

## **“Conversion therapy” is harmful practice based on homophobia and transphobia**

The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) highlights the importance of legislation that protects individuals and society from the so-called “conversion therapy” which falsely claims that pseudoscientific interventions can change a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

Malta banned “conversion therapy” in 2016 with the enactment of the ‘Affirmation of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression Act’. The provisions of this Act that prohibit the advertising and spreading of “conversion therapy” are expected to be strengthened by means of an amendment to the law in the coming weeks.

“Conversion therapy” has no basis in science and is known to leave psychological damage such as depression and anxiety on those that are subject to its harmful practices. It specifically targets LGBTIQ persons, especially vulnerable individuals such as minors.

However, “conversion therapy” is not only harmful to the persons on whom it is practiced, but it also contributes to propagate falsities and stereotypes about LGBTIQ people in society since it is based on the erroneous belief that sexual orientation is a disorder that can be cured through treatment. The promotion and practice of “conversion therapy” thus leads to the stigmatization of LGBTIQ persons and hinders their full and equal inclusion in all spheres of society.

Over the past years, Malta has made significant strides forward in recognising the right to sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. However, the practice and promotion of “conversion therapy” continue to exist. It is both the State’s and society’s responsibility to ensure that LGBTIQ persons live in a safe social context free from a harmful practice based entirely on homophobia and transphobia.

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