



Founded 1964

N-Mara

Newsletter of the National Council of Women - Malta



International Women's Day 2022

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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*International Women's Day Celebration at
St Patrick's Church, Sliema (photo courtesy
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NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN - MALTA

Kunsill Nazzjonali tan-Nisa
Pope Pius XII Flats, Mountbatten Street
Blata l-Bajda HMR 1579, MALTA
Tel: 21 248 881/21 Tel/Fax: 21 246 982 E-mail: ncwmalta@camline.net.mt
<http://www.ncwmalta.com>

EDITORIAL

Dear NCW Members

What an exciting couple of weeks it's been! We're excited to bring you this Easter Edition of our newsletter as a testament to the Council's hard work and initiatives.

On International Women's Day, at the start of March, our Council's President, Ms Doreen Borg Zammit, together with members of the NCW Executive committee presented a beautiful hamper made up of various toiletries to each lady attending the services of the Soup Kitchen OFM – Valletta, made possible by the kindness and generosity of our sponsors.

Following this, the Council held a well-attended Mass celebrated at St Patrick's Church, Sliema where His Excellency President Dr George Vella and First Lady, Mrs Miriam Vella, were welcomed by the NCW's Executive Council, together with several other VIPs. This celebration kicked off an eventful start to Spring, with a plethora of other notable events that took place locally.

Election day and the excitement leading up to it took place a few weeks later, which brought around new proposals. We welcomed familiar faces to Parliament and a couple of new faces that we hope will inject new blood and ideas for the betterment of our Country. However, election time brought about some instances that proved disappointing for gender equality efforts, most notably the reduction of women in politics compared to last year when in fact efforts were made to increase women's participation. This led some to wonder whether the mention of introducing gender quotas had the contrary effect as opposed to why it was intended. Was this a result of the quota imposed, leading constituents to not prioritise women candidates? Possibly the shorter time to campaign had an impact on this result - Maybe females in politics face more scrutiny than their male counterparts, so women need more time to prove to constituents that they deserve votes? One can only speculate on this and hope that we will have better and more equal representation in future elections.

Personally, the highlight of the last few weeks was Pope Francis's visit to Malta and Gozo, fostering a sense of love and hope in the Maltese, a welcomed refreshed sense of spirituality aiding to reset tensions, leading up to Holy Week. In his first speech, Pope Francis encouraged Malta to continue to fight corruption, foster honesty in politics, and stop unbridled construction and land speculation. He spoke about the importance of forgiveness and readjusting our spiritual compass. Inspiring words of wisdom, well timed in our Country's current affairs. I am both proud and honoured to have seen His Holiness so close in Gozo, making it a truly lovely start to April.

I invite you to prepare a piece of Figolla and a nice cup of tea while you read through the interesting articles that we have prepared for you in this Newsletter. I'll also remind you to like our Facebook Page and interact with our posts, as we love hearing from you!

On behalf of the National Council of Women, we wish you and your loved ones a Happy Easter! May the miracle of this beautiful and sacred day stay with you all year.



Lara Gail Dougall
Editorial Board

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President's Message

Dear ladies and friends

Time flies and as the months go by it is again time for another newsletter just as spring is revealing itself. I hope that the weather has brought sunshine in your lives and Easter will be a new beginning especially where it concerns the fight against the COVID 19 pandemic

During the first three months of this year the members of the Executive Committee continued to participate in different fora to ensure that the voice and rights of women and girls are heard, and the message driven home to those involved in decision making.

Unfortunately, this year started with the tragic femicide of Paulina Dembska in Sliema, followed by the murder of Rita Ellul in Gozo. These issues are top priority on the agenda of NCW and we are constantly working on them. In fact, femicide, gender equality and peace and security, were among the topics which formed part of the discussions that NCW had with distinguished guests that visited our premises as part of International Women's Day.

Although we have the privilege to celebrate International Women's Day, our friends in other countries don't all have the same opportunity due to too many conflicts around the world, which find countless women and children trying to flee from their country to find a secure refuge for their families.

The peace and security dialogue shall be seen between all nations, especially at these moments with the ongoing war triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine which is literally happening on the doorstep of Europe. We need more women in leadership positions to promote more dialogue, peace, gender equality, and opportunities for all. It will be vital for the gender equality of today and in the future for more women to have a voice and participate as equal team members in the decision-making process. The Security Council Resolution 1325 clearly acknowledges that women's participation and empowerment are critical components for the maintenance of peace and security.

It was a blessing that this year we succeeded in celebrating International Women's Day in person and several activities were prepared to mark this occasion. This was achieved due to the relaxation of certain COVID-19 restrictions.

On Sunday 6th March a Mass was held at Saint Patrick's Church in Sliema and celebrated by Fr Eric Cachia. Attending this celebration were the President of Malta and First Lady Mrs Vella, other distinguished guests, the women's section from

the Malta Police and the Armed Forces of Malta, the Executive Committee and affiliated organisations and members.

It was a great honour to be invited by H.E. Ms Cathy Ward the British High Commissioner for tea and H. E. Ms Sangeeta Bahadur, the Indian High Commissioner for lunch. During which, we discussed women's issues and the history of the council and its present and future work.

At the National Council of Women Learning Centre our Educational programme continued with in person sessions. Some of those attending NCW classes felt that online teaching is not as good as face-to-face teaching. They felt that the tutor has more possibility to interact with the class and therefore they are able to get the full benefit of the lecture. The Food Handling Courses have become very popular as participants are awarded a license at the end of the course, with the possibility of working at any catering establishment and also as carers.

NCW has been in the forefront in promoting women to attain posts in decision making positions especially in the political sphere, however after almost sixty years, the situation has remained practically the same. The recent National elections has shown that only four women were elected on their own merits, less than women elected in 2017. The gender mechanism approved in the past legislature will help to appoint up to a total of twelve women to complete the number of parliamentarians of both sides of the House. One must examine what are the obstacles of electing women as parliament representatives?

On behalf of the National Council of Women, I would like to congratulate all the members of parliament that were elected and all those that will be working for the benefit of the Maltese Society.

As we remember the hardship brought about with the war in Ukraine and express solidarity with the people of Ukraine, NCW continues to work towards its aim to bring everyone together to celebrate the social, economic, cultural, sustainable, and political achievements of women while at the same time praying for peace, inclusivity, and gender equality in today's society.

Doreen Borg Zammit
President



National Council of Women Activities for International Women's Day 2022

Foreign Dignitaries visit NCW for International Women's Day

During the last week of February, an Argentinian delegation from the Ministry of Women, Gender and Diversity paid a visit to the National Council of Women to exchange best practices on gender equality in the private sector between LatAm (Latin American) and Europe Institutions. The group were led by Dr Laura Martinez Alvero PHD, a gender expert consultant for Eurosocal +.

NCW President Doreen Borg Zammit together with NCW representatives spoke about the many milestones of the National Council of Women as well as current issues affecting the Maltese society from a gender perspective.



French Ambassador

On 24th February 2022, The National Council of Women welcomed Her Excellency Agnes Von Der Muhll, Ambassador of France and her delegation to our premises in Blata L- Bajda. Before being appointed Ambassador of France to Malta, HE von der Muhll was the Spokesperson of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and Director for Communication and Press Department. She was also the Senior Official for gender equality at the Ministry. H.E von der Muhl was keen to discuss our organisation; its activities, aims and accomplishments, as well as gender equality, domestic abuse issues and also Maltese women in Parliament. Her delegation was particularly interested in the volunteer sector in Malta and how best to encourage more young people towards a volunteering role. Present at the meeting was HE von der Muhll and her delegation, NCW President Doreen Borg Zammit, Hon General Secretary Josette Barbara Cardona, Vice President of International Council of Women Doris Bingley and Assistant Hon General Secretary Marie Demicoli.



Greek Ambassador

As part of International Women's Day activities, The National Council of Women welcomed Her Excellency Tasia Athanasiou, the new Ambassador for the Hellenic Republic to Malta. Prior to joining the Greek Embassy, H.E Athanasiou was the Greek Special Envoy to Syria. When she was Greece's Ambassador to Damascus from 2009 till 2012 she was responsible for closing down the mission due to security concerns. HE Athanasiou has also held the position of Ambassador to Russia, Poland and Italy.

During our meeting with Her Excellency, NCW President Doreen Borg Zammit and ICW Vice President Doris Bingley, Vice President Grace Attard and Assistant Hon General Secretary Marie Demicoli discussed

NCW's work in the community, the courses being held at the centre, domestic violence issues, the proposed Femicide law being discussed in Parliament and the challenges that women in Malta face today especially working mothers.



Stories of Home

As part of International Women's Day celebrations, the National Council of Women Malta invited Janette Marsh, 67, who was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in late 2020 to launch her memoirs 'Stories of Home'. This project led by Andrew Borg Wirth and Marija Grech follows Janette's journey since diagnosis.

During the well-attended launch at NCW premises, Janette spoke about her challenging and painful ordeal undergoing chemotherapy and surgery. She also highlighted the importance of empathy between doctor and patient. Her aim is to raise awareness about ovarian cancer whilst also generating funds for the Malta Community Chest Fund.

The National Council of Women would like to thank Helga Ellul who initially suggested that NCW host the event to launch the awe-inspiring story of Janette's battle with cancer.



National Council of Women gifts an essentials pack to women at the Soup Kitchen OFM – Valletta for International Women's Day

On this occasion of International Women's Day, the National Council of Women's President, Ms. Doreen Borg Zammit, together with members of NCW Executive committee presented a beautiful hamper made up of various toiletries to each lady attending the services of the Soup Kitchen OFM – Valletta on Tuesday 8th March 2022

A dining room called "Soup Kitchen", which is run by Franciscan Friars, started serving food to insecure and homeless guests in late August. During the height of the coronavirus pandemic, this humanitarian initiative was set up in Valletta to serve nourishment for both the body and the soul to those who need it. Apart from offering free lunch and dinner to the needy, it offers shower and laundry facilities, a barber, as well as legal and psychiatric support. People from all walks of life are welcomed with dignity. 91% of those using this service are Maltese and the rest foreigners. Fr. Marcellino makes it a point to get to know all attendees on an individual basis. We greatly recommend others to visit and be humbled by this experience.

The National Council of Women would like to thank VJ Salomone Consumer lines, VJ Salomone Marketing, Vivian Corporation, and Tal Lira Fgura for their kind sponsorship. This wouldn't have been possible without their generosity and support to the Council's initiative.



Donation to the National Council of Women

Mrs Maryanne Micallef Cardona, Director of Tas-Sapun Eco Friendly Store, gave a monetary donation to the National Council of Women and also 50 sample bottles of one of their Eco-friendly products. Tas-Sapun is a store which minimize single use package but also seeks durability and quality over quantity. The Shop only sells tried and tested eco-friendly and vegan products, which are non-toxic, hypoallergenic and good for everyone including kids and pets. The National Council of Women would like to thank Mrs Maryanne Micallef Cardona for her kind donation and wish her great success in this new venture which contributes to a healthy environment not only to its customers but also for Malta.



Maryanne Micallef Cardona and
NCW Hon. Gen. Secretary Josette Barbara Cardona

International Women's Day 2022

"Peace and Equality in Today's Society"

The National Council of Women of Malta was founded in 1964. It is a non-governmental organisation that is formed and made up of individual members and national organisations. The NCW is a coordinating body that aims to present a broad and comprehensive view of women's opinions on matters of public interest. Its aims and objectives are to promote amongst women dignity, knowledge, education, and participation in decision-making to improve the quality of life for all.

NCW works to promote equality of opportunity for women and enable them to participate effectively at all levels and in all aspects of the life of the community. It provides a forum for women of different backgrounds and experiences to come together as individuals and as representatives of affiliated organisations, to exchange information and ideas, formulate policy, educate and promote change. National Council of Women also bring everyone together through activities to celebrate the social, economic, and political achievements of women, whilst appealing for peace, inclusion, and gender equality in today's society.

Global challenges such as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, are evidently impacting the dynamics of society. The sustainability of the economic world is of paramount importance to achieve equality and social justice. Future careers especially in STEM and green economy, are traditionally and predominantly male-orientated, so women should be encouraged to engage in these career prospects. Industries are moving in that direction, therefore both employers and educational institutions should ensure that there are equal training and

employment opportunities to enhance gender balance.

In 2015, the United Nations (UN) adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a universal call for action to end poverty and protect the planet. The 17 SDGs aim to create an ambience for the world population to enjoy peace and prosperity by the year 2030. Women have a significant role to play in all the SDGs. The most prominent one is actually SDG number 5, which refers to *Gender Equality*. This goal aims to achieve gender equality amongst women and girls, thus bring to an end all gender related discrimination and exploitation. This SDG also aims to strengthen education and employment accessibility for women. Although women and girls in many developed countries have achieved several milestones in terms of rights, in some instances, females are at a disadvantage when compared to males (e.g. the gender pay gap).

Sustainable development is tightly interlinked with both gender equality and peace however without peace there will not be a sustainable tomorrow. Unfortunately, there are too many conflicts around the world. Women and children flee from their country to find a secure place, leaving their life and prospects behind.

Lastly, NCW wishes to congratulate all the women candidates who are contesting in the General Election of March 2022. We at NCW are hoping to see more women elected in our parliament, so the parliament will be more representative of the Maltese society.

Doreen Borg Zammit
President
National Council of Women



Talk on Empowerment at the Qawra Youth Hub

**Everyone has something good in them!
Some hide it, some don't take any notice of it;
But it's always there.
Bring out the best in yourself.**

Madre Tereza

During the week of International Women's Day, NCW was asked to address a group of women who meet regularly through a community outreach programme, on empowerment. A member of NCW, Vivien Cassar gave a power point presentation inviting the participants to engage in a discussion on their ability to reach high personal and collective aspirations and goals.

Empowered persons recognize and identify their own strengths and the strengths of others while gaining knowledge necessary for them to take control of their own lives. Unfortunately, those who carry the baggage of constant derision by significant others find they do not have any confidence to even believe they can achieve their ambitions in life. The participants were given the space to explore their experiences through the following points:

Know Yourself / Value Yourself / Plan and Learn / Act / Experience Outcomes

Vivien Cassar, NCW Member

International Women's Day Celebration

Mass Homily by Rev. Fr Eric Cachia

From Dante's View in the United States, one can journey down to the lowest spot in the US, Bad Water, or one can move to the highest peak, Mount Whitney. From Dante's View, any movement must be in either one or the other direction: downwards or upwards. Dante's View is symbolic of where we stand at the beginning of Lent: a time for choice, for deepening our understanding of our faith, for reflection and renewal.

Like Jesus, we are all faced with the harsh and liberating effort of choosing between what is humane and not, between investing more or less in life. "To choose", in the Hebrew tradition implied a strong legal framework; a rigid approach, an either/or position. In today's Gospel, through the temptations and choices faced by Jesus in the desert, we are presented with a paradigm shift. Jesus redesigns the world of human relationships: the relationship with myself and creation, with God and with others. "Choosing", in this new scenario, opens us to a new reality. It is not simply and exclusively choosing between good and evil. It is too little and too simple. It is an invitation to engage, to enter into dialogue with what is good but it is not the best, with what is possible but does not encompass wholeness, with what is productive but not necessarily fruitful. In this day and age, as Christians and as people of good will, our choices rely but also supersede a black or white mentality. "Choosing", in this new sense, means being grounded and fully embracing the roots of my journey.

In the first reading we read: "A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous". Already 5 years ago, on the 60th birthday of the European Union, Pope Francis was reflecting on the danger when society is facing a "vacuum of values". "Choosing", in today's Gospel, implies a leap of faith. Believing in a God who is merciful, compassionate and forgiving even when our decisions, mistakes and shortcomings suggest otherwise. This type of choosing requires that we look for solutions in a change of humanity; otherwise we would be dealing merely with symptoms.

Pope Francis reminds us that we are invited to replace consumption with sacrifice, greed with generosity, wastefulness with a spirit of sharing, an asceticism which entails learning to give, and not simply to give up. Today's dialogue between Jesus and Satan reminds us that we need to strive more on the patrimony of ideals and spiritual values with greater passion and vigour. Fr Eric Cachia SDB | NCW 2022 It is a way of loving, of moving gradually away from what I want to what God's world needs. It is the liberation from fear, greed and compulsion. It is precisely the opposite of Satan's temptation: if you bow down before me, all this will be yours. The spirit of evil establishes a culture of trade. God acts differently: he never trades his gifts, he gives lovingly without clauses or conditions. Meister Eckart reminds us: God cannot give things, because he "cannot give, other than himself". And Catherine of Siena adds: "by giving himself to us he gives us everything".

In one of his sermons, Eckhart urges us to "enter our own 'ground of humility', which is our lowest part, but it is also our highest part, since God is present there and raises us up, and it is no less our innermost part, for it is our own essence". It is like Dante's View in the States. Can we see the parallelism between



today's message and what is currently going on around us? Can we see how greed, exhibitionism of abused and misused power, how the heart of stone which cries for love and compassion along with the frailty of humankind have created a culture of alienation and pain? Humanity seeks an answer...the answer was once again reiterated today: "The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart". God is near even when the fog of Satan's oppression blinds our immediate connection with God. The answer is not in producing utterances but building a relationship with a God who was tried and tested in the person of Christ, His Son, who became man and who still invites us to allow Him in our endeavours. Wealth, status and power, for their own sake, reduce other people to things.

Today we are thanking God for the 65th birthday of the Republic of Ghana which became independent on this very day, in 1957. It is significant to thank God for such an occasion which deconstructs in the beauty of freedom, justice, friendliness, respect, honesty and solidarity. Contrastingly we are following the drama in Ukraine as the veil of evil unfolds and makes visible the heaviness of a heart of stone. In addition, as we ponder on the Word of God and celebrate Women's Day, how can we forget Paulina Demska, murdered two months ago just down the road? How can we forget all women serving their families and their country in so many different roles? How can we forget the women whose dignity and equality is jeopardised in the name of God?

The Liturgy of today and the celebrations which brought us together remind us that, mindful of our challenging context as well as embracing a loving God, we can, as the 2022 theme for International Women's Day suggest, foster a world free of bias, stereotypes, and discrimination. A world that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive. A world where difference is valued and celebrated. Fr Eric Cachia SDB | NCW 2022 Lord, fill us with your peace so that as we journey onwards, we would pour out your love and grace to others. Make us agents of change; help us replace greed with benevolence and altruism; fear with a restful heart and compulsion with harmony. Amen

International Wome



n's Day Celebrations



International Women's Day 2022

ICW Statement

ICW Statement to mark International Women's Day 2022 March 8, 2022 The International Council of Women, a Non-Governmental Organization in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, has worked diligently to advance equal rights for women since its establishment in 1888. The Council is steadfastly committed to full implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, advancing the status of women, and the removal of all forms of discrimination against women and girls.

The International Council of Women's objectives are definitely in line with the theme chosen by UN WOMEN to mark the International Women's Day 2022: "Gender Equality today for a sustainable tomorrow"; a topic of primary importance for the building of a more sustainable future for all. Gender inequalities still remain deep-rooted in many societies. Structural barriers in the economic, social, political and environmental spheres produce and reinforce these inequalities, resulting in a lack of equal access to the workforce, as well as occupational segregation and gender wage gaps. Very often, women and girls are still widely denied access to basic education and health care, are victims of domestic violence and discrimination, and are under-represented in relevant important political and economic decision-making processes.

Despite the many formidable challenges, women have a critical role to play in all the Sustainable Development Goals; and the need to recognize gender equality is especially represented in Goal 5. This goal, known as "the stand-alone gender goal", is dedicated to achieving gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, and detailing within the single goal a full range of issues of general concern. It is true that effective actions have brought some positive change. However, all too often the hard earned achievements in the field of Gender Equality have suffered from a serious backlash; particularly in the last two years of a worldwide pandemic and an increase of violence and unrest in certain parts of the globe, as the case of Afghanistan has shown, and now the crisis in Ukraine. Sustainable development is tightly interlinked with both gender equality and peace; without peace there will not be a sustainable tomorrow.

Sadly, there are too many places of conflicts around the world to mention one by one and the most recent news are filled with heartbreaking images of many women and children trying to flee from Ukraine in search of safety and survival. Women and girls suffer inordinately during and after armed conflicts, losing their fundamental human right to live in safety and peace. They have to face the overwhelming tasks of holding their families together after displacement, of providing food, clothing and shelter in destroyed areas, and the heightened risks of becoming widowed, as well as being victims of sexual violence and diseases.

Security Council Resolution 1325 clearly acknowledged that women's participation and empowerment are critical components for the maintenance of peace and security. Yet the gender gap in these peace mechanisms still persists. As such, members of the global community must hasten their implementation of this important Security Resolution through enforcing the various international humanitarian and human

rights laws and conventions that protect the rights of women and girls during and after conflicts, taking special measures to protect them from all forms of violence, protecting the needs of women and girls in refugee camps and settlements and including women as full and equal participants in peace processes, including disarmament and rebuilding mechanisms.

The International Council of Women's affiliates diligently continue to struggle for women to gain opportunities to play a decisive role in addressing the challenges in the fields of politics, economics, and climate change. Clearly, women are indispensable in this process and must be included as strategic partners. The building of solid partnerships is unquestionably a key component of ensuring a positive sustainable future for all. Thus, there is a fundamental necessity to bring together a whole range of relevant participants: institutions, international and regional organizations, governments and even members of local communities, in order to form alliances and direct efforts towards achieving gender equality. Long-term advocacy and actions, in conjunction with specially designed policies and measures to promote the inclusion of women in the economy and polity, continue to be an urgent necessity that will contribute for a sustainable tomorrow. We need to ensure that women and girls are at the very heart of this matter, because the inequities and inequalities impacting on their health, opportunities and wellbeing are so persistent. This is, unfortunately, a much unfinished business and this should be the world's greatest challenge as we chart the path ahead.

To work towards meeting such challenge, one must recognize that good education is certainly a prerequisite for the fulfillment of human gender equality potentiality. However, although the gender gap in education is gradually closing, far too many girls are still denied schooling or have to drop out prematurely with few skills and even fewer future opportunities. With two thirds of the world's illiterate being women, overall gender equality cannot be achieved. Therefore, overcoming the gender inequalities and critical barriers, which prevent women and girls from exercising their rights and empowering themselves, must be at the heart of our efforts to create sustainable and resilient societies in order to build a sustainable future for us and our future generations. The International Council of Women joins UN WOMEN in stressing the belief that "Without gender equality today, a sustainable future, and an equal future, remains beyond our reach".

We at the International Council of Women recognize the supreme challenge of the times. Our hearts go out to those of you who have lost loved ones, those of you who have felt economic decline, those of you who have been denied a good education, those of you who have lost security and safety, those of you who have felt deterioration of equal rights and all the other despicable baggage that has come along with this pandemic and the increase in climate disasters, gender-based violence and armed conflicts around the globe. We feel with you, but don't let this defeat you. Rather than despair, we believe it is time to redouble our efforts to help build a just, peaceful and sustainable future. It is time to dig deep to help create what we know to be a better world.

The need to guarantee real rights of persons with disabilities to vote in EP elections

On 20 March 2019, the EESC sent its information report **Real rights of persons with disabilities to vote in EP elections to EU institutions and Member States**.

This report covers procedures in European elections, but similar or the same solutions are also applied in national parliamentary elections, local elections or referendums.

This Report was followed by the EESC own initiative opinion (Rapporteur: Krzysztof Pater (SOC/638) **The need to guarantee real rights of persons with disabilities to vote in EP elections**.

- ✓ The EESC hopes that this report will help EU countries draw up comprehensive solutions to remove legal and technical (organisational) barriers preventing some persons with disabilities from voting.
- ✓ The EESC is counting on this information being used by civil society organisations that are seeking to remove barriers to the exercise of voting rights by persons with disabilities, and on public authorities – often from local level – which can implement many practical arrangements without any changes to national law.

Summary of EESC Report

Current situation – barriers to exercising voting rights by persons with disability

In each of the 27 EU countries, there are laws or organisational arrangements which exclude some voters with disabilities from participating in EP elections.

- About 800 000 EU citizens from 16 Member States are, on account of national rules, deprived of the right to participate in EP elections because of their disabilities or mental health problems.
- The extent of this phenomenon is very uneven across individual countries.
- Millions of EU citizens have no possibility to vote because of organisational arrangements (technical barriers) which do not take into account the needs resulting from their disability.
- The main place of voting is the polling station. Many persons with disabilities, even when given the option of alternative, more convenient forms of voting, want to vote at a polling station, recognising it as the best form of civic participation.
- In 12 countries, this may not be possible, since national legislation does not allow the polling station designated on the basis of residence to be changed to another which can better accommodate the specific type of disability.
- In other countries, participation in elections is made difficult by a number of restrictions at polling stations.
- In eight Member States, anyone who cannot get to a polling station is not able to vote, as they do not have the option of an alternative form of voting (postal voting, voting by mobile ballot box or electronic voting). Three of these countries offer the possibility of voting by proxy.
- However, such a solution cannot be regarded as an adequate alternative. In fact, it does not allow a voter with disabilities to exercise their right to vote, but merely enables the voter to designate someone to whom they can delegate their vote.
- In 18 Member States, blind voters have no way of voting independently; they can only entrust somebody accompanying them to cast their vote on their behalf.

- Another factor preventing people from voting independently or discouraging them from doing so are specific rules and organisational arrangements – such as the absence of information adapted to different types of disability, obstacles to mobility in the polling station itself and burdensome administrative procedures – governing how voters can exercise their right to vote in an appropriately adapted form.
- If the best practices from across all countries were implemented, an ideal system would emerge in which every EU citizen with disabilities not only would have the full possibility to vote but also would be able to choose for themselves the most convenient way in which to vote.
- Current EU legislation already addresses a number of issues concerning EP elections. Thus, there are no formal obstacles to this legislation also including guarantees on voting options for persons with disabilities. In any case, however, there is a need for a formal EP legislative initiative and for it to be approved subsequently by all Member States.

Standards throughout the EU that would guarantee real voting rights for persons with disabilities, in accordance with Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The EESC calls on the EP, the European Council and Member States to urgently **amend the 1976 Electoral Act by clarifying the principles of universality, directness and secrecy of elections**, which would make it possible to implement standards throughout the EU that would guarantee real voting rights for persons with disabilities, in accordance with Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The standards should include at least the following:

- a ban on depriving people of the right to vote in EP elections on the grounds of disability or health status,
- obligation to provide information on voting rules in a form suitable to the needs resulting from the type of disability,
- allowing individuals unable to access their polling station due to their disability to vote independently outside the polling station,
- implementing solutions that would enable persons with disabilities in need of significant support – such as persons who are deafblind, blind, visually impaired or having limited manual dexterity – to vote independently, without relying on assistance from other people,
- the possibility of changing the designated polling station to one that is more suited to the needs of voters with disabilities,
- a person's right to freely choose a personal assistant who will support them in exercising their right to vote.

Implementing these rules will still give Member States broad discretionary powers but will nevertheless guarantee that as of 2024 every EU citizen will have the real right to elect their representative to the EP, regardless of nationality or country of residence.

Grace Attard
NCW Vice-President

Women4IT Closing the first Phase of the Project – Tech.mt

On Tuesday 22nd March 2022, Tech.mt Foundation Malta held the closing event of the first phase of the Women4IT Project, an initiative which has been going on for the past three years. Women4IT is a multi-stakeholder partnership funded by the Norwegian, Icelandic and Liechtenstein Foundation Youth Employment Program and aims to promote the involvement of young women in ICT professions and in digital works.

The event was held in the presence of all the participating stakeholders involved throughout all the various stages of the project. Participating women who received the training, prospective employers and assisting stakeholders, were among the attending audience.

During the event was explained the holistic ambition of the project which

revolved around the development of digital competences of young women at risk of exclusion from the labour market. This aspect was specifically highlighted by Ms Mary Gaerty from the National Council of Women. This ambitious challenge was contested through the development of eight different job profiles aimed at improving ICT skills in women. According to a preliminary study held in Malta by Dr Maria Brown, it emerged that Malta is to focus on five of the job profiles developed, for which Malta chose:

- Customer Support Service Representative
- Digital Media Specialist
- Junior Web Developer
- Project Administrator
- Software Tester



The aim of the Women4IT project aims to increase the employability of young women aged between 18 and 29 years in digital technologies and boost the opportunity to increase more female talent within the economic growth of the country.

The Women4IT Project is supported by 9 Partners from across Europe and training has been implemented across 7 European countries which are Latvia, Lithuania, Greece, Ireland, Romania, Spain, and Malta. The project is also supported by the European Centre for Women and Technology of Norway and DIGITALEUROPE of Belgium. Overall, throughout these years, the Women 4IT project, has assessed the digital skills of 1000+ women within these 7 countries, and provided them training on digital skills and personalized career guidance to around 700 of them.

More information about the project can be found on www.women4it.eu whilst access to the digital platform can be through www.digitaljobs.women4it.eu/



Ghanaian High Commissioner celebrates Ghana's 65th Independence

H.E. Barbara Akoukor Benisa, the Ghanaian High Commissioner celebrated Ghana's 65th Independence on 6th March 2022 during NCW IWD celebrations at St. Patrick's Church. Her Excellency presented a lovely flower arrangement with the colours of the Ghanaian flag during the Mass and joined NCW in prayers for peace. During the Reception H.E. Barbara

Akoukor Benisa presented a gift to Mrs. Miriam Vella spouse of the President of Malta H.E. Dr. George Vella and chocolates to NCW Executive Committee Members.

Republic of Ghana was formerly known as the Gold Coast in the

15th century a name given to it by the Portuguese due to the excessive availability of gold in the region. In 1874 Great Britain established control over some parts of the country assigning these areas the status of British Gold Coast. Ghana gained independence from Great Britain on 6th March 1957.



Message from ICW President Jungsook Kim on the invasion of Ukraine

Different people have different understanding of the justification, or lack thereof, for the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The causes of war are always complex. My focus here is not to join what appears to be essentially the global condemnation of Russia's aggression, but to emphasize the growing number of those who suffer. We cannot help but feel enormous sympathy for all the casualties, particularly for all the innocent women and children whose lives have been turned upside down if not destroyed.

As members of the International Council of Women, our hearts ache for them. When we see clips of fleeing moms with babies in arms, it hurts us deeply. We can literally feel their fear and anguish. When we see women hand in hand with their young family, walking mile after mile to safety in tears, we cry with them. Regarding neighboring countries which have graciously taken in hundreds of thousands of refugees, potentially millions, we express our gratitude and appreciation for their

kindness. Our strongest hope is that there can be a peaceful, just and speedy resolution of the conflict. But as we move toward that goal, it is imperative that we remain vigilant to the plight of women and children. They need and deserve our strongest support. Humanitarian action, we believe, is an important role that national councils of women can play in influencing policy.

As members of the global community, we at the International Council of Women will redouble our efforts to enforce the various international humanitarian and human rights laws and conventions that protect the rights of women and girls during and after conflicts. We will also do our best to stop the war and take the lead in establishing permanent peace with the power of women's cooperation and unity.



Femicide: Name it, count it, end it!

Femicide is the killing of women and girls because of their gender. It can include intentional homicides, such as the killing of women by their current or former partners, as well as unintentional killings, such as the death of a woman undergoing an unsafe abortion.

According to official data gathered by EIGE, 444 women across 10 EU Member States were killed by their intimate partners in 2020. EIGE has released a package to help EU countries gather solid data to prevent such killings. We need a common understanding of what counts as a femicide.

To help countries identify the different forms of femicide, EIGE's package includes a classification system, as well as guidance on how to identify the 'gender dimension' of a female homicide.

While no EU Member State currently has a legal definition of femicide, some countries do recognise gendered motivations behind killings of women in their laws, for example because of hatred on the grounds of her sex. This has allowed EIGE to assess the different ways EU countries measure femicide and provide recommendations on how to improve.

A common EU-wide definition of femicide would help EU Member States identify these gender-based killings, which currently vanish into female homicide statistics. Knowing the motivations and circumstances that lie behind the killing of women and girls can help EU governments better protect potential victims, as well as punish and deter perpetrators.

We need rich and comparable data to properly measure femicide

The more data we have about the killings of women and girls, the more likely it is that we will be able to correctly identify femicides. And the more EU countries

collect the same type of data, the more information we have on the motivations and circumstances behind these killings.

EIGE advises EU countries on a set of variables to collect at a minimum in order to establish whether a killing is a femicide, and to gain more understanding about the context behind it. Important variables include: demographic information on victims and perpetrators; the relationship between victim and perpetrator; the context of the killing, such as whether there were any child witnesses; and the presence of any gendered risk factors such as dependence or previous violence.

Laws and data collection practices are slowly improving to better capture femicides

EIGE's femicide package finds that more refined laws and data collection practices on femicide are emerging in certain EU Member States. There is also increased awareness of the usefulness of statistics and their importance in supporting the planning and monitoring of policies.

To raise awareness about violence against women and kick-off the '16 days of activism against gender-based violence' campaign, important buildings around the world will be lit up in orange. EIGE will light up Europe House in Vilnius on 25 November, to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. In Brussels, the European Commission, the Council of the European Union, the European Parliament and the European External Action Service will be lit up the same day. The theme of this year's campaign is 'Orange the World: End violence against women now!'



Commonwealth Women's Network joins the Children's Interest Group

New Children's Interest Group Formed

As Commonwealth Day approaches on 14th March, we are proud to announce the formation of a Commonwealth Children's Interest Group, which will be working to bring forward children's rights and protections on the international Commonwealth stage. It is now more relevant than ever to utilise the Commonwealth's friendship, co-operation and common action to establish an interest group to protect children.

Those involved in setting up the group are organisations with a wide range of expertise, with conveners representing the International Social Service Network/UK-CFAB, the Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work (COSW), and the Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network (CBWN). International Social Services-UK/CFAB will provide the point of contact for the group, acting as the Secretariat. Other Commonwealth accredited organisations supportive of the initiative to date include: Commonwealth Association for Health and Disability (CAHD), Commonwealth Association of Science, Technology, Mathematics and Engineering Educators (CASTME), Commonwealth Nurses and Midwives Federation (CNMF), Commonwealth Consortium for Education (CCfE), Commonwealth Health Professions and Partners Alliance (CHPPA), Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), Commonwealth Lawyers Association (CLA), Commonwealth Trade Union Group (CTUG), Commonwealth Women's Network (CWN), Council for Education in the Commonwealth (CEC), Rotary International, Royal Life Saving Society – Commonwealth (RLSS), Towards Zero Foundation (TZF), and The Commonwealth Equality Network/Kaleidoscope Trust (TCEN). The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) will assist with links to parliamentarians as appropriate.

The aim of the group is to advocate and provide expert, research-driven policy advice on specific subjects to improve the lives and welfare of children and families across the Commonwealth. With a large percentage of the Commonwealth population aged under-18, it has never been more vital to form a unifying position in the Commonwealth to consider the interests, needs, protection and care of children, including

young carers and the specially challenged community and to protect the many children of Commonwealth families who cross international borders. Given that all Commonwealth countries are signatories to the UN

Convention on the Rights of the Child, this group is an important step forward in upholding those rights. The group is open to any Accredited Commonwealth Organisation concerned for the wellbeing of children and their families and expects to work with other Commonwealth and international bodies with shared interests and values.

The main objectives of the cluster are to:

- Represent diverse interests from across the Commonwealth.
- Focus on advocacy and making tangible change happen for children by utilising the collective that is the Commonwealth, including political platforms such as CHOGM and Ministerial meetings.
- Act as a forum for partnership between organisations within the informal and formal Commonwealth and without, such as the International Social Service, UNICEF and Plan International.
- Researching and advocating for policies to improve children's safety and wellbeing.
- Engage with the formal Commonwealth institutions, High Commissioners and other decision-makers within the broader Commonwealth.

The group will also utilise and seek to build on the mapping work that Commonwealth Accredited Organisations have already undertaken in policy areas such as modern slavery, early child marriage, child labour, child sexual exploitation and abuse, and child road and water safety. The group is looking forward to working in collaboration with other experts in the field of child protection to improve the welfare and safety of children and families across the world.



Commonwealth Day 2022

Commonwealth Day is an annual celebration observed by people all over the Commonwealth in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Americas, the Pacific and Europe. Commonwealth Day 2022 was celebrated on Monday 14 March, with a service held at Westminster Abbey.

The theme for Commonwealth Day 2022 centred around the theme for the forthcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting – 'Delivering a Common Future' – which highlights how the 54 member countries in the Commonwealth family are 'innovating, connecting and transforming' to help achieve goals like fighting climate change, promoting good governance and boosting trade.

Given that 2022 is Her Majesty The Queen's Jubilee Year, there was also a special focus this year on the role service plays in the lives of people and communities across the Commonwealth.



Commonwealth Day

Doris Bingley
Commonwealth Women's Network

REPORT

Reconvened 64th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and Reconvened 30th Session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

At its reconvened session, the CCPCJ discussed, jointly with the CND, the strategic management, budgetary and administrative questions pertaining to the work of UNODC. At the end of the sessions the results of the elections for the board for the 65th session of the CND and the 31st session of the CCPCJ were held. The chair of the CND will come from Belgium and the chair of the CND will be the ambassador of Japan.

Smuggling of migrants was the main theme in the part of the CCPCJ. The difference between smuggling and migration and the one between regular and irregular migration was made clear. Addressing the root causes in a holistic way is required. Escaping violence often brings women and children in the hands of criminals who use smuggling to commit other crimes. Corruption may act as a facilitator of smuggling.

The pandemic aggravated the situation for children and women exposing them to multiple risks.

The Kyoto Declaration, meanwhile adopted by the GA in autumn, was praised as an excellent roadmap. Despite the difficulties encountered significant results were achieved.

The themes for the thematic discussions to be held during the thirty-first, thirty-second, thirty-third and thirty-fourth sessions of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, will be: (i) Strengthening the use of digital evidence in criminal justice and countering cybercrime, including the engagement of minors in illegal activities with the use of the Internet; (ii) Enhancing the functioning of the criminal justice system to ensure access to justice and to realize a safe and secure society; (iii) Promoting international cooperation and technical assistance to prevent and address organized crime, corruption, terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and other forms of crime, including in the areas of extradition, mutual legal assistance and asset recovery; (iv) Addressing new, emerging and evolving forms of crime, including crimes that affect the environment, smuggling of commercial goods and trafficking in cultural property and other crimes targeting cultural property;”

The 31st session of the CCPCJ will be held 16-20 May 2022 in Vienna.

During the reconvened session of the CND again the **Cannabis issue** was on the agenda. The misuse of the internet with the substantial risks to public health, the need for surveillance, live saving assistance instead of incarceration and a health centred perspective were stressed. Also witnessed was the increase of violence and the demand for synthetic drugs under the circumstances of the pandemic. Given the complexity of the issue some speakers asked to resume the discussion at next year's session.

Harsh critic on the report of the **Working Group on Arbitrary Detention** (agenda item 11) was spoken out in a joint Statement by a group of 15 states at the reconvened 64th

session of the CND: No international consensus would be possible against capital punishment, the report would not be a reliable source of information. “We have serious reservations about the content as well as the process of preparations of the study “Arbitrary detention relating to drug policies” which was published at the website of the 64th session of the Commission and, through this action, brought to the attention of the Commission, as requested in 42/22 Human Rights Council resolution.”

“Despite a request given to the Working Group in the Human Rights Council resolution to prepare the study in close consultation with Member States, the report is mostly based on views and assessments of the civil society which are presented as the ultimate truth. Such a selective and biased approach questions the credibility and authority of the study. Having said that, we emphasize that the report cannot be considered as a reliable source of information or valuable input to the work of the Commission which has never requested the Working Group or the Human Rights Council to present it in Vienna.” Following this statement the speaker of the Western European and Others Group (WEOG) expressed concern about the refusal to allow a statement of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention of the Human Rights Council. “Not allowing the statement of a UN instrument is not understandable and would set a dangerous precedent.... The Commission should indeed be open to hear information, opinions or advice from various external stakeholders. This definitely includes statements promoting the protection of and respect for human rights and the dignity of all individuals. The study that the Human Rights Council working group would like to present is public and not part of the work of the CND. It is however very relevant to the CND mandate and highlights where issues are still to be addressed. Since the creation of the Commission, we have been committed to strengthen our normative framework and widen our scope. We therefore regret that such a request for a statement is used by some to divide us instead of helping us move forward... We hope that the WG will be able to make its statement at a later stage.”

A highly valuable, excellent and important **statement by the chair of the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs** on Agenda item 4c concerning the participation of CS / NGOs in the sessions of the CND was made. The video of it can be found on **you tube** under *Jamie Bridge, Vienna NGO Committee 64th Reconvened 2021*. I strongly recommend watching it.

The 65th session of the CND will be held from 14-18 March 2022 in Vienna.

Vienna, 9 January 2022

Eleonore Hauer-Rona
ICW Main Representative
to the UN in Vienna

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Weight Management Programme at the NCW Centre

Date: Tuesday, 26th April 2022

Venue: NCW Centre, Blata L-Bajda **Free of Charge**

Due to popular demand the National Council of Women in collaboration with the department for Primary Health Care are organising two more Weight Management Programme to help overweight and obese individuals lose weight, prevent weight regain and avoid further weight gain for life.

The programme consists of eight sessions of 1.5 hours duration each. Here, various topics relating to healthy nutrition and weight loss are presented and discussions take place in a group setting.

For registration on first come first served please phone NCW Malta office on 21248881 or send an email to ncwmalta@camline.net.mt

Food Handling Courses at NCW Centre Blata I-Bajda

Date: Sunday 24th April 2022

Tutor: Mr Joseph Cassar Lecturer ITS

Duration: 5hr training programme

The course will be held at NCW Learning Centre – It is a one day course covering the following topics:

- Food Safety and Hazards - Biological, Chemical and Physical
- Allergens and intolerances
- Pre requisite program- pest control, personal hygiene, cleaning and sanitation, temperature control, etc
- The HACCP system
- Legal requirements
- Other related topics

The cost of the course includes **registration with the Food Safety Commission, Tuition and License to work in the food industry.**

Courses are being held at NCW Learning Centre, Pope Pius X11 Flats Mountbatten Street, Blata I-Bajda

For further information and registration please email: ncwmalta@camline.net.mt or phone on 21248881/99291936



May the holy spirit
of Easter fill your home
with hope, love and peace

Happy
Easter

*The National
Council of Women
President Doreen
Borg Zammit
and the Executive
Committee
Members wish all
our readers a very
Happy Easter*