

NCPE Annual Conference 2023

Wednesday 14th June 2023 – AX, The Palace, Sliema

Proceedings

Welcome - Ms Renee Laiviera, NCPE Commissioner

- Through various initiatives, the NCPE continued to safeguard equality with the aim to eliminate discrimination on the different grounds within its remit.
- As per the Equality for Men and Women Act, my role as the NCPE Commissioner entails the investigation of complaints of alleged discrimination.
- The promotion of equality is our other main function (awareness-raising campaigns, training, policy work etc.)
- Despite the progress achieved in different spheres, many challenges remain. For instance, gender stereotypes on the roles and behaviours of women and men are still prevalent in our societies.
- In this context, the NCPE sought to work on a research study in collaboration with the Faculty of Social Wellbeing of the University of Malta.
- The scope of the research study was to analyse the prevalence and persistence of stereotypes in Maltese society by investigating gender roles, gender role expectations and gender stereotypes.

Opening remarks - Hon. Minister Dr Byron Camilleri, Minister for Home Affairs, Security, Reforms and Equality

- The progress achieved in the sphere of equality in the past years has been significant.
- However, we still have a long way to go. We need to do more.
- The NCPE is at the heart of the national infrastructure for equality and a first point of contact for victims of discrimination.
- Gender stereotypes can reproduce unwanted and harmful practices and can also impact attitudes towards violence against women.

- We are committed to continue working to curb gender-based violence and to provide adequate services to victims with particular focus on the domestic sphere and at the workplace.
- We need to eliminate gender stereotypes that tend to perpetuate obstacles towards gender equality and to address the imbalance of power and control between women and men in society.
- The research study on patriarchy and gender stereotypes on the roles and behaviours of women and men to be presented during this Conference will further guide our work.

Opening remarks - Hon. Ms Rebecca Buttigieg, Parliamentary Secretary for Reforms and Equality

- Discrimination and prejudice are very often fuelled by stereotypes and preconceived ideas on the roles assigned to women and men in society.
- Along the years, Malta has made significant leaps in the sphere of gender equality.
- The participation of women in the labour market increased considerably.
- We have been working not only to increase the participation of women in the labour market but also to empower women to take up decision-making positions. In fact, around 46% of the highest positions in the public service are occupied by women.
- We also have more women in political decision-making positions (28%) following the enactment of the gender corrective mechanism, which was utilised for the first time in the 2022 general election.
- We pledge our commitment to continue supporting the NCPE's initiatives to ensure that Malta stays at the forefront of inclusion, diversity, and equality for all.

Opening remarks - Hon. Ms Graziella Attard Previ, Spokesperson for Equality, Human and Civil Rights, and Children's Rights

- Although conceptually, there seems to be a general consensus on the need to channel efforts to bring about gender equality, the Gender Equality Index 2022 revealed that progress to realising gender equality continues to move at a glacial pace.
- There are two main gender equality issues: knowledge and the gender pay gap.

- Gender segregation in education and in the labour market.
- Where are women pursuing their studies? We need to encourage more women to pursue STEM careers.
- Top management tends to be held by men
- Women tend to have longer career breaks, and they are more likely to work part-time.
- With respect to the EU Work-Life Balance Directive, Malta adopted the bare minimum: there should be more paternity leave and parental leave. We need an efficient and effective work-life balance.

Equality Mark Awarding Ceremony

- 13th consecutive year since 2010 through an EU-funded project
- To organisations with gender equality as one of the core values and whose management based on the recognition and promotion of potential of all employees: women and men, and persons with caring responsibilities.
- Currently there are 139 organisations certified with the Equality Mark with over 32,500 employees. During this Awarding Ceremony:
 - **10** organisations certified for the first time
 - **33** organisations recertified – **15** receiving their first recertification, **13** their second and **5** their third.

Investigations Report 2022 - Ms Renee Laiviera, NCPE Commissioner

- PowerPoint Presentation available [here](#)

NCPE Promotion of equality 2022 - Ms Renee Laiviera, NCPE Commissioner

- PowerPoint Presentation available [here](#)

The NCPE's research study: 'The prevalent gender roles perceptions and attitudes among adults living in Malta'

Prof JosAnn Cutajar, Department of Gender & Sexualities, University of Malta

Prof Liberato Camilleri, Statistics & Operations Research, Faculty of Science, University of Malta

- PowerPoint Presentation available [here](#)

Discussion:

- Research study: there was a difference in the perceptions of participants and in what they did
- HR managers are important gatekeepers in the uptake of parental leave for men
- Teaching men how to deal with emotions is important
- Girls tend to blame themselves – men blame others
- The need for more male role models – nursing, social work
- In a heterosexual couple it is mostly the woman who takes care of the children and household. The focus should not be on which partner is to stay at home to care for children, but on how family responsibilities are shared between the couple, irrespective of their sex
- In Sweden one parent works in the morning and the other parent looks after the children and then they switch with the other parent going to work later in the day – children will benefit
- Barriers still exist, particularly workers in management roles may feel that they need to spend more time in the office
- We need to remove the hat of privilege – barriers related to work-life balance and on the sharing of family responsibilities can impinge on the family size
- If one can only afford a one-bedroom apartment, how can you have more children?

Workshops - Discussion on findings and recommendations of the research study

Recommendations:

- (1) From the research, it was made clear that more needs to be done to address misogyny and toxic masculinity through education, training of professionals and awareness raising – **Workshop 1**

- (2) To ensure a change in attitudes and values, different institutions in Maltese society need to work in tandem - **Workshop 2**

- (3) State-led initiatives need to tackle underlying ideologies about gender roles, unpaid care work, and the respective roles the state, market, and family need to play in providing care for young children and other vulnerable family members – **Workshop 3**

- (4) Promoting women’s employment on a national basis is not enough. Unpaid work undertaken in the private sphere needs to be shared, while the earner/caregiver model needs to be facilitated with generous and coordinated statutory work-family policy schemes made available in both the private and public sectors – **Workshop 4**

Reporting from workshops

Workshop 1:

- At times, misogyny is hidden.
- Misogyny is passed from one generation to another.
- Social media also plays a role in influencing misogyny; there is more exposure now; becomes a form of bullying.
- Sexualisation of roles is sometimes brought on by women themselves. They put pressure on each other about beauty standards
- It is important that women learn to detect abuse – not only physical abuse, as there are several forms of abuse that are often misunderstood as ‘love’

- Which groups/stakeholders should receive training? – Schools and Workplaces through awareness-raising campaigns (social media, TV, and radio for those who do not have access to the internet)
- Which groups/stakeholders should be targeted through awareness campaigns? – (senior managers, police, educators, parents/guardians)
- Immediate action needs to be taken. Otherwise, the message of ‘getting away with murder’ keeps being repeated throughout generations.

Workshop 2:

- In which areas is a change in attitudes and values mostly required?
 - In society, to address the expectations related to gendered- norms
- In the families to combat stereotypical perceptions that caring roles are only for women
- In employment, to ensure that both women and men are granted flexible working arrangements when required
 - In artificial intelligence: biased towards the male gender
- There are biased expectations which create structural barriers
- Which institutions can work to change attitudes and values?
 - NGOs
 - The church and the media and the values they promote
- What should be done?
 - Adopt an interministerial approach. For instance, the Education Ministry must work with other Ministries
 - We need more holistic work

Workshop 3:

- What kind of state-led initiatives would be mostly effective to address ideologies on gender roles and unpaid care work in the labour market?
 - The issue of progression at work, career break, parental leave

- Bridge holidays - parents take time off when children are on holidays
- What changes are required in the roles played by the state, the market and the family providing care for young children and other vulnerable family members?
 - Parent hubs
 - Childcare at work
 - Family-friendly measures
 - Research to be carried out with private SMEs to encourage modern work practices – less finance more corporate management well-being practice.

Workshop 4:

- What needs to be done to ensure that unpaid work, particularly care work and domestic tasks, are shared?
 - senior management does not see beyond family with children. So only families with children have access to these family friendly measures?
 - Carers' leave is not given if you do not live with the person
 - Telework should be given equally to everyone
 - Nurses can not take telework, so is it discriminatory?
 - The housework should be shared
 - A shift in mentality – teach children – it depends on the relationship between the couple
 - Who is supposed to do what – the couple decides on their responsibilities depending on their abilities
 - Our generation is in the middle – we saw our mothers stay at home and our fathers go to work whilst now we see that women keep on working
 - Different generations have different skills
 - Should the state be paying for the unpaid work?
 - What happens to women who haven't been paying their NI because they stayed at home to take care of the children and do the housework
 - The language we use 'I did it for you – cooking, hanging the clothes'
 - When the child is at childcare the mother is the first one to be called for any mishap
 - Women who are 35 years and under are remaining in the labour market
 - Grandparents cannot keep their grandchildren because they are still working
- What are the consequences of lack of work-life balance for parents particularly women?

- Gender pay gap
- Not having enough children

Concluding remarks - Ms Renee Laiviera, NCPE Commissioner

- Thank you all for participating in today's NCPE Annual Conference
- We have taken note of the reports of the workshops with points of particular interest being raised that will be taken on board in our work.

22nd June 2023