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Malta

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I am pleased to present ETC's second Gender Equality Action Plan for the years 2005 to 2006.

ETC continues to contribute – through its employment and training schemes and services – to the implementation of Government policy with respect to equal opportunities in the labour market.

Robert Tufigno Chairman



Chairman's Foreword

The Gender Equality Unit within ETC is directly responsible to promote equal opportunities in employment and training both within and beyond the Corporation, and has worked with great dedication towards this end since it was established two years ago.

Among the many initiatives taken by the Unit over the duration of the first Plan, and which are well described in the report, one finds a firm promotion of family friendly measures and of the equal sharing of both work and family responsibilities in two-earner households. Family-friendly measures, especially more flexible work

arrangements and affordable childcare services, go a long way towards making the option to work a feasible one for women. A healthy distribution of working hours also prevents job hoarding and allows for a more equitable spread of work. Such measures should aim to give women and men a real opportunity to freely choose the way in which they balance family life and work.

It is important to remember that the importance of family-friendly measures lies not only in their economic value, but in their potential to bring about a healthier balance between one's work, family and

leisure. The way that work is currently organised means that this balance also eludes many men who would wish to spend more time with their families and are unable to do so.

ETC will therefore continue to promote opportunities for women to enter, to remain or to re-enter the labour market, and to understand and eliminate any barriers in this respect. We will also continue to promote a healthy work-life balance, in the interest of employees and their families as well as of a vibrant workforce. The activities planned for the years 2005 and 2006 reflect this vision.

Report on the Gender Equality Plan 2003-2004

It has been a busy time since the launch of the ETC Gender Equality Plan in January 2003. The country has seen important milestones since then; for instance, Malta joined the European Union in May 2004 and the first National Action Plans for Employment and for Poverty and Social Exclusion respectively were launched in late 2004. In these last two years two important pieces of legislation with direct relevance to gender and work have also come into force, namely the Employment and Industrial Relations Act and the Equality for Men and Women Act.

Work in the Gender Equality Unit at ETC has spanned many areas and included training, studies, seminars, campaigns, involvement in EU projects and much more. We worked with guidance teachers, union officials, policy makers and people within the media and with various experts in the gender equality field. We have also collaborated closely with the then Department for Women in Society and later with the newly appointed National

Commission for the Promotion of Equality between Men and Women. We also helped numerous university students who asked for our assistance with their dissertations related to gender and work and gave our input in matters relating to policy especially with regards to the childcare regulations.

We have managed to do most of the initiatives described in our first Gender Equality Plan. Some of the initiatives stalled

due to reasons beyond our control; others were slightly modified to meet a changing situation. Still another number of initiatives were not foreseen in the last plan but came about in response to emerging needs and opportunities. The next section provides a brief summary of the main activities which were undertaken by the Gender Equality Unit during these last two years. A comprehensive list of activities may be found in Appendix 1.



Training

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Training for ETC Staff

In November 2003 Dr Alison Parken delivered a two day training seminar in Gender Mainstreaming for Senior Managers, Managers and Senior Executives working at ETC. The seminar was prepared in conjunction with Professor Teresa Rees, an expert of international renown on gender mainstreaming. It included training in a step-by-step approach to Gender Proofing and Gender Impact Assessments and was designed to enable ETC staff to create and deliver effective programmes which promote equality.

During the training it was emphasised that the design of employment and training programmes must not reproduce inequalities by offering a 'one size fits all' service. Doing so does not account for the gendered differences of individual's daily lives and compounds labour market disadvantages.

Training for Advertising Agents

An information meeting was organised in March 2003 for key persons involved in the advertising media about the changes in the Employment and Industrial Relations Act regarding advertising and gender equality. Dr Brenda Murphy, a university lecturer in Media Studies, addressed the participants

and made suggestions regarding the use of language to ensure law compliance when accepting adverts for jobs in their media.

Training for Guidance Teachers

Guidance Teachers in Public and Private Schools were given training with the scope of updating them on the legal developments in the Employment and Industrial Relations Act (2002) and The Equality for Men and Women Act (2003) During the training sessions, held in December 2003, Dr. Roselyn Borg briefed the Guidance Teachers about these laws and their relevance to the labour market. The workshops touched upon issues relating to the interviewing process, job advertisements and sexual harassment.

Training for Personal and Social Development Teachers and Guidance Teachers

On the occasion of the launch of a Manual for Gender Sensitive Vocational Guidance in April 2004, four training sessions were organised between March and April 2004 for all Guidance and Personal and Social Development Teachers in Public, Private and Church Schools. The training, which was delivered by Ms Mary Cooney from the University of Malta with the assistance of



Ms Charmaine Mifsud Cardona included four workshops on career opportunities for both sexes, how to avoid gender stereotyping and work segregation and the importance of getting boys and men to share in the domestic responsibilities at home.

Training for Union Officials

A two-day training seminar for officials from Trade Unions in Malta which included General Workers Union (GWU), Union Haddiema Maghqudin (UHM), Malta Union of Teachers (MUT), Malta Union of Midwives and Nurses (MUMN) and Union of Cabin Crew, together with a representative from the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality was held in January 2005. Training was delivered by Professor Godfrey Baldacchino.

The aim of the seminar was to provide background information, practical guidelines and checklists in order to add to the efforts of trade unions to promote gender equality at the place of work, through gender sensitive collective bargaining.

Six workshops permitted participants to reflect on gender issues and what concrete

input they could make when drawing up collective agreements for employees. The topics discussed included the benefits for women participating in trade unions; the benefits for the various unions in attracting more women; the inclusion of gender-friendly clauses in the respective collective agreements including childcare structures, parental leave entitlements and other work-life policies.

Training for Women Returners

Empowerment training is offered free of charge to unemployed women who would like to return to the labour market. The previous training course was reviewed and updated and now this course is being run on a continuous basis throughout the year.

The course includes units on communication, working in a team, assertiveness skills, time management, conflict and stress management, job search and CV writing skills and interview skills amongst others. The sharing of experiences with role models who have successfully returned to the labour market is a salient feature of the course.

Studies and Seminars

Two studies were commissioned by the Gender Equality Unit and are still underway at present. These studies focus on Occupational Segregation and on Telework and should be completed in 2005. We have also commissioned the writing of a Manual for Gender Friendly Organisations which will be published and disseminated amongst Employers.

Women's work aspirations

In 2004 the Research and Development Division of ETC launched a series of short surveys among women with the aim of assessing their work aspirations and their wish to find or retain employment. Separate surveys were held among employed, unemployed and inactive women (i.e. women who are not in full-time study, in employment or seeking work). Survey participants were asked a series of questions dealing with their intention to retain or take up employment and the conditions that would help them to do so.

Results have already been obtained for the first survey among inactive women and presented during a Research Forum organised in June 2004. Findings reveal that almost half of the respondents interviewed would like - under certain family-friendly conditions - to take up work. Most were younger women, had secondary level of education or higher, used to work as machine operators and assemblers, clerks or as service and sales workers and were employed in sectors such as manufacturing, wholesale and retail, as well as hotels and restaurants. A

publication containing the results of all three surveys will be produced in 2005.

Lone mothers on social security benefits

In 2004 the Research and Development Division also launched a qualitative study among lone mothers on benefits. The scope of the research project is to get to know more about this client group's work aspirations and the factors that influence them. Respondents have been asked about their work experiences, whether they wish to work, the type of working conditions that would help them work, and the factors that may be hindering them from searching for or taking up work. Findings of the study will be presented during a research forum organised in 2005 and published later on the same year.

Seminar on Women's Formal Participation in the Maltese Labour Market

In June 2003 a seminar was held at St James Cavallier in conjunction with the Workers' Participation Development Centre and the Department of Women in

Society. The study which was conducted by the WPDC tested seven distinct hypotheses which may impact on women's decisions to stay away from the labour market. ETC contributed to the dissemination of this study by organising the seminar, at which the Senior Executive on Gender Issues and other speakers gave their reactions to the findings of the study which were presented by Professor Godfrey Baldacchino.

Women and Men in the IT labour market

The ETC, in conjunction with the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality and the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity, organised a seminar on Women and Men in the IT Labour Market in January 2005. The aim of the seminar was to generate ideas as to how the IT labour market could be made equally accessible for both women and men. Members of various organisations with interest in either IT or gender equality were invited. The guest speaker for this seminar was Dr Jane Millar, a researcher/consultant from the UK whose area of expertise is the IT, electronics and communications sector.

At the seminar, ETC's R&D division presented the results of a small study of 11 companies that employ both males and females in IT occupations. The scope of this enquiry was to understand the recruitment and promotion procedures of employers in the IT sector, as well as the measures they take to retain IT staff within the company. Employers indicated that most applicants for IT jobs are male, although the females that they have interviewed came across as very talented. Most companies claim to offer family-friendly measures to their employees such as flexible or reduced hours, the possibility to shift to part-time work, teleworking, career breaks and special leave. Female employees avail themselves of family-friendly measures more than males.

The Division intends to supplement the findings of the study with another small-scale qualitative enquiry among female IT employees themselves. Participants will be asked questions relating to their job experience, their choice of a career in IT, and their working conditions. The information gathered from both studies will be published in 2005.

Campaigns

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A campaign aimed at encouraging more girls to study Science, Engineering and Information Technology

In 2003 a campaign was launched to encourage more girls to study science, engineering and Information Technology. The campaign coincided with the time of

the year when applications for courses at MCAST and at University are open for students. The Maltese Judoka Michelle Grech who was then pursuing a Ph.D in a science related field, was used for this campaign. The message behind the campaign was that work in these areas can be fun and creative and is usually well paid. The main slogan was "Science, Engineering and Information Technology - Girls can do it too - It's fun and it pays!".

Work-Family Balance Campaign

In 2004 ETC launched a campaign on work-family balance with the aim of raising awareness and encouraging a debate about enabling mothers and fathers to meet their responsibilities as workers and parents.

For this campaign TV, street billboards, radio and printed media were used. Two Public Service Announcements were produced and aired on the public and political television stations in Malta in conjunction with adverts on radio and local newspapers. The aim of this campaign was to encourage and enable women and men to pursue productive and

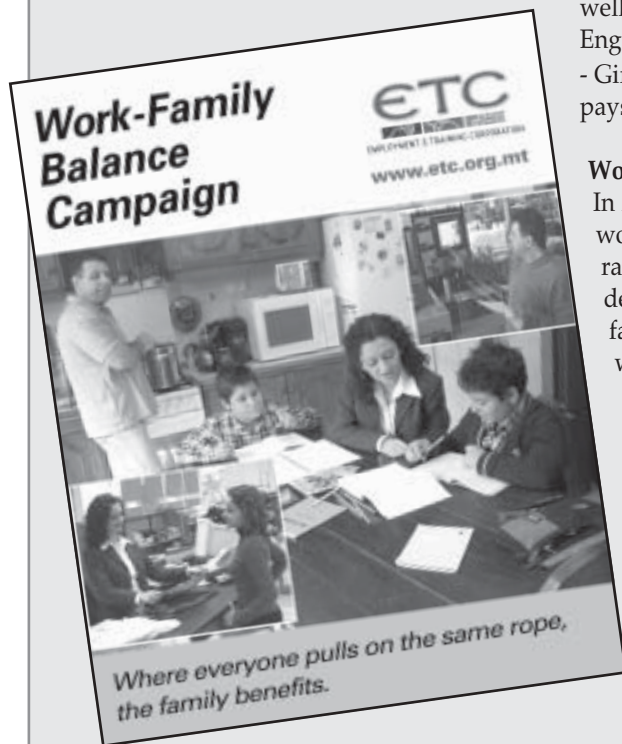
fulfilling work which would bring an income to the family while ensuring that both can share equitably in the joys and burdens of parenthood. Through this campaign ETC wanted to give a positive message to families by encouraging the collaborative sharing of paid and unpaid work.

A campaign aimed at encouraging girls to continue schooling

Girls who have low qualifications and skills find it more difficult to remain in employment and to re-enter the labour market at a later stage if they stop working to have children. Thus the more qualified

and skilled they are the more likely it is that they remain or eventually return to the labour market.

In 2003 a campaign was launched in time to coincide with the end of the scholastic in order to encourage more girls to continue studying after they finish their secondary education. For this campaign the singer Nadine Axisa who is a B.Sc graduate in Maths and Physics was used on the poster which was distributed in secondary schools and used on street billboards. A parallel campaign was also done on some radio stations.





Local Projects

ETC Childcare Centre - all year round care

As from August 2004, the childcare services offered to parents who work at ETC were extended to include all year care for babies over three months of age. Previously the childcare services were offered only during the holiday periods. New nursery equipment was procured and the setting was changed and adapted to accommodate children of different ages.

Participation in the Childcare Technical Committee

ETC has been a regular contributor to the Technical Committee for Child Day Care. The Committee was set up with the aim of producing childcare regulations, and these regulations were launched for consultation in July 2004.

Lone Parents Pilot Project

An Action Research Project targeted at lone parents is underway. The aim of the project is to provide a holistic package of care by means of multiple interventions centred around the needs of lone parents and their children with the scope of encouraging them to return to training or education so that they can become financially independent.

The project is now nearly a year old. It was initiated in May 2004, when six participants from the Ghozza Unit of the Education Department and another six participants from the Parish of St. Paul's Bay and Merhba Bik Home. Participants were either pregnant or had at least one child, were not in a stable relationship and were not in gainful occupation. The ages of the participants ranged from below 16, to thirty.

A tool was created which served to gather all relevant information in a concise manner. The Profile tool looked at the particulars of each participant in the areas of Housing; Education; Income; Development; Childcare; Health; and, Occupation. A personalized action plan was drawn up, led by the wants and needs of the participants and with a view to enabling participants to continue their academic education and training in any subject of their choice.

Cottonera Pilot Project for Women

The Cottonera Women's Pilot Project is a joint project between ETC and the Cottonera Community Services, Appogg. The aim of the project is to help women to

enter the labour market and helping them overcome specific obstacles through training and mentoring support.

The project started in 2003 wherein focus groups with social partners and women registering for work were held. In these focus groups the needs and suggestions of participants were noted and eventually this led to the creation of a training programme which was tailor-made for their specific needs. The course included units on self-esteem, assertiveness, communications, time management, decision making and ethical values, gender issues, harassment, job search, CV writing and interview and presentation skills amongst others. The women were each assigned a mentor to help them identify possible employers. All the nineteen participants who started the course completed it, and were awarded certificates for attending.

At present a review is underway to establish how many of these women are in employment and to assess future needs.

INT - Ibdha Negozju Tieghek

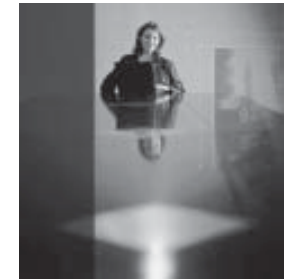
In 2003, a number of women participated

in INT, a one-stop Entrepreneurship Programme run by ETC's Training Division, aimed at promoting an enterprise culture among persons interested in taking up self-employment. In this programme, ETC offered training and guidance, as well as a financial grant to those with a successful business plan, mentoring and marketing support

The Small Business Management Courses

The Training Division also organised courses dealing in management issues for those interested in starting their own business or those already having their own business who need further training in management. There were various modules in the course itself which tackle different issues including how to manage finance, book-keeping skills and VAT accounting; and marketing skills amongst others.

There has been a positive participation by women in such courses. Since 2001, the female uptake of this course has been promising with 220 women making use of this managerial course.



EU Projects

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Leonardo Project

ETC secured funds through the Leonardo da Vinci Programme for a project which involved six persons from the Childcare Technical Committee. Through this project the six beneficiaries gained insightful experience by visiting and observing the municipal infant-toddler centres and the pre-schools in the Reggio Emilia area in Italy. Reggio Emilia is a world known centre of excellence for childcare.

This project gave participants the opportunity to experience several of Reggio's Children's Centres and to observe the settings in which education and care are delivered. The exchange took place between the 19th and the 25th October 2003.

European Social Fund Project Increasing Female Participation through childcare services at the workplace

Funds amounting to Euro 907,419 have been secured from the European Social Fund for a project which aims to increase the supply of quality, accessible and affordable childcare service facilities at the place of work. It is

envisaged that this project will create around 600 new childcare places at the work place. Doing so will mean that more women will be able to remain in or return to the labour market.

This project covers a range of activities to promote childcare. The first part provides for the training of child carers. The training programme consists of both a theoretical component, in line with NVQ Level 3 standards, as well as a practical component where trainees are required to work under supervision in a childcare facility.

The second part of the project entails a package of incentives for employers to start and run childcare services. The incentive package includes half the salaries of trained child carers and the provision of free-of-charge childcare expertise to companies wishing to provide such services. The project also includes a start-up grant to adapt the premises to a desirable standard and/or to render it safe and stimulating for toddlers and children and another grant in order to buy the equipment and furnish the place adequately.

Modern Men in an Enlarged Europe

The project Modern Men in Enlarged Europe: Developing Innovative Gender Equality Strategies aims to foster sustainable change in gender identities by encouraging men to take up new and modern gender roles.

The project promoter is the Lithuanian Office of the Ombudsman and includes three other countries, namely Denmark, Iceland and Malta which is participating through ETC. The project revolves around the use of paternity leave and seeks to confront stereotypes about men and to develop new images of men as care-givers. Areas of activity include the development of strategies and tools to overcome gender stereotypes; encouraging new gender images through the media; training decision-makers to become more gender-sensitive; and developing gender mainstreaming policies with particular focus on men and care-giving roles

Gender News Good News

The project Gender News Good News aims to increase gender awareness among those who contribute to the various media namely television, radio, press and web media.

Through this project script writers, producers and journalists in collaboration with experts in the equality field will produce a manual with guidelines for the various mass media that will help overcome gender stereotypes in public opinion. The project aims at raising awareness in media workers/experts about the existence of stereotyped and prejudiced attitudes in the workplace, that hinder or discourage male workers from taking more caring and less gender stereotyped roles within the family. It aims at spreading information and cultural models that facilitate the conciliation between family and work, at prompting a fairer distribution of non-remunerated work done at home and at changing stereotyped roles both at work and at home.

The promoter is the Ministry of Labour and Social Politics in Italy in collaboration with the RAI Italy and Spanish and French Television amongst others. Malta is represented through the Gender Unit at ETC as well as the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality. Through this project seven Maltese persons who are involved in the different media will be able to get training in order to produce guidelines for more gender sensitive portrayal of women and men in the media.

Women, Work and the European Union

In May 2004, Malta became a member state of the European Union. Gender equality has long been a highly-valued principle of the Union, and is reinforced by the new Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe. It is becoming increasingly important to integrate the gender perspective across all policy spheres. This is very much the case in terms of labour market policy, where women's full potential has yet to be mobilised.



In its recent report on Gender Equality 2005 (COM2005 44 final), the Commission highlights a number of policy challenges that face member states today. These include the following:

- Member States should ensure equal opportunities in the labour market for women and men with care responsibilities, by providing the right combination of instruments which would allow them to work full time if they wish and also to return to full time jobs after a period of part-time
- Member States should pursue their efforts to modernise social protection systems. Pension systems and other social benefits should be adapted to a context where women are employed to the same extent as men and aspire to the same career opportunities as men and where men can share equally domestic tasks and care responsibilities.
- Member States should remove financial and non financial disincentives to women's participation in the labour market, as well as the ones that cause long career breaks with negative consequences on the level and entitlement to pensions. These include notably the individualisation of taxation and benefit systems and the promotion of affordable childcare facilities.
- Member States should ensure that measures and activities financed by the Structural Funds and the European Social Fund in particular, aim at combating gender stereotypes in education and in the labour market and contribute to reducing the gender pay gap. Meanwhile European Social Fund and European Regional Development Funds should be used to increase the provision of care facilities.
- Member States need to boost the provision of affordable, accessible childcare facilities of good quality, in particular for children aged 0-3 in line with the Barcelona targets.
- In the context of the ageing population, urgent actions and commitments are needed at member states level to guarantee a suitable level of care provision for dependants other than children, in order to avoid the withdrawal of workers, in particular women, from the labour market.
- Special attention should be paid to actions directed towards men in order to promote a change of workplace culture in support of gender equality.
- Member States should promote adequate parental leave schemes, shared by both parents. It is particularly important to facilitate men's possibilities to take up leave by developing financial and other incentives.
- Member States and the Social Partners should initiate awareness raising activities to encourage men to share responsibilities for care of children and other dependents.
- Member States need to address the large gap in employment rates between older women and older men by adequate measures with a view to reaching the target of 50% employment rate for older workers by 2010.
- Member States and Social Partners should address the persistence of the high level of the gender pay gap and of gender segregation in the labour market.

In 2004 Malta published its first National Action Plan on Employment (NAP), as part of the European Employment Strategy. Each member state is to submit a NAP every year, outlining its policy priorities and measures. The NAPs are based on ten employment guidelines, the sixth of which deals with gender equality in employment. It calls for an integrated approach to encourage female labour market participation and to achieve a substantial reduction in gender gaps in employment/unemployment rates between women and men including a reduction in the pay gap by 2010.

The guideline calls for measures which will help reconcile work and private life particularly through the provision of services for children and other dependents and encourages the sharing of care and house work between women and men.

Below is a table showing the Targets as set by the Employment Strategy and the set Maltese targets for increasing the female employment rate, increasing the provision of childcare and encouraging the return of older women to the labour market:

Table 1: EU targets NAP 2004

Targets as set for Malta	Situation as at December 2003 in Malta	Proposed targets for Malta at 2010	EU Target 2010
Increasing female employment rate by 7%	33.7%	40.7%	60%
Increase childcare provision to 1,800 places (300 per annum) for children under 3	Not available	15%	33%
Increase older worker employment rate by 2.4%	32.6%	35%	50%

Member States are encouraged to remove disincentives to female labour market participation and to provide childcare by 2010 for at least 90% of children between three years old and the mandatory school age and at least 33% of children under three years of age.

The first Maltese NAP identified a number of key issues where action must be taken over the coming years. These include, in particular, the low levels of female employment and self-employment, but also the issues of occupational and vertical segregation and the pay gap. Furthermore, an increased supply of regulated and affordable childcare facilities must be promoted, and the issue of reconciling work and family life - particularly with children's school hours - is a pressing one. The NAP identified the following key features with

respect to women in the Maltese labour market:

- A gender gap of around 40% between male and female employment rates
- A rapid growth in part-time work among women
- Low self-employment among women
- Higher unemployment among women
- The persistence of a gender pay gap
- Slightly more female workers than male workers undergo on-the-job training
- 98% childcare coverage of ages 3 to 6 (though only in school hours)
- Unquantified coverage of childcare services for children below three

The National Action Plan includes concrete proposals which encourage women to remain in and return to the labour market through tax incentives and by removing disincentives to work. For example at present a full time worker is entitled to be taxed at a flat rate of 15% on earnings up to Lm3000 which have been earned through a second job. In the case of a couple opting to be taxed at the married rate, this 15% rate entitlement can be transferred to a spouse working on a part time basis while the other spouse remains taxable at the preferential married rate.

Another incentive is addressed to women who have been inactive for at least five years from the labour market. The National Action Plan proposes that they will be given a one-off tax holiday in the first year of their full-time or part-time employment in the private sector.

European Social Fund Projects

While gender equality is an important theme in all European Social Fund projects, a number of projects funded under the ESF focus particularly on gender equality. These were referred to in the National Action Plan and will be undertaken by various entities during the period of 2004-2006 as follows:

An ETC project which aims to train a pool of child carers and to provide a packet of incentives to employers with the aim of helping them to open a childcare centre for their employees at the place of work

A project of the Ministry of Health, Elderly and Community Care which will promote more women in top management positions at public hospitals through gender-sensitive training and the introduction of job sharing and flexible hours for public health workers.

A project of the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality which will revolve around a number of studies. These include an analysis of the benefits of family-friendly measures for employers and employees, a review of the gender pay gap, an analysis of the career path and working conditions available to graduates and a quantitative survey relating to a Telework pilot project in the public sector.

Finally, a project promoting technical skills among women returnees in IT and customer services and Entrepreneurship will be undertaken by The Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology.

A look at the main events

of the Gender Equality Plan 2003-2004 through pictures



Dr Louis Galea, Minister of Education, Youth and Employment at a press conference to launch the Manual for Gender Sensitive Vocational Guidance. Seen on right is ETC chairman Dr Robert Tufigno and on left Ms Anna Borg, ETC Senior Executive Gender Issues



The Maltese silver medallist judoka Michelle Grech, who was then pursuing a PhD in a science related field was used in the 2003 campaign encouraging more girls to study science, engineering and IT



Former ETC CEO Mr John P. Camilleri presiding over a meeting of Dr Mark Smith (seen in the right hand picture) with social partners. Dr Smith the guest speaker at the launch of the ETC's first Gender Equality Action Plan



A snapshot of different women and men



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Riccardo Flask

"I chose to stay at home with our child to be actively involved in his upbringing. Even though man is considered to be the main breadwinner, one has to evolve and adapt to the particular situation. My father could not spend so much time with me at that age due to his work and today regrets there was no parental leave."

Cecilia Attard Pirotta

"We have a good gender mix here at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Valletta, although. Gender and work-family balance related problems, arise with the implementation of the Conditions of Service for Officers Serving Abroad. We had to revisit some of our policies when, for example faced with issues such as women diplomats who became pregnant while serving overseas in our Missions abroad." Cecilia Attard-Pirotta, Malta's former Ambassador to Spain and the first female Permanent Secretary

Group of paediatricians

Today young women make up a large proportion of each medical course. We don't believe there are any barriers to entering the profession. However, current work practices make it very difficult for an active parent to balance his or her family responsibilities with the long hours worked by doctors on hospital shifts.



Dorian Galea

“Only good time management and my husband’s full support and house chore sharing can allow me to be a mother of two, a semi-professional basketball player and a full time seamstress, managing my own business - all at the same time.” Dorian Galea, captain of Malta’s National Basketball Team, Gold Medallist at the Small Nations’ Games 2003.

Dorian’s national team has now qualified, on its own merits, to represent Malta in the Commonwealth Games to be held in 2006 in Australia.



Shirley Camilleri

“After being away from the labour market for a number of years I felt the need to return for more than one reason. I was feeling the need to make a financial contribution to my family. I also wanted to do something for myself and to gain financial independence and to make a contribution to society through my work outside home. However I was determined not to join the labour market in the same occupation as when I was younger. This instilled the need to educate and re-train myself. I did this with determination, keeping in mind that this was an investment for my future. Looking back I think made the right choice because now I am contributing towards my family, towards the economy and society in general while feeling more independent and fulfilled.”



A group of female adult university students

Motherhood should not stop women from taking further education: A group of mature students, the majority of whom are also mothers who are currently studying for a diploma on gender development at the University of Malta.

A look at the main events

of the Gender Equality Plan 2003-2004 through pictures

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Ms Ann Toledo, ETC trainer, speaking at an ETC research forum on women and work aspirations. Seen on right is Fr Joe Inguanez

Ms Mary Cooney addressing guidance and PSD teachers



Ms Anna Borg, ETC trainer (second from right), speaking at the ETC research forum on women and work aspirations. Also seen in the picture, from left to right, Dr Angela Abela, Mr John Camilleri and Mr Arthur Muscat



Opening of the ETC childcare centre on a full time basis

Women in the Maltese Labour Market

The last two years have seen a number of developments at a national level that impact upon women in the Maltese labour market. The Equality between Men and Women Act (2004) was a major development; the EU accession process, too, instigated the introduction of a number of gender-related projects and initiatives.

Other developments may also be seen to have a significant impact. The establishment of the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality between Women and Men, in 2004, is one such example. The Commission, or NCPE as known for short, promotes and disseminates the values and practices underlying gender equality and seeks to understand, and progressively eliminate, direct and indirect discrimination. The Diocesan Synod, too, is providing a fresh perspective on the issue of work-life balance. Its publication on Marriage and the Family (2003) makes a number of basic points. Married couples are to take decisions jointly and freely, including where work is concerned. It is the wellbeing of the family unit, and particularly the child's development and education, which must be paramount in the parents' decision as to how work is to be distributed. Both parents have an indispensable role with

regard to their children's wellbeing. While there are clear developments in terms of policies and measures, the picture in terms of key indicators remains mixed. While progress has definitely been registered on a number of issues, change is slower to come about on others. The following section offers an overview of some selected aspects of women in the labour market.

A Snapshot

According to the Labour Force Survey issued for the period July to September 2004, the gainfully occupied population in Malta amounted to 148,609 persons. The female share of total employment is 30.4%, while the female employment rate is 32.9%. (Chart 1). The same Labour Force Survey found that 7.9% of all the 148,609 persons in employment were in part time jobs, while another 0.9% were in full-time jobs with reduced hours. Part-time work as one's

main job is far more common among women (17.7% of whom work part-time) than among men. Part-time work is on the increase across Europe; however one needs to ensure that those working on a part time basis enjoy the same pro-rata rights and benefits as those working on a full time basis. In Malta pro-rata benefits are available to those who work at least 20 hours a week and persons who have a part-time job as their primary job, still have to pay a National Insurance Contribution equivalent to the minimum wage, even if they are not earning it.

A look at the age distribution of the total employed persons reveals that of all working women, the largest percentage of women (29.1%) are aged between 25-34. This is the prime age when women are likely to have their first or their second child and if they have remained in the labour market during this period, they are

likely to remain employed as their children grow older. If more women are likely to want or need to remain in the labour market, family friendly measures are going to assume ever greater importance.

According to the NSO (18/2005), of all working mothers, 63% work full time whilst 37% work on a part time basis. On the other hand, 99% of working fathers work full time and only 1% work part time. It is clear that women continue to carry a disproportionate amount of responsibility for the care of children and elderly relatives; the gender contract remains quite traditional. Affordable childcare services remain few and far between, while after-school care does not yet exist. While employees in the public sector enjoy access to a range of gender-friendly provisions such as career breaks and reduced working hours, these are far more rare in the private sector. Furthermore, although they are also

Chart 1: Total employment as at September 2004

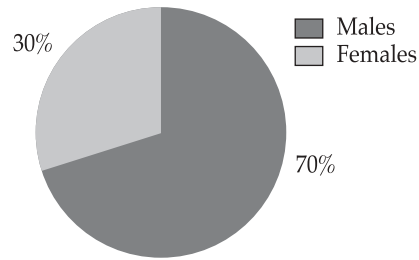


Chart 2: Employment rates by age and gender

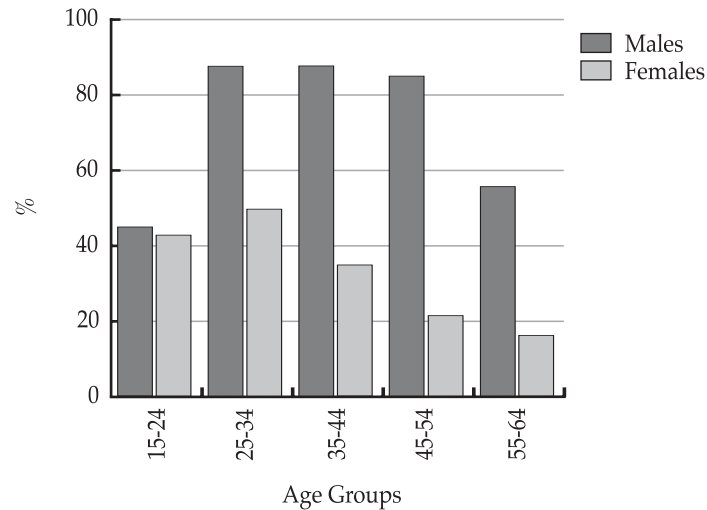
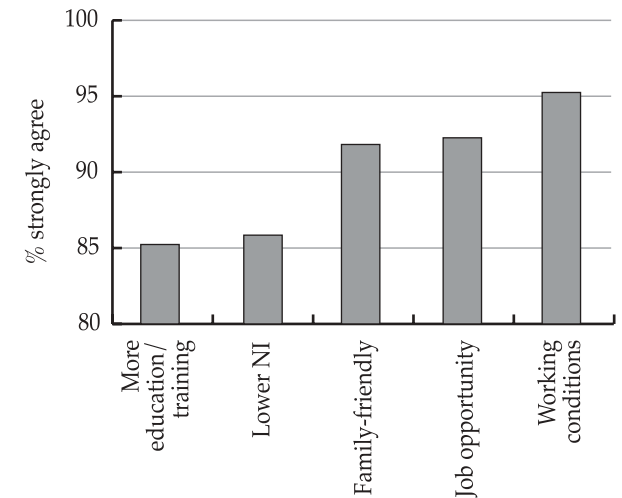


Chart 3: Important factors for potential women returners



available to men in the public sector, they are very rarely taken up except by women.

The labour market itself has changed, affecting the opportunities open to women. According to the Labour Force Survey (July-September 2004) employment in manufacturing has decreased, while an increase was registered in the wholesale and retail trade sector. There were also slight increases in the employment rate of women within the health and social work sector as well as in the catering industry. The shift from manufacturing to the services sector brings with it new challenges in order ensure that women and

men are given re-training in order to enable them to find work in alternative sectors of the economy. (Chart 3).

Turning to self-employment, in 2004 there were just under 21,000 persons who were self-employed and of these, only 14% were women. In the private sector, men outnumber women in all sectors and the least differences appear in the Banking, Insurance and Real Estate Sector. In the Public Sector the only two categories of work where women outnumber men are in the Educational and Health and Social work fields.

A positive development on the theme of self-employment, one may refer to the Financial Pack for Women Entrepreneurs launched by a local Bank in 2004, in conjunction with Women in Business. This pack allows female entrepreneurs access to a loan with respect to purchase of professional services, often needed in the early days of start-up. It also allows for financial assistance involving loans of up to Lm30,000 with respect to the purchase of property, machinery, equipment, goodwill and initial stocks.

A study carried out by the Labour Market Information Unit at ETC during 2003

aimed to determine the numbers and reasons for female dropout rates from the labour market. It is interesting to note that in the public sector where greater emphasis is placed on work-life integration measures, the level of female dropouts was much lower than that in the private sector. This has evident implications for the private sector, where family-friendly arrangements may make a significant difference to their retention rates

The LFS (July-Sept 2004) reports that 69.5 of all Maltese women aged between 15 and 64 are not active in the labour market,

Chart 4: Duration of job search

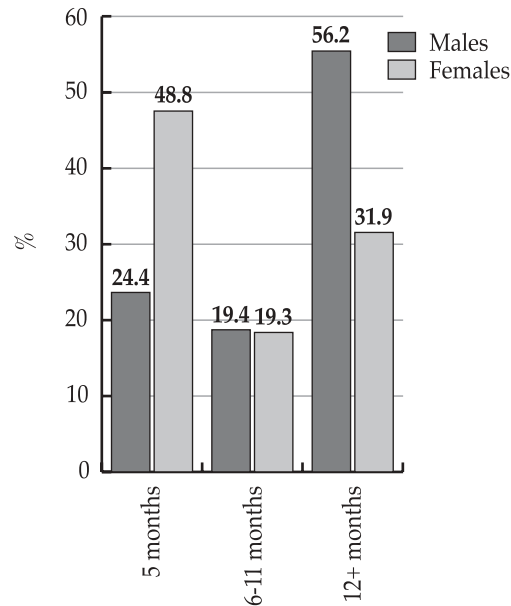
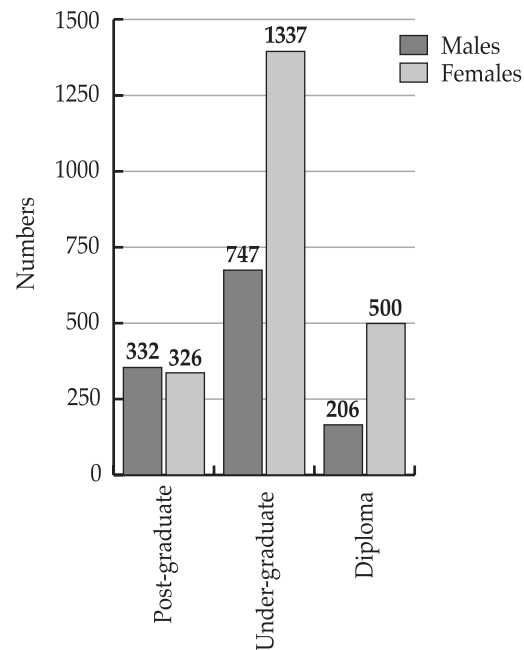


Chart 5: University graduates 2004 by gender



that is they are neither employed nor looking for work. However, research on the “Work Aspirations of Inactive Women” carried out by the Research and Development Unit at ETC during 2004 revealed that 44.8% of inactive women would consider working under certain conditions such as family friendly hours, adequate job opportunities, further education and training opportunities and favourable fiscal measures in respect to national insurance and tax rates (Chart 2). Those who said they would not like to work were significantly older, with more children, and having partners with a higher mean income. They also tended to be less

likely to have ever worked and to have a lower level of educational attainment.

Turning to unemployment, women tend to spend less time searching for work than do men. This might mean, on the one hand, that women are more successful in their jobsearch activities; for instance, while only 31.9% of women seeking work have been unemployed for over a year, the same is true for 56.2% of unemployed men (LFS, July-September 2004). However, it is hard to gauge whether a women may cease to define herself as unemployed more frequently, or earlier, than a man. (Chart 4).

Turning to tertiary education, statistics for students who graduated in November 2004 show that 64% of all undergraduates (1,337) were women and 36% (747) were men. In postgraduate courses, there were 326 females (49.5%) and 332 (50.5%) males (Chart 5). Female undergraduate students were largely under represented in Engineering (80.9% males) and Architecture (63.3% males) while males were under represented in the humanities mostly in the education (72.7% Females) and the health care sector (71.8% Females).

In the present academic year 2004-2005 there are encouraging signs in the number of

female students reading for Science degrees at the University of Malta where 49.5% of students (1645) are female and 50.5% (1681) are men. Similar signs of improvement can be noted in the number of female students following the Information and Communication Technology courses where female students make up 42.1% of all students and in the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, where 60.6% (303) are female students and 39.4% (197) are males.

However, in March 2005, at the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology, there were still twice as many boys (66.2%) as girls (33.8%) taking vocational education courses.

Chart 6: Breakdown of MCAST students, March 2005

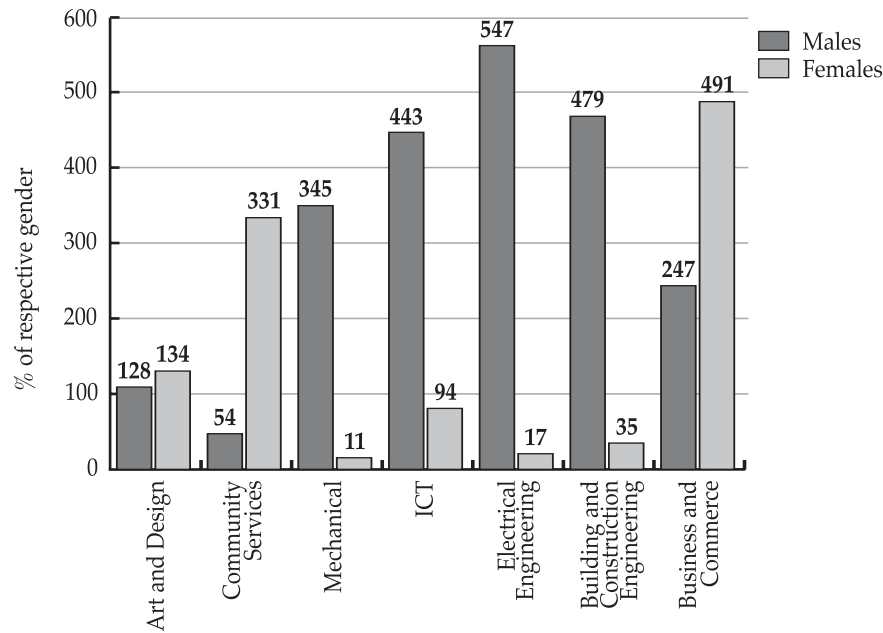
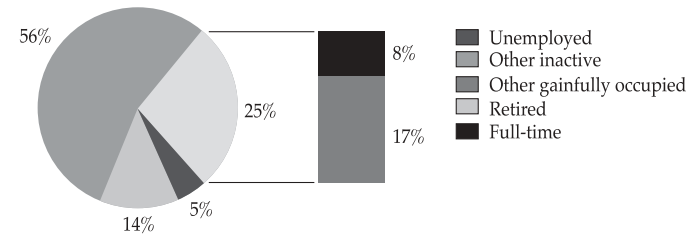


Chart 11: Single mother household by economic activity



Male students predominate in courses related to electronics, telecommunications, computer hardware, masonry, engineering, ventilation and air conditioning and other more stereotypical male areas. Female students, on the other hand, predominate in courses related to arts and design, banking and financial services and administrative and community care amongst others.

In the trades and technical training schemes administered by ETC and for which training is provided by MCAST, the ratio of young women to young men is still very low. Boys tend to follow traditional courses

like auto electrical technicians, applied mechanical engineering, and motor vehicle technicians and girls tend to follow courses in the caring and beauty field.

This poses a challenge to ensure that more female and male students enter into non-traditional areas of study and work to extend their career options. This should decrease job segregation and should impact positively on the wage-gap. It is also important to address the gender gap in educational achievements since women are outnumbering men especially at the tertiary level but men are still outnumbering

women in vocational education and training. It is essential that both female and male students continue to be encouraged further their education and training beyond the mandatory school age is an increasingly knowledge-based economy.

The importance of improved qualifications takes on particular significance in the case of groups at risk of labour market exclusion. For instance, there has been a rise in the number of single mother households, the majority of whom are headed by women and over half have been estimated to be at risk of poverty. This

poses new challenges to ensure that more single parents can work and that it is feasible and worthwhile for them to do so. The need for affordable, accessible, quality childcare takes on particular importance in their respect.

Programmes and Initiatives 2005-2006

This section offers an overview of the key initiatives that will be taken over the coming two years. Of course, while the Plan is important in order to ensure a focused effort and the best use of the Unit's resources, it remains open to change and also to all suggestions made by stakeholders on these, or other, initiatives to promote gender equality in the labour market.

2005

Launch European Social Fund Project Scheme to encourage Employers to open childcare centres at the workplace

This project which is co-financed by the European Union provides a packet of incentives to employers to open a childcare centre for their employees at the work place. The launch will include details of how employers can apply to get funds and will give more information about the training of child carers who ensure a quality service.

Introduce a register for Part-Time workers

At present persons seeking employment do not have the option to register for part-time work. With the creation of a new Part-Time register, persons who can only work part time or reduced hours will be matched by ETC with vacancies notified to it by employers who are seeking part-time workers.

New Training and Employment Schemes for Women

A new scheme that combines training with an employment placement phase will be introduced for women returners to the labour market. Single parents who have custodial care of their children will benefit from the Employment Training Placement Scheme (ETPS) so that they improve their employment prospects. New graduates will be assisted through a work experience scheme that enable them to obtain work experience related to their area of studies.

Presentation of project for EU funding

A project will be written and presented to the European Union for funding through the Programme relating to the Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality (2001-2005) through the Open Call for Proposals. The priority for this year's call focuses on the role of men in the promotion of gender equality, in particular the role of men and fathers in the reconciliation of work and private life.

Launch of Manual for Employers

A manual will be launched and training will be provided, in collaboration with the Malta Employers' Association, in order to increase awareness among employers about important issues relating to gender and work

Training to ETC Staff – Employment Section

Staff within the Employment Section at ETC will be updated on the existing and recent legislation that are of relevance to gender and the labour market. Subsequently a process of Gender Mainstreaming spanning several months will be initiated in collaboration with the Senior Manager and staff.

Telework Study and Seminar

Following a study on the feasibility of telework, we will disseminate findings through a joint seminar with the Ministry of Investment, Industry and Information Technology.

Men on Parental Leave Project

Following a qualitative research which has been carried out with men on parental leave and their employers, we will organise activities to disseminate findings especially through the use of a video production which will focus on a day in the life of a man who is on parental leave to care for his child.

Work Segregation Study

Following the results of a study on work segregation a seminar will be organised in collaboration with the Euro-Mediterranean Institute for Education and Research and the Euro-Guidance Unit.

Longitudinal Tracer Study

A ten-year long longitudinal tracer study is being proposed, starting with 11 year old students and following them over ten years to achieve a better understanding of the cohort's work preferences and how gender impacts on their career choices.

Seminar for 5th Formers from area secondary schools

An area secondary school for girls will be selected for this pilot project wherein the 5th formers attending that school will be invited to a weekend of activities wherein they will be able to explore and widen their employment options.

Gender News Good News Project

As a follow-up of the Gender News Good News Project, guidelines for more gender sensitive portrayal of women and men in the media will be issued and disseminated as widely as possible. This project will be done in collaboration with the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality.

Follow-up work with Guidance Teachers

A follow up of the work already carried out with the Guidance Teachers and the Personal and Social Development Teachers will be done wherein further training and support will be given. The nature of this support will be designed in consultation with the teachers themselves.

Training of ETC staff

Staff within the Training Services Division at ETC will be updated on the existing and recent legislation that are of relevance to gender and the labour market. Subsequently a process of Gender Mainstreaming spanning several months will be initiated in collaboration with the Senior Manager and staff.

Conference on Women and Work in Southern Europe

An international conference with foreign and local speakers will be held on Women and Work in Southern Europe. The idea is to take a closer look at the common factors which affect the low participation of women in the labour market in southern Europe and propose suggestions messers to increase the level of participation.

Entrepreneurship Scheme and Training for Women

This project will consist of a training and entrepreneurship scheme for women and men who are interested in providing home help in various areas.

Qualitative Study on Early School Leavers

A qualitative study on early school leaving among young women and men will be carried out, with a view to drawing up policy proposals to help this vulnerable group.

2005 Jan to June

Launch ESF scheme for employers to open childcare centres at the place of work

Introduce a register for part-time work

Design and launch of new ETC training and employment scheme for women returners

Preparation and presentation of project for EU funding

Launch manual for employers and training for HR Managers in collaboration with MEA

Training to ETC staff - Employment Section including legal updates and gender mainstreaming process + launch of written guidelines to staff

2005 September to December

Telework study + Seminar / project in collaboration with MITI

Video Release and Seminar following study of fathers on parental leave

Gender Segregation results and seminar in collaboration with the Euro-Guidance Unit and the Euro Mediterranean Institute for Education and Research

Launch of a ten-year longitudinal study with a cohort of 11 year olds with respect to their work and life choices and the impact of gender upon them

2006 Jan to June

5th formers seminar on career exploration - weekends for area secondary students

Gender News Good News - Publication of guidelines and training to persons in the media in collaboration with NCPE

Supported employment scheme for single parents

Preparation and presentation of project for EU funding

Follow-up work with guidance and PSE teachers

Training to ETC staff - Training Section including legal updates and gender mainstreaming process

2006 September to December

International Conference on Women and Work in Southern Europe

Highlight foregone income and declared work benefits

Entrepreneurship Scheme and training for home help support scheme

A qualitative study of the reasons for early school-leaving and the differences between young men and women in this respect

Appendix 1

Laws relevant to the Labour Market and Gender Equality

This Appendix provides important aspects of the Equality for Men and Women Act (2004), the Employment and Industrial Relations Act (2003) and a number of regulations which followed. These have an impact on gender equality in the labour market. This summary of the legislation is in no way meant to impart legal advice.

Equality for Men and Women Act

To promote equality for men and women, 2003

Definition of discrimination:

“discrimination” means discrimination based on sex or because of family responsibilities and includes the treatment of a person in a less favourable manner than other person has been or would be treated on the grounds of sex or because of family responsibilities and “discriminate” shall be construed accordingly.

Employers discriminate if Employee is given less favourable status than others on the basis of sex and family responsibilities in view of:

- Managing the work
- Giving promotions
- Distributing tasks
- Offering training opportunities
- Working conditions
- Alter conditions after employee invoked right under the law.
- Publishing or displaying an advertisement which promotes discrimination.
- Neglecting the obligation to suppress sexual harassment.

(It shall be unlawful for any person to harass another by imposing an act of physical intimacy; requesting sexual favours; subjecting persons to acts having sexual connotation, unwelcome and offensive.)

Other clauses:

- Spouses of self-employed workers who participate in activities of the company are entitled to fair compensation proportionate to the value of their contribution.
- A financial or insurance company to discriminate on basis of gender, particularly in issuing grants for business start-up.
- Educational or training establishments to discriminate in access to courses; offering educational support; assessing skills.
- The law establishes the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality.

Employment and Industrial Relations Act

Protection against discrimination related to employment, 2002

It shall be unlawful to:

- Discriminate in job vacancies and selecting procedures of employees where the discriminated party is better qualified, unless the Employer can prove that the action was based on acceptable grounds related to the nature of the work or on grounds related to previous work performance and experience.
- Victimise employees for reporting complaints or disclosing information regarding discriminatory behaviour.
- Harass through unwelcome acts regarded as offensive, humiliating and intimidating.
- Sexually harass employers or employees by subjecting them to sexual intimacy; requesting sexual favours.
- Employees in the same class of employment are entitled to the same rate of remuneration for work of equal value.

Offence:

A fine not exceeding Lm1,000 or a maximum of 6 months imprisonment or both.

Part-Time Employees Regulations, 2002

It shall be unlawful for an employer to:

- Treat a part-time employee less favourably than a comparable whole-time employee.
- Dismiss employee for his/her refusal to transfer from part-time to full-time work and vice versa.
- Dismiss employee due to proceedings against employer or making use of these regulations.

Part-time employees (minimum 20 hours a week and having part-time as principal employment) are entitled to:

Pro rata entitlement of public holidays, vacation, sick, birth, bereavement, marriage, injury leave and bonuses.

Other clauses:

It is the duty of the employer to inform employees on whole-time opportunities

Urgent Family Leave Regulations, 2003**Main clauses:**

- Employees are entitled to time off from work in cases of sickness, accidents, births and deaths of immediate family members.
- No advance notification is needed for urgent leave.
- Employer is bound to grant a minimum total of 15 paid hours per year to each employee (this is to be deducted from vacation leave entitlement).
- Employer shall establish the maximum number of hours of time off in each case (should not be less than 1 hour per case except where there is the explicit agreement of employee).
- Employer can demand evidence to confirm request of urgent family leave.
- Part-time employees are entitled to pro rata urgent leave.

Offence:

A fine of no less than Lm200 and no more than Lm1,000

Parental leave entitlement regulations, 2003**Main clauses:**

- Unpaid parental leave is granted at birth, adoption or legal custody of a child to care for that child for a period of 3 months until the age of 8.
- Employer and employee decide to grant the parental leave on a full-time or part-time basis (piecemeal or time credit system).

- Same job or alternative, equivalent employment is ensured on his/her return.
- At the end of parental leave employee remains entitled to all rights and benefits as others at the same work-place.
- Employer cannot dismiss an employee on the basis of parental leave usage.
- The Employee has the right to demand a statement of parental leave taken.
- Employer may postpone the granting of parental leave for justifiable reasons related to the operation of the place of work.

Offence:

A fine of no less than Lm50 and no more than Lm500.

Equal Treatment in Employment Regulations, 2004

Direct discrimination occurs where one person is treated less favourably than another on the basis of stipulated conditions. "Indirect discrimination" occurs where an apparently neutral practice would put persons at a disadvantage when compared with others.

It shall be unlawful:

- To discriminate on the basis of religious belief, age, disability, sexual orientation and racial or ethnic origin.
- To harass a person through acts which violate the person's dignity and create an intimidating or offensive environment.

- For an employment agency to discriminate in providing services; in terms and conditions and in provision of services.

Other clauses:

Positive action shall not be deemed unlawful.

Offence:

A fine not exceeding Lm1,000; a maximum of 6 months imprisonment or both.

Protection of Maternity Regulations, 2003

Employee =

"pregnant employee",

"employee who has recently given birth"

and "breastfeeding employee".

Main clauses:

- Employment and wages shall be ensured throughout the duration of leave.
- Temporary alternative work or adjustment of working environment will be offered.
- Special maternity leave - leave for absence from work granted by the employer to an employee who is pregnant, breastfeeding or has recently given birth, when despite the employer taking steps there exists or would still exist, a risk that could jeopardise the health or safety of the employee; such leave is to be granted for as long as the risk exists and on terms referred to in the regulation.

Employee is entitled to an uninterrupted maternity leave of 14 weeks, availed of in:

- Four weeks before giving birth
- Six weeks after giving birth
- Remaining weeks in part or full, immediately or before or after the above periods as the employee may request.
- Full wages are paid for 13 weeks, 14th week is unpaid.
- Time-off from work will be granted to attend ante-natal exams at no loss.
- Employees on maternity leave are entitled to all rights and benefits as other employees.
- During leave, employee will forfeit bonuses/allowance related to production/performance.

The Employment and Industrial Relations Act also stipulates that:

It shall be unlawful for an employer to dismiss an employee during the whole period of maternity leave or the period of five weeks following the end of such leave in which she is incapable of work, owing to a pathological condition arising out of confinement.

Offence:

A fine of no less than Lm200

Appendix 2

2003 Key Events

- **6th January**
Information session and discussion with employees at the ETC Employment Section.
- **13th January**
Participation in RTK radio programme
- **15th January**
Work-Life Balance Forum at Hotel Phoenicia organised by Workers' Participation Development Centre
- **16th January**
Information session and discussion with ETC Employment Advisors
- **22nd January**
Launch of the Gender Equality Plan
- **23rd & 24th January**
Gender Mainstreaming in Action Training
- **7th February**
Participation in PBS radio programme on the Gender Equality Plan
- **15th February**
Participation on Radju Malta programme
- **27th February**
Meeting with Gender Media Group
- **17th March**
Cottonera Women's Project - Introductory meeting
- **8th April**
Attended seminar organised by the Broadcasting Authority on Gender and Media issues
- **24th April**
Meeting at Ministry of Social Policy regarding Joint Inclusion Memorandum
- **5-7th May**
Conference on Women and IT - Athens
- **14th May**
Childcare Technical Committee - Meeting with service providers
- **20- 21st May**
Gender Budgeting and Gender Mainstreaming training meeting -The Hague.
- **28th May**
Participation in Action Learning Group - ETC
- **29th May**
Training on Equal Programme
- **3rd June**
Meeting at Kummissjoni Nazzjonali Persuni B'dizabilita
- **24th June**
Participation in PBS TV programme to encourage more young girls to continue studying after they finish secondary schools and to choose non-traditional subjects.
- **25th June**
Speaker in seminar on Factors Affecting Women's Formal Participation in the Maltese Labour Market organised - Workers' Participation Development Centre
- **9th July**
Participation in Television programme - Net TV
- **10th July**
Talk at Corradino Correctional Facility
- **14th July**
Presentation to ETC staff
- **6th August**
Participation on RTK radio programme on Family and Work
- **7th October**
Work-life Balance Conference organised by Richmond Foundation
- **11-14th October**
Meeting in Hungary organised by the Swedish Labour Market Board
- **19-25th October**
Visit to Reggio-Emilia childcare centres - Leonardo Project
- **14th November**
Cottonera Women's Project - Focus Group
- **18th November**
Talk to members of "Tibqax Wahdek" Voluntary Group
- **26-28th November**
Gender Mainstreaming in Action Training by Alison Parken to ETC staff
- **2nd December**
Attended presentation at St. James Cavalier on Disability and Work
- **3rd & 10th December**
Legal updates to Guidance Teachers - Parts 1 and 2

2004 Key Events

- **20th January**
Participation in Seminar Il-Familja u x-Xoghol organised by the Kummissjoni Nazzjonali tal-Familja
- **28th January**
Participation in radio programme - PBS
- **10th March**
Participation on NET television programme regarding childcare
- **18th March**
Presentation on National Action Plan to Gender and Social Partners
- **1st - 3rd April**
Participation in EU conference on "Women and Men in an enlarged Europe" - Malta
- **16th April**
Participation in radio programme - PBS
- **23rd April**
Meeting at Zejtun Local Council on childcare
- **29th April**
Meeting at Education Department on Single Mothers' project
- **19th May**
Participation in Focus Group on National Action Plan for Social Inclusion
- **21st May**
Participation in seminar Promoting Entrepreneurship amongst women organised by the Organisation of Women in Business
- **11th June**
Participation in Seminar on National Action Plan for Social Inclusion
- **14th June**
Speaker in Seminar on the Work Aspirations of Inactive Women in Malta
- **27th July**
Attended the launch of the Provisional Childcare Regulations
- **1st September**
Participation in European Social Fund training
- **20th September**
Presentation in European Employment Committee meeting on childcare - Brussels
- **1st October**
Participation in General Workers Union seminar on Vocational Guidance
- **7th October**
Participation in Seminar on single parents in Germany
- **10th October**
First transnational committee meeting of Men on Parental Leave Project - Lithuania
- **24th October**
Peer review meeting in Denmark
- **2nd November**
Participation in Conference Living to Work - Working to live in Ireland
- **10th November**
Participating in meeting on Gender News, Good News in Italy
- **3rd December**
Participating on Net TV Arena
- **3rd December**
Attended training seminar on VAT issues on EU Structural and Cohesion Funds.
- **15th December**
Speaker in Career Guidance Seminar organised by Euro Guidance.