sup> November 2019**

