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U-Mara

Newsletter of the National Council of Women - Malta



NCW President Mary Gaerty during the NCW visit to St Vincent de Paul

Foundation Day Dinner - NCW President Mary Gaerty with Mrs Catherine Gonzi, Prof. Irene Sciriha and Dr. Mercedes S. Wismayer



The New Executive Committee for 2012

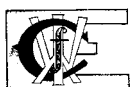
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NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN - MALTA

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Editor's Note

Dear Reader,

After a long hard winter, I am sure you all join me in welcoming the beautiful days of spring. As we all start changing our wardrobes for a fresh start, perhaps it would be the prime time to spring-clean our internal wardrobe as well.

Let's reflect on the past few months and ready ourselves for a new season. Is there an area in your life you feel uneasy about? This would be the ideal time to speak about it with someone and act upon it.

In this issue we learn about both national and European initiatives where our Executive Members did just that: they got up and spoke



about something they felt uneasy about.

Do you feel that you need to get your voice heard? We would love to hear your comments. Send me an email on editor.il-mara@gmail.com

Have a remarkable spring,
Maria Stivala

President's Message



Dear ladies,

It's been nearly three months that I have now been your president. I have said recently that I had a baptism of fire as I was thrown in the number of activities that are synonymous with International Women's day. This year as in other years our participation was varied. On Women's day, a number of us visited St Vincent De Paule Residence where we met ladies whom few people visit and are considered as

vulnerable, with later visiting other ladies with whom we chatted. All these ladies were once active and are now resting after a life of work. This event reminded me of this year's theme, Intergenerational Solidarity, how important it is that people of all ages meet, as all can contribute and gain from such meetings.

As the year advances we are once again faced with the possibility of further financial crisis in Europe. The situation does not look as bleak as it did in the last two years, especially after the recent bail out of Greece. Other countries such as Italy and Portugal seem to be recovering. We augur well to all countries that Europe will once again stand tall. I believe that we create our own problems, take manufacturing for example, this has been transferred to China and India and other countries poorer than Europe.

This is beneficial in itself as all people deserve to have a good

standard of living, but it has left Europe struggling as we now purchase cheaper products from these countries and at the same time purchasing products that are not manufactured according to laws that are the norm for European industries. We have read this week that in Malta the minimum wage should be €180 per week, an increase of no less than 13 % on the present minimum wage. One has to wait and see how this develops.

During the mass that was celebrated on Sunday 11th March at St Patrick's Church Sliema, for the occasion of Women's day, one of the distinguished guests asked me amongst other questions, if we have women of different religions as members and if the tie with the Roman Catholic Church could deter other women from becoming members. This question took me slightly by surprise as all are considered equal and one cannot discriminate. My

answer was simply, we are Maltese. This brings me to another topic - the family and the importance of both parents to be present for their children. The new parental leave for adoptive parents, which will be discussed in the coming weeks will no doubt create a great deal of discussions

The NCW Flagship project is nearly finalised. This has been a great success and you will read more about it in this newsletter as well as in the future ones.

I thank you all for participating in the events that were organised and I urge you to continue doing so in the future. We must all work to keep the Council alive and bubbling. I thank you for your support and please do come forward if there is anything that you feel should be discussed.

Mary Gaerty

Annual General Meeting

NCW AGM 2012 highlights quota systems for women in Local Councils and General Elections

The Annual General Meeting of the National Council of Women was held on Saturday 21 January, 2012 at the Palace Hotel, Sliema. Outgoing president, Grace Attard spoke about the evolvement of NCW over the years, including crucial developments which NCW has been quick to respond to. NCW has been addressing gender equality areas that are becoming more relevant to our society today, both at national and EU in the fast changing scenario that we are living in - women in science and research, women's role in the financial crisis, women entrepreneurs, youth and domestic violence, the follow-up to the extension of maternity leave, the EU Years for Volunteering and Active Ageing and many others. Grace Attard thanked all the Executive Committee members and NCW members who worked with her throughout her term of office as a team, without which NCW cannot move strongly ahead in its vision for a better society.

In its resolution, the AGM Assembly highlighted the importance of quota systems in forthcoming Local Council and General Elections urging political parties to rethink their strategies and adopt action plans for recruiting an equal number of women & men making party politics more inclusive. The principle of capitalising on the potential of all individuals (over 50% women) in decision-making should be the foundation for any democratic decisions to be taken in the immediate future. NCW urges political parties is

to introduce more concrete measures (quota systems) such as the zipper system, on ballot sheets, alternating women and men throughout the list, to ensure a mass of at least 30% participation of women, as required to be realistically effective in the decision making process of our political system..

Due to the short time available for elections, Government and political parties should immediately reach agreement within their decision-making internal structures and make public the measures they are to take to comply with the above recommendations for elections 2012-2013. Political Parties and Government need to study and explain clearly what gender quota measures are, as misconceptions in society give the impression that meritocracy is not a priority.

In her message to the Assembly, incoming President Mary Gaerty made an emphasis on Intergenerational solidarity and the importance that people of all ages meet, share experiences, knowledge and skills. The Council, she said can be a showcase of this solidarity where women of all ages can contribute and gain from one another. She also asked all members for their support and participation to keep up the important work that the Council has been doing since its inception. Touching on the subject of entrepreneurship, the president emphasised the need to assist women, especially those self employed.

The General Assembly discussed and approved a number of resolutions, dealing with Engaging Youths in the

Elimination of Domestic Violence, Women's Representation in Local Councils and Parliament; Oocyte Vitrification as an alternative to Embryo Freezing during IVF Treatment; Proper Designated Space in the Breast Clinic at Mater Dei Hospital; an Adequate Prosthesis Fitting Room; Follow-up to the Extension of Maternity Leave; the 2012 EU Year for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity; Addressing Alcohol Consumption during Pregnancy; NCF - Lejn Edukazzjoni ta' Kwalita' ghal Kulhadd and Improving Measures regarding Refugee Status to Asylum

The Assembly approved Honorary Presidency on Dr Mercedes Schembri Wismayer MD for her pioneering work in gender equality in particular in the field of medicine and health and Honorary Life Membership on Dr Irene Sciriha for her outstanding contribution in the field of research and science, in particular as Maltese female representative on the Helsinki Group

The Executive Committee Members for 2012 are President Mary Gaerty, Vice Presidents Grace Attard MQR, Pauline Azzopardi, Nadyanne Mangion Hon. General Secretary Doris Bingley, Hon. Treasurer Therese Cassola.

Members: Roselyn Knight, Evelyn Vella Brincat, Maria Stivala, Judith Debono, Doreen Micallef, Priscilla Muscat, Diane Xuereb, Mary Rose Zahra, Helga Ellul MQR and Dr Claudine Zarb, NCW Legal Advisor

Mary Gaerty
President NCW

Foundation Day Dinner



The Foundation Day Dinner was held on Thursday 1st March at The Terrace Restaurant of the Westin Dragonara Resort St. Julians. On this occasion Honorary Life

Presidency was bestowed on Dr. Mercedes Schembri Wismayer for her outstanding contribution to the Council as former President and long-time Coordinator of the Health Committee and for her active role in promoting women's well-being and healthy lifestyles for young people. She has been a role model in balancing family life and career, while keeping in touch with developments in the medical field in exercising her medical profession. Also during the evening, Honorary Life Membership was bestowed on Prof. Irene Sciriha for her outstanding contribution

to science teaching and research, both nationally and internationally, particularly in promoting the role of women in research and in attracting students to research in mathematics and related scientific areas.

Mrs Catherine Gonzi spouse of the Prime Minister Dr. Lawrence Gonzi was also guest of honour. It was a lovely gala dinner and everyone enjoyed the evening. The wine was sponsored by Farsons Group.

Marie Demicoli
NCW Office Secretary.

NCW Message for International Women's Day 8 March 2012

The National Council of Women strongly believes that more women in political decision-making posts is key to adequately dealing with economic, social, legal and political issues related to lack of gender equality. In its message for International Women's Day 2012 and in view of the forthcoming General Elections, NCW Malta urges political parties to rethink their strategies and adopt action plans for recruiting an equal number of women & men as candidates for 'winnable seats' and in general, for making party politics more inclusive.

NCW acknowledges the steps that have been taken by political parties over the recent years to improve the participation of women in decision-making with an increase, albeit small, of a number of women in their decision-making structures. However NCW is concerned that these steps have resulted in very little change in the top political positions.

Capitalising on the potential of all individuals (over 50% women) in decision-making should be the foundation for any decisions to be taken in the immediate future. NCW urges political parties to immediately introduce more concrete measures to ensure a mass of at least 30% participation of women, as required to be realistically effective in the decision making process of our political system. Structured



consultation with NCPE and NGOs working in the field of gender equality should be a priority. While NCW urges more women to come forward it will be launching a campaign to support women candidates standing for general elections.

NCW urges Government to bring before the House of Representatives the relevant debate to reach agreement on how to establish a 40% quota for both sexes as minimum requirement for General Elections 2012-2013. Political Parties and Government need to study and explain clearly what gender quotas measures are, as misconceptions in society give the impression that meritocracy is not a priority. Other measures, include the zipper system, alternating women and men throughout the list or 40% of each sex and alternation by sex on the first half of the list should be introduced.

Explicit rules about the

implementation of gender quotas such as rank-ordering rules, legal sanctions for non-compliance (legislated quotas) and a 'contract' with the local party organisations (voluntary party quotas) are needed in the short to medium term

Due to the short time available for elections, Government and political parties should immediately reach agreement within their internal decision-making structures on measures they are to take to comply with the above recommendations for elections 2012-2013 and to make them public as part of their campaign.

Finally, the incoming new government should ensure prioritising measures to be put in place to address issues regarding the lack of women in decision-making by submitting relevant legislation and the implementation of innovative measures on the agenda for a serious debate in the House of Representatives for a National Action Plan to be drawn up to include concrete plans towards reaching equality in decision-making in all areas: political, economic and legal spheres at different levels.

Grace Attard,
NCW Vice President

Women's Day Celebrations



*Homily by Rev. Father Joe Cini
11 March 2012 – (John 2:13-25)*

We have listened to the Word of God. In the first reading from the Book of Exodus, we read how God wanted his people Israel to relate to him and to one another. All instructions are contained in a nutshell: the 10 Commandments. In the Gospel, then, taken from St. John's, we see Jesus scandalised at the way the sacred area of the Temple in Jerusalem is used: it has been turned into a market place. Like the desert (Lent week 1) and the mountain (week 2), the Temple is a place of special encounter with God. But today we do not see the glorious face of Jesus; we see his angry face. Jesus is not happy with what he sees precisely because of the way the Temple worship has been organised no longer reflects God's original idea of a worshipping community.

I want to share with you some thoughts that arise from these 2 readings which the Church gives us for our spiritual nourishment today.

1: In the Old Testament and in the story of the people of Israel, God's chosen people, the privileged place of God's presence was the Temple in Jerusalem. He is the "beloved of the Father" and the Spirit of God

dwells in him. This is the symbolism of the action of Jesus in the Temple: same as that temple would be destroyed, so would his body be crucified; but while the temple would remain in ruins, He would be raised from death, newer than before. And from this moment onwards, our

contact with God will not be any more in the Temple, but in the Person of Jesus Christ. Here we make a first personal reflection and ask: how has Jesus helped our relationship with God? By teaching us to call God, Father; by showing him as merciful and forgiving; by teaching us to pray to him with trust. For this let us give thanks.

2: St. Paul teaches us that our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. And we have been taught also that as Church, we are the Body of Christ. We are told how to relate to God and to others, in view of this, let us ask ourselves: when have we been particularly aware of the sacredness of people (ourselves or others)? When have we felt 'brother or sister' to others? Was it perhaps when we ourselves were treated with kindness and respect?

3: There are many ways in which people, the temples of God, are being profaned today. Every person is, potentially, a child of God. Yet we know that many are having their dignity as human person violated every day. AND who are the people seeking to cleanse the temple, by promoting respect for the dignity of every human person? They are those agencies and organisations, local or international, ecclesiastical or

lay, governmental or civil, who fight for and struggle to promote dignity and basic human rights for all. Certainly the National Council of Women is engaged in this. A word of encouragement to them.

4: We may also think of institutions as in some way temples of God's presence. In this time when Celebration of Women's day by NCW aspects of our institutions are crumbling we can perhaps identify with the Jews who were horrified at the suggestion that the Temple would be destroyed. Look at the classical and basic institution of 'family'. One third of our families in Malta are in an irregular situation: separations, children out of wedlock, cohabitation. Let us look at the woman, created by God equal to man, created from man's rib so as to be loved and not exploited or demeaned: how many women, all over the world, are still being used, abused, enslaved, underpaid, unconsidered?

Conclusion: This year, 2012, the UN theme for International Women's Day is Empower Women –End Hunger and Poverty. In many countries, women are still underrated, not trusted, not educated, not empowered. International Women's Day is an occasion to draw attention to this plight, as well as to honor and praise women who have achieved. So I take this opportunity also to praise the National Council of Women of Malta who every year organise activities to mark this special day and draw the attention of our Maltese society to the state in which women find themselves. I thank them for their work, and also for having chosen St. Patrick's, this year, to have here their annual Holy Mass, and I wish them every success in their endeavours.



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Dementia and its Impact

The NCW Health Committee presented a talk on Dementia and Its Impact by Dr. Carmelo Aquilina Senior Lecturer University of Sydney and Director of Specialist Mental Health Services for Older People on Tuesday 13th March 2012 at the National Council of Women Centre Mountbatten Street Blata L-Bajda.

This talk was very well attended with some 50 members and friends present. Dr Aquilina particularly wanted to be present at NCW and give this talk as he said that the incidence of the disease is higher in women than in men. This could be attributed to the higher longevity of women and the hormonal changes that occur in women as they approach menopause and beyond. Furthermore he stated that women are also affected indirectly as they are the main care-givers of persons suffering from the disease.

Dementia is a word for a group of symptoms caused by disorders that affect the brain. Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia. Dr Aquilina emphasised that having trouble with memory does not mean you have Alzheimer's. Many health issues can cause problems with memory and thinking. If dementia-like symptoms are caused by treatable conditions such as depression, drug interactions, thyroid problems, excess use of alcohol or



certain vitamin deficiencies — they may be reversed. He also stated that the onset of Alzheimer's cannot as yet be stopped or reversed, however an early diagnosis allows persons with dementia and their families to plan for the future and participate in decisions about care, financial and legal matters in time; lessen anxieties caused by unknown problems; get a better chance of benefiting from treatment and have time to develop a relationship with doctors and care-givers.

Persons suffering from this disease lose one ability after another. Providing care for a person with Alzheimer's disease is sometimes described as the reverse of raising a child – the patient undergoes a process where cognitive and physical regression will ultimately require 24 hour care. Although medical advances can slow early stage decline, Alzheimer's remains

a terminal disease if the onset is early. Placing patients in an institution is not always the answer to problems arising. Patients benefit greatly if they remain in an environment that is familiar, surrounded by loved ones.

The demographic projections for Malta estimate that by 2060 16.5% of the population will be made up of men and women with an expectation of life at birth of 85.5 and 89.6 years for males and females respectively. Dr Aquilina ended by stating that it is financially wiser to invest in education programmes for care-givers rather than to build institutions and homes to house these patients.

The National Council of Women Malta would like to heartily thank Dr Aquilina for his time, energy and enthusiasm. A follow-up talk on how to retard the onset of dementia and Alzheimer's is being planned, details of which will be communicated in the coming months.

Useful links:

<http://www.maltadementiasociety.org.mt>; <http://alzheimers.org.uk>; <http://www.alzheimer.ca/en>; http://www.alz.org/alzheimers_disease_facts_and_figures.asp;

**Nadya Anne Mangion,
NCW Health Committee
Coordinator**

AMIE Project Update



On the eve of Women's Day 7th March 2012 three AMIE ambassadors Miriam Duca, Jeanette Borg, Sandra Zammit together with Nadya Anne Mangion and Ruth Gatt participated in a Ranger Guides meeting at the

35th Attard Group headquarters. The three ambassadors spoke of their experiences on how they started their business enterprise after a brief introduction by Nadya Mangion. She stated that most youths of their age consider pop stars and sports personalities as role models. So how is it that we rarely hear of entrepreneurs as role models? She pointed out that Steve Jobs was an entrepreneur – an excellent role model to look up to.

Although the number of girls was small due to the fact that it was the time of school exams on the island; the girls were very enthusiastic about the event. The

three ambassadors were bombarded with questions regarding market research and business plans, how to choose what type of business to set up and information about how to finance one's enterprise.

Overall it was a very positive experience and quite rewarding when we heard that the dream of two of the girls present was to start their own business enterprise one day. This encourages us to continue targeting girls of this age in the hope that the female entrepreneur sector will become stronger in the near future.

Proposed Resolutions from NCW

Engaging Youths in the elimination of Domestic Violence adopted by the Assembly at the NCW AGM 2012

Justification

Domestic violence causes serious physical and psychological harm to victims and in extreme cases may also lead to the loss of life. The effect is even more drastic when the victim is a child or a youth. Since at this age they would still be developing emotionally and formulating their perception of the relationships and of the environment. Youths who experience domestic violence are especially vulnerable and have an independent right to help and protection. Many of these youths suffer serious distress which is likely to impinge on several aspects of their life including their academic performance, relationships with peers and friends as they become socially withdrawn, problematic relationships with partners and also more engagement in negative health habits such as smoking, alcohol and drug abuse and eating problems.

In addition current research has revealed that an estimated one fifth to one third of teenagers witnessing domestic violent situations experience teen dating violence, regularly abusing or being abused by their partners verbally, mentally, emotionally, sexually and/or physically. 30 to 50% of dating relationships can exhibit the same cycle of escalating violence in their marital relationships. Through improved prevention, more detection, more rapid reaction and better rehabilitation, we will promote a safer and healthy society.

Recommendations

More emphasis should be placed on targeting youths through the

implementation of a National Action Plan which targets the problem of domestic violence amongst youths holistically by working on:

- More emphasis on prevention and early intervention measures:

This can be done through the adoption of educational campaigns that provide more adequate and effective education on the risk factors and the early signs of domestic violence in relationships of teenagers and young couples, in schools at secondary and tertiary level. In this way, more emphasis would be placed on prevention and early intervention of the early signs of domestic violence, both if these predispose the youth to become a victim or an abuser.

- Working on Positive Campaigns transmitting a sense of hope:

1) When targeting potential victims campaigns should generate hope and empower them to work on themselves to help them to regain the trust in themselves and in others so as to be able to engage in healthy relationships

2) When targeting potential perpetrators, campaigns should be empathic rather than judgmental and directing them to professional services that can help them to work on themselves and past traumas so as to be able to engage in healthy relationships

- More training to professionals working closely with youths:

1) Training professionals on the early signs of

domestic violence including behavioural, emotional and physical signs, as well as on potential risk factors which are likely to evoke episodes of violence in the future

- 2) Training professionals as to how to direct the youths to the professional assistance required.

- 3) Facilitating networking amongst key professionals involved; teachers, doctors, psychologists, social workers, priests, members of the police force and local agencies

- Strengthening assistance to victims and their family:

More support should be provided to the relatives of the victims, since most of the times the children of the victim and the perpetrator require a lot of support and psychological assistance to prevent them from engaging in abusive relationships or adopting aggressive and abusive behaviours with their future partners.

- Generating a sense of corporate responsibility amongst youths:

Friends and colleagues should also be involved in the action against domestic violence, since youths tend to open up and to seek initial help from friends. Therefore the campaigns shouldn't only address victims or perpetrators but also provide skills to youths who might be in contact with potential victims or perpetrators. In this way youths will also be included as catalysts in this fight against domestic violence.



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EU Flagship Project European Year for Volunteering 2011

On 24th February 2011, NCW organized the 4th Meeting on the theme 'Strengthening and Encouraging Volunteering'. This seminar was held at NCW premises. Participants were welcomed by President Mary Gaerty. Please note that a full report can be found on our website, and if you wish further information about any presentations do not hesitate to contact us.

Domestic Violence Commission – Ms Joanna Xuereb

Joanna Xuereb explained A professional and effective set up for NGOs is needed. Volunteers need to dedicate their time, which may be limited, and at the same time they need to be trained to be able to contribute effectively. NGO's need ample resources to sustain themselves, yet many times it all starts with having an idea and plenty of enthusiasm.

Kunsill Nazzjonali Zagħżagh – Ms Isabelle Camilleri

Isabelle explained that KNZ is an umbrella organization for 50 organisations that cover many spheres of life including youth, sports etc. The scope of KNZ is to give youths a voice on different topics such as policy making. A key activity of KNZ is the organization of youths' parliament that gives youths the opportunity to research current topics and present them in parliament for discussion. Isabelle mentioned that meeting new people and learning about different cultures is one of the perks of volunteering.

Nature Trust – Mr. Vince Attard

Vince explained that he has been a volunteer since 1976. According to Vince there are 5 types of volunteers: supporting members, occasional members, committed volunteers, very committed volunteers and finally very dedicated volunteers

In view of his extensive experience in volunteering, Vince provided a number of useful guidelines such as integration, identification of promising members and mentoring

National Council of Women – Ms Doris Bingley

Doris gave out a presentation of the origins of NCW Malta and how it contributes to the betterment of society through the 33 affiliated organizations. The executive committee of NCW consists of sixteen volunteers, six of which are the officers. The Council is run by this Committee.

Doris pointed out that volunteering is important for Society whether it is at individual, organizational and societal level. Volunteering is for the benefit of others, it is unpaid and done freely without any obligation. Volunteering contributes to the improvement of the different aspects of society, involving empowerment of citizens; raising awareness to their rights and works

towards social inclusion.

She said that NCW works towards a common understanding of "quality volunteering". It aims to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the committees in ensuring quality volunteering experiences; Identify and disseminate good practice in this field to all our affiliated organisations; Collect concerns in terms of legal barriers and bottlenecks that result in limiting volunteering and Advocate for recommendations for improvement of the status of volunteers. Volunteering is part of citizenship. Investing in volunteering contributes to the shaping of a strong cohesive society and also contributes to the social, economic and environmental causes.

Discussion points:

Following the presentations of the panel members, participants were given the opportunity to provide their feedback. The following points were mentioned: to push community work, also amongst students, change image with employers and also how some believe volunteering is a way of giving back to society.

**Diane Xuereb, Rapporteur
Doris Bingley Hon. Gen. Secr.**



NCW - EU Flagship Project European Year for Volunteering 2011 Engaging and Strengthening Volunteering - The Way Forward

Volunteering is a strong manifestation of the greatest universal values such as respect, tolerance, charity, altruism and commitment, which should be channelled from generation to generation. These values are today threatened by increased materialism and a 'want it now' culture. Volunteering plays a vital role in developing a sustainable and effective civil society. It can be argued that a strong civil society is also a sign of a strong democratic society. As such, a vibrant volunteering sector can contribute to a vibrant democracy.

On Friday 9th March 2012 the final conference of the project, following a year long set of activities promoting and studying volunteering in Malta, was held at the Westin Dragonara Resort St. Julians. The project's lead partner was the National Council of Women of Malta and the project was supported by the European Commission.

The objectives of this project were to *mainly encourage and support* — notably through the exchange of experience and good practices — the efforts of all Maltese voluntary organisations and individuals to create the conditions for civil society conducive to volunteering in Malta and to increase the visibility of voluntary activities in Malta, in conjunction with the Commission and Council for the Voluntary Sector of Malta; to *work towards an enabling environment for volunteering in Malta* in order to anchor volunteering as part of promoting civic participation and people-to-people activities in an EU context and address existing obstacles to voluntary activities, where appropriate and necessary; to *empower organisers of voluntary activities to improve the quality of voluntary activities* in order to facilitate voluntary activities and help organisers to implement new types of voluntary activities and to

encourage networking, mobility, cooperation and synergies within civil society and between civil society and other sectors and to *recognise voluntary activities* in order to encourage appropriate incentives for individuals, companies and volunteer-development organisations and gain recognition for volunteering at Government level by policy makers, civil society organisations, public institutions, the formal and non-formal education sector and employers for skills and competences developed through volunteering and to *raise awareness of the value and importance of volunteering* in order to raise general awareness of the importance of volunteering as an expression of civic participation to create harmonious societal development and social cohesion.

In this regard throughout the past year ongoing work was carried out led by the lead partner of the project National Council of Women on the exchange of experience and good practice in the sector. Four well attended meetings were carried out to promulgate discussion and formulate opinions. The meetings highlighted interaction between volunteers and society in active citizenship and the creation of improved structures; thematic workshops incorporating various sectors including mental health, environment, youth, children elderly, band club associations, health care services, Caritas and prison inmates, refugees and sports. The work involved vox pops, interviews, questionnaires for organisations, active volunteers as well as the general public and creation of thematic videos. The project aimed to attract and reach a vast cross sector of society. A toolkit aimed at 13-18 year olds and the elderly will be distributed in the coming month to raise awareness within these particular age groups of the important role they can play and their valid contribution as well as promoting intergenerational volunteering.

A part of the project consisted of undertaking of studies and research and dissemination of their results. A research study is presently being concluded and the results will be presented at the final conference. This study aimed to discuss an overview of existing structures in Malta, research any and all studies carried out relating to Malta to date in this context and incorporate EU statistics and research studies and compare and contrast policies; including corporate initiatives and the private sector as a contributor towards this sector whose economic value is often under rated but which is considerable. It sought to centralise all information existing possible about this sector. In practice it spoke to various stake holders within the sector being authorities and policy makers as well as people working in the sector as management, service providers and also service users, active volunteers and the public at random. The results show a very active NGO sector which is made up of very committed and passionate individuals who firmly believe in a cause. It also highlights the great needs that are absent in this sector and the void that needs to be addressed in the realm of frame working and resources as well as legal structures. The results will be disseminated to the media later on by means of articles and further dissemination.

All this with the aim of creating more active citizenship within the context of solidarity and altruism and the creation of an all encompassing and caring society whilst recognising the personal growth and fulfilment that accompanies an act of volunteering.

NCW was supported by partner organizations Nature Trust, Commission for Domestic Violence and National Youth Council in this project.

Women's representation in Local Councils and Parliament adopted at the NCW AGM 2012-04-11

Background

In Malta women are still under represented in political decision making assemblies. With the forthcoming Local Council elections and later General Election, NCW Malta urges political parties to rethink their strategies and adopt action plans for recruiting an equal number of women & men as candidates for 'winnable seats' and in general, for making party politics more inclusive.

Recommendations

- NCW welcomes the steps taken by political parties to improve the participation of women in decision-making with an increase, albeit small, of a number of women in their decision-making structures.
- The principle of capitalising on the potential of all individuals (over 50% women) in decision-making should be the foundation for any decisions to be taken in the immediate future
- The next steps to be taken by political parties is to introduce more concrete measures to ensure a mass of at least 30% participation of women, as required to be realistically effective in the decision making process of our political system
- Structured consultation with NCPE and NGOs working in the field of gender equality should be ongoing
- Government should establish a 40% *quota* for both sexes as minimum requirement for Local Councils and General Elections 2012-2013.
- Due to the short time available for elections, Government and political parties should immediately reach agreement within their decision-making internal structures and make public the measures they are to take to comply with the above recommendations for elections 2012-2013
- Political Parties and Government need to study and explain clearly what gender *quotas* measures are, as misconceptions in society give the impression that meritocracy is not a priority
- Other measures, include the zipper system, alternating women and men throughout the list or 40% of each sex and alternation by sex on the first half of the list should be introduced
- Explicit rules about the implementation of gender quotas such as rank-ordering rules, legal sanctions for non-compliance (legislated quotas) and a 'contract' with the local party organisations (voluntary party quotas) are needed in the short to medium term
- Finally the incoming new government should ensure prioritising the issue of women in decision-making both legally and through innovative measures by placing this issue on the agenda for a serious debate in the House of Representatives resulting in a National Action Plan to include decision-making in all areas: political, economic and legal spheres at different levels

NCW Position on Alternatives to IVF Treatment

The National Council of Women has been following developments, particularly in the Parliamentary Social Issues Committee, regarding proposals for legislation on IVF treatment. NCW is aware that the general public is not adequately informed of the legal, ethical and scientific implications of Embryo Freezing, due also to the lack of balanced information (often manipulative) in the Media. NCW has been searching for scientific initiatives for pro-life alternatives, that would not be tantamount to destroying life and we are sure that the Council is not the only organisation. With regards to moral objections, although as NCW members we all have our own personal positions, we

believe that it is the prerogative of the Church Authorities to explain and instruct on moral implications.

Consequently, at its AGM January 2012, the National Council of Women approved a resolution on Oocyte Vitrification (egg preservation) as an alternative to Embryo Freezing, during IVF treatment, giving also background information to sustain its position. It is a fact that fertility declines with age. Women's fertility peaks when the women are in their early twenties. Statistics today, however, show that many women are postponing their pregnancies until much later due to a number of reasons. This is contributing to many women having problems

in conceiving and looking for help later on in life.

Oocyte Vitrification (egg preservation) is a method of 'freezing' a woman's eggs as part of the IVF procedure. Cryopreservation is a process which involves a flash-freezing process of eggs (oocytes) without the formation of ice-crystals within the cells. The eggs are extracted, frozen and stored. Later, when the woman is ready to become pregnant, the eggs can be thawed, fertilized, and transferred to the uterus as embryos. This technique can be availed of by women who have certain serious health issues as well as women who make particular life choices.

There are a number

of justifications on which the Council based its recommendations.

- Oocyte vitrification has achieved the same pregnancy results as using frozen embryos.
- Oocyte cryopreservation, avoids having several excess embryos through the selection of the optimal eggs and the insemination of only a few avoiding the ethical problems associated with surplus embryos.
- Women with fertility problems do not need to be “dangerously” hyper-stimulated several times.
- Young cancer patients, undergoing chemotherapy that can destroy their eggs, can have a chance to get pregnant later in life by having their eggs cryopreserved.
- The preservation of the female egg, instead of the embryo, considered to be the first cell of a human being – eliminates legal and ethical problems of ownership. The female gamete (oocyte) belongs to the female, as opposed to the embryo, which belongs to both partners. The ethical, religious and moral issues involved during the process

of embryo freezing which no court is comfortable with when deciding on the matter of frozen embryo ownership; are eliminated when oocyte vitrification is opted for. Complex problems due to the negative aspects of embryo freezing of a legal nature result when split couples enter into acrimonious battles over ownership of the embryo.

NCW would like to put forward the following considerations as approved at the NCW AGM 2012:

- a) Working protocol: Good results depend on excellent standards, including the training of embryologists and doctors, and the use of top-quality materials, to select the best oocytes instead of embryos. Any sort of experimental approach should be avoided and local embryologists and doctors must be well trained in the procedures involved.
- b) Politicians and the general public must be educated on fertility issues. Educational campaigns involving the dissemination of information regarding protection of fertility, and options to treat fertility including

oocyte vitrification in the IVF technique are strongly advised.

- c) The education of citizens on how to use and protect their fertility should also focus on how mothers/guardians should look after their daughter's fertility from a young age, e.g.: taking them for check-ups, proper methods of personal hygiene, etc. This can be supplemented by educational material to be distributed and discussed during PSD lessons in schools.
- d) General Practitioners need to be regularly updated on fertility issues including prevention but also regarding pathologies that cause damage to the human reproductive system.

NCW calls on the relevant authorities to respect the rights of taxpayers' moral, legal and ethical objections who will, after all, will be paying for future relevant services and which therefore constitutes an obligation on the part of law makers when decisions are being taken in Parliament

**NCW Vice-President
Grace Attard**

European Initiatives

Malta Press Conference on Citizens Initiative

15 March 2012
Ewropa House, Valletta

The Malta Conference was a joint initiative organised by the MCESD Civil Society Committee and the Maltese EESC Delegation to find out how the European Citizens' Initiative can be implemented and why it is a useful instrument that will serve as a link with citizens of all EU member states and to create awareness of this important instrument so that every European citizen will be in a position to make use of it.

From 1st April 2012, European

citizens will enjoy a new right, which will give them a stronger voice in EU affairs when the

European Citizens' Initiative enters into force. From that moment on, citizens will be able to express their demands in a new, unprecedented way. By collecting one million signatures across Europe, they

can call upon the European Commission to propose or change European legislation. In this way,





citizens can push a question onto the EU agenda and thus become an active player on the European scene.

The recent years have witnessed a build-up during which the EU Commission together with the EESC have established the EU Year against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2010, The EU Year on Volunteering 2011, the current EU Year on Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity 2012 and not less important the forthcoming EU Year of European Citizenship 2013.

For many years, The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) has played an active part in the development of

participatory democracy both in its initiatives for member states and also in its external relations policies. The EESC has an active role as a bridge between the EU Institutions and the Citizens to ensure that the necessary instruments and mechanisms are in place to implement participative democracy.

Participants were welcomed by Ms Grace Attard, EESC Civil Society Representative and Mr. Ryan Mercieca, President MCESD Civil Society. The opening speech - Giving visibility to Civil Society in Malta - a process of increased participation was delivered by Hon Dr Chris Said, Minister for Justice, Dialogue and the

Family. An audiovisual message was transmitted by the EESC Vice-President, Communication Ms Anna Maria Darmanin. Mr Christian Weger, Relations with Civil Society, Constitutional Affairs, EESC made a detailed presentation on the guide to the implementation of the Citizens Initiative - the role of the EU. Mr Martin Bugelli, Head EU Commission Representation in Malta spoke about the role of the EU Commission. Mr Joe Sciberras Malta EU Action and Steering Committee, MEUSAC, traced the development of Maltese Civil Society in the EU Consultation Process. The role of the European Parliament was presented by Mr Massimo Farrugia, Acting Head European Parliament Office, Malta Comments from the floor focused on the need for education on EU issues for children and young people in schools. The Institutions must work together where more discussion on EU matters is allowed more frequently.

There was a general agreement on the importance of networking so that proposals are jointly recommended to the Commission.

**Grace Attard,
EESC member
Varied Interests Group**

Trafficking of women for Sexual Exploitation ...time to take stock!

The recent case of a man charged with trafficking for sexual exploitation has given visibility to human rights crimes that for the past 10 years have been given little or no attention by the authorities. As far back as 2006, the National Council of Women worked with the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs to take steps to review national legislation in order to separate what we term as 'traditional' prostitution from 'trafficking of women for 'sexual exploitation' or 'sexual favours''. Women

who come to Malta mostly from Russia and Eastern European countries are not prostitutes. They are often enticed by the myth that in Western Europe there is a better life. Coming from a life of poverty and no opportunities for employment, often they are offered the choice to work in the entertainment business.

The disillusion sets in when it is too late, when they start working and find that they get are gradually forced into providing sexual favours with a very small share of the earnings. They

often end up as 'slaves' losing their freedom, sometimes not even allowed to leave the place of accommodation provided for them. Visa permits which expire after six months are taken from them. In fact these activities are part of a vast ring of organised crime including drug trafficking where Mediterranean and eastern Mediterranean countries are used for these illicit activities – and this makes it easier to get rid of them without leaving any traces.

Stronger measure to address the issue in Malta: The Palermo Protocol

In 2007, NCW called for stronger measures to address these issues in a more comprehensive manner with the Office of the Attorney General and the Malta Police Force to review and propose reforms on current procedures concerning the identification of victims of human trafficking, before the initiation of prosecution proceedings.

Despite the existence of a number of instruments to combat the exploitation of persons, especially women and children, a universal instrument that addresses all aspects of trafficking in persons was needed. Its aim is to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons especially women and children. The Palermo Protocol as it is more commonly known, supplements the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime.

The UN Trafficking Protocol

entered into force on 25 December 2003. By 2006 the protocol had been signed by 117 states, and ratified by 110 states, which was followed by the Council of Europe Convention.

The United Nations Palermo Protocol, which Malta has signed and ratified clearly states that 'Trafficking in Persons means the "recruitment, transfer, harbouring of receipt of persons by means of threat, use of force, or other forms of coercion, fraud, deception, abuse of power or of vulnerability or of giving or receiving payments of benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation".

Concrete action to address the issue at EU level has been of concern both to the European Parliament and to the Commission. On the 14th of

December, 2010 the European Commission appointed Ms Myria Vassiliadou to serve as Anti-Trafficking Coordinator.

The establishment of an Anti Trafficking Coordinator provides for an overall strategic and policy orientation in the field of trafficking in human beings, to improve coordination and coherence between EU institutions and agencies as well as with Member States and international actors. The Anti-Trafficking Coordinator is contributing to the elaboration of existing and new EU policies relevant to the fight against trafficking in human beings, in particular in relation to third countries. By bringing together prevention, law enforcement, and victim protection, she will ensure that all appropriate means for EU action against trafficking are adequately used and mobilized.

Meeting with Group of Experts on Action Against Trafficking

At the end of February, (coinciding with the recent case of trafficking) NCW together with Human Rights organisations met a Group of Experts on Action Against trafficking of Human Beings (GRETA) who were in Malta monitoring the local situation to evaluate the situation of member states who have signed and ratified the CoE Convention. The meeting served to raise a number of issues that need urgent attention. As a member of the European Network Against trafficking in Women for Sexual Exploitation (ENATW) from Hungary, France, Greece, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden and Italy, the Council has been following court cases which include both crimes: trafficking and sexual exploitation which are treated separately according to national law and in which often the alleged criminal is sentenced for sexual exploitation

resulting in penalties that do not reflect the seriousness of the crime. Alleged cases of trafficking of human beings have always eluded justice - in one particular case as a result of the prosecutor by mistake!! quoting the wrong letter of the relevant article referring to trafficking of goods instead trafficking of human beings - charges were dropped. Other Russian women victims involved in this particular case remain till this very day unaccounted for. NCW has tried several times to encourage witnesses to come forward for a meeting with journalists, however they refused at the last minute out of fear.

This case is a breakthrough as, so far no individuals have been charged of human trafficking for sexual exploitation, whether because of lack of adequate law enforcement or supposed lack of evidence. Malta needs to ensure

legal protection and forms of support social structures as set out in the Palermo Protocol and the CoE Convention for these young women who are victims of organised crime and also for witnesses. Acting as a deterrent, there is the need of administering heavy penalties for all those involved in the chain of organised crime, including individuals who are financing these activities.

The Malta representatives working with the EU Commission Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinator need to establish contact with NGOs working in this field. A review of the task force set up to monitor the local situation is necessary and if necessary its remit widened for more effective results. This included also working with the Police Force and immigration officers on the need to harmonise regulations for immigrants suspected of being trafficked, identifying places where women

were being forced to work in the sex industry as well as following court cases on trafficking and illicit employment in unlawful sex services, forced return to countries of origin and immigrants who were unaccounted for and untraced

before and after similar cases.

It further urges government to focus on the issue of demand, which has been addressed in some countries through legislation to criminalise the buying of sexual favours along the whole

chain to be adopted in Maltese legislation as a crime against human rights.

Grace Attard,
NCW Vice President, European
Economic and Social
Committee

MCESD Civil Society calls for a meeting to discuss its Representation on MCESD

The MCESD Civil Society Committee is pleased to note that Government is in the process of appointing representation of the MCESD Civil Society on the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development. This is an important step forward in participative democracy and in citizens' participation in national consultation fora

The Civil Society Committee, comprised of independent umbrella organisations has repeatedly submitted its proposals to Government and relevant authorities on how it can be represented in the best interest of society and to ensure effective participation..

Over the years the representatives of the MCESD

CS have taken the initiative to work together and regularly submitted proposals on topics of national interest, including national budgets proposals, energy policies, the financial crisis and active labour market policies, social enterprise amongst many others

The MCESD CS has also been submitting its proposals on EU topics and their relevance to the Maltese situation to various Ministers. The MCESD CS is represented on the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). The direct participation in this EU Institution has served to provide expertise in a number of areas including labour market policies, immigration issues, social dialogue, the role of persons with disability in society, the

financial crisis, gender equality amongst others.

It representatives have also participated in workshops and public hearings with its counterparts from the 27 member states organised by the EESC. The MCESD has also organised relevant seminars and meetings in Malta with EESC key experts on a number of themes

The MCESD Civil Society calls on the MCESD to urgently hold a meeting with the relevant CS representatives to present their proposals on their representation on the MCESD

Ryan Meercieca
President MCESD CS

Grace Attard
Secretary MCESD CS

Grace Attard had a meeting with Palestinian Delegation on the Reform of the Palestinian ESC - obstacles and steps forward (Euromed follow-up Committee)

As member of the EuroMed follow-up Committee, Grace Attard had a meeting with the newly reformed ESC of Morocco in Brussels. The meeting served to

discuss how the Moroccan ESC is going to proceed as an association independent from Government. It also served to establish Morocco as the rapporteur on a report on

the Role Women in Society in the EuroMed region

Grace Attard,
NCW Vice-president, EESC

NCW welcomes new members

Anna Fenech from Pembroke
Isabelle Camilleri from zebbug
Tamara Katryna Gauci from St. Paul's Bay
Edwina Vella from B'Kara
Pauline Azzoparid from Ibrag
Maria Gatt from Cospicua
Bernadette Gerada Aloisio from Ibrag
Rita Dimech Portelli from St. Julians
Connie Tonna from Sta Lucija
Tzianna Grech from G'Mangia
Ms Geraldine Portelli from Naxxar

Diary of Events - January to April 2012

January

- 6th - New Year
- 8th - Public consultation with the Hon. Chris Said
- 9th - Labour Party Festive Reception
- 11th - Executive Committee Meeting
MCESD Civil Society Meeting Grace Attard and Doris Bingley attended
- 18th - "Integrazzjoni tan-nisa fit-tmexxija" workshop imtella' mill-Ghaqda Nisa Laburisti Doris Bingley and Marie Demicoli attended
- 20th - Entrepreneurship through Education Conference – Dolmen Hotel – Nadyanne and Grace attended
Seminar and Training: The Role and Networking of Different Stakeholders in Civil Dialogue
Banking on Women Annual General Meeting Dinner – NCW President was honoured during the event.
- 21st - Annual General Meeting
- 30th - Doris Bingley attended EESC Study Group in Brussels
- 31st - Facilitating Integration Conference Aditus

February

- 3rd - Seventh Monitoring Committee for the EEA and the Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2004-2009 at the Xrobb l-Ghagin Nature Park and Development Doris Bingley participated
- 6th - First Executive Committee Meeting for the year 2012
- 16th - EESC Study group and public hearing on Specific Problems facing Islands – Grace Attard participated
- 16th - International Vocational College "I Can" workshop Mary Gaerty attending
- 22nd - Women's Entrepreneurship makes economic sense Ministry of Finance. Mary Gaerty attended
EESC February Plenary Grace Attard participated
- 24th - EU Flagship Project – Identifying the needs of Volunteers – 4th meeting at NCW Centre. Meeting with St Aloysius College Sixth Form Students on EESC Youth Project Your Europe Your Say with EESC member Grace Attard
- 24th - Consultation Meeting with Core Group and Sectoral Committee with MEPs – Excelsior Hotel - Doris Bingley attended
- 25th - ENVOY project on drug and alcohol abuse. Doris Bingley participated.
- 27th - Central Committee Meeting
- 28th - Gender Issues Committee Seminar on the occasion of IWD – KSU Common Room NCW President Mary Gaerty attended
 - Council of Europe, GRETA delegation on trafficking meeting Doris Bingley and Mary Gaerty participated
 - President of Malta Volunteer of the Year Award at the Palace Valletta Doris Bingley and Marie Demicoli attended.
 - EESC SOC Meeting February – Grace Attard participated

March

- 1st - Foundation Day Dinner at Westin Dragonara Resort St. Julians
- 1st - Gloria Mizzi's Net TV Programme, "il-Mara ta' Illum", discussed the work of NCW with Mary Gaerty, Grace Attard, Doris Bingley and Nadyanne Mangion
- 1st - Zjara mill-MMT lil Kummissarju għat-Tfal – Mrs. Helen D'Amato and Josephine Sammut represented NCW
- 2nd - Open Government Programme Public Dialogue at Westin

- Dragonara Resort St. Julians NCW was represented by Mary Gaerty, Doris Bingley, Roselyn Borg and Marie Demicoli
- Girl Guides National Convention "Changing Lives" Grace Attard and Doris Bingley participated.
- 4th - Breast Care Support Europa Donna Annual Awareness Walk – Floriana to Sliema Walk.
- 6th - EESC Meeting with ESC Moroccan delegation Grace Attard participated
- EEA and Norway Grants for NGOs meeting at Phoenicia Hotel, Doris Bingley attended
- 8th - St. Vincent De Paule – President Mary Gaerty led a NCW delegation and distributed gifts to the residents.
- Grace Attard interviewed on PBS Radio programme with Joe Dimech
- 9th - EU Flagship Project – Final Conference at the Westin Dragonara Resort, St. Julians, Key Guest Speaker EESC Group III President Mr Luca Jahier
- 9th - Malta Unborn Child Movement, Meeting with Hon. Minister Chris Said – Grace Attard, Doris Bingley and Marie Demicoli participated
- 11th - International Women's Day Mass organized by the National Council of Women at St. Patrick's church Sliema
- 12th - Executive Committee Meeting
- 13th - Nisa fil-faqar:- Azzjonijiet u Soluzzjonijiet Roselyn Borg attended
 - Dementia Talk by Prof Carmelo Aquilina organized by NCW Health Committee at NCW Centre
 - Nisa fil-Faqar: Azzjonijiet u Soluzzjonijiet seminar organised by Fondazzjoni Ideat Priscilla Muscat and Roselyn
- 14th - MCVS presentation of grants to NGOs at Dar l-Ewropa Doris Bingley attended
- 15th - The Launch of the European Citizens' Initiative organized by EESC representative Grace Attard and MCESD Civil Society at Dar l-Ewropa
- 16th - Peace Symposium – Excelsior Hotel – Nadyanne Mangion attended
- 17th - Funeral of H E President Emeritus Dr. Censu Tabone. NCW President Mary Gaerty attended.
- 19th - EESC Study Group on 'Female entrepreneurs' Grace Attard participated
- 20th - EESC Study Group on 'Partnership for Democracy in the Euromed Region' Grace Attard participated
- 21st - AMIE Meeting – Gateway House – Nadyanne Mangion attended
- 27th - MEUSAC Information Session – Generalised Scheme of Tariff Preferences
 - Funeral of Rev. Father Peter Serracino Inglott, Doris Bingley attended.
- 28th - Neighbourhood Noise – Laqgħa ta' konsultazzjoni: Il-Prevenzjoni, it-tnaqqis u l-kontroll tal-hsejjes – Mediterranean Conference Centre – Mary Gaerty attended
 - EESC March Plenary - Grace Attard participated
 - National launch of "The Policy Agenda for Volunteering in Europe (P.A.V.E)." developed by EYV 2011 alliance - SOS Malta at Dar l-Ewropa, Doris Bingley and Louiselle Pace Gouder attended
- 30th - Malta EP Office and MCWO Public Dialogue Women against Violence. Doris Bingley attended.
EEA and Norway Grant Monitoring Committee meeting at OPM, Grace Attard and Doris Bingley participated.

Forthcoming Events

The Bice Mizzi Vassallo Music Competition

The Bice Mizzi Vassallo music committee is once again working towards organising the next edition of the music competition. The target of the committee for the next edition for October 2013 is to still have one competition however, there

will be a winner for the string category and another for the pianist section. We hope that this development will attract more applicants especially string players. The next fund raising event to raise funds for the 2013 competition is a concert where

the winners of the last edition will perform as soloists as well as in trio. For the first time, we have commissioned a work by a local composer, Chris Muscat. The concert will take place on the 27th July at St James Cavalier.

Spring Gozo Outing - Saturday 9th June 2012

The Environment Committee is organising a Gozo Outing on Saturday 9th June 2012. Transport leaves Blata l-Bajda at 7.15am with various pick up points. We shall return back to

Malta with the 16.30hrs ferry boat. Mr. Joe Attard Tabone whose interest is archaeology will be our guide for the day and we shall visit many places of interest. Members with their

family and friends are welcome. Early booking is recommended as places are limited. Price 10 Euros excluding Lunch and boat.

NCW AMIE - Ambassadors in Malta for Increasing Women Entrepreneurs - Stakeholders Conference

Date: Friday – 25th May, 2012

Venue: Dar L-Ewropa, 254, St Paul's Street, Valletta

Time: 08:30 – 13:30 followed by networking lunch

Please phone NCW Office to book a place and lunch on 2124 8881 or 2124 6982

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