

## **Empowering Today's Youth: Celebrating International Youth Day 2023**

With half of the [world's population aged 30 or younger](#), and that number projected to reach 57% by the end of 2030, the significance of youth empowerment cannot be underestimated. Empowering young people involves creating inclusive environments that respect their rights, provide opportunities for growth, and address discrimination.

Young individuals need to be enabled to take control of their lives, make informed decisions, and contribute positively to their communities. [Youth empowerment](#) plays a vital role in fostering social, economic, and environmental development. When young people are provided with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities they need to thrive, they can become a positive force for change, driving progress and innovation.

The United Nations (UN) theme for this year, '[Green Skills for Youth: Towards a Sustainable World](#)', emphasizes the crucial role young people play in addressing challenges related to education, health, employment, and gender equality. By empowering youth with the skills needed to build a sustainable future, we can harness their potential as agents of positive change.

The Council of Europe, through its [Youth Sector Strategy 2030](#), aims to promote youth participation, inclusion, and equal opportunities across member states, to foster a cohesive and progressive Europe. The strategy encourages collaboration between governments and organisations by providing a comprehensive framework for action to design national policies that better meet the needs of young people. The promotion of inclusive principles such as solidarity, democracy, and respect for human rights is crucial in the context of the strategy, thus allowing young people to actively contribute to their own communities. In Malta, the [National Youth Policy - Towards 2030](#), aligns with the Council of Europe strategy to empower young individuals at a national level.

Additionally, in order to ensure a positive environment for young people, the [National Commission for the Promotion of Equality \(NCPE\)](#) investigates complaints of age-based

discrimination in various areas, including employment, education, and financial institutions, ensuring equal opportunities for all.

Various forms of discrimination hinder youth empowerment. Globally, in developed economies, [youth unemployment](#) can be linked to factors such as lack of job experience, discrimination, and structural barriers. [Young women](#), despite higher education levels, often face labour market discrimination when seeking employment. Moreover, [youth in vulnerable situations](#), such as migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, and those with disabilities, face added challenges due to their specific circumstances. Furthermore, [ageism](#) against younger people manifests across areas like employment, health, housing, and politics, denying or dismissing their voices, as highlighted by the UN's report on ageism.

Malta presents a different reality as evidenced by a [study](#) conducted by the [National Youth Agency](#). In Malta, young people between the ages of 16 and 30 constitute 19.2% of the total population. The study aimed to understand the backgrounds, perceptions, values, and behaviours of young people aged 16 to 30 across various issues. Understanding the challenges faced by today's youth is crucial to ensuring their empowerment.

While participants were generally positive about their personal development, they appear to be even more so about their social development, which could indicate that they are more socially outward-looking than personally inward-looking. However, while family life and relationships are generally looked upon positively, there is evidence that personal happiness and stress-free family life levels have deteriorated.

A positive aspect is that over 50% of participants were in full-time employment, whilst more than 20% engaged in full-time education. Furthermore, the study showed that around 50% of participants' highest level of educational attainment was at degree or post-graduate level. Empowering young people involves creating inclusive and equitable environments that respect their rights and provide opportunities for growth while addressing systemic discrimination.

Youth empowerment is pivotal for creating a transformed, inclusive, and sustainable world. By removing barriers to opportunities and addressing discrimination, we can continue to unleash the potential of the younger generation, allowing them to lead positive change for a better future. It is with the collaboration of all stakeholders, including policymakers, that the necessary support is provided to create environments that foster such empowerment.

*The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) can be contacted on: 2276 8200, [equality@gov.mt](mailto:equality@gov.mt) or NCPE's social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter - NCPE.Malta)*

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