

Founded 1964

il-mara

NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN - MALTA

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← Minister Dr Louis Galea during the presentation of certificates

Mrs Gonzi with one of the children during her visit to Bormla Primary School ↓



↑ The Prime Minister Dr Lawrence Gonzi addressing members of the National Council of Women



← First Vice President Grace Attard during the consultation meeting on PN vision 2015

Contents:

- Editorial - Page 2
- President's Message - Page 3
- NCW's Bice Mizzi Vassallo Music Competition 2007 - Page 3
- The Effects of Separation on the Family - Page 4
- Appreciation Beatrice Testaferata Moroni Viani - Page 5
- Highlights of the EESC July Plenary - Page 5
- 2008 is the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue - Page 5
- NCW Comments and proposals on pre-budget 2008 Consultation Document - Page 6
- Women in Political Decision Making course - Page 9
- Environmental Competition - Page 9
- Highlights of NCW reactions and comments to PN Vision 2015 - Page 10
- Niltaqghu mas-Sinjura Catherine Gonzi - Page 12
- Seminar on Osteoporosis - Page 13
- Consultation on the Voluntary Organisation Act - Page 13
- Meeting of MCESD Civil Society with Chairman - Page 14
- Budget 2008 - unleashing the potential of Maltese citizen - Page 14
- Non-standard Employment - Page 14
- Diary of Events - Page 15
- Forthcoming Events - Page 16
- January's Annual General Meeting - Page 16

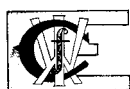
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Motto: "Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you."



European Centre of the International Council of Women

Founded 1961

In Special Consultative Status with the Economic & Social Council of the UN.

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EDITORIAL

Once again so much has been going on within NCW's calendar that it is often a struggle to fit everything into a 16 page newsletter. This issue is interesting both because of its important Budget 2008 recommendations as well as its focus on a number of women who have and are achieving extraordinary things in our society. As always we look forward to your feedback and comments and hope to see many of you involved in our activities throughout the coming Winter. 🌸

Warm Regards,
Giuliana



A Partnership Project:

The European Year of Equal Opportunities for All 2007

On the 17th May 2006 the European Parliament designated the year 2007 as the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All. The aim of this Year is to launch a major debate on the benefits of diversity for the European society. It will also seek to make people in the European Union more aware of their rights to enjoy equal treatment and a life free of discrimination.

Malta together with all the other European countries is also celebrating the year 2007 as the year of Equal Opportunities for All. The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) together with 9 other organisations is implementing the project "Mosaic - One in Diversity". The project Mosaic is one of the approved projects under the European Year for Equal Opportunities (EYEO) and it will address the fears and misconceptions that lie behind the six recognized grounds of discrimination by the EU which are: gender, race/ethnicity, religion/belief, disability, age and sexual orientation all of which are represented by 9 organisations participating in the project.

This project which aims to increase awareness of discrimination and its negative effects on society is two pronged:

- providing for the provision of train the trainers sessions and capacity building for both staff and volunteers of the organizations participating in the Mosaic Network
- and the dissemination of information through the media, through visibility during Diversity Days, and forum theatre sessions, as well as through informative publications

NCW Malta is ready to consolidate its usual objectives by its participation in this project. It also aims to achieve a positive outcome which will eliminate discriminations in our society.



IL-MARA is issued every three months and contains the news and views of the NCW of Malta – hence its name "Woman" in Maltese.

It is distributed to all its members and affiliated organisations and sent to other NCWs all over the world. Correspondence and contributions are to be sent to:

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Now that summer is over and autumn has crept in, life seems to be catching up its hectic pace. The summer heat makes us slow down to a near standstill, with only enough energy to carry out mundane tasks.

Work at the Council, however, was far from being at a standstill. Apart from meetings with several entities such as ministers, one of the major projects was preparing the proposals and recommendations for the pre-budget document 2008. Amongst the issues dealt with in this document are the need for revision of tax bands, increasing the participation rate of women in the labour market, part-time work, legal framework for temping agencies, men and family friendly measures, childcare services provision, further and higher education, government scholarships for masters and doctoral degrees, entrepreneurship, social security schemes and pensions, family and demographic change and the need for services and training for easier access to EU funds.

NCW will again start offering courses in basic Maltese, English, computer awareness and ECDL. In addition to these, we will also start to run classes in basic maths and another course which aims to help people reach national vocational qualifications level 1. I am proud to say that NCW will be the first centre in Malta to offer this latter course. Another interesting course will be for women intending to take up political decision-making posts. This course stems from the study NCW carried out in collaboration with NSO and UNESCO on the obstacles women face in taking up decision-making posts. To carry out such a study without

taking any further action would have been, to say the least, foolish. This is only part of our on-going commitment to really help women attain equal opportunities. I would, in fact, like to take this opportunity to thank all those people who have accepted to lecture these women; all the lecturers are very busy people, from MEPs to journalists and TV personalities, who have found the time to contribute to this unique course.

I think that there is no better way to celebrate the European Year of Equal Opportunities than by actually offering the tools for equal opportunity.

I would like to share with you a very touching moment. One of the events we had a fortnight ago was the presentation of certificates to about eighty people, mostly women, who successfully attended courses at our centre. Two of the women who attended the ceremony brought along their children. The pride and joy on the faces of these two children when their mothers went up for their certificates was inexplicable. One boy was clapping and jumping up and down with joy while a girl was making sure she captured the moment on her camera while beaming and nearly crying. Yes, ladies, we are doing the right thing at NCW. Let's keep up the good work and help make more women proud of themselves. ♡

Doreen



NCW'S BICE MIZZI VASSALLO MUSIC COMPETITION 2007

The winner of 2007 was Christine Zerafa. Her prize was a course at the Lake District Summer Music School. Christine wrote to us saying:

Dear Ms Micallef,
I'm back from the Lake District! And I really wish I'm still there; it's been such a wonderful experience!!!! Even the few days I spent with Mrs Richardson were great. She was the perfect hostess. I spent the first two days at her house and she took very good care of me; she cooked good food and she even drove me to the College in Ambleside.

The course was very well organized. I was so busy everyday. We had one-to-one tuition every single day with very good professors: Renna Kellaway, Carole Presland, Klaus Hellwig and Arnaldo Cohen. Besides, all other classes were open to listeners, so I took the opportunity to attend and learn from my colleagues. I'm so pleased that I've learnt so much from this experience, and I'm even feeling more mature in many aspects especially musicality. The professors try to bring out the best out of you – the fact is that they make everything look so simple. For example, Professor Klaus Hellwig really impressed me. He's such an intelligent man! All he used to say (both on the musicality or technique of the piece) was so simple and obvious, but it really made everything sound so much better.

Besides the solo course, I also took part in chamber music. I

formed part of a piano trio, together with a cellist and violinist (English girls who study at the Royal Welsh College and the Royal Northern College respectively). We studied Shostakovich trio no. 1. This was actually my first experience in a trio. We had to learn a piece from scratch and only in a few days! So that added some extra hours of practice in our daily schedule. But I don't regret it at all. We had tuition almost everyday with different professors, including members of the Skampa quartet and the Royal quartet. And we learnt so much!

So this is why everyday was so full! The rest of the time was with my metronome and my pieces in some practice room. Besides, there were concerts every evening, and I tried to attend most of them. They were great and truly inspirational!

I'm also very pleased to have made so many friends all over the world: Japanese, English, French, Italians, Americans, Spanish, etc, etc.

I would like to thank you so much for this wonderful experience; I'm sure I'll remember it for all my whole life and I would redo it for a hundred times. I assure you it has been fruitful; as I said before, I'm feeling more mature and inspired to work harder and harder. ♡

THANK YOU! Regards,

Christine

THE EFFECTS OF SEPARATION ON THE FAMILY

The Social Issues Committee within the National Council of Women, held another talk on Thursday 5th July at 6.00pm at NCW premises. The talk which was about separations, was delivered by Ms Roberta Zahra de Domenico, a clinical psychologist who has been working for quite a few years with families who have been going through separation. She discussed the psychological affects of separation and its consequences on the whole family. It was a very interesting talk and the participants expressed feelings of satisfaction especially with the interactive way the speaker presented it which also allowed the audience to ask questions.

After introducing herself, Ms Zahra de Domenico began her talk by asking the audience present for some brainstorming regarding the trauma of families involved in separations. Such brainstorming was divided into two sections, those pertaining to adults and to children.

She began explaining that one has to keep in mind that there are three different stages in separations, these being; pre separation, during separation, and post separation.

From her experience in this field, the speaker explained that although some children feel sorry, they may also feel better that their parents separate due to the constant fightings and arguments in the house. There has been a few couples who managed to get back together again, but it is not so common. It is a huge decision to leave marriage since the couple go through a deal of great turmoil.

Adults

It is a fact that marriage needs a lot of work between the couple. Very often separations take place for lack of help at the beginning of the dispute. Some men find it difficult to open up and are less likely to seek help. It is not only when a new partner is involved but in some cases, it takes place because the couple may grow apart from each other. Although they live under the same roof, by time, feelings towards each other diminish. In the beginning of the relationship, opposite couples attract each other, but if they don't change to each other's taste they grow apart eg. introvert / extrovert. Another example given was that of some women who change when children come along. Their main focus will then be on their children while the husband feels abandoned. On the other hand, some men lack sensitivity, but nowadays this seems to be changing. Lack of communication is another factor which leads to separations. Sex orientation, that is when one seeks same sex partner is another factor. Sometimes, there are also personality problems. However, very often it takes two to separate. While in the past many women stayed in marriage due to being solely financial dependent on their husbands, by time, this has changed because women are now becoming financial independent. This gives women the courage to go to separation.

Separation definitely brings a lot of losses, thus the couple go through bereavement such as denial, anger, bargaining, and some of



whom may even experience depression. When finally it is accepted, they can move on.

Among the losses that were mentioned was that of their dream of marriage through their entire life, loss of status, loss of someone around the house to fix things like the gas and other similarities. Then there are the special occasions like birthdays, Christmas, Anniversary, Mother's day and Father's day and others. There is also the lack of security where one doesn't know where s/he stands since very often the world around them changes dramatically. There are those who end up starting all over again afresh from scratch. Support is very crucial at such a difficult time.

There are also guilt feelings where one may feel that one could have done things otherwise to avoid separation. The family may also blame them for getting shame on their family. Parents of separated couples play an important role. There are cases where the parents' involvement in the couples life had a negative effect on the marriage while there have also been cases where the parents of the couple even support the other part, or if a new partner is involved, they may influence their grandchildren against the said partner.

Children

Children at a young age build a lot of fantasies. Some children may feel guilty because of their parents' anger. There is also the insecurity issue due to their parents' separation. Children about the age of nine, also feel insecure because they are afraid that the parent they live with may die and they are left on their own. Children cry when they go with one parent while leaving the other behind. This is quite normal because they love the one they left behind too. The twelve/ thirteen year olds may feel odd because they may be dating and so is the parent. Children project anger towards the parent they live with especially if s/he is strict while the other parent is lenient or may seem like Father Christmas because s/he gets them presents etc... Children may manipulate their parents in these situations.

Children also feel the stigma of separation of their parents. Sometimes they feel as if this situation happened only to them. Sometimes they even hide it from friends, teachers etc... Research shows that conflict during and after separation influence the children. The more conflict, the more difficult it is to accept.

Sometimes parents build new relationships with new partners. If parents present it gradually, children may manage to accept the new partner. Children hope for reconciliation but when a partner is involved this hope is lost. For them the partner is considered as a stranger in their house. They feel that the new partner is taking their other parent's place. Children need to be involved in decisions which will affect them. Therefore certain decisions may need extra thought and strength.

It was concluded however that professional help should be sought at all times. 🌸

Maria Camilleri – Social Issues Co-ordinator



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Appreciation: Beatrice Testaferrata Moroni Viani

Bice was a gracious lady, with a positive attitude and a passive disposition. She was never flustered and took everything in her stride.

She had a deep sense of loyalty towards the things she cherished most, which were, her Catholic Faith, her family and the three organizations which were the Catholic Women's League, The National Council of Women and the Girl Guides Association, to each of which she dedicated several years when they needed her services.

When we first set up the National Council of Women, in February 1964 Bice came along with her sister, Baroness Maria Testaferrata Bonici, who was then President of the Catholic Women's League to join me, at that time I was Vice President General of the Malta Catholic Action and Josephine Amato Gauci who was then President of the Malta Corona Society, at Miss Griffin's invitation to meet Miss Nora Deane of the International Council of Women. Miss Mary Griffin was then Matron of St Luke's Hospital and a good friend of ours. We were on the verge of obtaining Independence and there and then, we decided that the time was ripe for us, Maltese women, to unite and

fight for our rights. So we immediately, set up a Steering Committee, under the guidance of Miss Dean. Since then we never looked back. As one of the six Founding Members, Bice became a member of the first Executive Committee and served in subsequent Committees, until she became President and served her term during 1972-75. She remained a staunch and loyal member and actively interested in our Council to the end.

In fact the last time I met Bice was when we sat next to each other at our last Foundation Dinner. She told me she knew she was terminally ill but as always she was accepting God's will without a murmur. Her only worry was about her younger brother whom she sensed was very ill and in fact passed away soon afterwards. Bice was proud of the achievements of NCW and the fact that she helped to keep high its ideals and the good standing we enjoy within the International Council of Women. May we in turn be worthy of her pride and like her face the future with courage and trust in God. May she rest in peace. 💖

Ms Mary Jane Spiteri MOM

Highlights of the EESC July Plenary

The plenary meeting of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) held in July, the last before the summer recess, was a very intensive session. Besides the usual number of opinions to be discussed and approved by the assembly, it included statements by Mr Jose Vieira da Silva, Portuguese Minister for Labour and Social Solidarity on behalf of the Portuguese Presidency, Ms Danuta Hubner, Commissioner for Regional Policy and Mr Jacques Barrot, Vice-President of the Commission.

The plenary also adopted four opinions on the Lisbon Strategy dealing with Investment in Knowledge and Innovation, Business Potential, especially of SMEs, Employment of Priority Categories and the Definition of an Energy Policy for Europe. Another important feature of this Plenary session was the presence of Presidents of the national ESCs of member states who were invited to participate in the general discussion.

Speaking about the Future of Europe, Mr Barrot highlighted the importance of reaching an agreement on the Reformed Treaty. The next few months are crucial. The European Council needs a legal basis – we have an agreement but not a Treaty, which is a crucial tool to take the European Union forward.

As a result of the Dutch and French 'no' votes, Europe has been through a period of reflection, listening to the aspirations and concerns of the citizens. The thinking period must now be transformed into action in particular regarding the role of the EU Institutions and the participation of the citizens themselves in a more democratic Europe. It is the role of the EESC to explain the Treaty to the citizens.

Mr Barrot also spoke about the Single Market – the Protocol on Services of General Interest and Internal Market and Competition. Referring to External Cohesion, the Vice-President also pointed out that Europe is speaking with a single voice in the areas of Trade, Humanitarian Aid and Development. Mr Barrot also referred to major areas that need to be addressed, such as Immigration, Criminal Law, Solidarity in the case of terrorism and Energy Security and Climate Change.

Members of National Economic and Social Councils of Member States who took part in the debate, highlighted the importance of involving the participation of Civil Society in the process of the Reformed Treaty by using the Community method and not relying only on IGC meetings. Mr Sonny Portelli, Chair of MCESD emphasised the need to address the threats regarding climate change, the supply of fuels (energy) and the problem of relocation of industries and their negative impact, in particular on Malta, as a result of its size, geographical position and limited resources. 💖

2008 is the EUROPEAN YEAR OF INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

Recent events at the international and local level have demonstrated how intangible elements such as culture and religion can affect the coexistence between people and communities. It is for this reason that the European Union has dedicated the year 2008 to theme of 'intercultural dialogue'.

The objectives of the EU Year of Intercultural Dialogue are to promote intercultural dialogue as an instrument to bring together individuals and communities of different cultures. Intercultural dialogue contributes to a number of strategic priorities of the European Union such as respecting and promoting cultural diversity; favouring the European Union's commitment to solidarity, social justice and reinforced cohesion; allowing the European Union to realize new efficient partnership with neighbouring countries. 💖

NCW COMMENTS AND PROPOSALS ON PRE-BUDGET 2008 CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

Following the proposals and recommendations made by the National Council of Women (NCW) earlier on this year, NCW is submitting its Comments and Proposals to the Pre-Budget 2008 discussion document

NCW is pleased to note that many of its proposals, in particular regarding women, employment of youth, the elderly, education and pensions have been acknowledged in this document.

NCW urges government to give priority to following issues in the forthcoming Budget for 2008

Investing in the future of the Maltese Family

NCW commends government on targeting the Maltese Family as the central theme underlying the Budget 2008 proposals.

While justifying the proposals made to reach the relevant objectives to address family issues, NCW finds that measures to acknowledge and strengthen the traditional family are missing.

In the medium to long term, such measures can act as preventive measures and therefore reduce both the negative social effects and the relevant rising costs resulting from new lifestyles, that are resulting in the deterioration of the social fabric of the Maltese society. NCW notes with concern that the traditional family is facing many challenges without having the adequate tools to survive.

The Council notes that there is the dire need for better values based educational programmes in schools at all levels to promote the traditional family as well as programmes for couples who are preparing for marriage to face today's challenges.

NCW recommends the setting up of a Government Agency for the Family, making use of experts in different areas and working with relevant NGOs to provide programmes that are based on values to strengthen the traditional family, while offering sessions on skills regarding personal development, building relationships, conflict management and problem solving, sharing of responsibilities and financial planning amongst others in preparation for marriage.

NCW believes that there is the need for more effective values-based sex education programmes in schools to help young people develop skills that challenge the media and Internet messages that are portraying sex in a distorted manner, completely excluding responsible behaviour

Gender Equality

The Commission's Roadmap for Equality between Men and Women 2006-2010 states that gender equality is a fundamental right and a necessary condition for the achievement of the EU's objectives of growth, employment and social cohesion to reach the targets of the Lisbon Strategy.

This has also been highlighted in the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All 2007

In many areas, the commitment of member states is crucial to achieve the Lisbon objectives and to drive the gender equality

agenda forward

The National Council of Women believes that Budget 2008 should have addressed gender equality as a national priority area, exclusively, in a chapter on its own following a number of communications by the EU Commission which include among others:

- Roadmap for Equality between men and women 2006-2010 COM(2006) 92 final
- The European Year for Equal Opportunities for All (2007)
- Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation
- Council Directive implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services

The principle of equal pay for work of equal value, in particular in the highest occupational categories needs to be addressed through **selection criteria that do not discriminate between women and men**. There is the need at national level to ensure non-discrimination in pay systems are in place through social dialogue with all stakeholders including NGOs working in the field of gender equality

Eliminating stereotyped gender roles in the labour market

Promoting non-gender biased education in schools and efficient and non-stereotyped career advice services for students and those already at work will enable individuals to make better informed education and career choices.

Examples of practical tools

- Organisation of open days in companies for girls to show that pre-conceived ideas about women's compared to men's jobs are not justified in practice and informing them about career options they may not have considered otherwise
- Setting targets to increase the number of girls taking up apprenticeships in technical and scientific professions as a way to step up female recruitment
- Sending women engaged in technical or scientific occupations into schools to inform and raise awareness of opportunities of technical or scientific professions for girls

Improving women's participation at all levels within enterprises.

- Encouraging women's participation at managerial level by promoting them in decision-making positions at an early stage in their career.
- Putting in place transparent and gender neutral recruitment, selection and promotion criteria.
- Setting targets for the promotion of women in decision-making positions in proportion to the number of women in the relevant occupational level

Facing the future with confidence: investing in people, nurturing and promoting a caring society

Revision of current systems of assistance to families

NCW strongly supports the following proposed measures

- raising the current threshold for entitlement to children allowance.
- adequate increases to be made in cases of disabled children
- increasing children allowance for second and third child etc within the family
- assistance to families who would be paying a house loan.

Incentives and rewarding the introduction of innovative family-friendly measures in the workplace in the private sector

Government needs to encourage family-friendly initiatives in the private sector through social partners' collective agreements and individual contracts and besides acting as a role model, offer incentives to increase family-friendly and gender equality measures

Proposals

Incentives to business (private sector) to further develop schemes for

- flexible working hours worked round childcare provision hours and other forms of family-friendly initiatives
- Working from home, including teleworking
- Job sharing etc
- Childcare provision initiatives including private-public partnership

Government (public sector) should also

- offer incentives including tax credits for fathers who make use of family-friendly initiatives
- legislate in favour of mandatory shared parental leave
- initiate an annual national competition/award entitled 'The Family-Friendly Workplace'

Part-time Work

NCW, is pleased to note the amendment to the threshold for part-time work that was discussed during the Budget 2007 consultation and that will come into force in Budget 2008.

Strengthening benefits for part-timers, a very high percentage of which are women, will help to increase the participation of women in the labour market and also serve as incentives to move out of the black economy

In line with benefits offered to full-time workers, NCW recommends

- Government credits or voluntary NI contributions for parental leave for part-time workers, mothers or fathers of children up to the age of three years and for career breaks for the care of dependent adults and dependent relatives with disabilities
- Tax incentives for employers who offer access to on-the-job training and/or vocational training during parental leave or career breaks, in particular for part-time workers

NCW also recommends that

- following the **register for part-time work** ETC will be embarking on, provision should be made to ensure criteria of the system will facilitate access to employment
- ETC 'back to work' **schemes for women** returners, including **part-time workers**, targeting prospective employees at all levels of education and of different age groups to include older workers.
- Promoting further schemes of collaboration with NGOs working in the field of gender and with Local Councils. These can provide technical resources and venues for the implementation of vocational training and lifelong learning programmes, to increase access to a wider range

of beneficiaries. Working in centres other than Hal far can provide a more user-friendly environment and easier access (less traveling and traveling expenses)

- Adequate data collection and indicators to identify why initiatives to increase the participation of women in full time employment have so far not been sufficiently successful

Legal framework for temping agencies

- So far there is no Community legal framework to regulate this form of work, which is creating risks and abuses. The provision of a **legal framework to regulate Temping Agency workers**, besides being another means of further increasing female participation in the labour market, is of benefit to both employers and employees as all stand to gain from legal certainty.
- Although, the EU's proposal for a directive to regulate the working conditions of temporary workers has not been made public, Government should encourage social partners to speed up reaching an agreement through social dialogue
- In the case of the Public Service there is the need to provide for legislation in the Industrial Relations Act for all types of work organization related to family-friendly measures (eg. Temporary workers in the case of reduced hours)

Non-standard Employment

Non-standard labour contracts need to be backed by legal certainty and security for employers and employees as both stand to gain.

- Industrial Relations legislation needs to be amended to define the meaning of 'worker' and 'employee' according to to-day's employer-worker different working relationships.
- Government needs to ensure enhancing working conditions in the revision of collective agreements for employees on definite contracts, ensuring a balance between flexibility and security, in particular in gender-related situations
- Also ensure that individual contracts offer legal certainty to workers in which the rights of the workers based on ILO requirements are respected

Agencies and Authorities:

Currently, discussions on the revision of collective agreements are underway for the different categories of employees of agencies and authorities.

Consultation with workers representatives is crucial to ensure that measures regarding flexible work arrangements, entitlement to leave and entitlement to sick leave in gender-related situations are not less favourable in comparison with those of similar agencies.

NCW recognises **the need to take measures to curb abuse, however such measures should not penalize honest workers.**

Anomalies in tax rates for remuneration of supervision services and overtime in state schools need to be addressed (overtime is taxed at 15% and supervision is taxed at 35%)

Employment and Training Corporation (ETC)

Adult Guidance

NCW supports proposals regarding the provision of guidance Services by ETC

However, Guidance Services for adults as proposed in the document have very limited possibilities to ensure re-

employment

NCW believes that ETC needs to invest more in the provision of support for transitions, for persons at risk of redundancy.

The scheme proposed in the document should be widened to include collaboration with employers and with workers representatives to provide access to public and private training establishments, or on-the-job training with recognition of the qualifications thus acquired for individuals at risk of redundancy, whether in full-time or in part-time employment. Such a scheme will also address the needs of women employees in transition as a result of family/child/elderly/disabled commitments.

Childcare Services Provision

The importance of childcare services cannot be underestimated although so far research has shown that a very high percentage of parents who are in employment prefer the care of grandparents.

A number of mothers are unable to enter the labor market or retain their job or opt for part-time work because of lack of accessibility of childcare facilities for older children. Parents are often constrained to leave children between 5 years and 14 years at home on their own after school hours and during the holidays

NCW recommends **implementing an after-school programme to match parents' working hours, providing a holistic creative learning environment for this age group. Programmes can include extra-curricular activities in a number of areas including drama, sports, art, music and thinking skills as well as assistance with homework, fostering a love for reading etc** (a pilot project is currently under way regarding the 0-3 age group)

Facilitators for disabled children in Private and Independent Schools

The National Council of Women is concerned over the issue of fees for facilitators paid by parents who have children with disabilities attending private/independent schools.

Although choice of school is a private matter, these parents are already burdened with very exorbitant school fees, which would otherwise be paid from the state coffers.

While Budget 2007 supports these families through a family benefit for all and state-paid NI Credits for four years for parents who take a career break to look after these children, this is far from adequate to sustain payment for fees required for the services of facilitators.

All disabled children should have equal access to education without discrimination and therefore the forthcoming **Budget 2008 should include state-paid fees for facilitators in these schools in line with State Schools and Church schools.**

Social Security and Pensions Reform to ensure adequate pensions entitlement for women

Social Security and Pensions should be designed in a way that do not penalize those who do unpaid care work and home care

While acknowledging the need to increase the retirement age to 65 years of age for both men and women, the contribution period increased to 40 years will impact negatively on women, due to gaps in their contribution record.

Also, with the increase up to 25 years or more in the years of study and consequently the delayed entry into the labour market for both men and women, the 40 year contribution period (up to 65 years of age) will not allow for flexibility to undertake periods of study, re-skilling and training

NCW fully supports the proposal of **accredited NI contributions** for a period of unemployment for individuals who interrupt their registration to carry out temporary work, and recommends that this measure will be **extended to individuals, whether in full-time or in part-time employment who opt to undergo training during the period of unemployment.** Such a scheme will also address the needs of women employees in transition as a result of family/child/elderly/disabled commitments.

Single parents and work

NCW agrees with proposed measures that encourage individuals to enter the labour market and not rely on social benefits as much as possible. Empowerment through economic independence opens up opportunities for self fulfillment from which society as a whole will gain

NCW supports proposed measures that offer opportunities for single mothers to enter the labour market. **NCW recommends financial incentives for single parents registering for part-time or full-time employment who opt to undergo a period of training or employability programme**

An employability programme for early school leavers

NCW supports proposed initiatives for employability of early school leavers. Very often early school leavers who come from unstable socio-economic environments have illiteracy problems, a history of absenteeism and in many cases challenging behaviour.

NCW therefore recommends that **programmes providing employability skills should include personal and social development modules to develop self-esteem, responsibility, teamwork etc.**

An analysis with the participants of the profiles of the jobs on the market and identifying individual skills and competencies as well as constraints should be carried out. Specific areas of labour shortages should be targeted also from a gender perspective in response to the realities of the labour market, to encourage placements in the right jobs.

Methods of participative learning and experiential learning away from classroom methods should also be used, besides work-related knowledge and skills. The programme should be extended to 9 (nine) months. Incentives such as 'pocket money' subject to set criteria would encourage more participation. Whilst the support of employers is necessary for a successful outcome, these programmes can be implemented **in collaboration with NGOs, as is currently being done in other employability programmes**

Incentives to women entrepreneurs

Whilst acknowledging entrepreneurship initiatives being carried out by Malta Enterprise, NCW supports proposed measures for the assistance of women entrepreneurs

NCW recommends the design and implement an integrated comprehensive programme that is two-pronged targeting:

- **prospective entrepreneurs** who are illiterate and low skilled and an additional target group of educated women

• women entrepreneurs and co-operators

'Train the trainer' programmes at both levels will ensure continuity of expert advice.

Professional evaluation methods of programmes and building on previous experiences will serve to enhance initiatives and result in better outcomes

Mentoring, in particular through the initial phases is also important to achieve targeted objectives

Offering opportunities for training of prospective entrepreneurs will not only reduce unemployment but will offer possibilities of new jobs.

NCW recommends that

- Training programmes for prospective entrepreneurs include
- 1 personal empowerment
 - 2 training in entrepreneurship and basic business skills
 - 3 vocational training and skills enhancement

NCW also recommends that programmes for **women entrepreneurs and co-operators**

should include assistance for

- strengthening of information to existing women entrepreneurs to discover new sectors where activities including capacity advertising, marketing and pricing, distribution service provision for exploring international

or niche market opportunities such as trade fairs and exhibitions.

- investment in technology infrastructure particularly ICT
- development of mechanisms for access to credit for launching, developing and modernizing businesses. Incentives for new business ventures and for enterprise establishment should include a legal framework for micro-credit with commercial banks providing adequate and realistic conditions for loans

Strengthening the Voluntary Sector

Consultation with the representatives of the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity regarding the White Paper on The Voluntary Organisations Act has been ongoing and many NGOs have contributed through discussions on proposals put forward to ensure that the rights of non-governmental organisations are protected and that obligations are clearly stated.

The consultation process had been carried out in a genuine spirit to reach agreement on most issues, culminating in the meeting of the Parliamentary Social Affairs Committee on the 17 July 2007, where the last amendments were discussed.

NCW urges Government to speed up finalizing recommendations to the White Paper for enactment by Parliament as soon as the summer recess is over. 🍷

Grace Attard - NCW Vice-President - EESC member

Women in Political Decision Making course

The NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN is currently running a series of interactive sessions, especially for women interested in local and national politics.

The sessions are being addressed by professional speakers;

- experts in the delivery of empowerment programmes,
- journalist from TV and print media
- representatives of local councils,
- representatives of political parties, MPs and MEPs.

Dates Wednesdays and Fridays between
18.00hrs and 20.00hrs

Venue: National Council of Women Centre



The UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award
Congratulations go to Dr Katrine Camilleri who was lately honoured by the UN refugee agency UNHCR for her dedication to asylum seekers and their well-being

Environmental Competition

On the 5th June 2006, The Environment Committee within the National Council of Women launched its 3rd Competition with an environmental theme. After the success of the previous two competitions expectations were quite high. The competition consisted of an artistic entry depicting a local species, tree, plant, bird, and animal and artistically presented in the form of a photograph, painting, collage, or however the participant felt could express his presentation. The presentation of prizes was on the 7th December 2006 and no less than 95 entries were exhibited at St James Cavalier. The main sponsor was the Ministry for Rural Affairs and the Environment who donated the first prize of a paid trip to an Italian locality. The winner was Nicholas Galea a 14 year old from Attard. 🍷



Highlights of NCW reactions and comments to PN Vision 2015

The National Council of Women supports the ambitious Vision 2015 programme based on the seven crucial areas in which Malta can become a Centre of Excellence, namely:

- Regional and European Centre of Excellence in Information and Communication Technology
- Regional Centre for Financial Services
- Tourism Centre
- Centre of Education and Institutes for international studies
- Centre of Manufacture
- Regional Centre of Quality Health Services
- Gozo as a centre of excellence specialising in tourism and gerontology among others

NCW believes that the success of this ambitious programme depends on all social partners and stakeholders by investing wisely in human resources, in particular in women, through proactive policies, both in the short and in the long term.

NCW is putting forward the following proposals and comments

- Planning to strengthen our current education system and services
- The introduction of more innovative policies to ensure that as early as primary and ongoing secondary, tertiary and post-tertiary education services students and young people are being prepared to take up the specialised posts of work required for the success of such a vision.
- Special attention needs to be given to ensure that the potential contribution of female students and women in all the seven areas is prioritised through modern and effective Guidance and Counselling services in schools at all levels.
- Counselling and information sessions for parents (who are a strong influence on young people in their choice of career)
- Obstacles to posts for women at all hierarchical levels due to family responsibilities both in the public and more particularly in the private sector are eliminated through incentives and information campaigns
- Incentives for men to share in family/profession responsibilities. Family support, in particular the support of spouses is crucial, as can be seen from other European countries to fully utilise the potential of women
- Childcare facilities that are affordable and that match the working hours of both parents and professional childminding services

All the three pillars: education, the economy and the environment, on which the seven areas are based, need to work in tandem to

reach the objectives. Current initiatives need to be strengthened and innovative ones need to be introduced ensuring sustainability.

Investing in the future of the Maltese Family

NCW commends the Nationalist Party in Government on targeting the Maltese Family as the central theme underlying the Budget 2008 proposals.

While justifying the proposals made to reach the relevant objectives to address family issues, NCW finds that measures to acknowledge and strengthen the traditional family are missing.

In the medium to long term, such measures can act as preventive measures and therefore reduce both the negative social effects and the relevant rising costs resulting from new lifestyles, that are resulting in the deterioration of the social fabric of the Maltese society. NCW notes with concern that the traditional family is facing many challenges without having the adequate tools to survive

The Council notes that there is the dire need for better values based educational programmes in schools at all levels to promote the traditional family as well as programmes for couples who are preparing for marriage to face today's challenges.

NCW recommends the setting up of a Government Agency for the Family, making use of experts in different areas and working with relevant NGOs to provide programmes that are based on values to strengthen the traditional family, while offering sessions on skills regarding personal development, building relationships, conflict management and problem solving, sharing of responsibilities and financial planning amongst others in preparation for marriage.

NCW believes that there is the need for more effective values-based sex education programmes in schools to help young people develop skills that challenge the media and Internet messages that are portraying sex in a distorted manner, completely excluding responsible behaviour

Family-friendly Measures

NCW strongly supports the following measures proposed in the Consultation Pre-Budget 2008 and urges the Nationalist Party to give priority to these measures

- raising the current threshold for entitlement to children allowance.
- adequate increases to be made in cases of disabled children
- increasing children allowance for second and third child etc within the family
- assistance to families who would be paying a house loan.

Incentives and rewarding the introduction of innovative family-friendly measures in the workplace in the private sector

There is the need to encourage family-friendly initiatives in the private sector through social partners' collective agreements and individual contracts and besides acting as a role model, offer incentives to increase family-friendly and gender equality measures

Proposals

- Incentives to business (private sector) to further develop schemes for flexible working hours worked round childcare provision hours and other forms of family-friendly initiatives
- Working from home, including teleworking
- Job sharing etc
- Childcare provision initiatives including private-public partnership

Government (public sector) should also

- offer incentives including tax credits for fathers who make use of family-friendly initiatives
- legislate in favour of mandatory shared parental leave
- initiate an annual national competition/award entitled 'The Family-Friendly Workplace'

Part-time Work

NCW, is pleased to note the amendment to the threshold for part-time work that was discussed during the Budget 2007 consultation and that will come into force in Budget 2008. Strengthening benefits for part-timers, a very high percentage of which are women, will help to increase the participation of women in the labour market and also serve as incentives to move out of the black economy

In line with benefits offered to full-time workers, NCW recommends

- Government credits or voluntary NI contributions for parental leave for part-time workers, mothers or fathers of children up to the age of three years and for career breaks for the care of dependent adults and dependent relatives with disabilities
- Tax incentives for employers who offer access to on-the-job training and/or vocational training during parental leave or career breaks, in particular for part-time workers

NCW also recommends that

- following the register for part-time work ETC will be embarking on, provision should be made to ensure criteria of the system will facilitate access to employment

- ETC 'back to work' schemes for women returners, including part-time workers targeting prospective employees at all levels of education and of different age groups to include older workers.
- Promoting further schemes of collaboration with NGOs working in the field of gender and with Local Councils. These can provide technical resources and venues for the implementation of vocational training and lifelong learning programmes, to increase access to a wider range of beneficiaries. Working in centres other than Hal far can provide a more user-friendly environment and easier access (less traveling and traveling expenses)
- Adequate data collection and indicators to identify why initiatives to increase the participation of women in full time employment have so far not been sufficiently successful

Legal framework for temping agencies

- So far there is no Community legal framework to regulate this form of work, which is creating risks and abuses. The provision of a legal framework to regulate Temping Agency workers, besides being another means of further increasing female participation in the labour market, is of benefit to both employers and employees as all stand to gain from legal certainty.
- Although, the EU's proposal for a directive to regulate the working conditions of temporary workers has not been made public, Government should encourage social partners to speed up reaching an agreement through social dialogue
- In the case of the Public Service there is the need to provide for legislation in the Industrial Relations Act for all types of work organization related to family-friendly measures (eg. including temporary workers in the case of reduced hours)

Women in Decision-making

NCW is very much aware and concerned with the low number of women in decision-making positions but more so with the low number of women in Parliament - only 9.2%. Our recommendation is 'empowerment' and 'education' of interested women for this political/public life.

An Academy or a Department at the University or MCAST could be dedicated to training courses for political life, with specific topics relevant to the life of a parliamentarian.

Leadership skills and how to utilise them

Public speaking

Communications - how to do it and how to engage in the full range of communications

Handling of Media for self portrayal, for

getting your message across and dissemination of information

Management of crisis situations - how to minimise situations, contain and even prevent a crisis

The policy making process from an idea to implementation.

Parliamentary procedures and the legislative process.

Party politics and public affairs and other skills

After such a course the prospective candidates have the tools to work with. They are ready to join any party they desire. At the political party of their choice they can be groomed according to the ideology of chosen party and have full confidence in their ability and presentation.

Here one should note that Europe encourages parity (50%) in our parliaments. At Beijing and 12 years on, we still have not achieved the 30% female parliamentarians in the Countries belonging to the UN. Also, the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action 2005-2015 recommends 30% women in parliament. In Malta, we need to do something urgently.

The Malta Association of Women in Business (MAWB)

Roseanne Galea - President

The Malta Association of Women in Business acknowledges the progress made in the IT sectors and would like to see other public private initiatives in other sectors.

It feels that more space and importance should be given to the private sector especially in the fields of education and training. On going discussions between the ministries and the private sector are important and the Office of the Prime Minister should be copied with the minutes of all meetings held in this regard. This will show that the Prime Minister gives importance to dialogue between the state and the private sector. These discussions should be with industry specific associations as well as trade unions and other bodies that form part of civil society.

The MAWB is concerned that the Malta Vocational Framework is not yet finalized and it will take time to get this finalized because a law is required for this. In the meantime provisional accreditation should be given to Maltese courses.

Project such as the Park and Ride are good in principle but could have 'negative side effects'. Floriana businesses have been negatively effected because the bus does not stop anywhere in Floriana

The Commission for the Disabled is proving to be a stumbling block for business women who want to open a business. The government has to acknowledge that it is impossible to make all buildings accessible, more so in

certain areas where businesses are located in old buildings. The commission is not practical and is hampering business initiative.

Issues related to the Agricultural Sector

Jeanette Farrugia - NCW member

In Malta, we have a unique situation where our agriculture shapes our rural areas. Many think that the main aim of agriculture is to provide us with food. However, the multifunctional role of land based agriculture is an asset for the maintenance of our landscape, provision of fresh fruits and vegetables as well as a source of recreation to all Maltese citizens. In my opinion we still need to give agriculture its due importance since it provides Maltese citizens, as well as tourists several goods and services.

Given our location in the Mediterranean, there is a potential to produce herbs, medicinal plants, as well as other alternative crops. Diversification is the key for the enhancement of rural areas. In Malta we cannot benefit from economies of scale and thus cannot compete when it comes to production. We can only compete by producing alternative, value added, quality products.

Women have a fundamental role in the improvement of the agricultural sector. Most of our traditional quality products are made by housewives. Processing can add value to our produce and can improve the economy of our rural areas and prevent land abandonment.

Increased awareness is necessary when it comes to the conservation of Maltese flora and fauna. Women have a fundamental role in this, through the education of children and their influence on society at large.

Energy conservation and alternative sources

Mary Gaerty - NCW Environment Committee co-ordinator

More incentives for alternative energy use in households and larger projects, including solar water heaters, solar panels and wind energy

Less bureaucracy from Planning Authority and quicker decision making in alternative energy projects, especially wind farms, in order to reach the established percentage by 2010

Change in the waste collection service for more efficiency, less cost, more user friendly and better waste management

Distance learning courses which are environment related

Women should be encouraged to enter this sector more

Education programs on better use of energy, water, materials.

Land reclamation- the land in Malta has real estate value 🌱

Grace Attard

NCW Vice-President and EESC member

Niltagghu mas-Sinjura Catherine Gonzi

Catherine Gonzi hija mara li ghal snin twal, nista'nghid minn tfulitha, dejjem kellha interess qawwi fl-izvilupp tas-socjeta' u hadmet ghal hafna snin b'impenn qawwi f'diversi oqsma.

Il-hajja taghha, bhala l-mara tal-Prim Ministru qed igibha f'kuntatti aktar diretti fejn ikollha l-opportunita' li tkompli twettaq inizzjattivi b'aktar entuzjazmu. Permezz ta' din l-intervista, ma Grace Attard, nixtiequ naraw aktar mill-qrib il-personalita' taghha.

Catherine Gonzi (nee Callus) twieldet f'Hal Safi, f'familja ta' disgha. Il-genituri taghha kienu t-tnejn għalliema u Catherine hadet din il-vokazzjoni wkoll. Minn mindu kellha 14-il sena bdiet hidma intensiva f'Youth Centre fejn kienet torganizza diskussjonijiet, drama u hargiet ghaz-zgahzagħ, bl-iskop li jkollhom zvilupp aktar holistiku u fl-istess waqt trawwem fihom sens civiku.

Staqsjejniha: kif tara lilek innifisek?

Għal ftit sekondi waqfet u bid-dahqa taghha wiegbet "Jiena bniedma pozittiva, nemmen li minn kull esperjenza johrog il-gid, ma nharisx lura. Nhobb inkun dejjem vicin in-nies b'mod li ma jsibuhix diffiċli jtkellmu mieghi. Nagħmel hilti kemm nista' biex nisma x'jixtiequ jaqsmu mieghi dawk li jkellmuni. Tgħallimt kemm hu importanti li ngħinu persuna tagħraf il-valur tagħha stess, jiggifieri nagħtuha l-empowerment biex tgħeleb difikkultajiet u sfidi fil-hajja."

Kif jirnexxielek tlaħhaq mal-bzonnijiet tal-familja u fl-istess hin twettaq il-hidma. impenjattiva tiegħek?

Catherine għandha sens qawwi ta' responsabbilta' lejn il-familja li hi tistqarr għandha tigi qabel kollox, sew bħal mara mizzewga kif ukoll bhala omm. Irnexxiela trawwem sens civiku fit-tliet uliedha, David ta' 29 sena, Mikela ta' 27 sena u Paul ta' 25 sena, u għalhekk bhala familja jgħinu lil xulxin, illum ukoll li tnejn minn uliedha huma mizzewegin.

Staqsjejniha kif tlaqqa' l-impenji tal-hajja pubblika ma' dawk tal-familja

Hi temmen li għandu jkun hemm għazla ta' prioritatijiet bejn il-hajja pubblika u l-hajja tal-familja, f'mument partikolari. Dawn il-hsibijiet, tgħid Catherine taqsamhom ma' zewgha, avolja hafna drabi diffiċli li t-tnejn isibu hin għal xulxin fil-hajja privata tagħhom.

Anki fil-hajja ta' kuljum jtkellmu u jiddiskutu fuq dak li jkun wettqu bl-aktar sens miftuh. "Il-hajja mar-ragel tiegħi hija esperjenza fejn kelli l-ispazju li nikber u nizviluppa u dan dovut ukoll għar-relazzjoni miftuha li għandi ma' zewgi. Bl-istess mod, inhoss li Laurence sab dan l-ispazju fir-relazzjoni tagħna. Għaddejnin quddiem għajnejja z-zminijiet meta t-tfal kienu zghar, il-logħob li kien jilagħbu ma' missierhom, u l-fatt li dejjem sabuha faċli jtkellmu miegħu anke issa li kibru".

Xtaqna nkunu nafu kif tiffacja xi sitwazzjonijiet diffiċli.

"Tgħallimt ninnegozja, niddiskuti mill-ewwel il-problema, ma ningħalaqx fija nnifsi, jew nibqa' newhden fuqha, speċjalment fil-familja", qaltilna bid-dahqa tagħha tas-soltu.

X'inhma l-impenji tiegħek fil-hajja pubblika?

Kellmitna dwar laqgħat f'pajjizi barra minn Malta meta Dr Gonzi kien Speaker tal-Kamra tar-Rappreżentanti fejn kien ikun impenjat hafna f'laqgħat tal-Commonwealth. "Bħal nisa ohra li kien jattednu ma zwieghom, kollna naqsmu l-esperjenzi tagħna u naraw minn xulxin kif nistgħu intejbu l-inizzjattivi tagħna. Hafna drabi, n-nisa impenjati fit-taħditiet uffiċjali kien jiehdu gost jtkellmu magħna fejn konna naraw kemm fil-fatt tixtiebah ma' tagħna il-hajja tagħhom fil-familja"

"Fost impenji diversi fl-1985 kont membru tal-kumitat Fond Għajri. Fl-1993 kont wahda mill-fundaturi tar-Richmond Foundation u sena wara tal-Mental Health Association, li tagħha

llum jiena President onorarju "Bħal ma' jaf kulhadd jien ili għal snin twal impenjata hafna fil-qasam tas-saħħa mentali. Fix-xogħol tagħna mhux biss naraw li jkun hawn aktar għarfien u edukazzjoni biex titkisser l-istigma izda nemmu wkoll fl-empowerment ta' dawn l-individwi, u anke tal-familjari tagħhom biex ikollhom il-hiliet necessarji biex ifittxu l-kura u l-għajjuna li għandhom bzonn huma stess. Inheggu ukoll it-tishieh ta'servizzi kemm fl-isptarjiet kif ukoll fil-komunita'.

F'Settembru tal-2005 Fir-Rumania giet mogħtija l-GAMIAN award għal impenn

tagħha f'dan il-qasam u f'Dicembru l-2005 giet mistiedna tagħmel prezentazzjoni dwar l-istigma u s-saħħa mentali fis-6 edizzjoni tal-Luton/Cambridge International Health Conference."

Rwol iehor hu dak ta' Chairperson tal-HSBC Cares for Children Fund (2003) li jagħti support finanzjarju lil proġetti ta'reabilitazzjoni, edukazzjoni u rekreazzjoni għal tfal l-izjed zvantaggjati fis-socjeta'.

Catherine Gonzi giet mogħtija l-unur ta' Membru Honrarju tal-Kunsill Nazzjonali tan-Nisa fis-sena 2005

Ahna nafu li ridentement int akkumpanjati lill-Prim Ministru fiz-zjara tiegħu fl-Awstralja. X'kienet tfixser din l-esperjenza għalik?

"Ma nistax ma nsemmix l-interess kbir li għandhom f'Malta, il-Maltin li jgħixu fl-Awstralja. Isegwu dak kollu li qed jigri f-pajjizna.. 'Qalbna hemm, għalkemm il-futur tagħna hu hawn' kien fost il-kliem li smajt b'emozzjoni kbira. Laqgħuna bil-qalb kif jagħmlu meta l-Maltin jmorru jzuruhom. Kelli l-opportunita' nitkellem magħhom dwar l-esperjenzi tagħhom individwali. Intqajt ukoll ma' għaqdiet li jahdmu f'oqsma differenti tat-tfal u sirt naf aktar dwar x'inhma l-bzonnijiet tagħhom.



Catherine Gonzi busy checking mail, in between answering questions during interview.

Iltaqjna maz-zewg generazzjonijiet ta' familji li emigraw lejn l-Awstralja, anzi nista' nghid mat-tielet generazzjoni wkoll għalkemm għadhom tfal jew adoloxxenti. Għall-bidu naghqdu f'komuntajiet u għalhekk hafna mit-tradizzjonijiet Maltin għadhom hajjin. Sahansitra hemm inizzjattivi biex it-tfal jitgħallmu l-Malti sabiex il-lingwa Maltija tibqa' għaddejja minn generazzjoni għall-oħra

Urew apprezzament għall-fatt li Malta saret membru ta' l-Unjoni Ewropeja, kemm Malta imxiet il quddiem u smajna wkoll il-kummenti tagħhom dwar il-fatt li Malta wkoll diehla fiz-zona ewro f'Jannar ta' 2008. Għalihom ukoll, dan ifisser l-importanza li kisbet Malta u l-opportunitajiet ekonomici għall-gzejjer Maltin. Izda fuq kollox urew is-sodisfazzjon tagħhom għal fatt li daww li jixtiequ jiehdu c-cittadinanza Maltija se jkun aktar faċli għalihom; dan ifisser wkoll access għall-Ewropa galadarba huma wkoll saru membri ta' l-UE"

Hemm xi mument partikolari f'din iz-zjara li baqa' f'qalbek?

"Kien hemm mument partikolari, li nahseb jibqa' f'mohhi u f'qalbi: dan kien meta saret ic-cerimonja hdejn il-Mafkar ta-Child Migrants, (1950s) go Freemantle Wharf, Perth. Xi ftit minnhom għadhom hajjin u t-tfal tagħhom tant jixtiequ jzuru Malta. Ma tistax ma thossx għal dawn it-tfal li kellhom jitolqu l-familji tagħhom ta' eta' daqshekk zghira biex ifittxu hajja ahjar li ma' kinitx faċli.



Mrs Gonzi visits the Old People's Home Melita House - Regency Green Multicultural Aged Care Facility in Adelaide, South Australia

Fl-ahharnett, staqsejniha kif thares lejn il-futur.

Bl-istess semplicita' li dejjem kellha, Catherine wiegbet, L-hajja hi sfida kontinwa. Nemmen li flimkien, fil-familja u fil-kommunita' nistghu nibnu soċjeta' izjed tolleranti u hanina. 🌸

Seminar on Osteoporosis

NCW Health Committee together with the Malta Osteoporosis Society organised a seminar on the 20th June at the Catholic Institute, Floriana. The aim was to give information which should be good, concrete and adjourned on the topic of "Osteoporosis" which, although a lot of information was found on the internet, not all the information was valid or controlled.

Key Speaker, Dr Raymond Galea explained the different phases of osteoporosis. Up to about 35 years of age, normally one does not suffer from osteoporosis, it is after that time that one starts losing slowly bone density especially in women when they reach their menopause. That change is more accentuated later on in life. It is important that when children are young they will have the best state of bone condition in order that when the bone mass starts decreasing it will not be in danger of this disease.

Dr Galea also spoke about one's lifestyle that can increase the negative effects of osteoporosis including poor nutrition, smoking, sedentary life and certain medical conditions (steroids) and Comorbid conditions (parathyroid - thyroid). He also explained the different types of treatment for this condition. The discussion from the floor helped the participants to understand better how to cope with this condition. Dr Galea also stated that the European Parliament has set up a Committee on Osteoporotic fractures to address these conditions at European level.

NCW President, Doreen Micallef thanked Dr Ray Galea and the Malta Osteoporosis Society who collaborated with NCW to make this seminar possible. She presented a token to Dr Ray Galea to thank him for his interesting presentation. Ms Suzanne Malvaney, on behalf of the Osteoporosis Society thanked all the participants and augured that there will be more occasions to share information for the benefit of everyone. The Seminar was sponsored by Ms Danielle Drago representative of Sanovi Aventis. 🌸

Consultation on the Voluntary Organisation Act

The consultation process with the representatives of the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity regarding the White Paper on The Voluntary Organisations Act has been ongoing and many NGOs have contributed through discussions on proposals put forward to ensure that the rights of non-governmental organisations are protected.

However the process also involved establishing guidelines regarding the organisations' statute, accountability, transparency and all other obligations contemplated by law. A crucial issue, the separation of the roles of the Commissioner and the Council will strengthen the legal framework and will promote a healthy working and collaborative environment. Organisations that need to ensure independence from government have been given a transitional period to regulate themselves in line with the definition of the term 'voluntary' in the White Paper.

The consultation process had been carried out in a genuine spirit to reach agreement on most issues, culminating in the meeting of the Parliamentary Social Affairs Committee on the 17 July 2007, where the last amendments were discussed. During the next few weeks, we hope that fine-tuning of the last recommendations submitted for inclusion in the White Paper will be finalised in time to be endorsed by Parliament as soon as the summer recess is over. 🌸

L'Aġenzija APPOĠĠ

"Għal aktar informazzjoni dwar l-Aġenzija Appoġġ u s-servizzi tagħha, inkluz daww relatati mal-vjolenza domestika, wiehed jista' jcampel fuq Supportline 179, miftuha 24 siegħa kuljum. Matul il-hinijiet ta' l-ufficju, wiehed jista' jikkuntattja lill-Aġenzija wkoll fuq 2295 9000. Għal aktar tagħrif, zur il-website www.appogg.gov.mt."

Meeting of MCESD Civil Society with Chairman

The first meeting of the MCESD Civil Society Committee with the recently appointed Chairman, Mr Sonny Portelli was a timely opportunity to discuss the importance of the role of Civil Society organizations represented on the MCESD to put forward the views and proposals of their members on issues of national importance in a formal, democratic structure within the MCESD.

The organizations represented during the meeting included: The National Council of Women; The National Alliance for Pensioners; The National Council for the Elderly; The Federation of Professional Associations; The Consumers Association; The National Commission Persons with Disability and The National Commission for Equality

The representatives fully supported the Chairman's acknowledgement of the valid contribution of these

organizations within the MCESD sub-committee. As a first step, more frequent and regular meetings, will be held every three months and other meetings in between if the need arises

As regards consultation on Budget 2008, each organisation was invited to submit comments and concrete suggestions to the MCESD Chair, to be discussed at a further meeting before the deadline of the consultation period and which will be included in the overall MCESD report

During the meeting, the representatives gave their views and comments, highlighting areas of particular concern on current developments. Practical suggestions on the function of the Civil Society organizations (NGOs) in collaboration with MCESD were also made. Finally, Mr Portelli invited the organizations to submit topics for discussion for the coming year's agenda. 🌸

Budget 2008 – unleashing the potential of the Maltese citizen – NCW

Underlying Budget 2008 is the fact that it is built on the potential of the Maltese citizens' aspirations and their ability to adapt to the realities of today and equally to the challenges of tomorrow. It provides our society with opportunities to contribute effectively to economic growth and no less to address society's needs.

In its first reactions, NCW is pleased that priority is given to the family, addressing different situations and all family members individually. This in fact has been our Council's priority during the consultation process.

The Council believes that it is a responsible budget with a sense of social justice providing financial measures that are not a 'one-size-fits-all'. Changes in tax bands reflected in the tax computation system, benefits for pensioners, children's allowance, sports benefits among others are substantially increased. In this manner, the budget addresses the needs of families in the low income sector and families with three or more children as well as vulnerable groups, including single parents, pensioners, female part-time workers and young women and men facing socio-economic problems.

NCW believes that the financial benefits are not an end in themselves. Once again, moving away from a paternalistic system of 'dishing out money', Budget 2008 aims to provide the impetus for economic growth through the citizen's participation. The Council believes that, just as there was strong participation by all sectors during the various consultation meetings, our society will once again respond wisely by putting these benefits to good use, to ensure that we reap the benefits of social development and economic growth for our families and our society.

NCW urges government and all social partners to ensure that mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of the various measures are in place, in particular in areas such as social services and employment to curb all forms of abuse. Listening to the people's aspirations should be an ongoing process. The Council moreover encourages all citizens, women and men to make sure they are well informed so that they too can help in curbing abuse. 🌸

Grace Attard
NCW Vice-President
EESC representative

Non-standard Employment

NCW is concerned with the increase in non-standard work in the private sector. Collective agreements regarding contracts of these new forms of flexibility need to be backed by legal certainty and security for employers and employees to ensure fair competition and proper protection of workers in an employment relationship.

Government needs to ensure that working conditions in the revision of collective agreements for employees on definite contracts do not sacrifice workers' rights, ensuring a balance between flexibility and security, in particular in gender-related situations which should also be guaranteed in individual employment contracts

Consultation with workers representatives is crucial to ensure that measures regarding flexible work arrangements, entitlement to leave and entitlement to sick leave in gender-related situations are not discriminatory. Recent comments in the media regarding, among other issues, sick leave during pregnancy are very worrying. While recognising the need to take effective measures to curb abuse, such measures should not penalize female employees in genuine need to make use of their entitlement to sick leave

Industrial Relations legislation needs to be amended to define the meaning of 'worker' and 'employee' according to to-day's employer-worker different working relationships. Dismissal of pregnant women during the probation period also needs to be addressed. 🌸

DIARY OF EVENTS

July 2007

- 5 Social Issues Committee – Talk on Marriage Separations
- 9 Cohesion policy Programme 2007-2013 meeting at Centru Hidma Soċjali, Marie Demicoli attended
- 10 EU Funding Seminar – Education & Training, Exploring Funding Opportunities at Westin Dragonara, Doris Bingley and Marie Demicoli attended
- 11-12 Household Budget Management Course at NCW organised by NECC
- 12 Junior Achievement- Young Enterprise, Final Presentations & Awards
- 13 Ministry for Rural Affairs and Environment – Consultation Seminar – Rural Development. Programme 2007-2013 Executive Committee Meeting
- 17 Civil Society Project – ‘The Fight against Poverty’ Preliminary Meeting. Doris Bingley and Marie Demicoli attended.
NGO Legislation meeting at Parliament, Social Issues Committee. Doreen Micallef accompanied by Doris Bingley presented NCW’s Comments & Proposals
- 18 Launch of the operational Programme at MCC, Valletta. Doris Bingley and Marie Demicoli attended
- 19 A Constitution or just another Treaty for the EU? ERDC at Radisson. Doris Bingley and Marie Demicoli attended
Monitoring Committee Cohesion Policy 2007-2013 Investing in Competitiveness for a Better Quality of Life at the Westin Dragonara. Doreen Micallef attended
- 20 NCW Barbecue at Paradise Bay Hotel
- 25 A Stronger Union for a better World – Presentation of the Portuguese EU Presidency Programme At MCC. Doreen Micallef attended
- 27 Civil Society Committee at MCESD – Minister of Finance, Hon. Tonio Fenech, presenting Pre-Budget Document. Grace Attard and Doris Bingley attended
NCW Lejla Letterarja at Valletta

August 2007

- 1 Doreen Micallef and Grace Attard meet MCESD, Mr. Frank Portelli
- 2 MOSAIC meeting Doris Bingley and Marie Demicoli attended
- 6 Priority Axis 1 – Enhancing Knowledge and Innovation, Grace Attard attended
- 9 Priority Axis 2 Promoting Sustainable Tourism, Grace Attard attended
- 10 FME Funding opportunities Westin Dragonara Doris Bingley attended
Priority Axis 6 Urban Regeneration and improving the Quality of Life
- 22 Presentation by Malta Labour Party of the document Pjan Għal Bidu Għdid at the Corinthia Balzan Grace Attard, Doris Bingley and Marie Demicoli attended
MOSIAC meeting at NCPE Blata l-Bajda, Doris Bingley and Marie Demicoli attended.
- 24 Grace Attard meets Claudine Cassar Director of Alert regarding NCW Website
- 28 12th meeting of Civil Society Committee MCESD at MCESD Premises Grace Attard and Doris Bingley attend
- 30 Italian winner of endemic species competition meets Maltese winner at NCW Centre. Domenico Bellato,

First Secretary Italian Embassy represented the Italian Ambassador. Reception organised by Environment Committee.

September 2007

- 01 Reception on the occasion of the 38th anniversary of the Great El-Fateh Revolution at the Corinthia San Gorg Hotel St. Julians, Grace Attard
- 03 50th Anniversary of ESF celebrations Grace Attard and Doris Bingley attended
- 04 Public Discussion Budget 2008 with the Hon. Tonio Fenech at St. James Cavalier NCW members attended
- 05 The Prime Minister meets the National Council of Women and the Affiliated Organisations. The Prime Minister discussed his vision for the future of Malta at Le Meridien St. Julians
- 06 Business Breakfast at Westin Dragonara “Strategija 2015 u Bagit 2008”
Dr Lawrence Gonzi Prime Minister of Malta presented his vision to the Social Partners & Civil Society. Grace Attard and Doris Bingley attended
- 07 Health Promotion Launch of Taste Freedom a campaign to promote understanding, prevention and effective treatment of eating disorders at the Malta Hilton, MaryRose Zahra and Mercedes Schembri Wismayer attended
Year of Equal Opportunities celebrated at the National Council of Women.
Minister Louis Galea presented Certificates to participants of courses organised by NCW
Grace Attard and Doris Bingley attend the Parliamentary Committee’s discussion on the NGO legislation
- 08 Quddiesa Pontifikali ta Ringrazzjament u te Deum Solenni Doreen Micallef attended
- 11 Dr Harry Vassallo and a delegation from Alternativa Demokratika visit NCW to discuss current issues concerning women.
- 12 EU Structural Funds 2007 -2013 organised by the Ministry for the family and Social Solidarity at Centru Hidma Soċjali Grace Attard and Doris Bingley attended
Ministry of Finance ‘Bagit 2008 Soċjeta Fejn HADD ma jibqa lura’ at Robert Sammut Hall. Grace Attard attended
- 13 Commonwealth Foundation, teleconference for CSAC . Executive Committee Meeting
- 14 The Impact of the Euro on Human Resource, a breakfast meeting at Corinthia Doreen Micallef attended
- 19 Discern Annual Lecture Children of the same God. NCW Executive Committee invited.
- 20 3rd Monitoring Committee for the EEA Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism at the Victoria Hotel Doris Bingley attended
- 21 Quddiesa Pontifikali ta Reingrazzjament u te Deum Solenni Jum Indipendenza Doreen Micallef attended
- 25 MOSIAC meeting
- 26 NECC Euro Changeover lecture for train the trainers programme
Symposium for the General Public entitled Change my risk for a healthy heart At Mater Dei
- 29 Visit to Palazzo Falson by NCW Members
- 30 Reception at the Upper Barrakka by NECC Doreen Micallef and Doris Bingley attended.

New Members:

Caruana Josephine (B’Kara); Ciantar Irena (Bugibba); Gauci Rosemary (St Julians); Micallef Therese (MGER) B.A. DIPSW (IBRAG); Mifsud Mary Iris (B’Kara); Vella Odette (Mellieha)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Visit to Zeppi's Organic Farm Fawwara

The Education and Culture Committee together with the Environment Committee are organising a visit to Zeppi's Farm in Fawwara on Saturday 3rd November 2007 at 9.30am. Price Lm3.00 which will include a picnic lunch plus a three hour tour of the farm.

Social Issues Committee Talk on Social Security

Wednesday 27th November 2007 at 6.00pm
at the National Council of Women Centre,
Blata l-Bajda

Lejla Letterarja

Il-Kumitat ta' l-Edukazzjoni u Kultura ser jorganizza attività oħra kulturali għax-xahar ta' Novembru. It-tema ta' din l-attività hija "Lejla Musa tal-Milied, flimkien ma' Ikel Tradizzjonali".

Il-Kumitat qed jerġa jhajar lill-membri u l-ħbieb tagħhom biex jibgħatu xogħol letterarju oriġinali biex jinqara fil-lejla. Ix-xogħolijiet letterarji bil-lingwa preferita għandhom jintbagħtu lill-Kunsill sal-21 ta Novembru.

L-Attività ser issir nhar il-Ġimgħa 30 ta' Novembru 2007 fis-6.00pm fiċ-Ċentru ta' l-NCW fi Blata l-Bajda. Il-ħlas għall-attenzenza huwa ta' Lm2.50 kull persuna.

Christmas Party

The annual Christmas Party will be held on Friday 7th December 2007. Keep this date free!

Maltese, English and Mathematics Classes at NCW

NCW in conjunction with Adult Education are holding morning classes for English, Maltese and Maths at the National

Council of Women Centre Mountbatten Street Blata l-Bajda. These classes will help those that would like to improve their Maltese, English and Mathematics. Participation fee is Lm1.00 for administration and handouts.

Computer Courses

The National Council of Women are once again offering courses in Computer Awareness, ECDL START and ECDL UPGRADE.

Courses will start on Monday 22nd October and there are morning and evening sessions. Course fee is Lm20 those wishing to attend one of the courses kindly contact the office.

Household Budget Management and the Euro

The National Council of Women are offering courses in Household Budget Management on Monday 12th November at 17.30 hrs and Wednesday 14th November at 09.30 hrs at NCW Centre.

For booking and further information for these activities/courses, contact the NCW Centre.

Tel: 21248881 / Fax: 21246982

Email: ncwmalta@camline.net.mt

January's Annual General Meeting

NCW's Annual General Meeting will take place as usual at the Victoria Hotel Sliema on the last Saturday of January which is 26th January 2008. Whilst we urge all members to attend we also wish to remind Affiliated Organisations and NCW Committees to present their resolutions to NCW Executive Committee by October 29th.

HSBC



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