

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

## **NCPE's Online Conference to mark Equal Pay Day 2021**

On average, all over the world, women continue to be paid less than men. In 2019, the average difference in pay between women and men in the European Union (EU) stood at 14.1%. (Malta's average was 11.6%).<sup>1</sup> In order to raise awareness on this lacuna, in 2011, the EU had established the European Equal Pay Day to be commemorated in November of each year. On this day, the gender pay gap and its long-term consequences, specifically in the pension entitlements for women and men, are discussed in the context of developments to date and possible way forward. One of the main reasons identified is the lack of pay transparency that makes pay discrimination a hidden phenomenon hampering detection and reporting.

In light of this, the NCPE has again this year organised an Online Conference focusing on the proposed EU pay transparency directive, its effectiveness at the national level and how this proposal can strengthen the principle of equal pay for equal work and work of equal value between women and men.

The Minister for Equality, Research and Innovation, Hon. Dr. Owen Bonnici stated that ensuring that women workers enjoy equal rights and the same wages for the same work as men is one of the principles in the Constitution of Malta. The Minister said that the Government fosters equal economic independence for women and men, and various measures were taken throughout the years to empower more women to enter or remain in employment, including the free childcare scheme, the breakfast club, in-work benefits, Klabb 3-16 programme, and the Maternity Leave Trust. Such measures contributed to an increase of 11.5% in the participation of women in the labour market in the last four years. Hon. Dr. Bonnici said that equal economic independence for women and men and gender equality became even more relevant, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated gender inequalities in various spheres globally. In light of this, the Government's commitment not only aims to ensure that more women participate in the labour market, but that the working conditions for all employees are fair, just and equal.

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<sup>1</sup> Eurostat – Latest updated: February 2021

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tesem180/default/table?lang=en>

NCPE's Commissioner Ms Renee Laiviera maintained that the gender pay gap is the result of various inequalities in the labour market, including gender segregation in employment and education, lack of women in managerial positions, lack of adequate work-life balance and pay discrimination. Ms Laiviera outlined that Chapter 456 of the Laws of Malta prohibits discrimination in employment including in the terms and conditions such as pay. Over the past years, the NCPE has taken various initiatives to address the gender pay gap and unequal pay. In 2020, the NCPE enhanced and re-launched the NCPE Equality Mark by developing an Equal Pay Tool with the aim of strengthening the measure of equal pay for work of equal value for women and men, through the Prepare the Ground for Economic Independence (PGEI) EU co-funded project. Ms Laiviera explained that the NCPE is currently working to fine tune the tool for easier interpretation of results.

The EU proposed directive on pay transparency to ensure that women and men receive equal pay for equal work was addressed by Prof JosAnn Cutajar from the Department of Gender and Sexualities, Faculty for Social Wellbeing Gender and Sexualities at the University of Malta. Prof Cutajar highlighted its importance, its whilst delving into the most pertinent articles.

In view of the work currently being carried out in developing the NCPE Equal Pay Tool, Mr Matthew Sacco, Software Developer, provided an overview of the equal pay tool. Mr Sacco explained the challenges encountered in developing the tool and how to overcome such challenges.

A panel discussion made up of Government authorities, unions and employers' associations addressed the effects of the proposal for a pay transparency directive on the national scenario, and the role of different stakeholders in this regard.

In her concluding remarks, Ms Laiviera described the Conference as an opportunity to discuss pay transparency as a crucial element towards equality. Ms Laiviera stated that the NCPE will study the issues raised and take them on board wherever possible in order to ensure equality in pay for all women and men.

**11<sup>th</sup> November 2021**