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*Press statement by the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE)*

## **PGEI Online Final Conference**

An innovative project for Malta, Prepare the Ground for Economic Independence (PGEI), that addresses the gender gaps over the life-cycle by increasing awareness on both the gender pay gap and gender pension gap, was implemented by the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) during the past two years.

In his opening speech, Minister for Justice, Equality and Governance Hon. Edward Zammit Lewis held that equal economic independence is a prerequisite for women and men to be in control of their lives. Hon. Zammit Lewis said the Government is committed to supporting equal economic independence. In fact, over the last years, various measures were developed to empower more women to enter or remain in employment including free childcare, in work benefits, breakfast club, Klabb 3-16 and the afterschool programme. Such measures contributed to a significant increase of 16% in the participation of women in the labour market in the last five years.

Furthermore, Parliamentary Secretary for Equality and Reforms Hon. Rosianne Cutajar underlined that unequal pay and gender discrimination in pay contribute to increasing the gender pay gap. Strengthening the principle of equal pay for work of equal value is indeed a crucial prerequisite for equal economic independence for women and men and for gender equality in general. Hon. Cutajar reiterated the Government's commitment to ensure that both women and men benefit from equal opportunities to reach their full potential for the advancement of the whole of our society.

During an online conference concluding this project, NCPE's Commissioner Ms Renee Laiviera stated that the gender pay gap does not only weaken the economic independence of women while in employment, but that inequalities tend to accumulate with age translating into a significant gap in pensions at retirement age. Ms Laiviera maintained that by ensuring equal pay for work of equal value, women's earnings increase throughout the lifecycle; thus their



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economic independence is enhanced while curbing their risk of falling into poverty or social exclusion. Ms Laiviera said the NCPE launched a set of initiatives to address the gender gaps over the life course that hinder women's economic independence through the PGEI project.

Ms Annalise Frantz, NCPE Senior Executive (Projects) explained the aims and objectives of the PGEI project which was launched in September 2018 until August 2020. Besides the public at large, the project had three main target groups; students, working age adults and organisations. The main objectives of the project were to inform the relevant target groups on the gender pay gap, the gender pension gap and inactivity, empower the target groups to act where necessary and possible, raise awareness and generate discussion on these issues.

Ms Joana Micallef, PGEI Project Promoter, gave an overview of the deliverables and results of the project's outreach activities. Training was given to students, career guidance teachers, and career advisors focusing on gender segregation in the education sector and in the labour market. In total, 67 participants from state schools in Malta and Gozo, attended these sessions. Ms Micallef stated that the NCPE has relaunched the Equality Mark by including the newly developed equal pay tool that looks at equal pay for work of equal value. Additionally, a seminar on the gender pay gap, inactivity and the gender pension gap was held in November 2019, besides awareness-raising campaigns on the gender pay gap and the gender pension gap.

As part of this project, a research study was carried out by KPMG Malta to gather information about existing equal pay tools in Europe with the aim of developing an equal pay tool suitable for Malta's labour market and tailor-made for the NCPE Equality Mark certification process. Furthermore, a trade union research study was conducted by M. Fsadni & Associates to seek how other European Trade Union representatives embrace the principle of equal pay for women and men during collective agreement negotiations and pass on this knowledge to local union representatives.

An external evaluation, of all the project's activities was also carried out, from which a series of recommendations were drawn as highlighted by the evaluators at NCP Consult SRLS.



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In her concluding remarks, NCPE's Commissioner Ms Renee Laiviera, whilst acknowledging the valid work undertaken, stated that this online final conference was an opportunity to scrutinize the challenges that still need to be addressed in relation to the gender pay and pension gaps, in order to empower both women and men to reach their full potential in the economic sphere.

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