

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

## **NCPE's Annual Conference 2022**

NCPE's Annual Conference 2022 was the occasion to present the work carried out by the NCPE in 2021 to enhance equal treatment as per the NCPE's remit. 2021 was another year of work for the attainment of equal treatment in Maltese society. Indeed, various initiatives such as the investigation of complaints of alleged discrimination, awareness-raising campaigns, training, research, and policy work were undertaken to ensure that individuals and minority groups facing discrimination can fully enjoy their rights.

Addressing this Conference, Parliamentary Secretary for Reforms and Equality, Hon. Ms. Rebecca Buttigieg spoke about the Government's commitment to strengthen the legislative framework on equality to further safeguard rights for the benefit of everyone. In addition, she stated that the principle of equal treatment will be mainstreamed so that policies and laws will respond more effectively to the needs of different groups in society.

The Minister for Home Affairs, Security, Reforms and Equality, Hon. Dr. Byron Camilleri, launching the Conference, stated that various initiatives were taken by the Government over the past years to strengthen equal opportunities for everyone, such as the free childcare scheme; the Maternity Leave Trust; the first-ever National Anti-Racism Strategy; as well as legal amendments and measures to strengthen equal rights for the LGBTIQ+ community. In effect, he emphasised Malta's significant progress in this sphere, and reiterated the Government's commitment to continue working to ensure that everyone can enjoy equality and freedom from discrimination.

During an Awarding Ceremony presided by Minister for Home Affairs, Security, Reforms and Equality, Dr. Byron Camilleri and the Parliamentary Secretary for Reforms and Equality Ms. Rebecca Buttigieg, 19 organisations were certified with the NCPE Equality Mark for the first time, and 37 organisations were recertified as a confirmation of their commitment towards equality in the policies and practices at their workplace.

The investigation of complaints is a crucial aspect of the NCPE's work to ensure that equality is safeguarded in our society. NCPE Commissioner Ms Renee Laiviera explained the NCPE's investigations' procedure of cases of alleged discrimination and outlined two examples of cases concluded in 2021 on alleged discrimination on the basis of sex.

In addition, Ms Laiviera gave an overview of the NCPE's work in 2021 in relation to the promotion of equality, including the dissemination of information on rights and responsibilities related to equal treatment through training, awareness-raising campaigns utilising different means of communication on both traditional and social media, and by replying to requests for information. In 2021, the NCPE continued providing input to national, European and international policy documents to ensure that the needs and concerns of different social groups in society are mainstreamed.

The second part of the Conference addressed the topic of intersectional discrimination to highlight how two or more characteristics can interact with each other at the same time in such a way as to produce distinct and specific forms of discrimination. Prof JosAnn Cutajar from the Faculty for Social Wellbeing Gender and Sexualities, University of Malta initiated the session and facilitated a discussion whereby experiences of intersectional discrimination were shared by persons who have lived or witnessed such discrimination. The output of this session will further support the NCPE's work in the coming years.

**8<sup>th</sup> June 2022**