

**PRESS RELEASE: NCPE's 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference**

**The online Directory of Professional Women officially launched**

The Directory of Professional Women was officially launched today during the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE). This Directory aims to give visibility to professional women and their competences in various fields. This online Directory, developed by NCPE, includes information about the qualifications, experience and skills of Maltese and Gozitan professional women and identifies women in the various sectors for possible appointment on boards and committees and/or to assume decision-making positions in the labour market.

In the opening address of this Annual Conference, Minister for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties, Hon. Helena Dalli, emphasised the government's commitment to an agenda that mainstreams human rights and equality in all spheres of life, and a policy framework that tackles discrimination, social exclusion and violence. In effect, Minister Dalli outlined a number of important developments concerning equality that took place over the past year.

Minister Helena Dalli highlighted the Government's work to address the low participation of women in the labour market by introducing several initiatives, such as free childcare to working parents. Minister Dalli referred to the introduction of civil unions for same sex and different sex couples and the Gender Identity Act that came into force a few weeks ago. Dr Dalli also highlighted work in hand to widen the remit of NCPE for it to develop into a Human Rights and Equality Commission.

The Equality Mark Certification was presented by Minister Helena Dalli to 12 organisations that were newly certified and to another 25 organisations that were re-certified. These organisations and entities truly foster equal treatment in their work policies and practices. In an overview of NCPE's work undertaken in 2014, NCPE's Commissioner Renee Laiviera explained how the Equality Mark Certification entered its fifth year and continued to empower companies to safeguard gender equality. By the end of 2014, there were 56 certified companies and government departments/entities in total, with over 15,700 employees working in equality certified conditions.

The investigation of cases of alleged discrimination in employment and in the access to or the supply of goods or services is an essential element of NCPE's work. NCPE's Commissioner stated that in 2014, besides the complaints lodged during the year, NCPE also finalised pending investigations from previous years. Ms Laiviera emphasised that for justice to be effective, NCPE strives to hear such cases in the least time possible.

Training is an important tool in NCPE's work to promote equality principles. Renee Laiviera explained how through the 55 training sessions that were carried out in 2014, the 1,100 participants, including employers, are informed of their rights and responsibilities regarding equal treatment, and thus are enabled to prevent or curb discrimination in society at large.

Reference was also made to various initiatives that NCPE is currently carrying out, mainly the Mentoring Programme and various research studies.

During the Conference, NCPE's Senior Policy, Mainstreaming, Training and Legal Executive Stephanie Borg Bonaci, explained NCPE's investigations' procedure of cases of alleged discrimination and outlined some case studies.

Officially launching the online Directory of Professional Women, NCPE's Senior Projects Executive, Annalise Frantz, explained that NCPE already received applications from various interested persons. Their profiles can already be accessed on the Directory's online – [www.equality.gov.mt](http://www.equality.gov.mt) A publicity campaign is planned to advertise the Directory on various media to encourage more applicants to have their profiles advertised online.

During this year's conference, NCPE consulted participants on the problem of sexual harassment. NCPE's Manager, Maria Borg Filletti made a presentation on the subject which was followed by workshops on the subject with participants.

Concluding the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, NCPE's Commissioner Renee Laiviera reiterated that throughout 2014 NCPE continued working to safeguard and promote equal treatment in different spheres in society promoting equal opportunities and safeguarding equal rights to all citizens.

NCPE's Annual Report 2014 can be accessed from [www.equality.gov.mt](http://www.equality.gov.mt)

**For more information contact NCPE on [equality@gov.mt](mailto:equality@gov.mt) or on 2590 3850.**

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