

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

## **NCPE's Online Annual Conference 2021**

NCPE's Online Annual Conference 2021 highlighted NCPE's work in 2020, underlining the progress made and the remaining challenges towards achieving equality in specific areas. In 2020, a year marked by the Covid-19 pandemic, the NCPE continued its work for the attainment of equal treatment in Maltese society by investigating alleged cases of discrimination, creating awareness-raising campaigns, delivering training sessions to stakeholders, giving input and contributions to policies and legislation, and providing assistance to the general public.

Opening remarks were made by Minister for Justice, Equality and Governance Hon. Dr Edward Zammit Lewis during which he congratulated the NCPE for the work undertaken during the past years to address discrimination and promote equality. Hon. Dr Zammit Lewis said that the Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the exacerbated inequalities in our societies, the Government has strengthened its commitment to address these inequalities even in challenging times.

Hon. Dr Zammit Lewis referred to the Equality Bill and the Human Rights and Equality Commission Bill tabled in Parliament in 2019. Once enacted, the Bills will restructure and strengthen Malta's legal framework on human rights and discrimination with the transformation of the NCPE into a Human Rights and Equality Commission (HREC) answering to Parliament, with a wider remit and power to grant effective remedies to victims of discrimination.

NCPE Commissioner Ms Renee Laiviera gave an overview of the NCPE's work in 2020. The NCPE continued to disseminate information on rights and responsibilities related to equality through training to 440 participants hailing from different sectors, through the implementation of EU co-funded projects, and through different means of communication on both traditional and social media. The NCPE also provided reviews and feedback in the development of national and international policies and legislation that are vital to safeguard equal treatment.

Ms Laiviera explained NCPE's investigations' procedure of cases of alleged discrimination and outlined two ex officio investigations: one on alleged discrimination experienced by women in having to declare their civil status upon entering a notarial contract, and the other on alleged discriminatory practices in the tax system based on gender.

The NCPE Equality Mark continues to find favour with organisations that make gender equality one of their values and whose management is based on the recognition and promotion of the potential of all employees: both women and men, and persons with caring responsibilities. During an Awarding Ceremony presided by Minister Hon. Dr Zammit Lewis, 11 new organisations were awarded the Equality Mark certification, 8 organisations' first re-certification and 6 organisations' second re-certification.

The rapid development of media technologies and telecommunications has changed the very nature of the media. While such communication tools can encourage participation in the happenings of society, they can also fuel hatred, stereotypes, and misinformation. Prof. Brenda Murphy from the Faculty for Social Wellbeing at the University of Malta initiated the session on stereotypes in different types of media that included online workshops during which participants discussed equality in print, broadcasting, and online media. The output of this session will support the NCPE's work in the coming year.

**27<sup>th</sup> May 2021**