

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

**NCPE's International Women's Day Conference 2021**

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the lives and well-being of many people. As the situation develops, the core values of equality and non-discrimination must continue to be protected and promoted for all. In light of this, on the International Women's Day, the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) organised an online Conference to raise awareness among stakeholders and the general public on how the pandemic has affected the lives of women and men.

International Women's Day is a day dedicated to honouring the achievements of women throughout history worldwide. It is usually a day when society reflects on the challenges that hinder women's full potential in order to provide equal opportunities for both women and men.

In his opening speech, Minister for Justice, Equality and Governance Hon. Dr Edward Zammit Lewis underlined that this pandemic has highlighted the exacerbated inequalities that already existed in our societies. It has shown us that, now more than ever, equality matters and should be at the forefront of any policy, legislative and institutional response. Hon. Dr Zammit Lewis referred to EIGE's data showing that around 26.5 % of women employees across the EU are in a precarious job, compared to 15.1% of men.<sup>1</sup> In this regard, the Maltese Government launched the COVID-19 Wage Supplement Scheme to safeguard employment in the wake of the pandemic.

NCPE Commissioner, Ms Renee Laiviera expressed her concern that women not only make up the majority (76%) of healthcare workers in the EU<sup>2</sup>, but they continued to shoulder most of the existing domestic and caring responsibilities brought about by the pandemic. Ms Laiviera referred to NCPE's research study highlighting that there is a substantial increase of 16% gap between female and male respondents reporting an increase in the time spent on home-

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://eige.europa.eu/covid-19-and-gender-equality/economic-hardship-and-gender>

<sup>2</sup> <https://eige.europa.eu/covid-19-and-gender-equality/frontline-workers>

schooling. Ms Laiviera stressed that much more work needs to be done to promote and inculcate behavioural changes that break gender stereotypes and overcome traditional gender role.

Prof JosAnn Cutajar from the Department of Gender and Sexualities, Faculty for Social Wellbeing Gender and Sexualities at the University of Malta, highlighted the challenges to be addressed in moving forward, including a better work-life balance, the benefits and challenges of teleworking, and the different impacts on women and men across various economic sectors.

NCPE Commissioner Ms Renee Laiviera and Mr Andre' Callus, Executive (Policy and Training) gave a presentation on NCPE's research study on the distribution of work in households during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings indicate that, the increase in the number of hours spent doing household tasks and childcare increased more for women than for men, while the time spent on leisure, personal care and sleep decreased more for women than it did for men.

Following these presentations, a panel with representatives from the health and employment sectors as well as academics discussed the way forward after the pandemic.

This online Conference, held to mark International Women's Day, offered an opportunity to look at how the pandemic has affected various sectors, the groups most affected by this crisis, the impact of COVID-19 on the world of work and more importantly, the way forward towards a just and equal society post-pandemic.

**2<sup>nd</sup> March 2021**