

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

NCPE's International Women's Day Conference 2022

As American writer and activist Audre Lorde said: *"there is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives."*¹ Individuals have intersectional identities deriving from social relations, history, and structures of power. An intersectional analysis seeks to unveil the complexity of everyday life and brings to light discrimination that occurs due to the combination of identities.

In this context the topic chosen for this year's NCPE International Women's Day Conference was **'Women and Intersecting Identities'** in view that some groups of people, particularly women, are more prone to intersectional discrimination.

In his opening speech, Minister for Equality, Research and Innovation, Hon. Dr Owen Bonnici underlined that Malta has made significant progress on gender equality in several areas. Indeed, the Gender Equality Index 2021, which measures the progress of gender equality in the EU over time, confirms that Malta registered the second highest progress on gender equality since 2010 following Luxembourg among the EU Member States.

Hon Dr Bonnici said the Government is committed to continue working on strengthening the progress achieved to date in order to ensure equality for all. Over the past few years, various measures were taken to empower more women to enter or remain in employment, to tackle discrimination experienced by individuals with racial or ethnic backgrounds, to continue improving the lives of women and men with disability, to support pensioners particularly women, and to achieve equality in practice on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics.

NCPE Commissioner, Ms Renee Laiviera spoke about the reasons behind the choice of this topic this year in the context women can experience intersectional discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion/belief, disability, age, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

¹ <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/intersecting-inequalities-gender-equality-index>

Ms Laiviera highlighted the importance to acknowledge the heterogeneity of women and men not only between different groups but also within a social group, which may lead to further differences and distinct circumstances and needs. A focus on intersectionality is encouraged as it helps us understand and respond effectively to the real-life experiences of people encountering discrimination to ensure that equality is truly a reality for everyone.

Dr Andreana Dibben, a Senior Lecturer of Social Policy & Social Work within the Faculty for Social Wellbeing at the University of Malta, defined intersectionality, gave a general overview of the development of intersectionality, and delineated how and why intersectionality is relevant on Women's Day. Dr Dibben also highlighted the importance of policies or laws that cover intersectional discrimination.

A panel discussion followed among different stakeholders highlighting the obstacles faced by women with different identities and the way forward.

The Conference concluded with workshops for participants discussing the issues raised during the panel discussion and underlining areas where women with different identities are mostly at risk of inequality/discrimination from their personal experiences.

The NCPE will take on board the recommendations raised and is committed to continue working to ensure that an equality perspective is mainstreamed in all policies and actions for the benefit of all women and men in society.

3rd March 2022