

NCPE Annual Conference 2026
Wednesday 27th May 2026
Marsa Sports Club
Proceedings

Welcome

Ms Renee Laiviera, NCPE Commissioner

- An Equality Body like the NCPE plays a crucial role in educating the public and raising awareness about equality issues and investigating cases of discrimination, ultimately fostering a more informed and inclusive society.
- The NCPE remains committed to working towards a society in which every person is treated with dignity and respect, irrespective of sex, gender, family responsibilities, age, race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics as per the NCPE's remit.
- Through awareness-raising initiatives, training, research, policy recommendations, and collaboration with various stakeholders, the NCPE continues to promote equality and work towards preventing discrimination.
- At the same time, the investigative role of the NCPE remains equally important.
- Individuals who experience discrimination often face significant practical, financial, and emotional barriers when seeking to enforce their rights.
- In this context, equality bodies such as the NCPE play a crucial role, not only by offering guidance on rights and obligations, but also through facilitating access to justice by restoring equality in cases of discrimination.
- The role of equality bodies has become even more significant in light of the recently adopted EU Directives on standards for equality bodies.
- These Directives will further strengthen the independence, effectiveness, accessibility, and resources of equality bodies across the EU, ensuring that they are better equipped to support individuals and promote social change.

Opening remarks

Hon. Ms Graziella Attard Previ, Shadow Minister for Equality, Civil Liberties and Public Broadcasting

- The NCPE, established in 2004, remains a cornerstone in advancing equality, dignity, and social justice in Malta, addressing discrimination in its many forms.
- While the NCPE is often associated with women's rights, its mandate extends beyond gender to include other protected characteristics, such as age.
- The growing concern of ageism - both younger and older individuals continue to face unfair barriers in employment, social participation, and access to services.

- Stronger awareness, education, and policy measures are needed to tackle this issue.
- The need to strengthen national equality structures—potentially through the introduction of a Commissioner for Human Rights—to ensure more effective protection, advocacy, and progress towards a more inclusive and equitable society.
- The Paris Principles outline the criteria for a human rights institution to operate without political interference.

Equality Mark Certification – Awards

- For the sixteenth consecutive year, the NCPE continued working on the Equality Mark Certification, an initiative which started in 2010 through an EU-funded project but which continued beyond the project's lifetime due to its success.
- The Equality Mark is awarded to organisations that make gender equality one of their core values and whose management is based on the recognition and promotion of the potential of all employees: both women and men, and persons with caring responsibilities. Organisations certified with the Equality Mark have to demonstrate a commitment towards best practices in the area of gender equality that go beyond what is mandatory by law.
- All organisations applying for the Equality Mark Certification are assisted by the NCPE to carry out the necessary assessments and identify the best way forward for their specific organisation. The NCPE provides guidance to organisations in implementing the necessary measures, such as drafting an Equality Policy and a Sexual Harassment Policy and putting in place or improving the availability of family-friendly measures.
- After the lapse of two years from certification, the NCPE carries out a re-certification process that reassesses the criteria and ensures that the commitments taken at certification stage are being followed.
- There are currently **161 organisations** certified with the Equality Mark with over **38,200 employees**. During this Awarding Ceremony:
 - **6 organisations** were certified for the first time
 - **24 organisations** were recertified – 9 received their first recertification, 5 their second, 3 their third and 7 their fourth.

NCPE promotion of equality 2025

Ms Renee Laiviera, NCPE Commissioner

Dr André Callus, NCPE Manager (Policy and Training)

Ms Annalise Frantz, NCPE Manager (Projects)

PowerPoint presentation available [here](#)

Q&A

- Ageism is a topical issue in view of the demographic reality that more people are reaching retirement age—prompting an urgent need for action
- In this context, the proposed United Nations Convention on the Rights of Older Persons is particularly relevant, as older persons should not be perceived as a burden to society.

Investigations report 2025

Ms Renee Laiviera, NCPE Commissioner

PowerPoint presentation available [here](#)

Understanding equality in practice: Case study workshops

Participants were divided into small groups to discuss one case study.

Within each group, participants took on different roles:

- **Complainant** – the person making the complaint of discrimination
- **Respondent** – the person or organisation responding to the complaint
- **Commissioner** – responsible for investigating and deciding on the outcome based on the facts presented

Case study: Race/ethnic origin

A Maltese couple post their place for rent on a social media platform. They received a call from Joseph who showed interest in renting their place and was in agreement with the price being requested. The couple agree to meet in order to show Joseph around the place and finalise the deal. Upon meeting, the couple declined the offer to rent, reason given was that they had changed their mind. Joseph thinks that this is because the couple realised that he is of Arab descent.

Discussion:

- The alleged victim asserted a history of trouble-free rentals. The respondent argued that landlords retain the right to refuse tenancy to any applicant. The Commissioner found that discrimination on the basis of ethnic background had occurred. Recommendations included that the landlord be permitted to conduct property visits to verify compliance with the lease agreement.

Case study: Gender

During Sabrina's parental leave, an internal call was issued for a managerial position within the department she works in. She applied for this position alongside her colleague Diane. While both candidates met the minimum requirements for the role, their qualifications and professional experience differed. Position was given to Diane. Sabrina believes she was unsuccessful due to her being on parental leave – and therefore, not present at the workplace.

Discussion:

- The victim said the promotion was given to someone who was less experienced and less qualified. Although both candidates met the minimum requirements, the alleged victim had stronger qualifications and more experience and argued that this was indirect discrimination because her professional record was overlooked due to family-related reasons. The respondent argued that selection must be based on the requirements at the time of the vacancy, and that the chosen candidate had performed well in their previous role, showed traits that better matched the job, and gave a stronger performance on the assessment day. The Commissioner found that indirect discrimination had occurred and recommended that the employer use more objective tools in future, such as clearer score sheets, structured situational exercises, and standardised interview records.

Case study: Age

Nora (38 years of age) and Maria (57 years of age) apply for a managerial position within the company where they work. Both of them have the same qualifications, however Maria has more experience in the field. It transpired that Nora was given the position and Maria believes that she was treated unfairly in view that she has a lot more experience than her colleague and that she was not chosen for the position because of her age.

Discussion:

- The call for applications did not contain an age limit, nor did the performance appraisal. The alleged victim asked the employer to provide the scores but was told that they could not give feedback, and no further response was given. Nora had been with the company for ten years and had progressed over time. No minimum years of experience were specified. There was no clear policy on informing candidates whether they had been selected or not. The panel should be diverse, and the selection criteria must focus on objectivity and transparency. Recommendations include training for HR and recruitment staff on the equality policy, as well as the implementation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the recruitment process that foster equality.

Case study: Sexual harassment

Ritienne and Nigel work in the same office. Nigel has asked Ritienne several times to join him for lunch during their hourly work break. Ritienne has submitted a complaint with the NCPE and alleges that she is being sexually harassed by her male colleague.

Discussion:

- Direct discrimination was found to have occurred. There were also clear power dynamics at play, which may have discouraged the alleged victim from coming forward. Employers need to have a sexual harassment policy in place that is both safe and accessible to all employees, so that they feel secure enough to report incidents—even when the alleged perpetrator is their boss.

Concluding remarks

Ms Renee Laiviera, NCPE Commissioner

- Thank you for participating in today's NCPE Annual Conference
- We encourage you to share your feedback by completing the evaluation forms
- Moreover, if there are any other proposals and recommendations, please feel free to get in touch with us.

3rd June 2026