



Approved Resolutions

NCW Annual General Meeting

January 2013

Foreword

Dear Colleagues

As in previous years, the National Council of Women together with its affiliated organisations have worked hard to contribute with their expertise and initiatives for a better quality of life for women, the family and consequently society. NCW has always been proactive as can be seen over the years. As in previous years this is evident from the 2013 Resolutions that have recently been approved at the Annual General Meeting held in January.

Over the years NCW Resolutions have been a vital tool by which developments, new ways of addressing issues and changes are put into motion, changes that have meant a better way of life in several aspects. This year, NCW Resolutions covered a wide spectrum to reflect the ever-changing scenario of the local, European and global state of the economy in these times of crisis, the role of women in society, not least in economic and political decision-making, children, the future role of NGOs and life in general. There are issues however that continue to be raised, either to be improved or to be implemented, and the insistence that changes take place in a responsible manner. On the contrary, it highlights the belief in what is being put forward.

Throughout this year, as NCW President, I have never ceased to marvel at the energy that the women belonging to these organisations as affiliated members of the National Council of Women have in working incessantly to reach their objectives.

On this note I kindly ask you to view these resolutions with a forward thinking mentality and as stakeholders to take them on board in your own initiatives, so that the work that has been put in these recommendations would not be futile, but will be of benefit to a wider society

Mary Gaerty
NCW President

Contents

- 1. National Framework for the setting up Social Enterprise**
- 2. Follow up of the EU Year of Active Ageing and Intergenerational Cooperation**
- 3. The EU Year of Citizens**
- 4. Active Labour Market Policies**
- 5. Women and Climate Change**
- 6. Gender balance in Research Science and Technology**
- 7. Towards Consumer Protection and Empowerment in Malta**
- 8. Women Asylum Seekers – Dignity and Work (Emigrants Commission)**
- 9. Stop the Violence against Girls and Young Women (Malta Girl Guides)**
- 10a. Normalising Childbirth**
 - b. Breastfeeding (Malta Midwives Association)**
- 11. More Education about Gender Equality (Malta PSD association)**

1. Title of Resolution

A. National Framework to address Social Enterprise at National and EU Level

B. Towards a Foundation Statute in line with a European Foundation Statute

Justification/s

“Social Europe can be translated into business opportunities and much-needed job creation. In the current crisis situation, where the number of people without a job or access to economic resources is steadily increasing, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) wants to strengthen growth, employment and competitiveness, through social enterprises while creating a more inclusive society that is in line with the Europe 2020 strategy”(Luca Jahier EESC President of Group III Various Interests Group)

The wide range and diversity of the NGO Sector reflects the importance the Maltese Society gives to voluntary work. NCW believes that, due to socio-economic developments in Malta and in Europe, not least the problems that need to be addressed as a result of the financial crisis there is an urgent need to take the necessary steps to ensure NGOs and Foundations are sustainable. The necessary measures can be taken within the framework for the development of social enterprise in Malta

Recommendation/s

A. Further to APS Bank studies and recommendations on the development of social enterprises

- Evaluation of the situation in Malta on the situation of NGOs and their prospective development to engage in social enterprise
- The role of the Commission and the Council for the Voluntary Sector in working with stakeholders for the development of sustainable social enterprise
- Sharing practices of existing examples of social enterprise in Malta
- Social enterprises should enjoy a level playing field with traditional economic operators.
- Measures to be taken to overcome legal, administrative, financial and political obstacles despite the richness and the innovative leadership which exists at all levels of the sector, with the aim of creating a more inclusive society and address the risk of unemployment, in particular of vulnerable groups, including women, youth and disabled people
- That Malta participates in the EU project which aims at mapping social enterprises, through an EU-wide comparison of approaches to public financing that are particularly suitable for social enterprises, proposed by the EESC, as stated by László Andor, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

B. Towards a Foundation Statute in line with a European Foundation Statute and access to public procurement

- Malta should take the necessary measures to introduce a Foundation Statute on the lines of a European Foundation Statute. This is crucial to defend the role of social enterprises in providing services of general interest.
- Malta together with other Member States should facilitate participation in public procurements to economic operators whose principal objective is the social and professional integration of disabled or

National Council of Women approved Resolutions 2013

disadvantaged workers, provided that a threshold of 30% of disabled or disadvantaged workers is respected.

- In line with the EESC proposal, NCW urges for the rapid introduction of a European Foundation Statute, the adoption of a Statute for a European Association and a review of the value and usability of a European Social Enterprises label that would definitely add value to the sector. These would help social enterprises to operate in different EU Member States without any extra administrative burden.
- Finally, in line with the EESC, NCWE urges that a mobilisation of the European Social Fund post 2014 should include "investment priority" for social enterprises and a better access to other funds such as capital for start-ups and growth, notably for young social entrepreneurs. As László Andor, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion stated, "cohesion policy funds can be used even better in the future, especially if they would be employed in the context of a truly integrated strategy"

2. Title of Resolution

The Involvement and Participation of Older People in Society¹ ***Follow-up of the EU Year of Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity 2012***

Justification/s

NCW has been at the forefront of activities both at National and EU level during the European Year for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity 2012. A member of the NCW Executive Committee was in fact appointed Ambassador for the Elderly for 2012. NCW believes that there should be a strong National Policy for the Elderly to ensure that the outcome of the work carried out in 2012 is continued and enhanced in the coming years

Older people are dynamic, capable and vital members of our society. They pass on knowledge, skills and experience to the next generations. As individuals and collectively they contribute to our economy, to our neighbourhoods and to carrying our history. As family members older people are responsible for encouraging cohesion and solidarity in our society.

There are currently 85 million people over the age of 65 in Europe and this will rise to 151 million by 2060. It is important not to just focus on chronological age but to recognise and build capacity to participate at all ages and to appreciate that even if older people (defined for the purposes of this opinion as over 65) experience health limitations it does not necessarily prevent them from being engaged.

"Active social, cultural, economic and political participation of older people relies on a correct image of age²". We must discourage the use of overly dramatic language by the media and governments to describe an ageing society.

The aim of this resolution is

- to highlight the current active participation of older people in Malta in line with its European counterparts,
- to consider the barriers to enabling more people to be engaged, and
- to emphasise that such participation continues throughout person's lifetime. Building an age friendly³ Europe starts at birth and requires the long view.

Recommendations

NCW recommends that:

- the focus be put on the capacity and contribution of older people and not on their chronological age, and that governments, NGOs and the media highlight these elements in positive statements;
- support be given for the active participation of all age groups in society and to greater solidarity and cooperation between and within generations;

¹ EESC Opinion SOC/448 Rapporteur Maureen O'Neill

² 6th Report on the situation of older generation in the Federal Republic of Germany.

³ "Stakeholder Manifesto for an Age Friendly European Union by 2020", Age Platform Europe, 2011.

National Council of Women approved Resolutions 2013

- governments and statutory agencies make a positive commitment to the active participation of older people in decision-making and to their role in communities;
- governments work with appropriate partners to eliminate any barriers that prevent older people from fully participating in society;
- all stakeholders continue to develop an approach that emphasises life-long learning for individual older people, employers and communities;
- governments ensure the digital inclusion and training of older people;
- older people stand for election, vote and take part as board members in companies, public authorities and NGOs;
- the contribution of informal care givers and recipients be recognised and their respective rights and responsibilities properly supported;
- older people be encouraged to volunteer in accordance with good practice guidelines;
- it be made possible for older workers to stay in employment until the statutory retirement age and beyond, if they so wish;
- employers adapt the working environment and find contractual arrangements to meet the needs of older workers;
- older people be recognised as consumers and that businesses be encouraged to produce goods and services that respond to the needs of an ageing society.
- **A review of Insurance Policies for the over 70s, in particular for Travel Insurance Policies to address age-discrimination where it is practised**
- **More effective measures to address the gender dimension in pension systems**

3. Title of Resolution

The European Year of Citizens 2013

Justification/s

The European Commission has designated 2013 as the *European Year of Citizens*⁴. The European Economic and Social Committee stresses that citizens play a central role in securing Europe's future and integration.

The major future challenges facing Europe and its people require the setting of priorities for this European Year. The low level of confidence that people have in the European Union, their scepticism about their power to influence EU decisions, apathy and the lack of involvement in the decision-making process are fundamentally detrimental to the spirit of the EU and impair the quality of decisions and the Union's long term development

In order to pursue good practice and provide maximum access and coordination for these actions, Liaison Group members representing European civil society organisations and networks, together with other partners and with the support of the EESC, have created an alliance for implementing the thematic year. This alliance is ready to take on a major role in taking the year forward and framing additional recommendations.

Recommendation/s

- *The main aim of this European Year must be active, participatory citizenship*
- *This Year should focus on how EU policies match up with the values, interests and needs of its citizens.*
- *Its aim should therefore be the informed participation of all EU citizens at all levels and at every stage of the decision-making process, all aspects of active citizenship, as well as European awareness and a feeling of belonging to Europe, and peace, freedom, the rule of law, equality, solidarity and respect for human rights.*
- *Focus should be on the principle of citizens' equality enshrined in Article 9 TEU⁵.*
- *Attention should be paid to groups of citizens suffering discrimination and multiple discrimination. Specific measures should be taken to guarantee that all citizens have the same opportunities for exercising their right to participate, their economic and social rights and for exercising their other rights, regardless of their origin and citizenship, age, particular needs, state of health, wealth, religious beliefs, family situation or other characteristics of the same nature. Total equality must be ensured between men and women⁶.*
- *Special attention should be devoted to combating radical or antidemocratic ideologies and activities.*

⁴ [COM\(2011\) 489 final – 2011/0217 \(COD\).](#)

⁵ [OJ C 83, 30.3.2010.](#)

⁶ See particularly the REX/307 file, rapporteur Ms Sharma, and [Flash Eurobarometer 294](#), published in October 2010. The groups that least understand the meaning of European citizenship include women and manual workers.

- *Particular attention should be paid to citizens' right to receive assistance from the diplomatic and consular missions of other Member States when they are in a third country.*
- The mobility of individuals should also be considered in the context of **demographic** trends, and that its beneficial effects **on employability and competitiveness** should be recognised. Mobility of individuals thus also means allowing citizens to benefit from the advantages of the single market and helping to achieve the growth targets of the EU 2020 Strategy
- Initiatives need to work towards **encouraging, developing, implementing and complying with European legislation in many areas such as consumer rights, the movement of goods, services and capital, healthcare, education, the right to vote and freely stand for elections to the European Parliament when in another EU Member State, knowledge of languages, intercultural and social skills, together with other social and economic rights and guarantees.**
- *The administrative bodies of the various institutions at both European and national level should delay no further in working towards achieving these objectives through a process of close dialogue with civil society organisations at every stage and every level (local, national, European) of the decision making process.*
- *The Commission should produce practical proposals, including white papers on the full implementation of Articles 10 and 11 TEU. The introduction of the citizens' initiative (Article 11(4) TEU) and the other mechanisms put in place to date are not enough to ensure society's full participation. A discussion should be launched right away on possible ways of supplementing these tools⁷.*
- *Action is also needed to supplement the existing mechanisms for dialogue and participation and the adoption of good practices⁸*
- *It is important to improve cooperation between the EU institutions and also between the European level and the national bodies working on questions relating to the Union, including governments, the national parliaments and civil society, to mention just these few stakeholders. The aim should be to make decision-making as open and transparent as possible.*
- *The level of funding should be appropriate, fixed and in proportion to the importance of the goal,. The reduced budget (down from some EUR 17 million for 2010 to around EUR 1 million for 2013) will not allow major issues to be addressed.*

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[OJ C 376, 22.12.2011, p.74.](#)

8

See also the INGO Conference, CONF/PLE(2009)CODEI, 2009

4. Title of Resolution

Active Labour Market Policies

Justification/s

A. Active labour market policies in an integrated approach

These policies are powerful "shock-absorbers" in times of crisis and should not be considered a burden on the public deficit.

Extending employment is relevant to all the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy. The social partners must be included in the initiatives oriented towards increasing the employment rate to 75% of the active population for men and women.

Further measures for integrating young people in society and working life, particularly in employment and employability programmes for early school leavers need to be strengthened.

NCW recommendations

- Parallel initiatives should be embedded in a strong active labour market policy with government and strong social partners involvement and ETC, training and on-the-job training schemes.
- Lifelong Learning programmes making better use of partnerships with other stakeholders, including NGOs and Local Councils and the creation of new jobs for effective growth and productivity. The needs of the different age groups should be addressed with specific focus on youth unemployment
- Reinvigorating active labour market policies: active labour policies, vocational training, investments and innovation promote the creation of more and decent workplaces so stabilising the pay-as-you-go schemes existing in the Member States.
- Increasing an effective retirement age needs to be supported by initiatives to foster extended working life with effective growth employment policies and a real active ageing policy in line with the EU2020 strategy and innovation policy as highlighted in the Europe Innovation Flagship.
- employment and employability programmes for early school leavers need to be strengthened.
- The strengthening of a Digital Agenda policy and its implementation is highly relevant to the creation of job opportunities
- Current employability measures need to be monitored and evaluated and adjusted for better outcomes rather than numbers in targeted groups (Malta's employment rate target is 62.9% by 2020) (*Clarification is required on whether this target signifies 62.9% of men and 62.9% of women*) This target fall short of expectations of reaching the EU2020 of 75% employment rates

B. Active Labour Market Policies: Integrating Young People in Society and Working Life

a. Employment

NCW Recommendations

- It is crucial that studies are carried out by NSO to identify the different needs of young people from a gender perspective.

- Over the past years, the introduction of new schemes to address youth unemployment has been a step in the right direction; however, they should be carefully monitored to ensure their effectiveness
- There is the need for genuine cooperation and coordination with all stakeholders, Local Councils, social partners and civil society who are providing education and vocational training services
- more effective measures to reduce the number of early school leavers, increase access to initial vocational, secondary and higher education including apprenticeships and entrepreneurship training for both young men and women
- speed up the development of frameworks to support the transparency of qualifications, their effective recognition and their validation of non-formal and informal learning
- devise schemes for knowledge transfer so that older workers' skills and wide experience over many years can be passed on in such a way that younger people are happy to take "old" knowledge on board and make it a part of their "new" body of knowledge, both for their own benefit and the benefit of their company
- set targets to reduce the gender gap as regards vocational and technological training and wage differences at the time of recruitment
- further promote the importance of foreign language competence in improving education and employment opportunities as well as mobility of young people
- foster young entrepreneurship, in particular among women, by providing financial and technical support and providing the necessary measures for these initiatives.

b. An employability programme for early school leavers

NCW recommendations

- Very often early school leavers who come from unstable socio-economic environments have illiteracy problems, a history of absenteeism and in many cases challenging behaviour. There is the need for NSO studies to identify the causes and impact on early school leavers from a gender perspective
- It is recommended that programmes providing employability skills should include personal and social development modules to develop self-esteem, responsibility, teamwork etc.
- An analysis with the participants of the profiles of the jobs on the market and identifying individual skills and competencies as well as constraints should be carried out in line with the EU 'Future Skills for Future Jobs (see CEDEFOP)
- Specific areas of future labour market requirements should be targeted also from a gender perspective in response to the realities of the labour market, to encourage placements in the right jobs.
- Methods of participative learning and experiential learning away from classroom methods should also be used, besides work-related knowledge and skills. The programme should be extended to 9 (nine) months. Incentives such as 'pocket money' subject to set criteria would encourage more participation. Whilst the support of employers is necessary for a successful outcome, these programmes can be implemented in collaboration with NGOs, as is currently being done in the case of other age groups

5. Title of Resolution

Women and Climate Change

Justification/s

- a. Climate Change is not gender-neutral and has specific gender differentiated effects. Consumption and lifestyle patterns are a significant impact on Climate Change.
- b. Studies show that women consume more sustainably than men and show greater willingness to act to preserve the environment by making sustainable consumption choices.
- c. Women's impact on the environment is not the same as men's and their access to resources and ways to cope and adapt is severely affected by discrimination in terms of income, access to resources, political power, education and household responsibility.
- d. NCW points out with concern the negative impact climate change may have on the achievements of the UN Millennium Development Goals, in particular those linked to the condition and protection of women.

Recommendations

- A. In the drafting of national policies on climate change, relevant authorities and stakeholders need to
 - **set up the necessary mechanisms for Gender mainstreaming in all areas directly or indirectly linked to Climate Change**
 - acknowledge women's firsthand experience and knowledge about what is needed to ameliorate the effects of climate change can contribute immensely to government efforts to identify mitigation and adaptation strategies
 - ensure the inclusion and participation of Maltese women at multiple levels in mitigation and adaptation efforts which is vital to climate change
 - acknowledge that at the family and community level, women often take primary responsibility for household recycling, efficient energy use, the purchase and preparation of food and education and care of family members.
 - that Government ensures that climate action does not increase gender inequalities but results in co-benefits to the situation of women,
 - that the gender perspective is mainstreamed and integrated in every step of climate policies, from conception to financing, implementation and evaluation.
 - that when planning, implementing and evaluating climate change policies, programmes and projects, indicators from the collection of Malta's specific and gender disaggregated data are reflected in the national policies, in order to effectively:
 1. assess the contribution of women to climate change and
 2. address the differing effects of climate change on each gender.
 - that a relevant guide is produced on adapting to climate change, outlining policies that can protect and empower women to cope with the effects of climate change.
 - that in the drafting of policies and their implementation, there is commitment to ensure that a series of actions aimed at addressing the health risks for both men and women associated with climate change are given priority and
 - the need to provide a framework for gender-based health risk assessments and adaptation/mitigation measures in relation to climate change.
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B. Migration and Displacement

Migration and displacement will increase in the future, due to climate change therefore the importance that urgent research is required on how to manage environmental migration in a gender-sensitive manner.

Recommendations

- Government should reiterate the importance of identifying gender-sensitive strategies for responding to the environmental and humanitarian crises caused by climate change
- **NCW to represent the gender dimension on the Malta Consultative Committee on Climate Change**
- **NCW to network with women's organisations in the Euromed region to address the environmental, social and humanitarian crises referred to above**
- **NCW to address climate change issues at EU and Global level on the recommendations of the UN**

6. Title of Resolution

Gender Balance in Research, Science and Technology

Background

NCW has been a pioneer in raising awareness of the situation in Malta. Through its Vice-President it set up an *ad hoc* Committee together with the Malta Council for Science and Technology, (MCST), the Maltese Helsinki Group representative. The Committee brought together a number of stakeholders to prepare a policy for Malta and to address specific obstacles that Maltese women are facing in R&D.

Following the presentation of the draft policy to the MCST CEO, a meeting was held during which a decision was taken that the Annual MCST Policy document would incorporate the gender dimension, so far missing. The first initiative of the *ad hoc* Committee was to organise a Training Session by a European Agency for key stakeholders, from Academia, Education and Industry for a holistic approach to the theme. (Title of Training Session: ***Gender in Research as a Mark of Excellence***, Monday 22 October 2012)

In the meantime, the EU Commission published a Communication ***on European Research Area Partnership and Growth***; an EESC Study Group is currently discussing the EU Communication, making its recommendations which will be approved by the EESC Plenary in the second week of January, (INT 662) The Maltese EESC representative is participating in this work and is also the President of the Study Group

Justification/s

The number of female researchers in Europe has grown significantly in recent years in practically all sectors. 45% of PhD graduates are women, but only 30% of active researchers are female (and just 19% in senior academic positions). On average, only 13% of high-level research or Science Institutes are headed by women, and only 9% of universities⁹.

In the private sector, the highest proportions of women researchers are found in areas relating to agriculture and medicine, the lowest in engineering and technology. This is in spite of the fact that there is evidence that mixed research teams perform better, benefiting from wider expertise, knowledge sharing, diverse points of view and a higher level of social intelligence. **Women's academic careers** remain marked by strong vertical segregation: women constitute a higher proportion of university students (55%) and graduates (59%) than men, but men overtake women at the higher levels. Women hold only 44% of junior academic posts, 36% of tenured posts and 18% of professorships. The glass ceiling remains firmly in place, as does labour segregation.

The gender pay gap continues in the academic field and research centres. Factors contributing to this include supposedly "neutral" job description systems that ignore gender inequalities, the burden of unshared family responsibilities and the persistence of direct and indirect discrimination¹⁰. This means that female scientific potential is undervalued and is not fully tapped; women are underrepresented and research and innovation decisions are not gender-balanced. The underuse of available female researchers is a waste of talent and a loss of value on investment, which is especially unacceptable at a time when Europe's future prosperity depends on its human capital

⁹ See Figures preliminary data 2012, *Gender in Research and Innovation: Statistics and Indicators*, Helsinki Group on Women and Science – European Commission <http://ec.europa.eu>.

¹⁰ The European Parliament resolution adopted in March 2011 underlines that, despite countless campaigns, targets and measures in recent years, the gender pay gap remains stubbornly wide. Women across the EU earn 17.5% less on average than men, while representing 60% of new university graduates.

Not all Member States have national policies to encourage **gender mainstreaming in research**. If gender mainstreaming in research content is not enhanced, the ERA's aims regarding high levels of excellence will be negatively affected. A majority of respondents to the public consultation recently carried out by the Commission stated that greater involvement of women in science would contribute to European socio-economic growth and would also boost research excellence, performance and impact.

Recommendation/s

NCW, in line with its EU counterparts, particularly welcomes the EU Commission decision to ensure a female presence of at least 40% on all committees involved in recruitment and drafting and/or reviewing project evaluation criteria, or establishing staff policies in academic, research and scientific centres and ***strongly recommends***

- Ending a waste of talent that Europe cannot afford by implementing complete gender equality and gender mainstreaming in Research, Science and Technology
- In line with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), NCW Malta calls on the Commission and the Member States to redouble their efforts to effectively eradicate remaining gender inequalities in academia, research and science.
- more specifically to ensure that all committees involved in recruitment, drafting and/or reviewing
- project evaluation criteria, or establishing staff policies in academic, research and scientific centres are at least 40% women.
- that women are fully and actively involved in the entire process of the establishment, implementation and evaluation of actions plans for gender equality in universities and research centres
- Urges the Commission to ensure that organised civil society is involved in preparing the recommendation
- that is to set out the guidelines for institutional changes, promoting real equality between women and men in universities and research centres.

7. Title of Resolution

Towards Consumer Protection and Empowerment in Malta

Justification/s (reason/s and current situation/s to be addressed)

- *A National Strategy should not only cater for the ‘intelligent ‘or ‘average’ consumer but also reach out to vulnerable groups.*
- *Empowering the consumers to ensure access to education and information thus providing them with the necessary tools to make informed choices and take positive action*

Structure of Consumer Education

- A National Strategy for consumer education should cater for all ages, in tandem with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health including the Health Promotion Department. Ministry for the Environment, (interministerial strategy) the business community and the NGO sector representing consumers
- Involve all stakeholders including the Business Community, Trade Unions and NGOs in constructive dialogue
- Programmes should not be a one-size-fits-all but should cater for the needs of different sectors of society
- Exchange of good practice through European and International Counterparts
- Keeping in touch with developments in legislation and new legislation and emerging consumer products at EU and Global level
- Monitoring of progress of the Strategy through regular surveys.
- Setting up a permanent committee within the Malta Competition and Consumer Affairs Authority (MCCAA) for the drafting and execution of the Strategy.
- The best scenario is for Consumer Education to be centralised within the MCCAA
- Building a library of effective communication programmes on consumer affairs as a tool for use on the media or for group activities to ensure interaction through active participation and feedback from target groups.
- Clear separation of information, (including labelling) advertising and education

Recommendation/s

In Schools

There is the need to consider a Consumer Education Framework Policy and Programme at all levels of education

- So far we do not have adequate evaluation of how consumer education is being addressed in schools at different levels, whether it is only information and little input of education. Information and education cannot be treated in the same manner.
- Consumer Education should also be provided at tertiary level for all students and not only for students attending specific courses
- The framework should also include new communication programmes with modern methods that would ensure active participation by the consumers in the various programmes.
- Programmes should be monitored and evaluated to ensure effectiveness with regards to empowerment of young people.

National Council of Women approved Resolutions 2013

- The strategy should provide adequate and effective education through current programmes in schools (such as PSD, which is open to all students) for school children of all ages (mainstreamed) and not only for students who take up courses where consumer affairs are relevant
- Due to an overloaded curriculum it would be difficult to include it as a separate subject, as stated above it can **be integrated in a number of subjects with basic education programmes for all students and more specialised education and information according to specific courses**. The education programmes at all levels **should focus on skills acquisition which is the key concept of empowerment**

The Mass Media

- *There is the need to introduce initiatives including media literacy, which educate and empower consumers of all ages, in particular children and young people to become active responsible consumers of the media and internet in a general manner, rather than passive consumers. This should be separate from specific education programmes on the marketing of different products, but should focus on the media as products in themselves*
- Emphasis should be made on educating and empowering consumers of all ages, in particular children and young people to become **active responsible consumers of the media and internet in particular, rather than passive consumers**.

ACR recommends that there should be some form of recognition eg. A School Leaving Certificate

- It should also include education on responsible consumption
 - The strategy should adequately address empowering consumers through the acquisition of skills regarding reporting consumer complaints, seeking redress etc
- The strategy should seek to encourage consumers to be proactive in consumer matters

Consumer Education as Lifelong Learning

- It is important that Consumer Education should be part of a Lifelong Learning Framework
- Malta needs to set up a National Framework Strategy for Lifelong Learning
- Training for specialised individuals for Consumer Education and Information programmes should also be ensured before implementation
- Lifelong learning programmes are already providing consumer education in eg digital competence for vulnerable groups such as disabled, illiterate, or early school leavers, for all ages and for the elderly and pensioners
- Different entities and stakeholders, including the business sector also need to be educated in consumer affairs : rights and obligations and the concept of education which leads to more and better quality consumption which will give a competitive edge to the business sector

Post-Secondary Education

Tertiary Education involves Junior College, University, MCAST, ITS. The strategy should be two-forked:

- Consumer education to be formally implemented for all students at Post-Secondary level.
- More indepth highly specialised education according to the different courses, which will also involve issues of *codes of ethics*, as part of consumer education
- Consumer Education should be included in the Systems of Knowledge
- Addressing the needs and the different social background of young people should be one of the priorities
- Incentives for a stronger involvement of Students Organisations is one of the best ways of getting young people on board

Teacher Training

- Adequate training for school staff to ensure skills and techniques for the use of indepth education programmes in the curriculum; programmes methodology should go beyond information giving
- There should be a combination of B.Ed (Hons) course as well as inservice courses
- Specialised subjects at Secondary and post-secondary level, in particular those that deal with accounts and economics should also have some form of training in consumer education, as it goes beyond the teaching of the subject, and the aim is to give a holistic development to individuals

Non-formal Education

- ACR supports models like EcoSkola and the further development of such models
- Initiatives through Parent-Teacher Associations can be devised to reach parents to become educated consumers

Public Authorities

- Most public authorities provide information rather than education. Education involves more expertise in communication skills dealing with a variety of consumer affairs, preparation of suitable programmes for interactive activities, relevant funds etc
- Although information is very useful, there is the need to educate consumers to have the skills to apply the information they receive themselves
- With regards to the Consumer Claims Tribunal, there is the need for better trained and informed individuals presiding over Tribunals (although often they are lawyers and therefore should know the law) to be able to interpret the law, to take just decisions especially when dealing with traffic issues and insurance claims.
- Local Councils should be involved to reduce bureaucracy, that is as intermediaries but should not be responsible for investigating and taking decisions, unless an expert is employed with a Local Council. This role and service should be covered by relevant legislation
- A One-stop-shop can be considered, however, the MCCA should be the overall Authority; to coordinate the various initiatives of different stakeholders, to ensure education programmes are standardised, to ensure development of expertise, technical and financial assistance to NGOs working in this field and other necessary initiatives to be taken in a fast changing scenario of consumer affairs
- The members of the Consumer Affairs Council need to be committed, ensure that they regularly update themselves regarding information, changes in amendments in laws, new legislation, modern methods of communication in reaching the public etc So far there is provision of information rather than education. NGOs need funds to operate effectively in the above proposals

Non-governmental Organisations/Private Sector

The Business Community

- The important role of the Business sector play an important role. There is the need for training and education, including also officials in human resources management (perhaps co-ordination with FHRD could be one suggestion). Educated consumers are an asset to business.(win-win situations)
- Employers themselves need to change their perception of consumer education; this can be done though specific programmes tailor-made for them, which in the end will serve employers to see the economic and social value of consumer education

- Providing consumer education in marketing departments in the private sector can provide for better marketing skills and techniques for their products; ethics is a very important area when dealing with production and marketing
- Members of Consumers Associations need time, expertise and commitment; they need to keep themselves constantly informed of developments, new issues that rise from time to time and have acquired communication skills.
- To work efficiently they need funds to employ experts and other necessary human resources, as well as use modern technology, including the social media.
- However personal contact and exchange of experiences of consumers is an essential method of empowerment and I think this should be one of the priorities of a Consumer Association

Emerging challenges

Digital Competence

There is the need to reach vulnerable groups, not only persons with disability (children, youths, adults and elderly) but also persons with social problems, persons with illiteracy problems, persons involved in criminal activities, inmates of prisons etc. Narrowing the digital divide should be a priority

Financial Education

- The setting up of a Commission for Financial Education is a very important step forward. Responsible Consumption should be part of its remit
- The aim should not only be to pass on knowledge and skills (financial education),¹¹ but also to ensure people are sufficiently financially literate to be able to take the right decisions on managing their personal finances in the real world (financial empowerment)

Financial education will allow consumers to make informed decisions, and promote the **intelligent consumption** of financial products. This issue is becoming a common objective for governments, regulators and supervisory authorities.

- The ACR supports the development of online consumer education tools for adults (**DOLCETA**), referred to in the Consultation document, and the establishment of the Expert Group on Financial Education (**EGFE**) by the Commission in October 2008. The EGFE meets regularly to examine the different strategies for rolling out financial education programmes, encouraging public-private cooperation to improve the way programmes are implemented

Concluding Comments

- Strengthening and enhancing structures that are already in place should be the first step.
- MCCA to be the 'umbrella' co-ordinator of the wide range of structures, agencies and departments in place is a priority
- Creating new key structures where a vacuum exists should ensure implementation measures to reach our objectives against deadlines
- Ensuring that the tools used to reach objectives are translated into well-targeted outcomes

¹¹ EESC ECO 297, July 2011 Financial Education and responsible consumption

8. Title of Resolution

Women Asylum Seekers – Dignity and Work

Justification/s

A. Women Asylum seekers try to work to enhance their situation and that of their family and many times they are abused in many ways;

Examples:

a. if they have a working permit and are contributing by paying NI contributions and find themselves out of a job, they do not receive any social benefits

b. if they have a job, such as with a cleaning company their employer does not give them an adequate contract.

Recommendations

These issues are covered by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Decent Work Agenda which should strictly be followed

a. the relevant authorities need to address these and other situations of precarious work

b. the asylum seekers need to be given adequate information on their rights and where to seek help

c. The Employment and Training Corporation – ETC with the cooperation of the Emigrants Commission should provide the necessary training and assistance

d. The working conditions should be scrutinized by a relevant authority and access to the works tribunal should be available to all workers

e. If jobs are lost or these people are made redundant social benefits to which they are entitled should be provided so they can continue to support their family and live in the community

f. the conditions of work of asylum seekers are to be aligned with national legislation and the need to ensure strong mechanisms are in place to curb abuse and eliminate discrimination practices.

9. Title of Resolutions

Stop Violence against Girls and Young Women

Justification

The national authorities support local and national efforts to end violence against women and girls, and several NGOs empower women to claim their rights and direct the society at large towards “zero tolerance”, despite this domestic violence is still a real problem which leads to a situation where all forms of violence against women seriously violate, impair or nullify the enjoyment by women of human rights and/or fundamental freedoms and constitute a major impediment to the ability of women to make use of their capabilities and to lead a dignified life.

Recommendations

1. Amending the age of criminal responsibility and addressing violence against children in the national draft child policy

The MGG calls upon the government to strengthen the existing laws in the best interests of the child by enacting the national draft child policy which aims to adopt a holistic and integrated approach to promoting child focus programmes and actions. Amongst its many proposals, the draft policy recommends, raising the age of criminal responsibility that currently stands at nine years. According to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child ‘a minimum age of criminal responsibility below the age of twelve years is considered by the Committee not to be internationally acceptable’ Evidently, this change in age requires careful study as there are no agreed indicators of how to assess one’s capacity and ethical understanding and therefore cannot be treated as a one-size-fits-all. It is imperative to educate young children from an early age detecting signs of all forms of violence at home or at school and to provide adequate services to eliminate violence from taking place in the first place, also involving the parents in the process. The policy also proposes severing punishment for child abuse and amending the Care Orders Act to remove discrepancies between children placed in care by their family and those under a government care order; during separation procedures children are given the opportunity to voice their opinion with regards choosing parent they prefer living with.

2. Harsher and more effective sanctions for perpetrators of rape, stalking and child abuse to act as deterrents

Perpetrators of such violence must be duly investigated and, as appropriate, prosecuted and punished in order to end impunity. The judiciary must treat all forms of violence against women and girls as a criminal offence, punishable by law, and ensures that penalties commensurate with the severity of the crimes and sanctions in domestic legislation to punish and redress, as appropriate, the wrongs caused to girls and young women who were subjected to violence. Perpetrators must also follow rehabilitation programmes to avoid recidivism. Serious attention needs to be given in cases of underage rape victims, which although addressed by law, should safeguard the rights of the child, even if there is so called ‘provocation’. Moreover, the sex offenders register must be given more weight.

3. Better Protection and support to Victims

Officials who work close to victims must receive proper training to be informed about the different and specific needs of girls and women who have been subjected to violence so that women do not end up as

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victims when seeking justice. Legal assistance and appropriate safeguards must be in place to protect victims and be available immediately once the report is done. Officials must follow the reports efficiently and effectively to rescue victims and potential victims. Evidently, more 24 hour women shelters are needed. There has to be continuity between filing the police report, providing victims with the right information, removing the perpetrator from the home so the victim and children are in their normal environment and not *vice versa*. More needs to be done with regards prevention measures, such as early detection and education to women and relatives on how to act as early as possible to avoid risks

10. Title of Resolution

Normalising Childbirth

Justification/s

a. Maternity care in Malta is over medicalised, to the detriment of women, babies and families. Recent data shows that the rate of artificially induced births is 36%, the caesarean section rate is 33% and the rate of mothers who are breastfeeding when they leave the hospital is 61%. The European Perinatal Report published in December 2008 gives details of the situation in Malta.

b.: In the majority of cases labour is induced for no plausible reason. Medicalization of labour carries a great incidence of operative delivery consequently increasing morbidity. Thus the process of birth becomes unnecessarily labour intensive with increased cost on the tight health budget which can be used more efficiently.

c.: The above along with the lack of informed consent is disempowering women, they are made to feel that they do not have an option in the management of their labour.

NCW recommendations

a.: That pregnancy be treated as a normal physiological process unless there is an underlying medical problem.

b.: That the health profession dedicate their time to the women with obstetric and/or medical problems.

c.: That midwives, **being licensed health care professionals** be allowed to practice the art of midwifery to its fullest, Autonomously in giving care to women with low risk pregnancies, antenatally, Intrapartum and postnatally.

d. Midwifery Led Practice needs to be established in the local health care setting since this had proven to lessen unnecessary interventions during pregnancy and childbirth, improved health outcomes to mothers and babies \nd provide dramatic cost savings.

10b. Title of Resolution

Increasing Initiation and Duration of Breastfeeding Rates to ensure long term benefits for the Maltese population.

Justifications

- a) Breastfeeding has been widely acknowledged as the best means of giving infants a healthy start to life. The promotion, protection and support of breastfeeding are a public concern and a health priority. Low rates and early cessation of breastfeeding have important adverse health and social implications for women, children, the community and the environment, and will result in greater expenditure on national health care provision and increase inequalities in health.
- b) The breastfeeding initiation rates in Malta are still very low, especially when compared to the north European countries. In 1995, 45% of Maltese mothers were breastfeeding (exclusively or mixed feedings) at the time of discharge from St Luke's Hospital, this figure rose to 57% in 2008 (National Obstetric Information and Statistics, 1995-2007). Although these reports have suggested a slow initiation improvement in breastfeeding locally, these figures are still much lower than the targets set out in the National Breastfeeding Policy which calls for a 90% breastfeeding rate on discharge from hospital remaining as high as 80% at four months (Health Division Malta, 2000, pg11),
- c) The European Union, through its institutions: "emphasizes...the importance of nutrition as one of the key determinants of human health", "is concerned by the consequences of the increase in obesity and overweight...particularly among children and adolescents"; "considers that action on nutritional health must be given an adequate place in the future Community action programme on public health".
- d) Childhood obesity is a growing problem. Kries, et al (1999) demonstrated that babies who were exclusively breastfed for 3 to 5 months were shown to reduce the risk of being obese or overweight by 35%. Various studies show that babies who are exclusively breastfed for six months are less likely to become adults who are overweight, obese, hypertensive and suffer from elevated cholesterol (Owen, et al. 2002; Bergmann, 2003; Ip et al, 2007). Babies exposed to formula feeding early in life, may develop a series of immune responses leading to Type I diabetes mellitus (Villalpando & Hamosh, 1998). Thus investing in breastfeeding at the start of life will save money on treatment reducing premature deaths and permanent disabilities from strokes.
- e) Exclusive breastfeeding protects the infant against a number of childhood illnesses. Studies have shown that working mothers, who were or are still breastfeeding, are less absent from work because the babies are less ill (Cohen et al. 1995).
- f) The increasing needs for a woman to return to work is currently causing women to stop breastfeeding because of the lack of facilities or support at the workplace.

Recommendations

In light of the World Health Organization recommendation of exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months, women should have adequate maternity leave and provision of baby-friendly work places. Facilities should be available to help working women to meet their infant feeding goals. James Grant, the late Executive Director of UNICEF, states:

"The promotion of breastfeeding must not be seen as an excuse to exclude women from the labour force. The burden should no longer fall on women to choose between breastfeeding and work. The burden is on society to facilitate breastfeeding and indeed child care".

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Therefore, breastfeeding women need support from the family, from the Health Care System, and require public health policies together with social policies and culture. This can be achieved through the following recommendations:

- a) Ensure adequate paid maternity leave. Ensure maternity protection provisions to women who are not currently entitled to these: e.g. women with short term contracts, casual and part-time workers, students.
- b) Truly offer flexible work hours to breastfeeding women, part-time schedules, job sharing, tele-work options.
- c) Work places become baby-friendly by providing the necessary basic facilities for nursing mothers. In this, the state is to act as a role model for the private sector. A clean, private and safe area is provided for the expressing and storing of breast milk.
- d) Breastfeeding women need to be allowed breastfeeding/lactation breaks.
- e) Breastfeeding women are not discriminated in any way, ensuring job security and employment protection.
- f) The right of women to breastfeed must be protected.
- g) Provision of infant/child care centres.
- h) The development and enforcement of legislation to ensure legislative support and protection are in place to enable working mothers to exclusively breastfeed their infants for 6 months and to continue thereafter.

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11. Title of Resolution

Increasing the time allocated for Malta Personal and Social Development (PSD) sessions on Gender Equality

Background

Gender Equality in PSD

The topic gender in PSD is tackled through the following objectives:

Primary curriculum:

The topic *Gender* is given importance in the General Aims of the Syllabus for Primary Schools under the heading of *Growing Up*.

"Furthermore, children are becoming aware of the different ways in which society treats males and females and gender expectations placed on them. Therefore, discussing gender equality from the point of view of the children is crucial at this point."

Year 4

Learning Outcomes:

- Gender 1. To explore what children understand by everyone being either a boy or a girl
2. To allow boys and girls to share equal talents, characteristics, strengths, and hopes for their future.

Year 5

Learning Outcomes:

- Gender 1. To distinguish how family, friends, the media, and society expect boys and girls to behave.
2. To think about how sometimes children receive different treatment because they are boys or girls.

Year 6

Learning Outcomes:

- Gender 1. To explore friendships between boys and girls and the mutual respect that should exist.
2. To have children reflect on the roles of both genders as carers.

Secondary curriculum:

Form 1 PSD 7.4 Roles and Responsibilities within different social contexts

OBJECTIVES

The teacher will:

1. enable the students to reflect on the stereotypical messages that media can portray
2. enable the students to reflect how gender stereotypes can affect one's life choices

Form 2 PSD 8.1 Establishing a positive environment

1. enable the students to understand that everyone is of equal worth and that it is acceptable to be different

Form 2 PSD 8.3 Promoting the use of social skills

OBJECTIVES:

The teacher will:

1. enable the students to identify different feelings in self and others and to recognize one's values whilst respecting the values of others
2. enable the students to reflect on the effects of bullying due to religious beliefs, gender, race, sexual orientation, disability, age and social background

Form 3 PSD Gender Stereotypes

- To help students explore the gender stereotypes regarding relationships they encounter through film and media.
- To understand how these stereotypes effect their personal dating relationships.

Form 5 PSD Gender Equalities

- To recognise that gender role influences the various roles taken on in life.
- To identify that gender behaviour could influence their work related behaviour.

Gender in the PSD Teacher Training Courses

Besides the 6 ECTS study units on gender issues, the theme of gender issues permeates across each and every study unit for PSD teacher trainees, examples:

- Interpersonal skills
- Intrapersonal skills
- Sexuality
- Methodology
- Strategies and techniques
- Related issues, such as addiction
- Ethical behaviour
- Abuse
- Career education
- Family roles

Justification/s

- a. Time allotted to PSD sessions is not enough – in a single session, there is not enough time to deal with gender equality themes. Despite being tackled in every Form, in a single session, students do not have adequate time to analyse, discuss and experience as follow-up, the arguments put forward. In general students find PSD sessions very effective, however they wish that they have more sessions since PSD deals with lifeskills.

Recommendation/s

- A. Drawing up specific programmes to be mainstreamed** across the curriculum **and more specifically in PSD Sessions**, for students, girls and boys, at different levels of education with adequate communication techniques for young people today, to help them become more engaged in the following
- the principle of respect regarding gender equality
 - gender mainstreaming
 - EU and National legal aspects of the rights of men and women.
 - the role of father figure in family care and responsibilities

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- sharing responsibilities in the home
- gender balance at the workplace, including choice of careers, equal pay for work of equal value
- family-friendly measures
- gender balance in Research, Science and Technology
- occupational health and safety at the workplace

B. PSD Sessions

- a. In order to be more effective, PSD sessions require more time - a double session instead of a single slot session so that such a topic like gender equity would be tackled both as a concept (theoretically) and in practice (implemented).
- b. More awareness about gender equity through the media.
- c. More available videos about gender equity for PSD teachers to be used during lessons on such topic.
- d. More resources about gender equity for PSD teachers to be used during the PSD lessons.
- e. At post-secondary and tertiary education level, students do not have PSD sessions. As a result, students don't have space where to discuss lifeskills including gender equity. Research shows that personal and social competences at this educational level will help to develop the holistic development of the person, including the perception about gender equity.
- f. **Proposing to the Education Department to introduce the Booklet 'My Life My Health' published by 'Breast Care Support Europa Donna Malta for young girls and boys of the 12 to 15 age group. The booklet deals with the different phase in life and the different social, environmental aspects that young people engage in and that influence the choices we make regarding lifestyles**