



# **THE EQUALITY MARK CERTIFICATION**



**INFORMATION DOCUMENT**



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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 What is the Equality Mark?

The **Equality Mark** is a certification awarded to companies that make gender equality one of their values and whose management is based on the recognition and promotion of the potential of all employees irrespective of their gender and caring responsibilities.

The **National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE)** awards this Equality Mark certificate to those organisations that demonstrate a commitment towards best practices in the area of gender equality.

The Equality Mark logo (see Fig.1) has been designed to distinguish the certified equal opportunity employers. Organisations will be able to use this logo on all outgoing correspondence including recruitment advertising and press releases. Additionally, certified organisations shall be promoted locally such that their practices are showcased as a standard for other employers to emulate and for job seekers to look out for.



Fig.1: Equality mark logo

### 1.2 What is the vision behind the Equality Mark?

The Equality Mark certification is based on the concept of gender equality where the rights, responsibilities and opportunities offered to men and women are not determined by sex. This implies equal access to opportunities by focusing on individuals' capabilities irrespective of their gender, marital status, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, or because of caring responsibilities.

Whilst gender equality should be implemented in all political, economic and social spheres, the Equality Mark certification is being targeted towards places of work, with the aim of incentivizing and supporting employers to make the most of all the human resource potential available. The Equality Mark also extends on the goods and services offered by the organisation with the aim of ensuring that the service users of that organisation may benefit from the same rights given to employees.

The Equality Mark is based on the following themes:

- Policies and Initiatives
- Recruitment and employment
- Employee Equality Representatives and Equality Committee
- Equality in career and personal development opportunities
- Family friendly measures for men and women with caring responsibilities
- Gender Equality in the access to and supply of goods and services



Details about each theme can be found in section two of this document.

### **1.3 What are the expected benefits for an equality certified employer?**

There are a number of benefits in being an equal opportunities organisation. Some of these include:

- *Accessing the full talent pool:* In today's specialized global economy, successful companies are characterized by employees demonstrating high creativity and skills. This is more likely to happen when recruitment is sourced from the population's total pool of talent, and not just half.
- *Higher profitability through gender diversity:* There is a link between gender distribution in a company's management and its profitability. Encouraging gender diversity at each level of the organisation and decision making process means more innovative approaches based on the different skills and experiences of both genders.
- *Being an 'employer of choice':* Studies of young leaders show that the linear, unbroken career model is no longer applicable. Both women and men want challenges and development opportunities from work but also choice and flexibility in order to accommodate their personal lives.
- *Reduce costs through staff retention:* Equal access to family friendly measures, helps organisations retain valuable staff thus leading to decreased training costs. Staff are also more likely to be motivated through increased job satisfaction and organisational loyalty, thus leading to more productivity and efficiency
- *Customers' perspective:* By involving both genders into their decision-making process, organisations are more likely to meet customers' needs and expectations. In mirroring their market demographically businesses are more likely to adapt to the changing social and consumption trends.
- *Risk management:* Discrimination, in all its forms, is a factor that is taken up in risk assessments. Adopting policies and business structures that safeguard the rights of all employees buffer against possible risk and cost of reputation damage and potential litigation. On the other hand it attracts investors and business opportunities that increasingly take gender diversity into consideration.

In order to help you reap the most of these benefits, NCPE will supply certified organisations with a logo which can be featured on all PR material and correspondence. In addition to this, the practices of your organisation shall be promoted across the island as being the benchmark for other organisations to achieve. This means that your organisation will be benefiting from free promotion, further raising its profile within its specific sector.



#### **1.4 Are there any costs in becoming an equality certified employer?**

Employers will need to demonstrate a commitment towards gender equality and this may entail:

- Assessing and reporting on the current practices within the organisation,
- planning and initiating a series of processes to implement the Equality Mark standards required for the certification (see principles below), and
- challenging the organisational culture if resistant to change and/or equality issues

There are no application fees to apply for this certificate. Provision of all PR logos and promotion of your organisation is free of charge.

#### **1.5 Will the employer be supported to achieve the required standards?**

Yes, all organisations applying for the Equality Mark certificate will be guided to carry out the necessary assessments and identify the best way forward for their specific organisation. More specifically, NCPE is committed to:

- Providing guidance to organisations in implementing the necessary measures, such as in the drafting of relevant policies or conducting needs assessment surveys in equality.
- Provide the training required within the organisation on gender equality related issues, in order to increase the knowledge base of key individuals within the organisation. Training provided shall aim to motivate the participants to train other employees within the organisation.
- Support the organisation in discussions with unions and other employee intermediaries/representatives over issues related to the implementation of the Equality Mark.
- Process all applications in as short a time possible.
- Promote the equality certified organisation as a best-practice example in NCPE's public relations and publications (with prior consent from the organisation).

## **2. The Equality Mark Certification Principles**

Organisations applying for the Equality Mark Certification need to meet the following standards. Kindly contact NCPE for guidance on each of the specified measures (see section 4.6 of this document for contact details).

### **2.1.1 Policies and initiatives**

- Implement an Equality Policy and a Sexual Harassment Policy in line with relevant legislation



- Should the organisation not have an internal reporting procedure in place, a network of reporting mechanisms for gender equality and sexual harassment issues needs to be established either in these policies or in a separate document.

### **2.1.2 Recruitment and employment**

- Implement standard operating procedures for recruitment and employment that are based on the principles of equal opportunities. This includes:
  - the short-listing of candidates for interviews
  - the interviewing process
  - training
  - staff retention exercises
  - appraisal
  - promotion
  - any necessary disciplinary action
- Ensure equal pay for work of equal value (including negotiation of fringe benefits)
- Ensure that work force profiles and job descriptions are gender inclusive and roles assigned are free from gender stereotype.

### **2.1.3 Employee Equality Representatives and/ or Equality Committee**

- Appoint a gender equality representative within the organisation and/or establish a gender equality committee within the organisation that would be responsible for:
  - Acting as a point of reference and a voice within the organisation for gender equality and sexual harassment issues including employees' role in gender mainstreaming and availability of employee friendly measures.
  - Be consulted for a gender equality perspective when new policies or conditions are introduced.
  - Implementing and monitoring the equality policy and sexual harassment policy including the monitoring of reporting mechanisms
  - Ensuring that policies and procedures associated with equality are part of staff handbook and are understood by staff
  - Appraise competency/behaviors to ensure that managers and staff are aware of action plans and capable of implementing the Equality Mark principles in all sectors and activities of the organisation.

### **2.1.4 Equality in Career and Personal development opportunities**

- Ensure equal opportunities in:
  - Accessing training, apprenticeship and staff development activities/material, study leave and other education/career incentives



(such as bursaries or permission to carry out research projects at the place of work).

- Accessing educational material, health and safety notices, news and any other material is made available to all employees regardless of gender, the nature of work they carry out, the hours/shift they work or the areas in which they work and take their break.
- Working on specific assignments and/or working abroad especially if such work may be a factor for career advancement and/or added benefits.
- Specify those measures that the organisation will undertake to facilitate participation from employees with caring responsibilities (including those making use of any family friendly measures) should training or other activities need to take place outside the normal working hours/ environment of some employees.

### **2.1.5 Family friendly measures for men and women with caring responsibilities**

- Provide incentives for men and women with caring responsibilities to remain employed or return to work.
- Ensure that all employees are aware of these incentives
- Ensure that employees making use of family friendly schemes are not treated less favorably than other employees (both directly and indirectly)
- Keep a record of persons applying for family friendly measures

### **2.1.6 Gender Equality in the access to and supply of goods and services**

- Ensure that any goods and/or services supplied and/or managed by the organisation are equally accessible to men and women as stipulated in the EU directive 2004/113/EC and Maltese Legislation – Legal Notice 181 of 2008.

## **2.2 Top management responsibilities**

The Equality Mark is not a simple paper exercise and requires the whole organisation to be committed to the principles set forth in order to ensure that the necessary measures can be implemented and enjoyed by all. Towards this aim, it is believed that the top management of an organisation needs to demonstrate commitment to each of the standards outlined in the Equality Mark certification, including those aspects related to employment and those related to goods and services such that it can lead by example and set the right vision within the organisation. This commitment can be demonstrated by:

- Informing all employees of the intention to apply for the Equality Mark certificate, such that the process is as transparent as possible.
- Formalizing agreements and explicit endorsement of official policies



- Supporting equality representatives and/or other officers in charge with implementing the relevant policies.
- Direct involvement (when possible) such as in committee work for gender issues, newsletters to staff or public addresses within the organisation promoting gender equality
- Supporting data collection for gender equality monitoring and needs assessments
- Encouraging an organisational culture that is open to maintaining the Equality Mark standards
- Make a corporate commitment to be a leading organisation in equality best practices and to maintain the standards proposed by the Equality Mark.
- Earmark specific resources for improving and promoting equality practice in every sector of the organisation to ensure that the organisation maintains its profile as an equality best practice example.

### **3. The Application Process**

#### **3.1. What are the steps involved in applying?**

Interested organisations may apply to become equal opportunity employers by following these steps:

- i) Contact the NCPE to discuss your organisation's current scenario and eligibility for the certification.
- ii) Fill-in the application form (available for download on NCPE website) and set up a meeting with NCPE to audit the necessary documentation relevant for certification. Note: A checklist of all the documents required for certification can be found in Section 5 of the Application Form.
- iii) Fill-in and submit the data protection form with your application (available for download on NCPE website).  
Note: Details on how NCPE will use and process your information can be found in Section 4 of this information document.

#### **3.2 By when can my organisation apply?**

There is no closing date for applications.

#### **3.3 What if my organisation doesn't yet have all the standards in place?**

Organisations that still need to implement one or more of the Equality Mark standards may still apply, and will work with NCPE to ensure standards are put into place.



### **3.4 How long does it take to be certified?**

NCPE shall ensure that all applications are evaluated in as short a time possible. If deemed necessary, NCPE reserves the right to perform spot checks to double check documents and data submitted.

### **3.5 How long is the certification valid for?**

The certificate is valid for two years at which point organisations may apply for renewal.

### **3.6 Are there any regulations linked to the Equality Mark logo?**

Only the logo shown in page one of this document (see Fig.1) is the official logo of Equality Mark campaign and only through this logo is an organisation recognised as an equal opportunities employer by NCPE. The Equality Mark logo can not be used before all necessary documentation has been received and vetted. Use of this logo is subject to the commitments being honoured by the organisation and in accordance to the brand manual that accompanies it. In the event that a certified organisation is not abiding by the Equality Mark principles, use of the logo will be terminated and/or will not be renewed.

## **4. Data protection**

### **4.1 Our Commitment to Data Protection**

The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) is committed to ensure that your information is used responsibly and in accordance with the Data Protection Act (Cap. 440 of the Laws of Malta). The collection, use and processing of data from business organisations shall comply with the following principles. Namely that data is:

- i. processed fairly and lawfully;
- ii. always processed in accordance with good practice;
- iii. only collected for specific, explicitly stated and legitimate purposes;
- iv. not processed for any purpose that is incompatible with that for which the information is collected;
- v. processed adequately and relevant to the purposes of the processing and that no more data is processed than is necessary
- vi. processed correctly and, if necessary, up to date;
- vii. subject to reasonable measures to complete, correct, block or erase data to the extent that such data is incomplete or incorrect
- viii. not kept for a period longer than is necessary, having regard to the purposes for which they are processed.



## **4.2 How your information will be used**

The data you provide us about your organisation, including policy documents, incentives and records pertaining to recruitment and employment practices, shall be used for the following purposes:

- i. to assess your organisation's eligibility for the Equality Mark certificate based on the principles and practices set forth
- ii. for research purposes such that NCPE can assess current practices in Malta and be able to tailor its services to the needs of both employers and employees.

We will not use the information you voluntarily provide to us for purposes other than those for which you were informed, without first providing you with an opportunity to agree or otherwise limit any use for other purposes to which you have consented. No reference shall be made to your organisation when referring to or quoting the data you supply, unless explicit written consent is obtained before hand.

## **4.3 The way we secure your information**

NCPE employs reasonable precautions to prevent your information from loss, misuse, unauthorized access, disclosure, alteration or destruction. Data will be stored electronically in a password protected database and only accessed by the NCPE officers directly working on the project and NCPE research officers who may access the data for research purposes. A hard copy of your data shall also be filed in a secure cabinet within NCPE. Any employee who intentionally misuses or improperly discloses your information will be subject to disciplinary action which could include termination of employment.

## **4.4 Disclosing your information to a third party**

Your company name and a contact person's details will be uploaded onto NCPE's website, in the following format, should you not wish this to happen, kindly inform NCPE before certification.

Organisation Name	Award Date	Equality Mark Representative/s	Email address/es

## **4.5 How You Can Access or Correct Your Information**

You can contact NCPE (see contact details in point 4.6 below) for a copy of the information you submitted, and/or ask us to revise, block or delete parts of the information submitted should this be necessary.



#### **4.6 Contact us**

For further details about the Equality Mark campaign and issues related to certification you may contact the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) on:

Tel: 2295 7850

Fax: 2590 3851

Email: [equality@gov.mt](mailto:equality@gov.mt)

Address:

NCPE

Gattard House, National Road

Blata l-Bajda HMR 9010

Malta

[www.equality.gov.mt](http://www.equality.gov.mt)