



Guest of Honour, Mrs Mary Fenech Adami, Mrs Trabalza wife of Italian Ambassador, Mrs Malgosia Korsun-Juszczak wife of the Australian High Commissioner and National Council of Women members at the International Women's Day Mass



Contents:

• Editorial	Page 2
• President's Message	Page 3
• Annual General Meeting	Page 3
• Standing / Sectional Committees	Page 3
• International Women's Day	Page 4
• A Unique experience for MCAST Students	Page 4
• Malta at the International Women's Day Concert at the Deutsche Bank in Berlin	Page 4
• Meeting with Hon Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information ...	Page 5
• The MCESD and Civil Society Development	Page 5
• EU gender report finds women opting for low-paid sectors	Page 6
• Interview: 'Positive discrimination' needed for female scientists	Page 6

• Dismissal of pregnant women during the probation period	Page 7
• The Lisbon Treaty – Listening to the Voice of Civil Society	Page 8
• Pan-Commonwealth civil society unites to mainstream disability	Page 8
• Commonwealth Week 2008	Page 9
• Dr. Joanna Drake, Head of Representation	Page 10
• Sending a strong message against violence	Page 10
• International Council of Women Conseil	Page 10
• NCW AGM 2008 Resolutions	Page 11
• Diary of Events	Page 15
• Forthcoming Events	Page 16
• Smart Women	Page 16

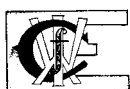
Members of



International Council of Women

Founded 1888

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.**

Executive Committee Members – 2008

President

Mrs. Doreen Micallef Dip MLS, B.Sc, AIMLS, PGCE

Hon General Secretary

Mrs. Doris Bingley

Hon Treasurer

Mrs. Caroline Attard B.Pharm(Hons), MSc.(Cant.)

EESC Representative

Mrs. Grace Attard

Vice Presidents

Mrs. Helga Ellul MQR

Mrs. Mary Rose Zahra

Mercedes Schembri Wismayer MD

Members

Ms. Marie Therese Zammit

Ms. Maria Camilleri Dip. Social Work

Ms. Diane Xuereb B.Psych(Hons), Dip.

HRM, Dip.Gestalt Psychotherapy

Mrs. Maud Muscat M.Ed., BA

Mrs. Ruth Falzon M.A

Mrs. Marie Demicoli

Mrs. Josephine Sammut

Ms. Jeanette Farrugia Dip. Agric.

Editor

Ms. Maria Giuliana Fenech BA (Hons.)

Legal Advisor

Dr. Claudine Zarb B.A. LLD

Office Hours

Monday to Friday: 9.00 - 13.30

Membership Subscription Rates

New individual membership	€13.98
Annual renewal	€11.65
Affiliated Organisations	€18.63
Associated Organisations	€18.63
Life membership	€93.17

*Members and affiliated organisations
are requested to keep their subscription
fees up to date.*



il-mara

NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN - MALTA

Kunsill Nazzjonali tan-Nisa

Pope Pius XII Flats, Mountbatten Street

Blata l-Bajda HMR 02, MALTA

Tel: 21 248 881 Tel/Fax: 21 246 982 E-mail: ncwmalta@camline.net.mt

http://www.ncwmalta.com

EDITORIAL

Dear Members,

Firstly, I must wish you all a belated Happy Women's Day. This year, Election Day fell on World Women's Day's, however NCW still managed to celebrate the occasion with the solemnity it deserves. For this reason, the centre spread is devoted to the Women's Day celebration.



On a very positive note, I must mention Zapatero's new government in which women outnumber men in stereotypically macho Spain! There are nine women and eight men in the new cabinet.

Spain's re-elected Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero included a female defence minister, the former housing minister Carme Chacon.

Zapatero said that it was the first government in which a woman has the defence portfolio and the first government in which there are more women than men. He thinks that equality between men and women would be one of the chief goals of the new government. The youngest minister is also a woman, the Equality Minister, Bibiana Aido, who at 31 will be Spain's youngest ever cabinet member.

NCW Malta is on the foreground when we speak about women and their importance in decision-making. We sincerely hope that eventually there will be more females in the Maltese Cabinet too. At this point I must heartily congratulate Dolores Cristina, a former NCW Malta President (1991 - 1995), on her appointment as Minister for Education and Culture. Congratulations must also go out to Giovanna Debono on her re-appointment as Minister for Gozo.

I hope that the Easter blessing is still with us all. 🌸

Maria Giuliana Fenech

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:

Il-Mara, NCW Centre
Mountbatten Street
Blata l-Bajda, HMR.02,
Malta

Editorial Board

President:	Doreen Micallef BSc AIMLS
Vice President:	Grace Attard
Gen. Secretary:	Doris Bingley
Editor:	Maria Giuliana Fenech
Distribution:	Marie Demicoli

Layout Design and Offset Printing
Veritas Press, Żabbar.
Tel: 21 822 270

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

When one thinks of spring and Easter, the first thing that springs to mind is new life: flowers in bloom, chicks, etc. Ironically, this season of new life was heralded by the news that the Council of Europe is once again attacking Malta for its anti-abortion stance.

We, as Maltese people, should be proud of our position on this situation. Even though several countries have a different view on the subject of abortion, we must not let numbers force us into changing our opinion.

We must always remember that the mother and the child are two separate individuals, each with their own right to live. A woman does have a right to her own body but so does the child who, quite clearly, cannot stand up for this right. So who else should stand up for the child's right to live if not the mother herself who, for a short period of nine months, has the caretaker role of nurturing this new individual?

We must not let anyone make us lose sight of the fact that the baby is a human being and not an object or simply another part of our body that we may dispose of at our whim. The baby is not a part of our body but is another individual sharing our body's functions to breathe, feed, etc. until it is big and strong enough to carry out its vital functions on its own.

So let us raise our heads high and be proud of the fact that we are fighting for the rights of the unborn child and let no one try to belittle us into thinking that protecting a human's life is in any way passé, old-fashioned or narrow-minded thinking.

Doreen



Annual General Meeting

The National Council of Women of Malta recently held its annual general meeting on the 26 January 2008. The guest speaker at this event was Dr. Ann Fenech, head of the Marine Litigation Department at Fenech and Fenech Advocates and director of Fenlex Enterprises Ltd and Fenlex Corporate Services Ltd. Dr Fenech spoke about the obstacles women face in decision making positions. A number of resolutions were also approved during this meeting which will later be passed on to the government and diplomatic corp and relevant institutions. Amongst the issues dealt with by these resolutions are flexsecurity and the gender pay gap. The members also approved a motion to bestow honorary life membership on Mrs Wendy Richardson, NCW Great Britain member, for her services rendered to NCW Malta and to young Maltese musicians.



On this occasion, an election for a number of posts within the executive committee was also held. The new executive committee now consists of Ms. Doreen Micallef Dip MLS, B.Sc, AIMLS, PGCE President, Ms Doris Bingley, Honorary General Secretary, Ms Helga Ellul, MQR Mary Rose Zahra and Dr Mercedes Schembri Wismayer M.D. as vice presidents and Caroline Attard B.Pharm(Hons), MSc.(Cant.) as Hon Treasurer. The members of the executive committee are Grace Attard, Marie Therese Zammit, Maria Camilleri Dip. Social Work, Diane Xuereb B.Psych(Hons), Dip.HRM, Dip. Gestalt Psychotherapy, Maud Muscat M.Ed., B.A.(Youth & Comm. Stud.), Dip.Sc.Couns., PSE Cert., Ruth Falzon M.A., Marie Demicoli, Josephine Ann Sammut, Jeanette Farrugia. Dip. Agric. Maria Giuliana Fenech B.A. (Hons.) is editor of the newsletter 'Il-Mara' while Dr. Claudine Zarb B.A. LLD is the Council's legal advisor.

Standing Committees

Publicity

Doreen Micallef Dip MLS, B.Sc, AIMLS – President
Grace Attard - Communications
Maria Giuliana Fenech B.A (Hons) - Editor
Jutta Klotz - Member

Finance

Caroline Attard B.Pharm(Hons), MSc. – Hon Treasurer
Therese Cassola – Assistant Treasurer
Mary Rose Zahra - Membership
Marie Demicoli - Member

Legal

Claudine Zarb B.A, LLD – Legal Advisor
Doreen Micallef Dip MLS, B.Sc, AIMLS – President
Helga Ellul MQR – Vice-President
Doris Bingley – Hon General Secretary

Sectional Committees

Education Committee

Ruth Falzon M.A. Coordinator
Maud Muscat M.Ed., B.A. Convener
Mary Rose Zahra Rapporteur
M.Carmen Housley CCR Malta Union of Teachers

Health

Christine Spiteri Paris B.Pharm(Hons) Co-ordinator
Dr. M. Schembri Wismayer MD Convener
Nadya Anne Mangion Rapporteur
Maria Cutajar CCR Malta Union of Midwives and Nurses

Social Issues

Maria Camilleri Dip. Social Work Co-ordinator
Ingrid Azzopardi B.A.(Hons) Accty., F.I.A., C.P.A.A. Convener
Marie Therese Zammit Rapporteur
Jutta Klotz Public Relations
Marlene Ebejer CCR Girl Guides

Environment

Marie Demicoli Co-ordinator
Therese Cassola Convener
Helen Galea St-John Rapporteur
Blanche Martin MBE, MOM CCR Din L-Art Helwa

Young Professionals

Diane Xuereb B.Psych (Hons)
Maria Giuliana Fenech BA (Hons)
Elisabeth Zammit B. Educ.
Jeanette Farrugia Dip. Agric.
Rozlyn Scerri BA(Hons.) Int'l Rels, MA

BMV Music Committee

Helen Degabriele LRSM Co-ordinator
Corinne Briffa B.Pharm, LRSM Convener
Mary Farrugia LRSM Rapporteur
Cecilia Xuereb LP, LRSM Treasurer

NCW celebrates International Women's Day with the Theme: Intercultural Dialogue

On the occasion of International Women's Day 2008, the National Council of Women and its affiliated organisations, organised its traditional Mass celebrated by His Grace Archbishop Mgr. Paul Cremona at St Patrick's Church, Sliema


As 2008 is the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, NCW wants to raise awareness of the role of women in intercultural dialogue, as one of the most effective ways of bringing about peace and creating space for sharing and understanding our common goals.



Supporting this initiative was Mrs Mary Fenech Adami, wife of the President of Malta, who urged all participants to work towards bringing about peace in their daily commitments.

Also sharing with us this event were Maria Ida Bernardini Trabalza - the wife of H.E. the Italian Ambassador and Malgosia Korsun-Juszczak - the wife of the Australian High Commissioner who were joined by a number of female and male refugees, representatives of the Police Force, the Armed Forces of Malta and representatives of NCW affiliated organisations


The Archbishop gave a moving sermon and spoke of the unique qualities and talents of women, their strength in facing problems, the way they support and educate their children, as well as their love and care for their family and society. All people should promote respect and diversity and show their commitment to solidarity and social justice

After Mass, NCW President Doreen Micallef and the newly elected Executive Committee members had the opportunity to share ideas on the role of women in intercultural dialogue with the Archbishop and all the participants, auguring that International Women's Day 2008 will leave its mark of peace in all societies. 

Doris Bingley

A Unique experience for MCAST Students



On the occasion of the World Women's Day, Ms Meli Director of Community Services at MCAST, offered the NCW Social Issues Committee to identify a few women to whom the students can give their services of Hair and Beauty. With the help of the Emigrants Commission, the Social Issues Committee identified a few Eritrean women to benefit from this offer. This activity which was held on Wednesday 5th March 2008 at MCAST was very much appreciated by the participants. It also served as a learning experience for the MCAST students who had the opportunity to learn about African hair. NCW President Ms Doreen Micallef together with Maria Camilleri, Social Issues Committee co-ordinator took part in this initiative. 


Maria Camilleri NCW Social Issues Coordinator



Malta at the International Women's Day Concert at the Deutsche Bank in Berlin

On the occasion of the International Women's day on 8th March, the CAMERATA EUROPEA - an organisation bringing together renowned musicians from the EU to support cultural rapprochement and the integration of the European countries through the universal language of music, organised a concert with works by women composers at the head offices of the Deutsche Bank in Berlin. The Embassy of Malta in Berlin joined a number of European cultural institutes and cultural departments of the EU Embassies in Berlin in this event and mounted a stand where guests were invited before and after the concert to obtain information on women in Malta as well as on Malta in general. The National Council of Women in Malta supported the Embassy in this endeavour by providing information material on different aspects concerning women's life in Malta.



Malta's megalithic temple period and in particular two figurines of the so called 'Fat Lady' aroused the interest of guests attending. The Embassy of Malta, following the concert, distributed a mimosa from the Malta stand to the female audience. The Embassy also prepared and distributed an attractive brochure highlighting some of the outstanding women personalities making a name for Malta. These include Helga Ellul Chief Executive Officer of Playmobil Ltd., The Hon. Minister Dolores Cristina Minister for Education, Dr. Joanna Drake, Head of the EU Commission Representation in Malta, Dr. Ena Cremona a Judge at the European Court of First Instance and Soprano Lydia Caruana. 



Doreen Micallef
President

Meeting with Hon Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information

An NCW delegation led by President Doreen Micallef had its first meeting with Parliamentary Secretary Hon Chris Said, during which there was an indepth exchange of views on a wide range of issues.

The meeting discussed key elements of the resolutions that were approved during the NCW January AGM and which included: Flexicurity, Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value, Pregnancy and the Probation Period, Part-time Work, The Roadmap for Equality Pensions and the Aged amongst others.

Grace Attard pointed out that these areas are being studied at European level, including the European Economic and Social Committee which regularly submits its opinions to the EU Commission and Parliament

The discussion focused also on issues regarding demographic change, in particular care for the elderly in an ageing population. Measures to facilitate the entry and retaining of women in the labour market were also discussed highlighting the social and economic implications. NCW President spoke about the NCW Building as a Centre of Learning, providing courses that the Council finds out are mostly needed during its contacts with women from different backgrounds. Gen Secretary Doris Bingley spoke about the key role NCW played during the Euro Changeover preparation period. She also spoke about her work as a member of the Commonwealth Foundation Civil Society Advisor Committee and the work the group does for the Commonwealth



People's Forum, working on Governance and Democracy, Sustainable Development and Culture.

Addressing the situation of women in decision-making, one of NCW's priorities was also raised. We were pleased to note that Prime Minister Laurence Gonzi considers this matter as top priority.. NCW is aware of the challenges that Maltese society will be facing and therefore it is pro-actively gearing for the future and strengthening its resources. 🌸

THE MCESD AND CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT - NCW Proposals

The debate on the role of MCESD comes at a time when awareness of the role of civil society organisations is gathering momentum, not least through the recently enacted NGO legislation.

This is no mere coincidence - it is in fact a process that is evolving, a process of 'participative democracy' through which ordinary citizens, through the proper structures are able to exercise their right to be consulted on matters of national interest. Indeed it is EU membership that has made this citizen's right a reality.

NCW has noted that in the current debate, both employers and workers representatives not only acknowledge the contribution of civil society organisations but also agree that a reformed MCESD should include civil society representation working at national level.

NCW believes that Civil Society is an essential part of the MCESD. For years, NCW has been addressing government and past chairmen on this issue. The expertise in different areas of civil society organisations should not be wasted, nor should it be underestimated. At present, a number of national civil society organisations are relegated to a third-class Civil-Society sub-committee, where its voice is hardly ever listened to. There is also the need for a clear interpretation of the definition of 'civil society' that makes a distinction between non-governmental and

governmental organizations and that the MCESD law acknowledges this difference.



The weaknesses of the MCESD as it is today arise from lack of structures that provide for sub-group meetings of representatives from all groups specialized in the topic under discussion to study, debate and come up with a single document well ahead the MCESD meeting for all members. This will ensure that in the final phase of the MCESD meetings a single document is tabled, limiting the debate to areas of controversy only, if necessary. Whether government is represented or not should not be an issue, as long as measures are taken to ensure that the process of consultation remains unobstructed.

Bringing together a wide representation of the different sectors of our society in a consultation process that is shaped on EU principles and practices would indeed be a unique step forward in the course of our democratization and would make every individual proud that his/her opinion counts.

NCW believes that proposals being brought forward must be treated with foresight and evaluated not only in the interest of the sector which they represent, but in the overall interest of the country. 🌸

Grace Attard EESC representative





VISIT US AT HF80, INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, HAL FAR
FOR MORE INFO CONTACT US ON 22242445 OR VISIT
WWW.PLAYMOBILMALTA.COM

EU gender report finds women opting for low-paid sectors

While increasing numbers of women are working, they remain underrepresented in sectors considered crucial for economic development which are usually better remunerated, notes the Commission's annual report on equality between women and men.

"Overall, despite their better educational attainment, women's careers are shorter, slower and less well-paid: it is clear that we need to do more to make full use of the productive potential of the workforce," said Equal Opportunities Commissioner Vladimír Špidla as he presented the Commission's fifth annual report on gender equality on 23 January 2008.

The report, which is the first to cover the EU 27, shows that "major challenges remain" in particular to "boost the qualitative aspect of equality". This is despite a number of measures announced in the Commission's roadmap for equality between women and men and the European Council's pact for gender equality, which were implemented in 2007.

The report shows that the female employment rate has been steadily increasing since 2000 and that the unemployment rate for women has fallen to its lowest level for ten years. However, the pay gap, labour market segregation, and work/life balance are ongoing challenges that undermine the qualitative aspect of jobs, found the report.

Regarding the employment rate of women, significant differences exist at national level across the EU. In Malta, it was only 34.9% compared to more than 70% in Sweden and Denmark.

As for the pay gap, it has remained steady at 15% since 2003. The biggest differences are found in three of the newest EU member states

Estonia (25%), Cyprus and Slovakia, followed by Denmark, the UK, Finland and Austria (all 20% or more). The smallest differences were observed in Malta (3%), Belgium (7%) and Slovenia (8%).

The report also highlights that "women's participation in the labour market is still largely characterised by a high and increasing share of part-time work." In 2007, the share of women employees working part-time was 31.4% in the EU 27, while the corresponding figure for men was only 7.8%.

The fact that some member states face high segregation in occupations as well as sectoral segregation is considered a particular problem as well. "In consequence of segregated labour markets, there is an underrepresentation of women in sectors crucial for economic development and usually well remunerated. For example, only 29% of scientists and engineers in the EU are women."

Links: EU official documents

- Commission report: Equality between women and men - 2008 (23 January 2008)
- Commission press release: More women in work, but 'better' jobs needed too (23 January 2008)
- Commission: Gender Equality NGOs
- European Platform of Women Scientists: A Roadmap for equality between women and men 2006-2010: its implementation thus far with a special focus on women in science and research (27 November 2007)
- European Platform of Women Scientists: Is science the forgotten area of the EU's equal opportunities? 🌸

Interview: 'Positive discrimination' needed for female scientists

Europe should not shy away from positive discrimination as a way to promote women scientists as it will help tackle skills shortages in scientific disciplines, argues the author of a Parliament report on women in science adopted yesterday in an interview with EurActiv.

The European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality adopted a report on 14 April on the role of women in science. It draws attention to the current under-representation of female scientists, which is says is a waste of the potential of female science graduates.

Promoting women in science "is not just about a feminist quest for equality," said Danish Socialist MEP Britta Thomsen, the author of the report, in an interview with EurActiv.com. "It is fundamentally about European growth, innovation and competitiveness in the future," she added.

According to Thomsen, things "don't seem to be changing naturally" and thus measures should be taken at European and national level in order to bring an end to prevailing stereotypes preventing women from succeeding in scientific careers.

She believes the education system should do more to encourage

young girls to opt for scientific careers than is currently the case. In addition, special funding should be allocated to female scientists to enable them to pursue their careers. In her view, the use of role models and improved mentoring schemes may also attract more young women to study science (see EurActiv 10/03/08).

The report also recommends implementing gender mainstreaming in the EU and national programmes. She thinks that "all universities and research institutions need to realise that it is in their own best interest to develop gender strategies if they want to attract both female students and female employees".

Asked whether positive discrimination should be considered to promote women scientists, she said "we should not shy away" from it. "It shouldn't be an end in itself, but it is necessary to take measures that counteract the current systems and traditions, because these obviously in some way 'positively discriminate' men."

Indeed the report argues that in practice, "to be taken as an engineer is to look like an engineer, talk like an engineer, and act like an engineer". "In most workplaces this means looking, talking and acting male," it states. According to MEPs, such decisions clearly play a role in the decision-making process for recruitment or promotions. 🌸

Foundation Day Dinner 15 February 2008



Dismissal of pregnant women during the probation period

Negotiating EU legislation – and ensuring that people know what their rights and obligations are – is not a simple process, particularly for the individual citizen who may have the feeling that somehow, he may not have been accorded their full benefits. The European Commission Representation in Malta set up a service to help people with this, it started on 15 January 2008. Dr Drake knows that there are already a number of outlets for EU information, which normally provide information of a general nature. The Eurojus service, however, provides specific, personalised information.

This is a significant difference. The EuroJus service essentially provides legal advice on an individual's specific circumstances. The EC Representation has engaged the services of a lawyer who will be taking appointments with citizens who believe they are not reaping the benefits of their European rights or who are not sure of what they are. While the general principals of that right may be clear, it is not always clear how those rights (and obligations) are to be applied in the citizens specific circumstances – and how best to go about seeking redress.

The service is open to anyone residing in Malta, whether they are EU or Maltese citizens, or not. People will need to make an appointment with the EuroJus lawyer.

The reason is simple: the advice given is legal, and highly specific. The lawyer will need to prepare for the consultation. This makes it impractical for people to turn up on the doorstep. The lawyer will be available for two sessions weekly: on Tuesdays between 13:00 and 17:00 and Fridays from 09:00 to 13:00.

All people wanting to use the service will need to do is call us on the freephone number 800 73 177 or send an email to eurojus@waldonet.net.mt to fix an appointment. Questions can also be sent in writing, with the advice delivered by email.

This service provides advice, albeit legal advice only. It will not take legal proceedings on behalf of the people coming for advice. If some sort of legal action is required or appropriate, the individual should go to his lawyer, who will then be able to take all legal action necessary.

The EuroJus lawyer will be able to guide people not only on whether there is a European right or regulation governing a particular area, but also on the best course of action, the way forward in that specific case.

This – taken as aggregate data, not to violate the confidentiality of the advice given to individuals – will form the basis of a report Dr Drake's office will prepare. This does not mean the Representation will take the issue up and seek to pressure national governments to make changes; it will, however, give both the national governments and the European Commission itself a source of information to tap into.

Dismissal of pregnant women during the probation period

One of the most recent directives concerning gender discrimination at the work-place that is being discussed both at national and EU level is pregnancy during the probation period. (Council Directive 92/85/EEC). NCW has researched information regarding the EU directive to pave the way for its transposition in Maltese legislation. Commissioner Spidla responsible for Employment, Social Affairs and Gender Equality has made a commitment to see at what stages this directive is being implemented in all EU member states.

We are reproducing a more detailed information of this important

directive and its implications and recommendations by NCW

Article 10 point 1 of Council Directive 92/85/EEC on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding, establishes the general prohibition of dismissal of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding during the period from the beginning of their pregnancy to the end of the maternity leave, irrespective of the type or duration of the employment contract or relationship.

According to EU law (Council Directive 92/85/EEC) 'Member States shall take the necessary measures to prohibit the dismissal of workers, within the meaning of Article 2, during the period from the beginning of their pregnancy to the end of the maternity leave referred to in Article 8 (1), save in exceptional cases not connected with their condition which are permitted under national legislation and/or practice and, where applicable, provided that the competent authority has given its consent.'

Article 10 paragraph 1 provides for derogations in exceptional cases not connected with the condition of being pregnant, having recently given birth or breastfeeding. In such cases, a dismissal could be permitted under national law and/or practice if two conditions are met:

- the employer has to give substantiated grounds for her dismissal in writing and, if relevant,
- the competent authority must give its consent (cf. Article 10, points 1 and 2).

Council Directive 92/85/EEC is the tenth individual Directive within the meaning of Article 16 (1) of framework Directive 89/391/EEC. The concept of "worker" for the purpose of Council Directive 92/85/EEC is defined in Article 3 (a) of Council Directive 89/391/EEC as "any person employed by an employer, including trainees and apprentices but excluding domestic servants". The Commission therefore considers that Council Directive 92/85/EEC applies to pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding during probation periods.

However, Maltese law allows employers to legally dismiss workers during the probation period without assigning any reason at all, and this includes pregnant women during the probation period and therefore in cases which may be linked to their pregnancy and/or in cases which are not exceptional.

NCW recommends that Government and the Social Partners study the obligations of Council Directive 92/85/EEC to pave the way for its transposition into Maltese legislation and ensure that mechanisms for implementation are in place

NCW also recommends that the necessary legal amendments be made for the transposition of the above directive into the Employment and Industrial Legislation.

ACT (EIRA) and Equality between Women and Men Act as stipulated by the directive, and implementation measures to ensure de facto legal protection against dismissal of pregnant women during the period of probation 🌸

Grace Attard
EESC representative

1) Council Directive 92/85/EEC of 19 October 1992 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding, OJ L 348, 28.11.1992.

2) OJ L 348, 28.11.1992, p. 1.

3) Council Directive 89/391/EEC of 12 June 1989 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work, OJ L 183, 29.6.1989.

The Lisbon Treaty – Listening to the Voice of Civil Society

Seminar on The Lisbon Treaty – Seminar organised by the Forum of Civil Society Organizations, Malta

A seminar on the Reform Treaty under the title: *“The Lisbon Treaty – Listening to the Voice of Civil Society”* was organized by The Forum of Civil Society Organisations, Malta made up of eight Maltese NGOs representing consumers, the elderly, women, pensioners, the professions, youth, persons with disability and a group of NGOs from the island of Gozo.

The first part of the Seminar was introduced by chair, Benjamin Rizzo, President of the Forum. The keynote address was given by Hon. Michael Frendo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malta who traced the developments of the Reform (Lisbon) Treaty after the ‘no’ votes at the referendum for the Convention during which period the EU underwent a period of reflection.

This was followed by a presentation by Prof. Peter Xuereb, Lecturer in European and Comparative Law at the University of Malta on the theme: *“From a European Convention to the Reform Treaty”*. Staffan Nilsson, European

Economic and Social Committee (EESC) Group III (NGOs) President made a presentation focusing on *“The consultative role of civil society”* and presented the position of the EESC. During question time, issues raised concerned the role of the EU Parliament and National Parliaments. Comments on the need for the EU to give a voice to Civil Society and mobility of workers across the EU.

The second part of the seminar was a panel discussion on the *“Ongoing debate leading up to ratification: what challenges?”*, chaired by Group III member, **Grace Attard**, in which Staffan Nilsson EESC Group III President, two Maltese MEPs, Dr Simon Busuttill and Mr Louis Grech, tackled this topic with Rev. Prof. Peter Serracino Inglott, who had participated in the negotiations of the Convention. The speakers explained the enhanced role of the MEPs and of National Parliaments, the Citizen’s right of initiative and the importance of The Charter of Human Rights, in spite of the fact that it has been removed from the Reform Treaty.

In the general debate, the majority of comments from the floor concerned features of the Reform Treaty rather. A point was raised asking whether ratification should be only by Parliament, or should the citizens be consulted through a referendum. The Reform Treaty does not include any issues that were



not agreed upon in the EU Convention; on the contrary the debate and decision-making rights of the EU Parliament have been strengthened together with the consultative role of National Parliaments. It is the implementation of the Treaty that requires the participation of the citizens. The voice of civil society must be given its rightful space in a participative democracy.

Representatives of 8 umbrella organizations that belong to the Forum and members of the general public participated in the Seminar. Participants were given several documents with information about the EESC and a number of its opinions and the Robert Schuman Foundation document *“The Lisbon Treaty. 10 easy-to-read fact sheets”*. A number of participants had the opportunity to share their views with the EESC President of Group III and with the Maltese MEPs.

More information can be obtained from NCW Centre, Blata l-Bajda, on tel: 356 21 248881 or 356 21246982

Grace Attard
EESC Group III representative



Pan-Commonwealth civil society unites to mainstream disability

Following the 2007 Peoples’ Forum, the Commonwealth Foundation is bringing together civil society groups to mainstream disability.

Inter-governmental organisation, the Commonwealth Foundation, have responded to a call from 600 international civil society organisations to launch the first ever Commonwealth Disabled Peoples’ Forum.

The Commonwealth Disabled Peoples’ Forum launched with the convening of a disability briefing on March 17th 2008. The Forum follows the November 2007 meeting of 1,500 delegates from 59 countries at the Commonwealth’s Peoples’ Forum in Uganda. In its statement to Commonwealth Heads of Government, The People’s Forum called for an emphasis on mainstreaming disability and integrating disability issues in sustainable development strategies. It is the first time that civil society groups have used the Peoples’ Forum to bring

disability issues to heads of government.

The 2007 People’s Forum also called for ratification and implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2006; the first human rights treaty of the 21st Century aimed at giving greater rights and freedoms to disabled people around the world.

The briefing brought together representatives from all Commonwealth Foundation members to hear statements of disability groups from around the Commonwealth on the potential for inclusive policies within employment, independent living, family and other issues.

The creation of the Commonwealth Disabled Peoples’ Forum will provide potential for information and best practice sharing amongst Commonwealth organisations which

currently reflect diverse attitudes in policies to disability issues. The Forum will also provide an enabling platform for disability rights, with an emphasis on mainstreaming disability issues into other social, political and economic policies, allowing governments to focus on disability as a human rights, rather than a welfare issue.

“The launch of the Commonwealth Disabled People’s Forum is an excellent example of the potential for civil society to impact on government,” said Mark Collins, Director of the Commonwealth Foundation. “The creation of this Forum will, in turn, serve as an opportunity for governments to learn from civil society organisations about how best to implement modern thinking into disability issues, ensuring inclusion of disability rights in all wider government policy.”

For more information go to www.commonwealthfoundation.org

Commonwealth Week 2008

This year's Commonwealth theme was 'The Environment – our future'

On Monday March 10, the week started with a multi-faith observance at Westminster Abbey. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, who is Head of the Commonwealth, in her message said that all actions which help protect the environment can "have a real and positive effect on the lives of others."

The Queen also said that it is "important to remember that the environmental choices available in some countries may not be an option for others."

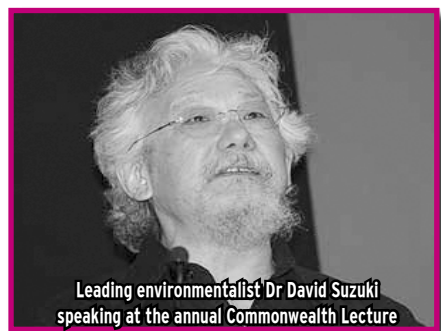
Her Majesty urged more support for young people, whom she described as both energetic and able to confront climate change. She added that governments, businesses, communities and individuals should each strive to "match words and good intentions with deeds."

"Whatever we do, wherever we live," said the Queen, "our actions in defence of the environment can have a real and positive effect upon the lives of others, today and into the future."

On 11 March, the Foundation, in partnership with the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Royal Commonwealth Society, organised a climate change briefing which was given by **Professor Mohan Munasinghe**, Vice-Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and co-recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize.

Professor Munasinghe spoke on making development more sustainable. He was optimistic and said that while the problems are serious, an effective response can be mounted to make development more sustainable, provided it is initiated immediately. He talked about the innovative sustainomics framework and practical applications that he believes in. He explained about the key elements and interconnections of the sustainable development triangle and encouraged everyone to start addressing the challenges ahead.

On Wednesday 12th March, **Dr David Suzuki** gave a demonstration of his compelling



oratory style at the 11th Commonwealth Lecture, organised by the Commonwealth Foundation.

Dr David Suzuki, Emeritus Professor in Sustainable Development, University of British Columbia and Co-Founder of the David Suzuki Foundation, is an award-winning scientist, environmentalist and broadcaster. Dr Suzuki said that the theme chosen by the Commonwealth: "Our Environment: our Future" is the most important issue of our time.

Dr Suzuki started the Lecture by urging people to consider the collective impact of 6.6 billion human beings living in one planet. Although every human being is created by the four elements – earth, air, fire and water – "we are failing to respond" to the damaging effects our actions are having on the environment, Dr David Suzuki has said.

He argued that these four elements need to be seen as "sacred substances" because "whatever we do to [them] we do to ourselves".

Speaking on the particular relevance for Commonwealth countries, Dr Suzuki said, "We need the perspective of many small island states in the Commonwealth. They are the canaries in the coal mine. I was there at Kyoto when the small island states pleaded, with no effect, for environmental redress." Dr Suzuki said developed countries need to lead by example.

Dr Suzuki said that as human beings we are created out of the elements of the earth. "We are in the environment. We are the environment. The crisis of the environment is a crisis of human beings."

"By continuing current living trends "we are using up the rightful legacy of our children and grandchildren," Dr Suzuki warned. It is essential, therefore, to look at "how we impact on the environment".

"What we eat, how we move and where we live" are three areas highlighted by Dr Suzuki which need to be assessed, so that this "rightful legacy" is not ignored.

The **Commonwealth Foundation** also hosted a joint seminar with the **Quebec Government in London** on engaging with cultural policy. The seminar, entitled *Sharing strengths: Commonwealth and Francophone engagement with the UNESCO Cultural Convention* marked a new relationship of Commonwealth-Francophone co-operation in the field of culture. This was very much a follow-up to the things we were talking about in the culture workshop at the CPF, which are reflected in the Kampala Statement.

Delegates represented a wide spectrum of those with an interest in the issues raised by the Convention, from cultural coalitions and other civil society organisations, to representatives of Commonwealth governments and senior delegates to UNESCO.

Commonwealth Countries were urged to ratify the UNESCO Convention. Malta has already done so.



Prof. Mohan Munasinghe, Vice-Chair of the IPCC and co-recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize 2007 after his lecture on Sustainable Development.

Apart from the meetings, the **Friends of the Commonwealth**, in association with the Foundation, brought together a wide range of events in the first Commonwealth Week Festival, which showcased the cultures of many different countries of the Commonwealth. Many took place in London and all the events and activities had a Commonwealth connection and all helped to demonstrate the rich and diverse cultural connection that extends throughout the Commonwealth today.

The last three days of Commonwealth week were dedicated to **Civil Society Advisory Committee (CSAC)** work. For three full days the committee met under the leadership of the elected Chair, Warren Nyamugasira from Uganda. During these few days, we presented regional reports, had talks on a range of ongoing Commonwealth Foundation activities related to sustainable development, culture, governance and democracy as well as an overview of the work related to youth, gender and trade done by the Commonwealth Secretariat. We discussed in detail some Commonwealth programmes, such as Civil Roads to Peace, Climate Change and ComHabitat, the Gender Plan of Action and CEDAW, Culture and Development Priorities and civil society involvement in different processes. We discussed the Vision and Strategy for the Commonwealth Foundation 2008-2012 with the title of "Civil Society: A Force for Transformation". We started the process of the Commonwealth People's Forum, with proposals for Trinidad and Tobago in 2009. All ideas will be developed further over the coming months.

The **Commonwealth Week** is an opportunity to promote understanding on global issues, international co-operation and the work of the Commonwealth, which aims to improve the lives of its 2 billion citizens.

It ended on Friday night with a colourful celebration in Marlborough House. Performers from the five regions entertained the guests with lovely music, exotic dancing and beautiful singing. Malta was represented by Ms. Degaetano a dancer with Esspressivita. 🌺

Doris Bingley - CSAC Member

Dr. Joanna Drake, Head of Representation, talks about EuroJus

Negotiating EU legislation – and ensuring that people know what their rights and obligations are – is not a simple process, particularly for the individual citizen who may have the feeling that somehow, he may not have been accorded their full benefits. The European Commission Representation in Malta set up a service to help people with this, it started on 15 January 2008. Dr Drake knows that there are already a number of outlets for EU information, which normally provide information of a general nature. The EuroJus service, however, provides specific, personalised information.

This is a significant difference. The EuroJus service essentially provides legal advice on an individual's specific circumstances. The EC Representation has engaged the services of a lawyer who will be taking appointments with citizens who believe they are not reaping the benefits of their European rights or who are not sure of what they are. While the general principals of that right may be clear, it is not always clear how those rights (and obligations) are to be applied in the citizens specific circumstances – and how best to go about seeking redress.

The service is open to anyone residing in Malta,

whether they are EU or Maltese citizens, or not. People will need to make an appointment with the EuroJus lawyer.

The reason is simple: the advice given is legal, and highly specific. The lawyer will need to prepare for the consultation. This makes it impractical for people to turn up on the doorstep. The lawyer will be available for two sessions weekly: on Tuesdays between 13:00 and 17:00 and Fridays from 09:00 to 13:00.

All people wanting to use the service will need to do is call us on the freephone number 800 73 177 or send an email to eurojus@waldonet.net.mt to fix an appointment. Questions can also be sent in writing, with the advice delivered by email.

This service provides advice, albeit legal advice only. It will not take legal proceedings on behalf of the people coming for advice. If some sort of legal action is required or appropriate, the individual should go to his lawyer, who will then be able to take all legal action necessary.

The EuroJus lawyer will be able to guide people not only on whether there is a European right or regulation governing a particular area, but also on the



best course of action, the way forward in that specific case.

This – taken as aggregate data, not to violate the confidentiality of the advice given to individuals – will form the basis of a report Dr Drake's office will prepare. This does not mean the Representation will take the issue up and seek to pressure national governments to make changes; it will, however, give both the national governments and the European Commission itself a source of information to tap into.

Sending a strong message against violence More action for less violence

Once a year on the 25 November, the silence surrounding domestic violence is broken, and for a few hours society wonders incomprehensively at this revolting phenomenon. Women, young people, children all over the world experience violence every day but not everyone talks about it

Statistics in Europe show that at least one in three women will be a victim of violence during their lifetime and 10 per cent will be victims of rape or attempted rape. According to UNIFEM, at least one out of very three women around the world has been beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused, with the abuser usually being someone known to her.

More women die from the consequences of violence than from cancer. Violence against women, children and young people has serious implications

for the health, development and private and work life of the victims. It entails lasting effects on all members of the family, in particular children who are witnesses of domestic violence

At EU level the fight against violence, trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation, forced marriages and stalking needs to continue. The Daphne III programme which has been for the third time overwhelmingly voted in favour on May 22 in the plenary session of the Parliament in Strasbourg addresses particularly vulnerable groups, women belonging to minority groups, female migrants, women in poverty living in rural or remote communities, women in institutions, women with disabilities and elderly women

In Malta the recently set up Commission for Domestic Violence together with the Domestic

Violence Unit of APPOGG are doing sterling work, however, more human and financial resources are required to focus more effectively on preventive measures backed by a National Interdepartmental Action Plan.

NCW believes that domestic violence and all other forms of violence are a societal and political issue and all society should be responsible to combat this phenomenon. We need more politicians to act and to voice their condemnation of violence. We need ongoing loud and visible education programmes and campaigns at all levels addressing potential perpetrators of violence. We need the timely intervention of a culturally trained Police Force and we need a more sensitised Judiciary so that criminal offences related to violence are punished severely. 🌸

Grace Attard - EESC representative

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN (Founded 1888)

PRESIDENTE Dr ANAMAH TAN [PPA(G), PBM, BBM, JP]
ICW-CIF Statement, Jakarta, Indonesia
Monday, 7 April 2008

The International Council of Women – Conseil International des Femmes (ICW-CIF) meeting at its Executive Committee in Jakarta, 4 to 7 April 2008, agreed that Governments are failing in their commitment through the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and other UN instruments to implement fully gender equality.

ICW-CIF demands that the culture of silence on all forms of violence against women and children be broken and more pressure be put on governments to stop trafficking of women and children. We demand that all Governments fully implement CEDAW and sign the Optional Protocol. ICW-

CIF urges all its national councils to support and promote the UN Secretary-General's special campaign to stop violence against women.

The Executive Committee heard with deep concern that there has been minimal progress on gender architecture reform at the United Nations. Further, the financing for gender issues is considered too limited to be effective and we call for the developed countries to meet their commitment of 0.7% GNP. Women's NGOs under the umbrella of ICW-CIF fully support the need for change. We urge the Secretary-General to act with utmost urgency to finalise a Resolution creating a new single entity for women to be brought before the General Assembly this year.

On the subject of Climate Change we recognise the powerful role of women as agents for change. It

was agreed that an ICW-CIF toolkit for community education should be developed. Carbon Credits gained through the efforts of women should be directed to fund gender equality programmes. We demand a greater number of women in decision and policy-making roles at all levels. Much wider consultation with women especially at the local community level was called for in the design of community rebuilding following natural disasters and conflict situations. We call for training in survival skills, gender analysis for all environmental policies, and development of early warning systems that address specific requirements for evacuation of women and children.

We encourage men at every level, community to global, to join with women to achieve full gender equality, as a pre-requisite for human rights and peace. 🌸

NCW Resolutions - January 2008

The National Council of Women in Conference assembled at its Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 26 January 2008 approved the following resolutions.

Notes with satisfaction measures taken by Government and relevant authorities in implementing a number of NCW recommendations and resolutions of the past years including:

- Enactment of legislation to strengthen the Voluntary Sector and the appointment of the first Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations
- Measures to strengthen benefits for part-timers
- The introduction of a register for part-timers
- Extending family friendly measures throughout the public sector
- Increasing financial assistance to families with more than one child
- Measures to assist young couples paying house loans
- The setting up of the Domestic Violence Commission
- Measures to strengthen the family unit

Reaffirms its policy as expressed in its resolutions and recommendations over the past years and urges the relevant authorities to take action on outstanding issues including:

- Setting up the necessary mechanism to implement the Principle of Equal Pay For Work of Equal Value according to the EIRA
- Measures to provide childcare facilities for the 5-14 age group
- Further measures for equal representation of men and women in decision-making posts
- Integrating young people in society and working life
- Addressing issues of children at risk
- The family and demographic change
- Provision for legislation to regulate temping agencies
- Priority to be given to the implementation of the National Breast Screening programme
- National Strategy for the early detection of domestic violence

1. Women in decision-making

The National Council of Women believes that achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making will provide a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society and is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning.

Addressing the issue of women's participation in decision-making is one of the six priorities of the EU Roadmap for Gender Equality 2006-2010. All member states are obliged to take the necessary measures to implement the Roadmap

NSO/NCW research clearly reveals that many women are not coming forward for top posts because of the difficulties in reconciling long hours of work and family responsibilities.

The study also reveals that both women and men fail to perceive that the relationship between a woman's life pattern and her gender is resulting in a negative impact on her career path choices.

NCW **recommends** that structural deficits be addressed across the board through the formulation of strategies to bring about changes in government policies, trade unions, political parties, and other institutions to ensure that opportunities for women in decision-making; the formulation of a national policy for a strategy and its implementation to bring about a cultural change that facilitates the entry of women in decision-making in economic, social and particularly in political positions at local and national level; that in the current revision of the National Curriculum and Lifelong Learning, concrete measures are taken to address gender stereotyping and to promote gender equality behaviour at the earliest stages of life, starting with the family; also recommends:

- that further positive action is taken in the field of equal treatment of men and women, as stated in EU directives
- to further strengthen family-friendly measures that address women's needs in particular, in political and management structures, which facilitate women's access to political decision-making roles,
- that in the spirit of democracy and equality of opportunity, in the planning phase of policies, the use of time is not built on men's norms
- that in local and national general elections, names of candidates on ballot sheets will be listed in alternate male/female order, whilst retaining alphabetical order
- that a University of Malta Diploma Course (or further) be set up to professionally prepare both men and women for political decision-making posts
- that in the revision of the National Curriculum, education, starting with the family, not only to change stereotyping but also as concrete measures to encourage gender equality behaviour at the earliest stages of life be given priority

2. Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value Background

Reducing the gender pay gap is one of the objectives of the European Strategy for Growth and Jobs. The gap between men's pay and women's pay is a major source of inequality between women and men. Whichever way you look at the data on pay, women's average earnings are lower than those of men: at the EU level, women are receiving only 73% of men's hourly earnings. Although there is much variation between countries in very few cases are average women's earnings more than 85% of men's and in no Member State over 90%.

Even after recalculating women's earnings to remove three major structural effects (age, occupation and economic activity of the employer), there still remains a difference of about 15% for the EU as a whole.

In addition, men are more likely than women to have jobs which include a range of fringe benefits. The most valuable of these is likely to be a pension. When this is taken into account the gap gets even wider. Low pay yields low Social Security benefits. The inequities of the workplace are perpetuated in retirement.

Women get paid less for many reasons: Jobs usually held by women pay less than jobs traditionally held by men—even if they require the same education, skills and responsibilities. Traditional women's work is usually undervalued. A central factor which has created unequal pay is the under-evaluation of women's skills – for example, (women's) caring skills are often given less value than (male) physical strengths.

In context of the above, NCW aware that member states are obliged to ensure that equal pay is implemented. "Each member state shall ensure that the principle of equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value is applied" (EC Treaty Article 141) (For the purpose of EC Treaty Article 141 (in force since 1999) 'pay' means **'the ordinary basic or minimum wage or salary and any other consideration, whether in cash or in kind, which the worker receives directly or indirectly, in respect of his employment, from his employer'**) **recommends that** government adopts (affirmative) positive action (measures) to eliminate gender discrimination and to eliminate labour market segregation; job classification schemes include effective measures to ensure the elimination of gender discrimination; that social partners are encouraged to adopt equality measures to ensure equal pay for work of equal value; that **trade unions have a key role** to play

in this process so that the gender pay gap is central to collective bargaining and negotiations and to ensure that unjustified pay differentials are revealed, corrected and prevented as research indicates that the presence of women in collective bargaining has a positive effect on gender mainstreaming; more women are encouraged to be involved in the negotiating process

NCW aware that the role of Employers is essential and facts about the gender pay gap become available also at company level where negotiations on pay take place

NCW recommends that employers conduct pay audits to identify the problems and then develop and implement the appropriate solutions; pay systems are simple, transparent and easy to understand to send a positive message to the workforce about the value an organisation puts on its staff; employers ensure that the skills, experience and potential of all staff are rewarded fairly, thereby increasing the organisation's morale, efficiency, productivity and competitiveness.

European Court of Justice (ECJ)

NCW aware that developments in legislation have resulted from ECJ Case Law, **recommends that** ECJ cases of 'equal work' and indirect discrimination, in particular in part-time work be consulted and the necessary amendments be made both in the Industrial Relations Act and in the Gender Equality Act; the application of affirmative (positive) action in addressing equality issues should be on the basis of criteria that do not to discriminate against female candidates, and therefore not based on a male norm

NCW aware that addressing indirect discrimination is not easy as it is disguised and usually addresses groups of employees and not individuals, **recommends that** the definition of indirect discrimination of Directive 96/80/EG (article 2) be interpreted according to ECJ case law, **also recommends that** the criteria should include: transparent and verifiable pay systems; objective criteria related to the nature of the work in question and reflecting the nature of the job and not the person; criteria "for which female employees could be particularly suited" must also be taken into account. (ECJ) Under certain circumstances, this includes necessary non-professional qualifications, psychosocial requirements and demands, as well as communication skills, team work ability, working under time pressure and responsibility for personnel. The set of criteria must be drawn up and implemented free of gender discrimination

Transparency in job classification systems with criteria that focus on: part-time work, new work organization, access to education and vocational training, IT training, working time directive is recommended.

Statistics on Wages

NCW aware that wage discrimination is an invisible, hidden and complex problem that requires new initiatives and innovative thinking in many different areas **recommends** changes of various kinds in data collection and in statistics on wages so as to make information on gender pay differences a more adequate basis for decisions.

3. Flexicurity

The role of the social partners and collective bargaining

One of the priority themes items of the outgoing Portuguese Presidency is **flexicurity** (balancing flexibility and security). Member States were invited by the Commission to pursue, in accordance with their individual labour market situations, reforms in labour market and social policies under an integrated flexicurity approach reflected in the New Employment Guidelines (December 2007).

Strengthening industrial relations systems is essential for any discussion on flexicurity. A strong and vital social dialogue where the social partners actively participate and are able to negotiate, influence and take responsibility for the definition and components of flexicurity and evaluation of its outcomes is a key element

NCW recommends that in the current debate on flexicurity, a balance between flexibility and worker protection be pursued; that this be guaranteed through regulations established by collective bargaining, in line with national practices; a solid context of rights, well-functioning social institutions and employment-friendly social security systems to back it up.

To better create a win-win situation, the National Council of Women

also recommends that the flexicurity debate should focus more on:

a. **The dimension of internal flexibility** can play a key role in advancing productivity, innovation and competitiveness, and can thus contribute to reaching the goals of the Lisbon strategy and it can also play a major part in allowing workers to better combine work with other activities and responsibilities and to improve the quality of their employment.

b. **Labour market flexibility and security** affect men and women in different ways. Women often work in more precarious and insecure jobs characterised by excessive flexibility, therefore there is the need to ensure that the risk of precarious and insecure jobs is offset by an adequate form of security.

c. **Intergenerational solidarity and flexicurity:** As well as a gender dimension, flexicurity also has a generational dimension. Therefore there is also the need to ensure that

the needs of older workers are addressed in the debate on flexicurity. There is also the need to address the needs of young people who face an uncertain labour market with high unemployment, fixed term contracts, insufficient social security coverage and work below their qualification level.

d. **SMEs and flexicuity:** Flexicurity is of particular importance to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the light of their significance in employment terms. Therefore policies in relation to flexicurity, will have to contain provisions safeguarding the needs of SMEs and their employees.

e. **Working time flexibility:** Working time flexibility needs be established by collective agreements and by law over a longer time period, by making use of overtime, the flexible scheduling of working hours over predefined time frames, shift work, etc. In this way working time flexibility can strengthen productivity and competitiveness whilst ensuring that employees' protection is taken into account which can otherwise lead to bad working conditions or precarious employment, or even having harmful effects on the quality of goods and the provision of services to consumers

NCW affirms that a stable framework for social dialogue and collective bargaining provides opportunities for strong social partners to agree on key issues relating to the labour market and **therefore recommends** strengthening collective bargaining and social dialogue as instruments to regulate and reform labour markets, within the context of legal regulations that ensure work and health protection and that provide stability and security to workers. A welfare state able to guarantee high levels of social protection, the assumption of responsibility by adequately funded public services, and a stable legal framework for collective bargaining and social dialogue. General welfare systems that can improve mobility by ensuring that workers do not lose out when they are confronted with changes affecting their workplace are recommended.

4. 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 pro rata **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 Government needs to ensure that part-time and term-time workers are not forced to register as self employed or freelance workers.

- Following the setting up of a register for part-time work, ETC is embarking on, provision should be made to ensure criteria of the system will facilitate access to employment and entitlement to training courses.
- 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 ETC Hal Far Head Office or Valletta ETC Centres can provide a more user-friendly environment and easier access (less travelling and travelling 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

5. Legal framework for temping agencies

NCW aware that so far there is no Community legal framework to regulate Temping Agency workers and aware that as a result, this form of work can create situations of abuse and risk for workers, that temping work is another means of further increasing female participation in the labour market, and that a legal framework to regulate Temping Agency workers is of benefit to both employers and employees as all stand to gain from legal certainty, recommends that Government through the MCESD ensures that social partners speed up reaching an agreement through social dialogue

6. Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men 2006-2010

NCW aware of the priorities of the EU Commission's Communication

'Roadmap for Equality between women and men 2006-2010' urges the National Commission for Equality (NCPE) in its initiatives, to give priority to the Commission Roadmap, in particular as 2008 will be an appropriate time for the mid-term report of action taken in the following areas:

1. Achieving Equal Economic Independence for Women and Men

- Reaching the Lisbon employment target
- Eliminating the gender pay gap
- Women entrepreneurs
- Gender equality in social protection and the fight against poverty
- Recognising the gender dimension in health
- Combating multiple discrimination in particular against immigrant and ethnic minority women

2. Enhancing Reconciliation of Work, Private and Family Life

- Flexible working arrangements for both women and men
- Increasing care services
- Better reconciliation policies for both men and women

3. Promoting Equal Participation of Women and Men in decision making

- women's participation in politics
- women in economic decision-making
- women in science and technology

4. Eradicating Gender based Violence and Trafficking

- eradicating gender-based violence
- elimination of trafficking in human beings

5. Eliminating Gender Stereotypes in Society

- elimination of gender stereotypes in education, training and culture
- elimination of gender stereotypes in the labour market
- elimination of gender stereotypes in the media

6. Promoting Gender equality outside the EU

- enforcement of EU legislation in acceding, candidate and potential candidate countries
- promotion of gender equality in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), external and development policies

8. Pensions

Pensions and the Aged

Act XXI of the Civil Code, 1870:9) generated changes in the reciprocal duties of spouses stating that "The Law promotes the unity and stability of the family... The spouses shall have equal rights and shall assume equal responsibilities during marriage. They owe each other fidelity and moral and material support"

NCW aware that in today's continuously evolving society a large percentage of couples in their old age effectively administer the pension to ensure an adequate standard of living for both, but there are many elderly women who have never been in employment and therefore have not been in a position to pay National

Insurance contributions and are not in a position to claim pensions entitlement, should the male spouse refuse to share in the administration of it and deprives the female spouse of her share, aware that pension cheques are addressed to the individual who pays National Insurance contributions according to part V of the Social Security Act (Chapter 318) which clearly states that the pension is a property of those who have paid the proper rate of contribution under this Act (Article 52), aware that the 'feminisation of poverty' is a growing concern among the 21st century Maltese housewives who end up living their old days deprived from the basic needs. Even though these women are repeatedly denied a share of the pension, they are not ready to take their marriage to court after so many years, aware also that according to the latest NSO statistics with regards 'Poverty and Social Inequality' standards in Malta – 51.1% of those living below the at-risk-of-poverty line were females, especially those aged above sixty.

Recommends that Pension Sharing should be legally considered in those cases where women declare that they are being deprived of a good standard of living in their old-age, due to lack of income sharing, similar to the way in which pension cheques are divided under court ordinance in cases of separation or when one of the spouses enters a retirement home, also recommends that the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity (MFSS) creates a platform where the aforementioned 'abused' dependent women can voice their concerns, and be able to claim a percentage share of the pension with the necessary mechanisms, criteria and professional human resources. Also recommends that in instances where the woman is living temporarily with her children or any other relative or friend, the two cheques: worked out on a definite outlined ratio of the pensionable income, will be sent separately to both addresses. Whereas, if the spouses are still living under the same roof, the Board may decide to have the cheques deposited directly into two separate bank accounts but above all recommends that a study be carried out on whether the current percentage being deducted for institutionalisation be revised

8. School absenteeism

In 2005 the Ministry for Education, Youth and Employment has published a report called "School Attendance Improvement" which was carried out by a taskforce made up of 5 persons.

According to this report, school absenteeism is a phenomenon with far reaching consequences impacting on a variety of social actors ranging from the children who are absenting, to their families, their schools and communities, the criminal justice system, social work agencies, social service organisations and the economy.

Non attendance is associated with low status occupations, less stable career patterns,

and more unemployment in adulthood, criminal behaviour and substance abuse.

NCW **aware** that regular attendance is an important factor in school success and that students often leave education early and are more likely to become long term unemployed, homeless, caught in the poverty trap, dependent on welfare and involved in the justice system (House of representatives 1996:3). **Aware** that there are several factors that lead to school absenteeism and that according to numerous studies, family and personal difficulties can contribute to non-attendance and dropping out of schools and that unemployment, low income and dependency on welfare, affect the family's ability to provide sufficient support to encourage a student to stay at school, Also **aware** that frequently reported causes of non-attendance are the result of parents asking their children to stay home, that many times Maltese parents present medical certificates to cover for any type of authorised absence from school and that unfortunately, some medical practitioners are unethical in their practice, since some medical certificates issued by them are not justified, and **aware** of 'The United Nations' Convention of the Rights of Children that 'sets out the rights that must be realized for children to develop their full potential, live free from hunger and want, neglect and abuse',

recommends the setting up of a Board of practitioners who will investigate such cases which should be detected by the schools as early as possible that the fines ordered by the Court be such as to be a deterrent and that a Board be set up to ensure payment of these fines **and also recommends** the setting up of a warden system to ensure that any enforcement is carried out by them, allowing the social workers within the School Social Work Service to focus on supporting the families of absentee students in addressing those factors within the family that may be enabling absenteeism as recommended in the "School Attendance Improvement" report

9. 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 but NCW notes with concern that the traditional family is facing many challenges without having the adequate tools to survive, **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
- Sessions offered to include skills regarding personal development, building relationships, conflict management and problem solving, sharing of responsibilities and financial planning among others in preparation for marriage

- More effective value-based sex education programme in schools to help young people develop responsible behaviour

Also recommends that couples opting for a civil marriage are offered pre marriage preparatory courses by Government similar to the couples married in Church.

Such initiatives can act as preventive measures and therefore reduce the negative social and spiritual effects resulting in the deterioration of the social fabric of the Maltese society

10. Sex Education

Sex education is basically a parental responsibility which should progress with the child's growth till adolescents. Clear explanations should be given to both sexes highlighting the responsibility attached to sexual activity such as unplanned pregnancy and the risk of transmitted diseases that can result from a single sexual encounter.

Furthermore, schools in collaboration with parents have an obligation to provide sex education that reflects the needs of youth in to-day's world.

NCW **aware** that as future mothers and fathers, young women and men are educators of the next generation **also aware** of initiatives taken by the Education Department to assist pregnant schoolgirls

and that adjusting to parenthood at such an early age and at the same time trying to live the life of an adolescent without renouncing on studies in preparation for their future is very difficult.

concerned with the increasing number of teenage mothers (under 16), (68 babies born to teenage mothers in the first three months of 2007) and that teenage pregnancies and births can have serious physical and emotional consequences both for the mother and for the child.

concerned with issues concerning the responsibilities of the father of the child that are often complicated

and **concerned** with the increase in violence in relationships including among adolescent

recommends that Government provide more effective values-based sex education programmes in schools for boys and girls while highlighting the importance of moral, health and social aspects and responsible behaviour

also recommends that schools second parental responsibility and assist with the provision of sex education programmes specifically for parents **and that** Government and the Community exercise their duty to ensure that the local media, including films with pornographic material and permissive television programmes are not allowed to instigate pre-mature sexual activity among youth.

NCW **recommends** the setting up of adequate Media Education at all levels of education to help young people develop skills that challenge the media and Internet messages, that are portraying sex in a distorted manner

NCW **calls** on the Commissioner for Children to give priority to the issues that our young people are facing in their daily life, to ensure that they can make mature and responsible choices in particular in emotionally laden situations

11. Regulating the Counselling Profession

NCW notes that clients, both adults and children, in need of counselling are in a vulnerable situation in their life and they require adequate protection through the assurance that counselling professionals are warranted

NCW **therefore recommends** that the Maltese Association for the Counselling Profession be designated as the responsible body; the setting up of a Board of Ethics for professionals working as Counsellors **and** that criteria will be established for the warranting process

12. Environment & Sustainable Development

The topic of Climate Change has dominated the news for the last number of months especially following the increase in whether changes, floods and other catastrophic events. The issue for a country's carbon footprint has been a discussed issue even in Malta and several proposals have been forwarded to the authorities in order to start taking measures to minimize the damages caused by carbon dioxide emissions. Some of these measures are already being implemented albeit on a voluntary basis.

NCW recommends

- Extensive use of solar water heaters and rebates by the government to encourage their use
- MEPA to 'impose' on issuing a building permit, that a percentage of the estimated energy consumption be generated by alternative energy
- Rebates by the government on the purchase and installation of solar panels, wind turbines and other alternative energy production projects
- The removal of older more polluting cars, with the government offering the owner the exemption of the registration and import tax on a new less polluting car, which would be approved by ADT
- Street lighting to have solar panels
- Education campaign through the media informing people about the incentives being offered and most importantly what each household would be saving in monetary terms.

DIARY OF EVENTS

January 2008

- 7 Azzjoni Nazzjonali meeting at NCW
- 8 Fondazzjoni Temi Zammit meeting at Ir Razzett Hursun UOM
- 8 Presentation of Certificates at NCW by the Prime Minister of Malta
- 9 MLP Reception
- 9 Gender and the Law at KSU Vodafone Room
- 12 Invitation to a concert at MCC on the occasion of Malta's membership into the Euro Zone
- 14-17 Training Courses to access EU funds
- 15 ICT training programme train the trainer course targeting over 60s
- 16 Making your way through the EU Funding Maze
- 16 EDRC seminar on the Reform Treaty
- 16 Ramblers Association meeting with NCW
- 17 Executive Committee Meeting
- 19 Forum of Civil Society Organisations Malta conference on "The Lisbon Treaty"
- 22 La Messe sur le Monde at St. John Co-Cathedral
- 25 Inauguration of the Play area at NCW
- 26 Annual General Meeting at the Victoria Hotel
- 27 MLP Gheluq tal-Konferenza Generali
- 28 Series of Lectures on Current Issues organised by the EU Representation Office
- 31 MOSAIC Project concluding meeting at NCPE
- 31 Information Meeting organised by MAWB

February 2008

- 5 NCPE and MEA seminar on Diversity Management at the Pheonicia Hotel
- 6 Business Breakfast mill Patit Nazzjonalista
- 8 Riceviment bhala turija ta' rekonnoxximent ghas-sehem tieghek fil-bidla mill-munita Maltija ghall-munita Euro mill Prim Ministru go Kastilja
- 12 WIIS conference on Women's rights in the wider Mediterranean

Region

- 15 Foundation Day Dinner
- 13 Launch of ETC's Register for Part-Time workers
- Forum FME "Reflecting on the Future of the EU Understanding the Implication of the Reform Treaty"
- 15 ETC Youth Employment Strategy Consultation Forum
- 15 Seminar Women's Rights in the Mediterranean organised by MEDAC Ghall-Gid tal-Familji Maltin - Konferenza
- 18 Launching of SmartWomen project at the Hilton
- 20 4th Anniversary conference by NCPE
- 18 EU Funding Training course at BOV Centre
- 21 Monitoring Committee Meeting
- 27 Ms Cummings Political Officer at the American Embassy meets Doreen Micallef, Grace Attard and Doris Bingley at NCW
- 28 Seminar Ghaqda Nisa Giljanizi "Kuntent Bil-Hajja"

March 2008

- 3 International Women's Day His Grace the Archbishop celebrates Mass at St. Patrick's Church Sliema for NCW Members and friends
- 4 WIIS Women's Participants in Public Life at the University of Malta
- 5 MFSS seminar 'Orizzonti Doda g'Dall-Mara Maltija' at UOM. Grace Attard represented NCW as one of the speakers
- 10-14 Commonwealth Week
- 12 Passover Meal at NCW Centre
- 14 Political Dialogue through Art
- 18 Half Day of Reflection at NCW Centre
- 18 Training Session of the Project ESF Affirming Gender Mainstreaming
- 26 Meeting with His Grace the Archbishop Paul Cremona
- 28 Executive Committee Meeting
- 29 FTZ meeting on Immigration

New Members

The following ladies have been approved membership to the NCW:
 Francesca Aquilina - Birkirkara; Jane Axisa - Qormi;
 Ilona Borg Carbott - Sliema; Lilian Abela - Balzan;
 Mary Rose Busietta - Sliema; Josephine Dalli - Fgura;
 Patricia Falzon - Attard; Thelma Gera - Birkirkara;
 Cettina Scicluna - Ghasaq; Mariosa Vella Cardona M'Jur LLD - Attard

New Life Members:

Doreen Micallef Dip MLS, BSc, MIBMS, PGCE; Sylvia Borg; Marie Demicoli;

New Affiliated Organisation

Ramblers Association of Malta

Easter Celebrations at NCW



NCW President with Fr. Albert Guscheri during the Passover Meal



Obituary - Cettina Cardona



On the 12th of December 2008 our friend Cettina Cardona passed away. She had been a life member of the National Council of Women for many years. She was a staunch supporter and rarely missed a discussion, seminar or conference. She was also generous with her expertise on aspects of the family and education. She had an enquiring mind and thoroughly enjoyed the activities organised by the University of the Third Age (U3E)

Cettina was a paragon of sound Catholic principles at their most humane - an exemplary wife, mother and friend - a woman of spirit, good humour and warmth who cherished every achievement of the members of her family.

We know that at this difficult time her son and daughters will be sustained by their memories of a loving mother. They can find comfort in the knowledge that she lived a good, full life. Farewell Cettina and may you rest in peace.

Obituary - Jessie Sant

The National Council of Women would like to convey its deepest sympathy to the Ladies Cultural Circle Paola on the demise of Ms Jessie Sant. Ms Sant has been on NCW Central committee for a number of years. She was a well known philanthropist and a great friend of NCW. May the Lord comfort her family and friends during this sad moment.



FORTHCOMING EVENTS

ECO CAFÉ AT NCW ON 28TH MAY 2008

The Environment Committee within the National Council of Women will be holding a ECO CAFÉ at the National Council of Women Centre Blata l-Bajda on Wednesday 28th May 2008 at 5.30pm. The programme will include informal talks by members of the environment committee on practical gardening in general, demonstrations on how to plant cuttings, transplanting and care of indoor plants, flower arranging etc. Entrance Fee 3 Euro Refreshments will be served.

For info and booking contact the office. Tel: 21248881 / Fax: 21246982 Email: ncwmalta@camline.net.mt

FAMILY VISIT TO ZEJTUN

The Education and Culture Committee will be organising a visit to Zejtun on Saturday 17th May 2008 at 16.00hrs. The tour courtesy of the Zejtun Local Council will include a visit to St. Gregory's church, Gnien San Girgor and Gnien tal-Kmandant, a visit to Zejtun Local Council offices and a 30 minutes Zejtun heritage walk. We will have Light Refreshments at the Pandora. Price 6 Euro. Transport from various pick-up points starting at 15.00hrs. at an extra charge.

Smart Women

Microsoft Malta Ltd. in collaboration with the Ministry for Investment, Industry and Information Technology together with the National Council of Women launched The Smart Women programme at the Hilton Malta on Monday 18th February. The programme will provide free training in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) at different levels and is offering free courses tailored to encourage women to participate in the ICT world. During the launching NCW President Doreen Micallef said this initiative would help fulfill a number of the Council's objectives which include the integration of women in the labour market. This would then lead to economic growth for the whole country. "Nowadays digital literacy is important even if women decide to stay at home or if they have to stay home. It helps facilitate their life through, for example, online shopping and helps them keep in contact with what's happening out there," she said. The programme leads to Microsoft Certification. The courses will include a basic computer course and three streams of specialisation in the business, development and technical areas.



HSBC 
The world's local bank