

Racial equality in housing: The Role of NCPE Malta

Sara, a young woman of African descent, was seeking a place to call home. Eagerly responding to a rental advert for an apartment, she met the landlord at the property. However, as the conversation unfolded, it became clear that the landlord's decision was not based on Sara's ability to pay rent but rather on the colour of her skin. The landlord, harbouring biased beliefs, abruptly informed Sara that the apartment was no longer available, leaving her to grapple with the sting of discrimination and the harsh reality that the colour of one's skin could still be a barrier to finding a place to live.

This scenario depicts a person who is refused accommodation based on skin colour. More than ever, instances of discrimination in housing are unfortunately prevalent. Prospective tenants may encounter prejudiced attitudes from landlords, leading to unequal access to housing opportunities based on racial or ethnic criteria. These instances not only violate the principles of equality but also contribute to a divisive and exclusionary society.

While social media can be a powerful tool for communication and information sharing, it has also been implicated in facilitating or amplifying racial discrimination.

Addressing the challenges and needs of these people is exceptionally pertinent in view of the significant increase of foreigners in Malta, whereby more than one in five residents were foreign in 2021.¹

Maltese legislation explicitly prohibits discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity through the [Equal Treatment of Persons Order](#). This legal instrument mandates that *"no person, establishment or entity, whether in the private or public sector and including public bodies, shall discriminate against any other person in relation to... (d) access to and supply of goods and services which are available to the public, including housing"*.

¹ National Statistics Office, 2023. Census of Population and Housing 2021: Final Report: Population, migration and other social characteristics (Volume 1). NSO Malta | Census of Population and Housing 2021: Final Report: Population, migration and other social characteristics - NSO Malta (gov.mt)

The NCPE plays a crucial role in addressing and combatting racial discrimination in housing. Through its mandate, the NCPE investigates complaints concluding with the issuing of an Opinion with recommendations to address the discriminatory practices. This work also raises awareness about the importance of equality, and collaborates with various stakeholders to foster an inclusive environment. In this regard, persons experiencing racism in the access to housing are encouraged to report their case to the NCPE so that it can be investigated.

While the NCPE works to promote equality, a collective commitment is required to fully tackle racism and discrimination when it comes to housing access. Eliminating racial discrimination in housing requires sustained effort and collaboration from individuals, communities, policymakers, media, and society as a whole. Housing is a fundamental right that should be accessible to everyone, irrespective of their racial background.

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

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