



Founded 1964

# N-Mara

Newsletter of the National Council of Women - Malta



## Members of


**International Council  
of Women**

Founded 1888

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


**European Centre of the  
International Council of Women**

Founded 1961

**In Special Consultative  
Status with the Economic &  
Social Council of the UN.**
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**Front Cover Photos**

IWD Mass at St Patrick's Church

Findel CASTME AWARD Ceremony

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Monday to Friday: 9.00 - 13.30

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are requested to keep their subscription  
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Founded 1964

# Il-Mara

NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN - MALTA

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**EDITORIAL**

Dear Colleagues and Friends

As the first quarter of the year has started we have seen a number of activists and events happening. Starting from our Annual General Meeting which was held at the end of January which has seen the election of a new executive. I would like to wish luck to the new members. We had, International Women's Day on the 8th of March where we celebrated together with the other organisations around the world, what has been achieved not only in relation of women's right but also in family right, which has recently been acknowledged with the new law passed by the European Parliament which increments the parental leave.

This is year we have also seen a New President of Malta being elected, Dr. George Vella. Which we would like to wish him luck for this upcoming years.

**Tamara Gauci**  
*Editorial Board*


**Congratulation to Madame Justice  
Lorraine Schembri Orland**

The National Council of Women congratulates Madam Justice Lorraine Schembri Orland for her success in becoming Malta's judge at the European Court of Human Rights. She is the National Council of Women Honorary Life Member and the council will always remember her very valid contribution as NCW President and a board member of the International Council of Women. NCW President, the Executive Committee Members and all members wish her great success as Judge of the European Court of Human Rights.



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## President's Message



Dear Ladies, dear Friends

Its Easter already, my goodness time is just flying by and with the increasing workload one finds oneself looking for these dates- Christmas, Easter, Santa Marija, beginning of scholastic year for our educational programme and again Christmas. Obviously in between loads and loads of work including conferences, meetings, reports and a thousand other things. Everyone keeps saying how very busy they are!! But people find time to stroll, to meet friends for a chat, to meet up for a coffee or lunches and that is comforting. At least direct human communication is still part of our lives and we feel the need to meet in person not just virtually. Digitalisation however is an important aspect in our lives and if we fail to grab this concept or remain on the border, not becoming interested to learn, we will risk losing out on a number of daily necessities, such as banking, shopping, news, contact with family members and friends who live in other countries, jobs and other daily requirements.

As the election fever builds up, so do our hopes in seeing more women in local council elections and being elected, in the European Parliament elections, where we hope to keep our percentage and most importantly also in the forthcoming general elections to be held in 2022. With a mere 15% of female representation in Parliament everyone must act to push this percentage up by at least 33% as a start.

Professor Carmen Sammut at the recent launch of the 'positive measures' to get more women elected explained brought to the attention of those present that in 73 years female representation in Parliament fluctuated between 10 and 15%. One would have hoped that after so many years there would be a few more females in Parliament. Like it or not we must do something different as what we have been doing so

far has not worked! Positive measures are temporary means by which women are given the necessary ladder to climb those steps that will result as a seat in Parliament. The proposed mechanism is based on four pillars and aimed at reaching the minimum of 33% but hoping for a 40%.

- Constitutional and Legal Amendments to permit up to 12 additional seats for the under-represented sex that obtains less than 40%
- Gender Mainstreaming in Parliament and family friendly measures
- Incentives in the form of state funding to Political Parties to recruit, train and support candidates from the under-represented sex to contest the General elections
- Extend remits for the Electoral Commission- basically to have a few women to the present all male Electoral Commission

We must, both men and women participate in this measure and do all we can to have more women in Parliament. The nation is missing out, as it does not have a balanced representation where decisions are taken. Women are missing out as their needs are not being addressed. So let us all play our part and encourage women to enter into politics by approaching a party of their choice so that they will be trained and groomed as candidates. There is little time left and the chance is now to change this situation and be part of history

Till the next time!

**Mary Gaerty**  
*President, National Council of Women*

## Thank you to H.E. Marie Louise Coleiro Preca

*We thank President Emeritus Marie Louise Coleiro Preca for her very valid work during her presidency. Her unending love for society was reflected in helping NGOs achieve their aims. Her legacy will remain with us for a long time. The National Council of Women wish her great success in her future endeavours which undoubtedly will be for the benefit of all.*



## NCW Annual General Meeting 2019

The Annual General Meeting of the National Council of Women was held on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2019, at The Victoria Hotel, Sliema. President Mary Gaerty spoke about the work which the Council has embarked on during 2018. This included pensions, education, violence against women, work and entrepreneurship, work life balance and the challenges faced by women on a daily basis.

She also highlighted the fact that the National Council of Women is looking ahead at the constant changes happening at national, EU level and globally and this is reflected in the 2019 resolutions. Mary Gaerty stressed the need to address poverty and the means to overcome it through education, knowledge about financial independence and financial capability. The means to obtain the necessary skills and the enhancement of existing skills could be the initial steps. The possibilities of education through Lifelong Learning are reachable by those who wish to tap this resource. She said that the introduction of skill cards qualifying a person's competences will serve as a ticket, either to continue with the development of skills or for employment. Many women, especially those seeking first employment after raising a family, would be better equipped when applying for a job.

Mary Gaerty urged young women to venture further and choose careers in Science, Engineering, R&D and ICT. Employment in these areas offer highly paid jobs in the diverse and related sectors and opportunities for promotions and managerial positions. This is crucial to the employment of women in future sectors and which will lead to realistic gender equality. Finally Mary Gaerty encouraged women to make their choices and decisions based on reliable and researched information.

Guest speaker Alexandra Zammit, European Semester Officer gave a presentation about Malta's country report on the European Pillar of Social Rights.

The General Assembly also discussed and approved a number of resolutions, **including** those submitted by the affiliated organisations dealing with:

- Work Life Balance and the Gender Pay Gap
- Challenges and Opportunities for SMEs in future work and digitalization



- A Holistic Approach to Migration
- Migration and the situation of Women Asylum Seekers
- Violence against Women
- Paternity Leave
- Sick Leave in view of Children's illness
- Other documents that were discussed were:
- Consequence of legislation on prostitution
- Today's Planning for Tomorrow's Well Being

The NCW Executive Committee for 2019 include President Mary Gaerty, Hon. General Secretary Doris Bingley, Vice Presidents: Grace Attard, Amy Camilleri Zahra, Diane Xuereb, Hon. Treasurer Therese Cassola, Members: Jacqueline Giordmania, Mary Buttigieg Said, Doreen Borg Zammit, Gertrude Abela, Josette Barbara Cardona, Lara Gail Dougall, Doris Caruana, Rebecca Wellman, Mandy Mifsud, Nadyanne Mangion, Dr Claudine Zarb, NCW Legal Advisor and Marie Demicoli Office Secretary.

## Talking Science Award

The National Council of Women Malta celebrated the achievement of the introduction of the sessions 'Talking Science' for pre - schoolers and toddlers accompanied by their parents, grandparents and carers on Commonwealth Day, 11 March 2019.

These sessions were held during the summers of 2017 and 2018 and were possible through the collaboration of the Commonwealth Association of Science, Technology and Mathematics Educators (CASTME), the Commonwealth Women's Network (CWN) and the National Council of Women Malta (NCW)

NCW's focus on science serves the communities and drive progress to have more interest in science, which is lacking especially among the female generation.

The Commonwealth Association of Science, Technology and Mathematics Educators (CASTME) awarded NCW Malta the Findel CASTME prize as they recognized the work done was of great importance in raising awareness on everyday science.

Dr Lady Sue Dale Tunnicliffe, Chair of CASTME, the Commonwealth Association of Science, Technology and Mathematics Educators, and Kathleen Nugent, Vice Chair of CASTME, came to Malta for the award ceremony. CASTME invited Mrs Michelle Muscat, spouse of the Prime Minister of Malta, to present the award.

With the help of this award NCW can scale up this venture and increase the impact in the interest of science.

Lady Tunnicliffe spoke about the CASTME Early Years project, which shows that Science is in play and in everyday life.



Ms Nadyanne Mangion, who led the sessions in 2017, and Dr Daniela Cassola, who led the sessions in 2018, described how much children and adults enjoyed doing the everyday science activities together and talking about science. "Science is Fun."

NCW will be organizing two more sessions during 2019 summer months.

## International Women's Day

The National Council of Women in Malta asks to have this special, annual Mass on International Women's Day to bring together members and friends from different sectors of society to share this commemorative day, highlighting the importance of equality for women. This year's theme, chosen by NCW-Malta is: "Think equal, build smart, innovate for change".

The celebration of International Women's Day coincides with the First Sunday of Lent. Lent is that Season of Grace, when all Christians are invited to prepare themselves spiritually to celebrate the great feast of the Resurrection of Christ. They are also helped to remember that the glorious, triumphant burst of New Life in Christ was preceded by a long time of self giving and two days of great love and suffering: Holy Thursday and Good Friday.

On the First Sunday of Lent, each year, the Liturgy of the Word, presents us with the same episode of Jesus, who "moved by the Spirit", cuts himself off from daily routine and noise, and goes to meet God in the solitude of the desert. He is followed by the Tempter, and so we find that the episode of Jesus in the desert is also known as the temptation in the desert.

The word temptation brings to mind, immediately, the word resistance. And the word resistance implies struggle. The struggle is in the mind as one tries to decide whether to have a temporary satisfaction or forge ahead towards something more lasting and truthful. It is a struggle to have to choose between an easy solution or a solid result that, however, calls for effort.

The struggle is also present also when one is presented with change, as usually we are averse to change. Jesus resisted temptation because he wanted to found something solid and lasting, the Church, and because he was not afraid to bring in change: no more fear, but love; no more superficiality but solid convictions and life to the full.

Card. Henry Newman was very much in line with this thought when he wrote:

*to live is to change; and to be perfect is to have changed often.*



And so, the NCW is right in inviting us all to resist the temptation of, first: thinking above, differently or below expectations. Instead the effort should be to "think equal". Equality in dignity and social rights that will be reached, but at various timings and in diverse ways according to country and circumstances.

The NCW invites women today to "build smart": to conceive projects that last: built slowly and with purpose; looking at the future and not just as a temporary solution.

It invites for innovation, for fresh ideas, for change, for optimism, for being positive, for owning our opinions and not be swayed by politics or self advantage.

All this entails struggle; it is resistance; it is building of character, building of society, building a truthful future!



On the First Sunday of Lent it is customary for our Bishops to speak to us through a Pastoral letter. Being the 4<sup>th</sup> centenary of the miraculous and precious painting of Our Lady of Ta'Pinu, they ask us to "invite Mary in our life". They speak to us about the struggles Mary went through once she accepted her mission to be Mother of Jesus. They gently urge us to imitate the young couple marrying at Cana, who invited Mary to their wedding feast. As in Cana, when we allow Mary in our life, Jesus will also follow. He not only accepted invitations but at times even invited himself: "Zaccheus, come down, quickly, for today I mean to dine at your house!" When Mary and Jesus come, they bring blessings, and they help us in our struggles, in moments of sorrow, in our difficult projects to better our conditions, in the difficult task of trying to accept change and make others accept it. We Christians are never alone, if we so choose. And so, if you Christian women are convinced of God's love that makes you children of God like any other person in the world, then you will be able to **think equal**, you will have the will to **build smartly** and **never fear change**, but bring it about in yourselves and around you, for a better future.

**Rev. Fr Joe Cini sdb**  
*Chaplain, St Patrick's Church Sliema*

## National Council of Women

### ...Think Equal International Women's Day Message 2019 'Think Equal, Build Smart, Innovate for Change'

This is the UN Women theme for International Women's Day 2019. This year, the focus is on research and innovation – for women and girls to achieve equality. The future of the European Union depends on research and innovation and Europe needs 1 million more researchers by 2020 to stay competitive in the world. Research could also create 3.7 million jobs and increase annual EU GDP by EUR 795 billion by 2025 if the target of investing 3% of EU GDP in R&D by 2020 is achieved. However, data available at European level show a striking imbalance between women and men in the European research sector

The National Council of Women strongly affirms that gender balance is crucial for a well-functioning research system. Research and innovation (R&I) are key drivers for economic growth. To achieve its policy objectives in global technology, Malta must use all the human capital at its disposal. Tapping into the full potential of women's skills, knowledge and qualifications will contribute to boosting growth, jobs and competitiveness, which are key drivers of a prosperous economy.

NCW has for several years stressed the importance for more girls to be attracted to the ever advancing digital world. NCW is deeply concerned that the number of girls opting for science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects (STEM) has remained significantly low. There is the need to develop and implement awareness programmes aimed at attracting more girls into STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) and more women into research together with special programmes for career guidance and assistance.

Malta should aim to improve legal and policy frameworks for gender equality in research, based on the recommendations set out in the ERA communication and the Horizon 2020 programme. The *evaluation, accreditation and funding* of research institutions and organisations should be linked to their performance on gender equality. NCW calls for dialogue with publishers and editors of scientific publications in order to remove gender bias from and increase female scientists' contributions to scientific publications, editorials, reviews and survey articles

There is the need to strengthen dialogue between research institutions, businesses and related social partners and university to ensure gender balance in their decision-making and selection process. Gender equality efforts must be incorporated into the planning processes and, for the business sector to lead by example by moving forward in the process of placing more women as directors and in decision-making positions

For high-quality research to be relevant to society, a number of different solutions should be considered. This is best ensured when research communities are diverse – men and women, and when they have the ability to cooperate across and within disciplines. Research and education are

integral to policy formulation and public administration, and contribute to a more critical, diverse and open public debate

Recruiting more women to the research sector can boost knowledge resources, enhance the quality of knowledge production and make the sector more robust and competitive. Studies suggest that heterogeneous research groups are more robust and innovative than homogeneous groups and that diversity of knowledge and social capital in teams is important for producing new ideas. Also, gendered innovations in science, medicine, engineering and the environment use sex and gender analysis as a resource to stimulate new ideas, new services and new technologies.

A comparison of Member States' gender indexes suggests that the countries with higher scores in the Gender Equality Index (GEI) tend to spend a greater percentage of their GDP on research and development, as well as achieve better results in innovation.

In an ever developing digital world, women will risk losing out on well-paid jobs and inclusiveness in the labour market, if the number of women in technology remains alarmingly low. Just as the rising number of female biologists has increased studies on women's health and wellbeing, women in leadership positions in technology careers will identify the exigencies that will allow women, through innovation to address issues that concern their daily lives. Without this change, women will simply fall out of the ever advancing digitised world.

Accelerating the process of equality and a change of mentality will result in a better quality of life for all. Women today are struggling with far too many duties and responsibilities, juggling between work and family life, many a time sacrificing even the little time left that should be dedicated as 'me time' with the possibility of grave consequences upon their physical and mental health. NCW calls on Government to launch a programme directed at girls to choose STEM subjects Science, Technology Engineering and Mathematics, which not only lead to the jobs of the future, but are vital in reducing the gender pay gap,

NCW calls on the Government to provide an environment that will encourage women to choose work according to the qualifications they have achieved and not be forced into low-paid jobs which are far below their qualifications - without having to be stressed and pressured in coping with family duties on their own.

To make change possible, we also need to encourage more women to present their candidature for elections to the European Parliament, Local Councils and General Elections, ensuring that all measures will give women an equal opportunity to succeed. It would be very encouraging if next year when commemorating International Women's Day, we can say - there has been a notable change!

## ICW-CIF Statement

### *In Recognition of International Women's Day March 8, 2019*

The theme chosen by the UN for International Women's Day 2019, "Think equal, build smart, innovate for change," is a powerful slogan indeed, but women throughout the world have to ask themselves whether the theme target is likely to turn out to be a reality or just a myth... that is considering the gender inequalities still existing in the world; and considering also the barriers to be removed in order to build services and infrastructures that help to meet the specific needs of women and girls, and foster innovation for change. YES, we have to think equal and to continue fighting for our rights and focus on innovative ways for the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment.

Indeed, there has been a growing recognition in recent decades of the interconnected nature of gender inequalities, women's empowerment, globalization, climate change, environmental degradation, poverty, gender-based violence, communicable diseases and other phenomena. It has thus become clear that current global challenges for the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals require multi-dimensional, interdisciplinary and innovative solutions that address the complex linkages between these issues. Despite this growing recognition for building smart, based on change innovation and technology, gender equality remains a "missing link" throughout many relevant policies and programs. There thus remains a compelling need for women worldwide to assume leading roles to help chart action in the desired directions.

The basis however for women to progress generally towards thinking equal, building smart and innovative maneuvering for change rests on women and girls being given the opportunity of acquiring the educational infrastructure needed. As such ICW calls upon its members throughout the world to strongly foster the educational infrastructure basis so needed in their own countries for women and girls.

Gender equality, it goes without saying, is a fundamental human right, a building block for social justice and an

economic necessity, but we have to face the fact that despite progress made, women globally are still far from reaching it. As pointed out by UN WOMEN, innovative approaches are critical to overcoming structural obstacles and "ensuring that no woman and no girl is left behind".

The International Council of Women (ICW-CIF), an international NGO which has been at the forefront of fighting for women's rights and empowerment for 130 years, appeals to game-changing activists in civil society, governments, and all stakeholders, to join efforts and to do far more together to uphold the human rights and potential of every girl and woman. As stated by Mrs. Irina Bokova, Former Director-General of UNESCO,

"The empowerment of girls and women starts on the benches of school with quality education and access to culture and information. Gender equality means literacy. It means access to science. It means genuine possibilities for girls to become everything they wish for and to make their own informed choices. This is essential for human rights, for health, for sustainable development, for the fabric of societies as a whole..."

ICW-CIF firmly believes in the vital role of education for women and girls to develop the skills and capacities necessary to achieve women's empowerment and gender equality and to fully participate in producing innovative ideas to build a sustainable and more peaceful world without the threat of violence against women. As the International Women's Day theme 2019 states, people need to "Think equal, build smart, innovate for change" and seek new ways to advance gender equality and women's empowerment, especially in terms of social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure.

In order therefore to make genuine change, women and girls need to awaken their global responsibility, national commitment, and power potential within local communities, and to remember that the possibility of achieving this change lies within their own capacities as women leaders. It is only by working together and combining our strengths that we will be able to translate global agreements about women's rights into tangible, meaningful results.





# The National Council of Women

*Saturday, 26<sup>th</sup>*



# Women Annual General Meeting

January 2019



# The European Pillar of Social Rights in 20 principles

## Equal opportunities and access to the labour market

### 1. Education, training and life-long learning

Everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market.

### 2. Gender equality

Equality of treatment and opportunities between women and men must be ensured and fostered in all areas, including regarding participation in the labour market, terms and conditions of employment and career progression.

Women and men have the right to equal pay for work of equal value.

### 3. Equal opportunities

Regardless of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, everyone has the right to equal treatment and opportunities regarding employment, social protection, education, and access to goods and services available to the public. Equal opportunities of under-represented groups shall be fostered.

### 4. Active support to employment

Everyone has the right to timely and tailor-made assistance to improve employment or self-employment prospects. This includes the right to receive support for job search, training and re-qualification. Everyone has the right to transfer social protection and training entitlements during professional transitions.

Young people have the right to continued education, apprenticeship, traineeship or a job offer of good standing within 4 months of becoming unemployed or leaving education.

People unemployed have the right to personalised, continuous and consistent support. The long-term unemployed have the right to an in-depth individual assessment at the latest at 18 months of unemployment.

## Fair working conditions

### 5. Secure and adaptable employment

Regardless of the type and duration of the employment relationship, workers have the right to fair and equal treatment regarding working conditions, access to social protection and training. The transition towards open-ended forms of employment shall be fostered.

In accordance with legislation and collective agreements, the necessary flexibility for employers to adapt swiftly to changes in the economic context shall be ensured.

Innovative forms of work that ensure quality working conditions shall be fostered. Entrepreneurship and self-employment shall be encouraged. Occupational mobility shall be facilitated.

Employment relationships that lead to precarious working conditions shall be prevented, including by prohibiting abuse of atypical contracts. Any probation period should be of reasonable duration.



### 6. Wages

Workers have the right to fair wages that provide for a decent standard of living.

Adequate minimum wages shall be ensured, in a way that provide for the satisfaction of the needs of the worker and his / her family in the light of national economic and social conditions, whilst safeguarding access to employment and incentives to seek work. In-work poverty shall be prevented.

All wages shall be set in a transparent and predictable way according to national practices and respecting the autonomy of the social partners.

### 7. Information about employment conditions and protection in case of dismissals

Workers have the right to be informed in writing at the start of employment about their rights and obligations resulting from the employment relationship, including on probation period.

Prior to any dismissal, workers have the right to be informed of the reasons and be granted a reasonable period of notice. They have the right to access to effective and impartial dispute resolution and, in case of unjustified dismissal, a right to redress, including adequate compensation.

### 8. Social dialogue and involvement of workers

The social partners shall be consulted on the design and implementation of economic, employment and social policies according to national practices. They shall be encouraged to negotiate and conclude collective agreements in matters relevant to them, while respecting their autonomy and the right to collective action. Where appropriate, agreements concluded between the social partners shall be implemented at the level of the Union and its Member States.

Workers or their representatives have the right to be informed and consulted in good time on matters relevant to them, in particular on the transfer, restructuring and merger of undertakings and on collective redundancies.

Support for increased capacity of social partners to promote social dialogue shall be encouraged.

### 9. Work-life balance

Parents and people with caring responsibilities have the right to suitable leave, flexible working arrangements and access to care services. Women and men shall have equal access to special leaves of absence in order to fulfil their caring responsibilities and be encouraged to use them in a balanced way.

### 10. Healthy, safe and well-adapted work environment and data protection

Workers have the right to a high level of protection of their health and safety at work. Workers have the right to a working environment adapted to their professional needs and which enables them to prolong their participation in the labour market.

Workers have the right to have their personal data protected in the employment context.



## Social protection and inclusion

### 11. Childcare and support to children

Children have the right to affordable early childhood education and care of good quality.

Children have the right to protection from poverty. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds have the right to specific measures to enhance equal opportunities.

### 12. Social protection

Regardless of the type and duration of their employment relationship, workers, and, under comparable conditions, the self-employed, have the right to adequate social protection.

### 13. Unemployment benefits

The unemployed have the right to adequate activation support from public employment services to (re)integrate in the labour market and adequate unemployment benefits of reasonable duration, in line with their contributions and national eligibility rules. Such benefits shall not constitute a disincentive for a quick return to employment.

### 14. Minimum income

Everyone lacking sufficient resources has the right to adequate minimum income benefits ensuring a life in dignity at all stages of life, and effective access to enabling goods and services. For those who can work, minimum income benefits should be combined with incentives to (re)integrate into the labour market.

### 15. Old age income and pensions

Workers and the self-employed in retirement have the right to a pension commensurate to their contributions and ensuring an adequate income. Women and men shall have equal opportunities to acquire pension rights. Everyone in old age has the right to resources that ensure living in dignity.

### 16. Health care

Everyone has the right to timely access to affordable, preventive and curative health care of good quality.

### 17. Inclusion of people with disabilities

People with disabilities have the right to income support that ensures living in dignity, services that enable them to participate in the labour market and in society, and a work environment adapted to their needs.

### 18. Long-term care

Everyone has the right to affordable long-term care services of good quality, in particular home-care and community-based services.

### 19. Housing and assistance for the homeless

a. Access to social housing or housing assistance of good quality shall be provided for those in need.

b. Vulnerable people have the right to appropriate assistance and protection against forced eviction.

c. Adequate shelter and services shall be provided to the homeless in order to promote their social inclusion.

### 20. Access to essential services

Everyone has the right to access essential services of good quality, including water, sanitation, energy, transport, financial services and digital communications. Support for access to such services shall be available for those in need.



## UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 63)

This year, the 63rd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW63) took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 11 – 22 March 2019. It focused on the theme, “Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls”.

The International Council of Women (ICW) members joined other NGOs to learn more about what women need and their role in sustainable infrastructure, public services and social protections. They followed the unfolding conversation at the United Nations and discussed what it mean for communities worldwide.

The theme meant a great deal for women and girls. They need to feel safe walking to the market, or through parks or having access to clean water. Public health centres and affordable childcare need to be available as well as a pension in old age and public housing for survivors of domestic abuse.

When infrastructure, public services and social protections are lacking, women and girls are often the ones most impacted. Their needs need to be factored in when policies are designed. Their voices must shape the decisions that affect their lives.

When women are at the table, making decisions, they bring changes that benefit entire societies and nations.

The International Council of Women participated in these Important Events:

On 11 March 2019 (8:30AM – 10:00AM) there was the NGO CSW63 Orientation Session. Venue: 2nd Floor, UN Church Center (777 UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017. 2nd Floor.)

On 10 March 2019 (9:00AM – 3:30 PM) there was the NGO CSW Consultation Day at Tribeca-Performing Arts Center, BMCC Borough of Manhattan Community College. 199 Chambers St, New York, NY 10007.

On 10 March 2019 (6:00PM – 8:00PM) there was the International Council of Women’s Dinner Reception at “The Kunjip” (32 W 32nd St, New York, NY 10001, USA)

On 12 March 2019 (6:00PM-8:00PM) there was the NGO CSW63 Forum Reception at The New Yorker Hotel (481 8th Avenue, NY 10001)

On 14 March 2019 (6:00PM-8:00PM) there was ICW-CIF Side Event at the Conference Room 11, UN Main Building with the Topic: “Social Protection for Women’s Empowerment”

On 15 March 2019 (8:30AM – 10:00AM) there was the ICW-CIF Parallel Event on 2nd Floor, Church Centre with the Topic: “Social Protection Measures on Health, and Violence Against Women.”

On 21 March 2019 (11.30 – 12.45) there was the ICW and WHO Office ‘Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and Universal Health Coverage’ in Conference Room A, United Nations Headquarters.

The Closing remarks by United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, to the 63rd session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York City can be found on [www.unwomen.org](http://www.unwomen.org)

The Commission on the Status of Women is one of the largest annual gathering of global leaders, non-profit organizations, private sector actors, UN partners and activists from around the world, focusing on the status of rights and empowerment of all women and girls, everywhere.



## International Women's Day Seminar

The National Council of Women in collaboration with Kummissjoni Nisa Qalbisti Socjeta Filarmonika Pinto Banda San Sebastjan organized a seminar to commemorate International Women's Day on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2019 at Qormi Pinto Band Club. The seminar entitled "Think equal, build smart, innovate for Change" discussed Women's health issues, healthy eating and Female dress history in Malta.

Mary Gaerty NCW President in her opening speech said that everyone present should be aware of the European Pillar of Social Rights. She said that the European Pillar of Social Rights is about delivering new and more effective rights for citizens and it has 3 main categories: Equal opportunities and access to the labour market, Fair working conditions and Social protection and inclusion. She informed the participants that booklets and other promotional material has been given to them during registration so that they will become more aware of their rights and the twenty key principles upon which the Social Pillar is built.

Dr. Chiara Frendo Balzan, a Gynaecologist, women's health and sexual health specialist explained that it is very important for women to keep regular health checkups as they increase the chances for living a longer, healthier life. Women should not prolong medical appointments or procedures, they should be aware of the consequences and be mindful to keep on top of their checkups, no matter how inconvenient they may be.

Dr Karen Mugliett, a Home Economist and lecturer in Nutrition, Family and Consumer Studies at the University of Malta gave a presentation about healthy lifestyles throughout life. She highlighted that although we lead hectic lifestyles preparing a healthy snack is important for our wellbeing. She said that vegetables are very nutritious and when in season they can be so cheap. They have excellent source of vitamins and dietary fibre and extremely low in calories.

Ms Caroline Tonna an art historian and curator at Palazzo Falson Historic House Museum Mdina gave a very interesting



and visual presentation about female dress history. She covered briefly the period between the 18th and 19th century from different aspects and gave information on the rich textiles and trimmings used for adornment. She also pointed out on how the clothes relate to the individual taste, wealth, identity and status of those who wore them. The Maltese had great European influence in their dress code. Although they adopted modern European fashion trends the Maltese continued to preserve the use of the faldetta in everyday life. Towards the end the participants had the opportunity to see some very beautiful Maltese lace which Ms Tonna brought with her.

National Council of Women and Kummissjoni Nisa Qalbisti would like to thank all the speakers for making this event so interesting and informative.

## MCAST signs Memorandum of Understanding with the National Council of Women

The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (Mcast) has signed a memorandum of understanding with the National Council of Women Malta.

The purpose of this Protocol is to bring together the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology and NCW to form a partnership to empower young and adult learners develop and cultivate skills, attitudes and values for the real world and become active citizens through activities contributing to social cohesion and community development.



## Commonwealth celebrates the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

2019 marks the 70th anniversary of the formation of the Commonwealth as it is configured today, with old ties and new links enabling cooperation towards social, political and economic development which is both inclusive and sustainable. The values and principles around which the 53 member countries and their 2.4 billion people connect are brought together in the Commonwealth Charter.

The theme 'A Connected Commonwealth' encourages collaboration to protect natural resources and the environment – particularly, with the adoption in 2018 of the Commonwealth Blue Charter, of the ocean which connects so many member countries. Under the Connectivity Agenda for Trade and Investment there is increased cooperation on trade and investment towards inclusive economic empowerment so that all people, particularly women, youth and marginalised communities, are able to share the fruit of progress and prosperity.

Why are we celebrating?

In the 70 years since this reformulation, the relevance and value of the relationship has been reaffirmed and consolidated. The creation of the Commonwealth Secretariat in 1965 and the ever expanding number of professional and advocacy Commonwealth organisations reflect this relevance.

Commonwealth Member Countries are supported by a network of more than 80 intergovernmental, civil society, cultural and professional organizations. The Commonwealth Women's Network (CWN) is one of them. It brings together women and gender focused civil society organizations from around the Commonwealth to promote justice, peace and human rights, empower women and young people, support decision makers and address threats such as climate change, inequalities and social injustice.

But most significant is the expansion of Commonwealth membership from eight countries in 1949 to 53 in 2019 – meaning 33 per cent of people on the planet belong to the Commonwealth and have cause for birthday celebrations!



The Secretary-General, Patricia Scotland, will host a garden party at Marlborough House, the Commonwealth's headquarters, on 14 June to celebrate the 70th anniversary. She said: "In celebrating 70 years of the Commonwealth we recall with pride and satisfaction the impressive record of impact and achievement which have brought sustainable development to the people of our diverse family of nations, with ever more inclusive progress and prosperity."

## “Celebrating Women, Art and Cultures”

The National Council of Women joined the China Cultural Centre in Valletta in celebrating this year's International Women's Day. A remarkable artistic exhibition entitled "Innocence, Tranquillity and Beauty", inaugurated in the presence of the Chinese Ambassador, brought together women from various streams of life, distinguished guests, art enthusiasts and critics including E.V. Borg. Artistic paintings by Debbie Bonello a Maltese artist and Feng Xiwen a Chinese painter were exhibited in a manner to interplay and complement each other in terms of tone, culture and femininity.

NCW Executive Member Rebecca Wellman was the guest of honour and a speech during the notable evening. She explained how in bringing together different pieces of art, two women hailing from different countries evidenced the grace, beauty and greatness of their femininity. The evening, she remarked, was yet another example where women stood out as pioneers and promoters of dialogue and respect.

Ms Wellman congratulated the China Cultural Centre for choosing such a remarkable and brilliant way to celebrate Women's Day. Providing women more space to exhibit their talents and opportunities to showcase their work is the way forward for a sensible country. She invited the public to be proactive and to inspire other members of society to work together as to actively support women to pursue their professional goals and talents. She explained that the evening endorsed and implicitly publicised the global effort to achieve Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). On behalf of NCW, Ms Wellman highlighted the fifth goal, that of gender equality, a target that could only be obtained through women's empowerment in different sectors, particularly related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEAM). Empowerment in view of the SDGs means doing the utmost to end poverty worldwide. Alternatively, the evening was intended to underline the 'richness' in fostering a culture of dialogue, respect and empowerment.



# The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)

## *Finland is a ‘calm and steady hand’ at Council of Europe helm, says President*

In a turbulent Europe, PACE President Liliane Maury Pasquier has welcomed the “calm and steady hand” of Finland at the helm of the Council of Europe during the Finnish Presidency of the organisation.

Speaking at the end of an official visit to Finland, she said: “Over the last three days in Helsinki I have appreciated the ‘sense and sensibility’ of my Finnish interlocutors. I look forward to supporting the Finnish priorities of strengthening Europe’s system of human rights and the rule of law, promoting equality and women’s rights, and the focus on openness and inclusiveness and on young people and the prevention of radicalisation.”

She continued: “I was able to hold discussions with the Speaker of the Parliament, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and met with the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Finnish Parliament. We discussed approaches to current international challenges, including strategies to promote dialogue with countries where human rights challenges risk affecting the Council of Europe’s values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.”

“I was particularly pleased to be able to launch, in the setting of the Finnish Parliament, the hashtag initiative focusing on combating sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Europe, #Not In My Parliament, with the Speaker of the Finnish Parliament.”

“All European parliaments must send a clear message of zero tolerance for intimidation, sexist behaviour, harassment and gender-based violence, wherever it occurs. This initiative can also be an encouragement for others outside parliaments. Why not #NotInMyTown, #NotInMyUniversity, #NotInMyTeam, and so on?”

### Sharia versus the Convention on Human Rights: protect human rights regardless of religious practices

PACE’s Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights is greatly concerned that Sharia law, including provisions clearly contrary to the European Convention on Human Rights, is applied officially or unofficially in several Council of Europe member states, in all or part of their territory.

In particular, it expressed great concern that three Council of Europe member states - Albania, Azerbaijan and Turkey - as well as Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco and Palestine, whose parliaments enjoy ‘Partner for Democracy’ status with PACE, are signatories to the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam of 1990.

Although not legally binding, this Declaration “has symbolic value and political significance in terms of human rights policy under Islam” yet it “fails to reconcile Islam with universal human rights, especially insofar as it maintains Sharia law as its unique source of reference” and does not recognise certain rights, the committee said in a resolution adopted today.

The countries concerned should consider withdrawing from the Cairo Declaration. They should make use of all available means to make statements that the 1990 Cairo Declaration has no effect on their domestic legal orders that may be inconsistent with their obligations as Parties to the European Convention on Human Rights, or adopt a formal act which clearly establishes the Convention as a superior source of obligatory binding norms.

On the basis of a report by Antonio Gutierrez (Spain, SOC) on “The compatibility of Sharia law with the European Convention on Human Rights: can States Parties to the Convention be signatories to the ‘Cairo Declaration’?”, the committee called on the countries concerned « to protect human rights regardless of religious or cultural practices or traditions. »

The committee also expressed concern at the “judicial” activities of “Sharia Councils” in the United Kingdom. While welcoming the recommendations put forward in the conclusions of the Home Office Independent Review into the Application of Sharia Law in England and Wales, it called on the authorities to ensure that Sharia councils operate within the law, especially as it relates to the prohibition of discrimination against women.

Noting the legislative change in Greece which made the practice of Islamic sharia law in civil and inheritance matters optional for the Muslim minority, the committee called on the Greek authorities to monitor whether this legislative change will be sufficient to satisfy the requirements of the European Convention on Human Rights.

### No to discrimination in access to employment

The right to work is a fundamental right and the Council of Europe has repeatedly shown its commitment to respect for this right and for the principle of non-discrimination in this area. Yet discrimination in access to employment remains a real problem in member States, whatever the ground of discrimination at issue, PACE Committee on Equality said.

Following the proposals by the rapporteur Damien Thiéry (Belgium, ALDE), the parliamentarians said States should take general measures to help to create the conditions in which unemployed persons can compete on an equal footing in the labour market. They should ensure that antidiscrimination laws fully cover the field of employment and all grounds of discrimination, and provide for easily accessible remedies for victims of discrimination in this field. According to the Committee, they should also adopt and implement integrated policies designed to promote access to employment for disadvantaged groups.

The draft resolution underlines that States must also respond to discriminatory behaviour by employers. It recommends that they legislate and implement policies to promote the use of direct tools such as anonymous CVs, unconscious bias training and diversity audits in companies; that they use indirect means such as employment subsidies, diversity labels and imposing a public sector equality duty; and that they support initiatives of public and private companies aiming to promote diversity and convey positive messages about diversity in society.

*Extracts from the report by Brigitte LE GOUIS ECICW/CECIF at the Council of Europe*

# DIARY OF EVENTS

## January

- 1<sup>th</sup> New Year
- 7<sup>th</sup> Lifelong Learning Courses continue
- 9<sup>th</sup> Labour Party Christmas Reception Mary Gaerty attended
- 10<sup>th</sup> Nationalist Party Christmas Drinks Mary Gaerty attended
- 11<sup>th</sup> Reception on USS Arlington at Pinto Wharf Mary Gaerty attended
- 14<sup>th</sup> MCESD CS committee meeting Mary Gaerty attended
- 21<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee Meeting
- 26<sup>th</sup> NCW Annual General Meeting

## February

- 5<sup>th</sup> CCWR Meeting at the Auberge d'Aragon 12
- 12<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee Meeting at NCW
- 13<sup>th</sup> Signing of MOU with MCAST during the Launch of MCAST CSR
- 13<sup>th</sup> Promoting Global Entrepreneurship Summit 2019 invitation from the Netherlands and US Embassies Mary Gaerty attended
- 15<sup>th</sup> Consultation session on Hate Speech Migrants Commission
- 15<sup>th</sup> Discussion on the Report on Work-Life Balance by David Casa at Dar l-Ewropa
- 20<sup>th</sup> Skills Assessment Consultation Meeting
- 21<sup>th</sup> European Pillar of Social Rights Networking event in Brussels Mary Gaerty attended
- 26<sup>th</sup> EmPOWER meeting Mary Gaerty and Doris Bingley participated

## March

- 1<sup>th</sup> European Parliament Office Public Discussion on the European Pillar of Social Rights Mary Gaerty invited on the panel and Doris Bingley and Marie Demicoli attended
- 5<sup>th</sup> CCWR meeting at the Auberge d'Aragon Mary Gaerty and Doris Bingley attended

- 6<sup>th</sup> NCPE Conference Avvanz fil-Karriera Opportunitajiet ugwali Grace Attard attended
- 7<sup>th</sup> NCW and Kummissjoni Nisa Qalbisti Seminar to commemorate IWD
- 9<sup>th</sup> Press Conference emPOWER Network Group for MEPs and Local Councils nominees. Mary Gaerty, Doris Bingley, Rebecca Wellman and Therese Cassola attended
- 10<sup>th</sup> Għaqda Pensjonati Annual General Meeting
- 10<sup>th</sup> IWD Celebration Mass at St Patrick's Church
- 11<sup>th</sup> BPW Careers Day Grace Attard attended
- US Embassy Buffet Lunch in Honour of Dr Trace Prince Mary Gaerty attended
- 14<sup>th</sup> Business Breakfast 'Sustainability Measures to Protect Employment'
- 15<sup>th</sup> Reception to celebrate St Patrick's Day organised by the Irish Embassy
- Violence in our society – Developing evidence based Practice Interventions Conference at the Auberge d'Aragon Doris Bingley attended
- 21<sup>th</sup> European Commission Representation Malta 2019 Country Report, the 2021-2027 cohesion Policy Funding in Malta Doreen Borg Zammit attended
- Gender Issues Committee Creating Spaces to All
- 22<sup>th</sup> President of Malta hosted a reception at Monte Kristo estate
- 25<sup>th</sup> CCWR meeting
- 26<sup>th</sup> Launch of Gender Balance in Parliament Reform Doris Bingley and Marie Demicoli attended
- 28<sup>th</sup> Migrant Integration information Session
- 29<sup>th</sup> Verdala St Margaret College Senior School Bormla debate on equality between Women and Men. Mary Gaerty was on the panel.

## Politics Needs Women

**emPOWER** is a platform consisting of women's organisations which was launched on 11 October 2017 under the initiative and with the full support of Her Excellency, Marie Louise Coleiro, President of Malta.

On 9<sup>th</sup> March 2019 the platform met MEP and Local Council candidates in front of the Maltese Parliament Building. H.E. Marie Louise Coleiro, President of Malta addressed the group.

Representatives of emPOWER organised this event to raise awareness, and encourage the public to get to know the candidate and vote for them.

This show of unity event attracted many members of the public.



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## Directive on Work Life Balance

The National Council of Women is pleased that the proposal for a Directive on work-life balance for parents and carers has just been approved by the European Parliament at its Plenary session in Brussels with a strong vote in favour. A victory for families across the European Union

## The National Council of Women welcomes these New Members

<i>Name and Surname</i>	<i>Sponsored by</i>	<i>Locality</i>
Marylene Borg	Doris Bingley	Marsascala
Fattum Almahdawi	Marie Demicoli	Luqa
Ashebane Fathiya	Marie Demicoli	San Ġwann
Maureen Calleja	Marie Demicoli	Sliema
Rita Paris	Doris Bingley	Sliema
Milena Stojanovic	Doris Bingely	San Pawl il-Baħar
Monica Mifsud	Marie Demicoli	Santa Venera

## Food Handling Certificate Award Ceremony

*at the National Council of Women Centre  
on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2019 at 11.00am*

*Members and friends are invited.*

**Happy  
Easter !**

*The President and the  
Executive Committee  
wishes all the  
members and friends  
a Very Happy Easter*