



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIAT
FOR REFORMS AND EQUALITY

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**HUMAN
RiGHTS**
DIRECTORATE

GENDER EQUALITY AND MAINSTREAMING STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2022 - 2027

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Message from the Parliamentary Secretary for Reforms & Equality – Hon. Rebecca Buttigieg



We are pleased and honoured to launch the Maltese Government's first Gender Equality and Mainstreaming Strategy & Action Plan, following extensive consultation with all stakeholders. This document marks an important milestone in Malta's efforts to achieve full gender equality in all spheres of life, since, for the first time, it proposes a cohesive, mainstreamed approach to the hurdles faced by individuals in Malta, particularly women.

As a government, we strongly believe that the mainstreaming of gender into all levels of policy and decision-making is crucial to ensure that both women and men's concerns are addressed by our actions.

It is for this reason that this government has continuously supported equality and is committed to continuing to do so. Statistics published over time have continued to show that our work is yielding the necessary fruit. For example, in the field of women's participation in the labour market we are seeing how month after month, more women are going out to work. This is attributed to the number of measures such as free childcare, the Breakfast Club, Club 3-16, tapering of benefits and in-work benefits which have had their desired effects.

The Gender corrective mechanism was used for the first time during the 14th legislature, and I must say that it yielded us another national achievement. Today we have a parliament that is undoubtedly the most gender-balanced in the last 70 years. The purpose of this change was not only to see more women in the highest institution of the country but to ensure that the decisions that are being taken take into consideration the perspective of all members of society. The unanimous approval of this mechanism shows that Malta is eager to keep working to increase female representation in politics as this will further enhance our democracy.

This Strategy & Action Plan recognises that while significant progress has been made, our goal of ensuring the advancement and empowerment of women and men equally remains distant.

We are committed to doing better.

The Strategy maps out our admittedly ambitious vision - that of creating an equal society where discrimination and structural inequality are inexistent. We are striving for a society where everyone can reach their full potential, men and women, boys and girls, in all their diversity.

The Action Plan lays down the steps we are committed to take in realising that vision. I am convinced that combined, this Strategy & Action Plan will serve both as an inspiration, and a practical guide towards equality, and the upholding of our fundamental human rights.

This document stresses the need for a concerted effort from all entities, and I personally invite all to join our effort, and commit to further concrete measures that will collectively combat the current constraints barring us from living in a free and equal society.

Despite these difficulties, we cannot shy away from this task. For this Government, gender equality is a question of justice and democracy. Over and above the economic benefits of ensuring the full participation of women in the labour market, their full and equal access in the political, social, and cultural sectors is an essential pillar of our democracy, and we are committed towards strengthening it.

The Government looks forward to bringing this landmark document to life in the years to come. Let us embark on this journey towards the eradication of stereotypical gender roles and structures, and let us create the society we all deserve to live in.



PART 1

GENDER EQUALITY & MAINSTREAMING

Context

Gender equality is a fundamental human right. It entails equal rights for women and men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, as well as the same visibility, empowerment, responsibility and participation, in all spheres of public and private life. This is not only a core value of Maltese society, but it is also a prerequisite for sustainable and inclusive growth, and a crucial indicator for a free, open, and just society.

The struggle towards gender equality is by no means a localised issue. In time, progress, both locally and abroad, has certainly been made, and many important steps have been taken. Nonetheless, full gender equality, to date, remains a pipe dream.

The Gender Equality and Mainstreaming Strategy & Action Plan (GEMSAP) recognises that society cannot reach its full potential without allowing each and every person to thrive equally, without gender-based obstacles. This Strategy therefore aims to identify and eradicate those obstacles by strengthening the gender perspective at all levels and stages of policy making.

This document draws inspiration from the approach recommended by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) for Gender Equality Plans in its identification of evidencebased challenges to equality, and their effective mitigation.

Gender equality and mainstreaming will only be achieved when women and men enjoy a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making, which requires a nation-wide gender equality and mainstreaming effort. This mainstreaming effort takes into account women and men's different needs, roles, and opportunities, and drafts policy and takes decision within this mindset.

An International Commitment

Malta is proud of its contributions towards gender equality in the international sphere. This GEMSAP draws on best practices in this sector, and is also in keeping with the nation's commitments at both international and European levels.

The landmark Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, adopted unanimously by United Nations (UN) states at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, set a path-breaking vision and commitment for women's rights and gender equality. This Conference recognised and endorsed gender mainstreaming as a critical and strategic approach to achieve gender equality goals. Over the years, UN states, including Malta, have built upon this historic Declaration through several commitments, resolutions, and decisions of UN bodies.

The GEMSAP closely reflects the Beijing Platform for Action's statement that while gender equality is the overarching and long-term development goal, gender mainstreaming, as a set of context-specific, strategic approaches, incorporates the technical and institutional processes necessary to achieve that goal.

Malta's commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) embody a roadmap for progress that is sustainable and leaves no one behind. Achieving gender equality and women's empowerment is integral to each of the 17 goals. Only by ensuring the rights of women and girls across all the goals will we get to justice and inclusion, economies that work for all, and sustaining our shared environment now and for future generations.

1 Articles 2 and 3(3) TEU, Articles 8, 10, 19 and 157 TFEU, and Articles 21 and 23 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

2 The EU Gender Equality Index 2020 reports an average score of 67.9%, with its highest scorer, Sweden, at 83.8%.

3 UN Women, Guidance Note: Gender Mainstreaming in development programming. Nov. 2014

This document is also in line with the Council of Europe's Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023, and the UN Women's Gender Mainstreaming global strategy of 2020, both of which call upon states to mainstream a gender perspective into all policies and programmes, in line with the 12 critical areas of concern for urgent action identified at the 1995 Beijing Conference.

Malta has also welcomed the EU Commission's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, which focuses on ending gender-based violence, challenging gender stereotypes, closing gender gaps in the labour market, achieving equal participation across different sectors of the economy, addressing the gender pay and pension gaps, closing the gender care gap, and achieving gender balance in decision-making and in politics. The strategy pursues a dual approach of gender mainstreaming in all policy areas, combined with targeted actions including an intersectional approach. This document closely endorses this method.

The Strategy and Action Plan Framework

The Gender Equality and Mainstreaming Strategy was formulated following intensive comparative research; consultations with the Consultative Council for Women's Rights (CCWR); a public consultation; and extensive consultation with all relevant stakeholders within government and civil society.

The Gender Equality and Mainstreaming Strategy informs the Action Plan by adopting a dual approach. First, the introduction of gender mainstreaming - that is, a gender perspective into all stages and all sectors of policymaking. Secondly, the commitment to direct, targeted measures to achieve full gender equality.

One approach cannot replace the other: this duality implies that policies are informed by the concrete situations and needs of people, by recognising the challenges attached to gender and their identities arising in various spheres of life. By doing so, policies are more effective, just, and lead to a fairer use and allocation of resources.

The Strategy calls for the systematic inclusion of a gender perspective within every policy area, as well as the implementation of intersectionality, to ensure that no one is left behind, and that national actions address the widest range of discriminatory practices possible. Gender mainstreaming also ensures the redistribution of power, influence, and resources in a fair and gender-equal manner, tackling inequality, promoting fairness, and creating true equality of opportunity.

To address the existing issues as identified by Government, but also as highlighted by EIGE, the calls issued by the European Commission in its Gender Equality Strategy 2020 - 2025, Malta's international commitments, as well as to further accelerate the achievement of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, Malta's first Gender Equality and Mainstreaming Action Plan focuses on eight strategic objectives:

1. Strengthening of Institutional Mechanisms for Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Equality
2. Guarantee equal access to employment in all sectors, combat segregation and ensuring Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value
3. Enhancing women's economic independence
4. Strengthening the principle of gender equality & mainstreaming in the education system and challenging gender stereotypes
5. Promoting co-responsibility and balance of work, private and family life
6. Achieving gender balance in political and public decision making
7. Promoting gender equality in social wellbeing and healthcare policies
8. Eliminate gender imbalance in the field of justice by addressing gender bias and gender stereotypes

4 Women & The Sustainable Development Goals

5 Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018 - 2023

6 UN Women's Gender Mainstreaming global strategy of 2020

All Ministries are committed to addressing the intersectional aspect of gender with other grounds of discrimination in policy making, as guided by the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC), which will ensure the necessary monitoring and evaluation of the policy framework together with the adequate collection of gender-disaggregated data. Crucially, the IMC will also ensure that the Action Plan is framed within an adequate timeline of work, breaking down each measure into objectives in close cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, and ensuring their timely and effective implementation.

The relevant stakeholders associated to the design, implementation, and monitoring of the strategy were selected following a process that the Human Rights Directorate embarked on, which, among others:

- researched the best practices and European strategies on gender mainstreaming and gender equality
- analysed the public perception on the matter through a public consultation
- held individual meetings with the respective Ministers/Parliamentary Secretaries and their experts on all the measures falling under their remit.

The fact that each strategic measure has a clear indication of the lead and supporting Ministry or Entity will furthermore ensure this continued cooperation. GEMSAP also takes into account several measures which are currently being discussed in upcoming European directives, and thus facilitates their eventual transposition, should they be approved by Member States. Moreover, the implementation of measures will be closely monitored by the IMC and the Human Rights Directorate (HRD) within the Ministry for Home Affairs, Security, Reforms and Equality (MHSR) with progress being reported on a quarterly basis to serve as an annual political stock-taking of the progress being made.

The envisaged timeframe for each strategic objective and action is to be considered in line with the official launch date of this document.

Parallel and further action

This document recognises that despite significant progress, an ongoing effort is required to effectively address gender equality. To this end, Government commits to the actions outlined within this Action Plan, as well as their review and follow-up in 2027. One year before the closing of this strategy, Government is also committed to start the design of the next strategy.

In parallel to the GEMSAP, Government has also already committed to eradicate gender-based violence, a societal scourge which, despite all efforts, persists. Government's dedicated second strategy and action plan to tackle gender-based violence and domestic violence acknowledges this and proposes actions to address it. Malta is also committed to continue the fight against human trafficking through the development of a National Strategy.

PART 2

GENDER EQUALITY & MAINSTREAMING

Objective 1: Strengthening of Institutional Mechanisms for Gender Mainstreaming & Gender Equality

Through several initiatives undertaken by the Maltese Government throughout the past years, gender inequalities in both legislation and policy have been considerably decreased. Women's empowerment has come a long way, and society has become more conscious of the importance of gender equality and how central this is for a better functioning society.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected countries all over the world and impacted the lives and well-being of many people. Despite this, Government has continued to make strides in the equality sector, but challenges remain in areas such as work and pay, representation in politics and leadership positions, and gender-based violence.

A dedicated unit within the Public Service has been active in addressing challenges highlighted by women and gender minorities ever since its formation. The Gender Mainstreaming Unit (GMU) within the Human Rights Directorate was established in January 2019 and serves as the main governmental coordinating body that liaises with various national, European, and international entities, imparts information, and feeds the gender perspective to ongoing processes.

A facilitated Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) set up for the purposes of the GEMSAP ensures the implementation of equality mainstreaming, including gender equality, at both operational and technical levels.

The 2022 Gender Equality Index (GEI) published by EIGE revealed some of the evidence-based challenges that Malta faces when it comes to Gender Equality. With 65.6 out of 100 points, Malta currently ranks 13th in the EU, a positive ranking which this Action Plan seeks to improve further. GEMSAP aims to advance Malta's current position with 5-7 points within 5 years. Malta also aims to be in the top 10 places of this Index by 2027.

This Action Plan recognises the important challenge of ensuring that all women benefit from gender equality policies and the protection provided by relevant instruments, including disadvantaged groups of women. To this end, this Action Plan adopts intersectionality throughout, taking into account not only gender, but gender in combination with other personal characteristics or identities, ensuring that gender mainstreaming truly results in equality for all.

The strengthening of institutional mechanisms for gender equality and the availability of resources, therefore, are critical, and will determine future progress to improve gender equality on the ground.

SPECIFIC ACTIONS AND LINKED OUTPUTS

Action 1.1: Addressing Intersectionality

Time frame: Within 1 year

1.1.1 Address the intersectional aspect of gender with other grounds of discrimination (including inter alia disability; race; belief; age; sexual orientation) in policy making, taking into particular account persons who are at risk of poverty and social exclusion

Lead : All Ministries

1.1.2 Quarterly awareness-raising campaigns on various themes in collaboration with Civil Society, addressing the intersectional aspect of gender

Lead : HRD

Supporting: Civil Society

Action 1.2 Research & Data Collection

Time frame: Within 1 year

1.2.1 Strengthen the collection of gender disaggregated data across the board

Lead: All Ministries

1.2.2 Further collaboration with the National Statistics Office (NSO) on the collection and sharing of data related to gender equality and gender mainstreaming

Lead: NSO

Supporting: All Ministries

Action 1.3 Development & Reform Structures

Time frame: within 3 years

1.3.1 Strengthen the Gender Mainstreaming Unit within HRD

Lead : MHSR

1.3.2 Strengthen the principle of gender mainstreaming in the design, implementation and evaluation of public service and public sector policies with clear requirements and obligations

Lead: OPM

Supporting: MHSR

1.3.3 Revisit the current gender mainstreaming reporting system within Government to ensure that the public service and public sector fully implement the principles of gender mainstreaming and gender equality

Lead: NCPE (MHSR)

Supporting: P&SD(OPM)

1.3.4 Investing in gender audit training for professionals

Lead: MHSR

1.3.5 Set up an Inter-ministerial Committee on Gender Equality & Mainstreaming, which will consist of focal points from each ministry, so as to monitor the implementation of the action plan.

Lead: MHSR

- 1.3.6 Determine, within the first six months (Q2) of GEMSAP, the timeline and budget foreseen for each measure in the strategy
Lead: Inter-Ministerial Committee
- 1.3.7 Introduce and adopt practical guidelines on how to take account of the gender perspective in events, meetings, reports, publications, language, publicity work and public procurement
Lead: MHSR
- 1.3.8 Introduce a new category in the National Worker of the Year Award (Premju Nazzjonali Haddiem tas-Sena), recognising the efforts of enterprises that register significant progress in gender equality and mainstreaming, or successfully implement innovative measures to ensure gender equality and mainstreaming within their structure or the industry in general
Lead: OPM
- 1.3.9 Boost cooperation and the exchange of best practices through existing fora within professional spheres
Lead: MHSR
Supporting: CCWR, Civil Society

Action 1.4 Gender Budgeting

Timeframe: Within 3 years

- 1.4.1 Introduce a genderresponsive budgeting system with clear, measurable targets, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms
Lead: MFE

Action 1.5: Development and Reform of Legislation

Timeframe: Within 5 years

- 1.5.1 Adopt the Equality Act and the Human Rights and Equality Commission Act to effectively tackle intersectional discrimination in all its forms in all spheres of life
Lead: MHSR
- 1.5.2 Strengthen the review process of Maltese legislation to identify and remove any provisions which needlessly differentiate between men and women, where applicable
Lead: HRD (MHSR)
- 1.5.3 Increase awareness on legislative tools and safeguards available to victims of gender discrimination
Lead: MHSR

Objective 2: Guarantee Equal Access to Employment in all Sectors, Combat Segregation and Ensure Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value

Malta had clearly made progress in women's participation in the labour market. The consistent increase in the female employment rate over the years clearly marks how the multitude of measures aimed at increasing women's participation in the labour market, such as free childcare, the Breakfast Club, Klabb 3-16, tapering of benefits and in-work benefit, left their desired effects.

Nonetheless, the Maltese context still holds barriers for women in the labour market, as patriarchal expectations remain, as well as the glass ceiling in decision-making processes. 2020 Eurostat data shows that 67.8% of women, between the age of 20 and 64, are in employment, compared to 85.6% of men. Data also shows that 13.55% of employed women are in part-time employment, compared to 3.69% of men.

There are various determinants that affect female labour market participation, including the burden of private and care responsibilities, employment segregation, career breaks, stereotypes, equal pay for work of equal value, among others. All these determinants are addressed in this document.

In 2022 GEI, despite Malta ranking second in the EU in the sub-domain of segregation, the uneven concentration of women and men in different sectors of the labour market remains an issue: 30% of women work in education, health and social work, compared to 10% of men.

In view of this, GEMSAP aims to advance women's participation in the labour market, aiming to have at least 73% of women engaged in full-time employment (20 – 64 years) by 2027 and strengthen the gender balance in segregation of labour.

The increase in female employment also led to a widening of the gender pay gap (GPG), which in 2019 stood at 11.6%. Eradicating this inequality has increasingly been defined as a priority in Malta and beyond, primarily since it is an obvious manifestation of gender inequality, as well as a contributing factor to poverty risk. In April 2018, the National Statistics Office published an analysis of the GPG in Malta, which shows that the GPG is highest in the private sector at 14.3%, as opposed to the public sector at 5%. This also impacts parents of dependent children (16.6%) more than nonparents (6%).

Such study also shows that GPG is widest in the 35-54 age cohort. This may be due to the demands of unpaid caregiving which lead women to opt for part-time employment as well as the higher incidence in these age groups of women returning to employment after a career break taken to care for dependent children.

It is also noted that GPG tends to be widest in sectors involving a higher proportion of professional, technical and management positions, one of the reasons being that women are underrepresented in these positions.

Women also still face considerable challenges and barriers to pursuing a career in the spheres of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). In particular, the stereotypes children face from an early age compel girls and boys to confine their choices to traditional roles and societal expectations. Aware of these challenges, the measures below are therefore aimed at ensuring that the present gap and employment segregation that currently exists within this sector is mitigated and eventually abolished.

10 Eurostat Employment - annual statistics

11 Eurostat Employment by sex, age, professional status and full-time/part-time (1 000)

12 Gender Equality Index 2022 – Domain of work

13 The National Employment Policy (2021 – 2030)

SPECIFIC ACTIONS AND LINKED OUTPUTS

Action 2.1 Strengthening gender mainstreaming in the workforce

Timeframe: Within 3 years

- 2.1.1 Study whether the feminisation of labour is occurring in certain sectors of the public service and public sector and, if so, draw a plan to rectify it
Lead: P&SD(OPM)
- 2.1.2 Introduce a gender mainstreaming obligation in the Quality Award Process
Lead: P&SD(OPM)
- 2.1.3 Strengthen the monitoring and enforcement process ensuring that tenderers awarded public contracts comply with, and ensure, gender equality and equal pay throughout their structure
Lead: MFE
Supporting: DIER (OPM)
- 2.1.4 Raise awareness and provide support for the adoption, and upgrading, of gender equality policies by:
 - i. assisting in the preparation of equality plans and the promotion of equality within the workplace, in accordance with the Equality Act and Maltese legislation; and
 - ii. revamping and relaunching the Equality Mark CertificationLead: NCPE (MHSR)
- 2.1.5 Encourage further dissemination of tools for companies, for them to voluntarily self-diagnose their wage structure, and detect and correct pay inequalities
Lead: NCPE (MHSR)
Supporting: DIER (OPM)
- 2.1.6 Promote further the 'Equal Pay' Equality Mark Certification, including recognition and promotion of companies achieving this mark
Lead: NCPE (MHSR)

Action 2.2 Training

Timeframe: Within 3 years

- 2.2.1 Invest in further training for public service and public sector officials in the practical implementation of gender mainstreaming
Lead: IPS (OPM)
Supporting: NCPE(MHSR), HRD(MHSR)
- 2.2.2 Incentivising industry-led training programmes for women who are re-entering the labour market with a focus on STEM careers
Lead: MFE
Supporting: MEFL

- 2.2.3 Ensure that upskilling training and employment guidance programmes for women belonging to vulnerable groups are provided (namely, migrants, persons with a disability, the elderly and LGBTIQ people) for them to access, and remain in, the labour market, and be fully included in society
Lead: Jobsplus (MFE)
Supporting: MEYR, HRD (MHSR), NCPE (MHSR), CRPD (MIVC)

Action 2.3 ICT & Entrepreneurship

Timeframe: Within 5 years

- 2.3.1 Establish mentoring programmes for women interested in technology namely entrepreneurship, ICT Artificial Intelligence (AI) and blockchain technology, finance and science
Lead: MEFL
- 2.3.2 Undertake regular raising awareness initiatives on careers within the ICT Sector, and equal opportunities within it
Lead: MEFL
Supporting: MFE
- 2.3.3 Propose further fiscal and financial incentives for women taking up entrepreneurship, ICT careers, and employment opportunities related to the finance and science sector
Lead: MFE
Supporting: MEFL
- 2.3.4 Develop a statistical system to monitor women's participation in entrepreneurship, ICT, finance, and the science sector, including in terms of employment tenure and progression, access to various forms of finance, and business growth
Lead: MEFL

Action 2.4 Gender Pay Gap

Timeframe: Within 5 years

- 2.4.1 Strengthen and upgrade the mechanisms for monitoring equality in employment by:
- 2.4.1.1 Improving data collection on elements related to equal pay for work of equal value and research its root causes, with a view of implementing targeted solutions
Lead: NSO (MFE)
Supporting: DIER(OPM), NCPE (MHSR)
- 2.4.1.2 Ensuring that employees and prospective employees are given accurate and updated information on their employment contract, pay policies and practices, pay structures, starting salaries, pay and promotion progression, as well as access to additional payments and bonuses, among others
Lead: DIER (OPM)

- 2.4.2 Combat gender-based job segregation by exploring the concept of job evaluation and assessment systems which systematically determine the value of a profession or sector, with a view of introducing the proportionality principle
Lead: MFE
Supporting: OPM
- 2.4.3 Increase information and awareness, and promote research on issues concerning equal treatment for men and women at work by:
- 2.4.3.1 Raising awareness on equal pay for work of equal value within society at large, and develop tools that workers can use to ensure that they are receiving equal pay for work of equal value, and to address any discrepancies
Lead: NCPE (MHSR)
Supporting: HRD (MHSR), MFE, DIER (OPM)
- 2.4.3.2 Promoting greater wage transparency within the private sector by publicising salary structures and entry level rates of all employment opportunities
Lead: Jobsplus (MFE)
- 2.4.3.3 Providing specialised advice and legal information to victims of pay discrimination
Lead: DIER (OPM)
Supporting: NCPE (MHSR)
- 2.4.3.4 Supporting the EU's directive to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms
Lead: OPM
Supporting: NCPE (MHSR), DIER (OPM), HRD (MHSR)

Objective 3: Enhancing Women's Economic Independence

Investing in women's economic independence and empowerment sets a direct path towards gender equality for equitable and sustainable societies. Economic empowerment increases women's access to economic resources and opportunities including jobs, services, property and skills and as a result, their contribution to economic development and growth. The result of economic independence leaves a positive impact on women's empowerment, allowing more women to shape their own lives, play a role in the public life and be economically independent.

In fact, Government has introduced several incentives to further ensure economic independence, including fiscal incentives aimed at addressing the issue of making work pay to encourage inactive women to enter the labour market and help for long-term unemployed to join the labour market by gradually tapering of their unemployment benefits once they are in employment.

According to the National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion, in 2019, 30.5% of Maltese women were considered at risk of poverty compared with 27.4% of men. By increasing women's participation in the labour market and their earnings throughout the lifecycle, women's economic independence is enhanced while reducing their risk of falling into poverty or social exclusion.

This Strategic Policy also highlights that "major factor behind this discrepancy is the high rate of elderly females with no or little pensions, who would rely on the husband's sole pension." This shows that the gender pension gap translates into higher poverty risks for older women compared to men, and no or little economic independence. In 2019, women aged over 65 received 40% less pension than men.

In order to continue safeguarding and enhancing women's economic independence, the below measures address social and economic policies, taxation and social security systems to ensure equal treatment in all spheres of life.

SPECIFIC ACTIONS AND LINKED OUTPUTS

Action 3.1 Incentives

Timeframe: Within 5 years

3.1.1 Reinforce actions to achieve equal economic independence for women and men by promoting tax incentives which strengthen women's participation in the labour market

Lead: MFE

3.1.2 Explore the introduction of further incentives to entice informal workers to move from the unregulated market to the formal sector, thus safeguarding their rights as employees

Lead: MFE

3.1.3 Promote existing incentives which continue to encourage more women to enter the labour market, and therefore, become more financial independent

Lead: MFE

Action 3.2 Policy Reforms

Timeframe: Within 5 years

3.2.1 Review and revise inland revenue policies and legislation to ensure equal treatment between men and women, irrespective of civil status and, or sex

Lead: CfR (MFE)

3.2.2 Review and revise social security policies and legislation to ensure equal treatment between men and women, irrespective of civil status and, or sex

Lead: MSPC

3.2.3 Explore the current gender gaps in pension, assess the risks to these gaps and identify solutions

Lead: MFAA

Supporting: MSPC

Objective 4: Strengthening the Principle of Gender Equality & Mainstreaming in the Education System and Challenging Gender Stereotypes

Equal access to education, as well as fair and high-quality educational processes, are essential for gender equality and for future economic prosperity.

Government acknowledges the importance of education and training and lifelong learning to ensure that women and men acquire and maintain the skills they need to participate fully in society and successfully manage transitions in the labour market.

Stereotypical expectations limit girls and boys in their aspirations, choices and freedom. This emerges clearly when one observes the gender imbalance in areas such as STEM and care, with women being severely underrepresented in the former, and men in the latter.

Evidently, although more women than men graduated from the University of Malta in 2020/2021, there is still significant segregation in the choice of educational subjects. In fact, 63.5% of graduates were women. However, women remain heavily underrepresented in business and STEM subjects whereas men are underrepresented in social and care subjects. As a matter of fact, men dominated in faculties of Engineering (73.7%) and ICT (79.6%). On the other hand, graduate women dominated in areas such as education (89.3%), health sciences (69.4%) and social wellbeing (76.3%).

Gender stereotypes are preconceived social and cultural patterns or ideas, whereby women and men are assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their sex. As gender stereotypes are pervasive and operate throughout time, a life-cycle approach is needed to address the socialisation of men and boys in a wide range of social contexts: at home, throughout the education system, at the workplace and the wider economy, in the public space, in social media and networks, as well as in personal relationships. Gender stereotypes both result from, and are the cause of, deeply engrained attitudes, values, norms and prejudices.

The media also plays an important role in shaping people's beliefs, values and perception, and are thus further key channels for changing attitudes and challenging stereotypes. In 2021, the Broadcasting Authority developed Gender Representation Guidelines for Discussion Programmes aiming at raising awareness on the issue, whilst helping to narrow the representation gap between men and women in discussion programmes.

In view of this, the following measures directly address segregation, stereotyping and gender gaps in education and training with the aim to advance the gender balance in traditionally male or female-dominated professions and address gender stereotypes.

15 NCPE – Annual Report 2021

16 Council of Europe - Combating Gender Stereotypes and Sexism

17 Gender Representation Guidelines for Discussion Programmes

SPECIFIC ACTIONS AND LINKED OUTPUTS

Action 4.1 Education Structure

Timeframe: Within 3 years

- 4.1.1 Strengthen positive gender representation in formal education of all subjects to tackle gender stereotypes and to ensure that the content of the curriculum includes values and attitudes of gender equality
Lead: MEYR
- 4.1.2 Carry out gender equality audits in all schools and higher education institutions to assess the gaps in the present allocation of resources and the gender relations and representation within them
Lead: MEYR
- 4.1.3 Ensure that the necessary resources are made available to ensure that gender equality is mainstreamed throughout the educational system, including the national curriculum, educational facility setups, as well as sports and STEM facilities
Lead: MEYR
- 4.1.4 Address the gender dimension in the preparation of specific educational support and reinforcement programmes directed at vulnerable groups likely to experience multiple discrimination (such as the Ġużè Ellul Mercer educational programme and Alternative Learning Programmes)
Lead: MEYR
- 4.1.5 Provide relevant, up to date resources for schools and libraries, including resource packs for teachers, story books, fiction and non-fiction for children and adolescents
Lead: MEYR
- 4.1.6 Introduce higher education training blocks divided into attainable steps (without stipulated timeframes), especially for women whose regular educational path was truncated
Lead: MEYR
- 4.1.7 Review the sex education currently being given within formal education
Lead: MEYR
Supporting: MFH
- 4.1.8 Establish an MoU between the Equality Ministry and Academic Entities, with the aim of identifying research areas related to equality and promoting these identified areas to their students and academics
Lead: MHSR
Supporting: MEYR

Action 4.2 Raising Awareness

Timeframe: Within 3 years

- 4.2.1 Create information sessions specifically designed for girls and women interested in careers which are traditionally predominantly male
Lead: MEYR
Supporting: MHSR
- 4.2.2 Promote and encourage women to make use of Recognition of Prior Learning programmes and institutions to recognise such programmes
Lead: MEYR
- 4.2.3 Promote the reinforcement and implementation of gender equality and non-discrimination in sports, drama, art, music, and organisations offering non-formal education
Lead: MEYR
- 4.2.4 Support sectoral women's rights organisations to implement a systematic programme concerning educational and professional networking events
Lead: MEYR
- 4.2.5 Enhance awareness of the importance and positive aspects of STEM tertiary education for girls and women
Lead: UM (MEYR)
Supporting: MEYR

Action 4.3 Investing in training

Timeframe: Within 3 years

- 4.3.1 Ensure that all personnel of educational institutions are adequately trained to tackle gender discrimination and stereotypes, promote equal treatment and equal value, and guarantee a safe and inclusive environment free from discrimination, marginalisation and/or violence
Lead: MEYR
Supporting: MHSR
- 4.3.2 Monitor the newly adopted Gender Representation Guidelines for Discussion Programmes and ensure that adequate training and support is provided as required
Lead: BA (MHAL)
Supporting: HRD (MHSR), NCPE (MHSR)
- 4.3.3 Train science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) teachers in gender-responsive pedagogy and classroom management
Lead: MEYR

Action 4.4 STEM

Timeframe: Within 3 years

- 4.4.1 Create safe and inclusive STEM learning environments, and promote the uptake of these subjects among female students
Lead: MEYR
- 4.4.2 Enhance mentoring, apprenticeship and career counselling to ensure a fair and equal orientation of female students on STEM studies and careers
Lead: MEYR
- 4.4.3 Promote mentoring programmes for girls and women on the practical and creative applications of STEM and AI
Lead: MEYR
- 4.4.4 Create and support more initiatives for girls with regard to computer science and entrepreneurship learning in and out of the classroom, and encourage and support their participation in mainstream activities and competitions
Lead: MEYR
Supporting: MEFL

Objective 5: Promoting Co-Responsibility & Balance of Work, Private & Family Life

An equal sharing of care responsibilities is crucial in order to achieve an equal society. The equal sharing of unpaid household and care work should be promoted to break down gender stereotypes, ensure women's and men's work-life balance, and get closer to real gender equality.

81% of women in Malta are still responsible for doing cooking and/or household chores every day, compared to 37% men. A gap is also present when comparing women and men when caring for and educating their children or grandchildren, elderly or people with disabilities, 42% for women compared to 25% of men.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted further that caring responsibilities and unpaid household chores are more likely to fall heavily on women, due to ingrained patriarchal mentalities. With the closure of schools and workplaces, it is highly likely that the increased caring responsibilities will rest squarely on women. This may include an array of tasks, from caring for children currently studying from home to sickly elderly relatives, as well as the usual household chores.

In the meantime, women are still expected, where possible, to keep up with their work duties from home, causing considerable emotional and social stress for women, hence, making it more difficult for women to seek long-term, full-time employment.

Malta's Public Service has already introduced several family-friendly and work-life balance measures, striving to be a model employer in this regard. In 2020, a research report conducted by the People & Standards Division within the Institute for the Public Services concluded that the overall utilisation of family friendly measures has increased in the Public Administration. A drastic increase of 122.73% in parent leave indicate a very positive change in the involvement of household duties among the male public officers. Moreover, although the Career Break remains predominant by female public officers, there has been an increasingly preference for flexitime and teleworking from both genders across the ministries.

Notwithstanding, there is still a gender imbalance in the take up of family friendly measures and considering the number of females who opted for family-friendly measures compared to men, it is important to note that balancing work and family responsibilities should not be a women-only issue. The reconciliation of work, private and family life is a key gender equality principle, which can be attained when women and men share caring responsibilities and duties.

18 Gender Equality Index 2022 - Malta

19 Institute for the Public Services - Family-Friendly Measures Report 2020

SPECIFIC ACTIONS AND LINKED OUTPUTS

Action 5.1 Raising Awareness

Timeframe: Within 1 year

5.1.1 Promote the reconciliation of work and family life by encouraging family-friendly policies and practices at the workplace, both within the public and private sector

Lead: MHSR

Supporting: MFE, P&SD(OPM)

5.1.2 Promote co-responsibility between women and men, and tackle gender role stereotypes and care responsibilities in families to instil a cultural change

Lead: HRD(MHSR)

Supporting: NCPE(MHSR), MSPC

Action 5.2 Directives

Timeframe: Within 1 year

5.2.1 Monitor the transposition of the Work-Life Balance Directive

Lead: OPM

Supporting: MFE, MHSR

5.2.2 Promote and encourage distance learning to support work-life balance

Lead: NCFHE(MEYR)

Action 5.3 Initiatives

Timeframe: Within 3 years

5.3.1 Incentivise companies to develop reconciliation and co-responsibility measures, and promote the adoption of equality plans in small and medium-sized enterprises

Lead: MEFL

5.3.2 Encourage men to make use of flexible working arrangements and other family friendly measures

Lead: MFE

Supporting: P&SD(OPM), HRD(MHSR)

5.3.3 Extend free childcare services for employees who work in the evening, weekends and on a shift basis.

Lead: MEYR

Supporting: MFE

Objective 6: Achieving Gender Balance in Political and Public Decision Making

The balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making is crucial to a more representative democracy. Political activities and public decision-making remain male-dominated areas. In fact, EIGE highlighted that the most room for improvement remains in the domain of power, in which Malta ranks in the 19th position.

Statistics also continue to highlight the gender imbalance in public appointments and boards whereby to date, 32% of board members are females whilst 68% are males. There is also a gender imbalance in presidents, board members and employee representatives of largest listed companies whereby in 2020 the percentage of women stood at 10.8% when compared to the EU average of 30.6%.

In addition, despite a small improvement being recorded in the participation of women in Parliament, the share of women in 2020 remained very low, with only nine of Malta's 67 members of Parliament being women. Following the amendments of the Constitution of Malta, temporary positive measures will be introduced to ensure that at least 40% of representatives in the Parliament are women. This Bill also amended the General Elections Act to increase the number of electoral commissioners and ensure equal representation. This mechanism was first put to the test during the 2022 general election, and more than doubled the percentage of female Members of Parliament, from 13% in 2020 to 28% in 2022.

In view of this, the below measures aim to address the various obstacles which still make it difficult for women to enter and ensure sustainability of their participation in the area of political and public decision-making.

SPECIFIC ACTIONS AND LINKED OUTPUTS

Action 6.1 Raising Awareness

Timeframe: Within 3 years

- 6.1.1 Advocate for the adoption of the EC draft Directive on Women on Boards
Lead: MHSR
- 6.1.2 Raise awareness on the benefits of equality of representation and the sharing of power between women and men
Lead: MHSR
- 6.1.3 Raise awareness on gender bias and stereotypes, sexism and discrimination against women including sexist hate speech online and offline in the political discourse
Lead: MHSR

Action 6.2 Research & Data Collection

Timeframe: Within 3 years

- 6.2.1 Ensure that at least 40% of appointments made to officially designated bodies are women
Lead: All Ministries
- 6.2.2 Collect and analyse relevant gender disaggregated data with regard to women's representation in Parliament, local councils and government appointed boards
Lead: MHSR
- 6.2.3 Ensure systematic periodic data collection on the presence of women and men in senior positions in all sectors
Lead: NSO(MFE)
Supporting: P&SD (OPM), MFE, NCPE (MHSR)
- 6.2.4 Ensure gender balanced representation among speakers and panellists in events and organised conferences
Lead: All Ministries .

Action 6.3 Training & Mentoring Programmes

Timeframe: Within 3 years

- 6.3.1 Introduce mentoring and leadership training programmes designed to enhance women's presence in senior managerial and directorship positions
Lead: P&SD(OPM)
Supporting: MHSR, IPS (OPM)
- 6.3.2 Provide support and assistance to companies that voluntarily choose to enhance the principle of gender equality in their human resources policies
Lead: NCPE (MHSR)
Supporting: HRD (MHSR)

Objective 7: Promoting Gender Equality in Social Wellbeing and Healthcare Policies

The 2022 GEI for the domain of health for Malta is 87.8%. This measures gender equality in three health-related aspects: health status, health behaviour and access to health services. Malta scores high when looking at health status and access to health. The first one focuses on the differences in life expectancy of women and men together with self-perceived health and healthy life years while the latter is measured by the percentage of people who report unmet medical and/or dental needs.

In fact, the life expectancy for men and women in Malta remains higher than the EU average as it stands at 80% and 85% respectively.

Nonetheless, this document aims to strengthen gender mainstreaming interventions to achieve gender equality and to improve health and well-being, by furthering awareness raising campaigns, policy development, ensuring further specialised training for professionals, and strengthening research and data collection.

SPECIFIC ACTIONS AND LINKED OUTPUTS

Action 7.1 Raising Awareness

Timeframe: Within 3 years

- 7.1.1 Raise awareness among professionals in health and social services on gender stereotypes and gender-specific health risks
Lead: MFH
- 7.1.2 Launch a far-reaching sex education campaign targeting different age groups so as to ensure that adequate and up-to-date information is available to all with regard to the methods of contraception, fertility issues, pregnancy, and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases
Lead: MFH
- 7.1.3 Ensure that emergency contraception at Mater Dei or primary health care centres is freely accessible, without any hindrances, for victims of rape
Lead: MFH

Action 7.2 Training

Timeframe: Within 3 years

- 7.2.1 Provide further specialised training for professionals working in health and social services to ensure effective service provision to vulnerable women
Lead: MFH
- 7.2.2 Review guidelines and provide further training regarding female genital mutilation to healthcare practitioners and other support services providers
Lead: MFH
- 7.2.3 Provide training to professionals in health and social services on people's sexual health, including the exchange of good practices
Lead: MFH

Action 7.3 Policy Development

Timeframe: Within 3 years

- 7.3.1 Revise and update the National Inclusive Sexual Health Policy & Strategy to reflect the needs of society
Lead: MFH
- 7.3.2 Criminalise the act of virginity testing to eradicate this traumatic experience against women and girls
Lead: MHSR

Action 7.4 Research & Data Collection

Timeframe: Within 5 years

- 7.4.1 Collect gender-disaggregated data for purposes of research and data analysis on health-related matters and healthcare gender budgeting
Lead: MFH
Supporting: NSO (MFE)
- 7.4.2 Explore the access to, and costs related to menstruation products, with a view to eliminate period poverty
Lead: MHSR
Supporting: MSPC, MFE
- 7.4.3 Reduce the VAT rate on menstrual products to the lowest possible in according with EU legislation.
Lead: MHSR
Supporting: MFE
- 7.4.4 Provide free menstruation products in schools to eliminate the stigma that exists around this issue
Lead: MHSR
Supporting: MEYR
- 7.4.5 Study the introduction of free contraception, including its cost and methods of distribution
Lead: MFH
Supporting: MFE
- 7.4.6 Explore the possibility of free female sterilisation (even if not medically required)
Lead: MHSR
Supporting: MFH
- 7.4.7 Study the health and wellbeing of older people in relation to the gender aspect of life expectancy
Lead: MFAA
Supporting: NSO(MFE), MFH

Objective 8: Eliminate Gender Imbalance in the Field of Justice by Addressing Gender Bias and Gender Stereotypes

Access to justice is a human right and an integral element of promoting the rule of law and a well-functioning democracy.

Persisting gender inequalities, gender bias and stereotypes may result in unequal access to justice. Cultural barriers, lack of awareness, fear and shame also impact women's access to justice, as do discriminatory attitudes and the stereotypical roles of women as carers and men as providers.

The Council of Europe Expert Group on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) has reported the need for further criminal justice responses in Malta, highlighting gaps in data collection, particularly in the area of law enforcement and justice, which are to be tackled further within this strategy. In parallel to the GEMSAP, Malta also adopted its second Strategy on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence.

In view of these challenges and barriers, it is crucial that this gender imbalance is addressed, as equal access to justice is fundamental to ensuring real gender equality.

ACTIONS AND LINKED OUTPUTS

Action 8.1 Collaboration with MFET on matters concerning WPS

Timeframe: Within 1 year

8.1.1 Ensure women's equal participation and full involvement in all efforts to maintain and promote peace and security, in line with the WPS agenda

Lead: MFET

8.1.2 Collaborate with MFET to commemorate the day when the Security Council adopted the resolution on women and peace and security on 31 October 2000

Lead: MFET

Action 8.2 Training

Timeframe: Within 3 years

8.2.1 Develop and disseminate training tools and materials on gender equality issues and human rights in the context of international conventions and legal frameworks, which are tailored to the needs of justice professionals and members of law enforcement bodies

Lead: MFJ

Supporting: MHSR

8.2.2 Develop training modules on gender equality and gender mainstreaming for police officers

Lead: MHSR

Action 8.3 Research & Data Collection

Timeframe: Within 5 years

8.3.1 Encourage research and standardised data collection to tackle gaps and lack of data disaggregated by sex concerning women's access to justice

Lead: MHSR

Supporting: NSO(MFE), MFJ

8.3.2 Identify and disseminate existing victim support tools and good practices to empower women in the process of accessing justice

Lead: LAM (MFJ)

8.3.3 Identify, compile, and disseminate good practices from other member states to reduce obstacles and facilitate women's access to justice

Lead: MHSR, MFJ

8.3.4 Monitor and follow up court decisions to raise awareness and ensure a better understanding among legal professionals of issues related to women's access to justice, including judicial stereotypes and the protection against gender-based violence and discrimination

Lead: MHSR

Supporting: MFJ

8.3.5 Carry out a gender equality audit within the Malta Police Force to assess the gaps in the present allocation of resources, and the gender relations and representation within them

Lead: MHSR

Monitoring and Evaluation

An Inter-ministerial Committee (IMC) on Gender Equality & Mainstreaming monitored by HRD will be set up for the purposes of the GEMSAP ensures coordination between Ministries and the HRD in its implementation. The IMC will consist of focal points from each ministry, who are able to push the agenda forward and report back on progress made.

A crucial aim of the IMC within its first six months of operations will be that of determining the timeline and budget foreseen for each measure within the Action Plan. While national funds will mostly be used to finance the GEMSAP, the IMC will also explore the possibility of tapping into relevant EU funding opportunities.

The GMU within the HRD is the lead coordinating body of this Strategy and Action Plan, responsible also for its day-to-day monitoring and implementation. Monitoring of the Action Plan will be carried out at the end of each quarter. The GMU will be responsible for evaluating the progress on achieving the outlined measures and actions across all objectives of the action plan, which will be reported annually. The annual report will highlight whether the implementation of measures is on track or otherwise, and, if not, propose remedial action from the implementing entity. Moreover, an independent body will be engaged to evaluate interim and final reports to ensure a stronger monitoring system. The monitoring and evaluation of this Action Plan will also feed into the second Action Plan, following the implementation of this first document. The GMU will maintain regular and consistent contact with the Consultative Council for Women's Rights (CCWR) with regards to the implementation and progress made on the Action Plan. The Council was established with the aim of representing women's rights and to serve as a platform for policy development and legislative proposals. The members of the Council are appointed from among persons active in non-governmental organisations working in the field of women's rights.

The annual progress report will be presented during the annual gender equality conference organised by the GMU. The conference will also serve as a space for communication with different NGOs through a number of workshops and discussions which will be organised.

NB: Ministries, entities, and stakeholders mentioned in this action plan are up to date as of the date of its publication. Where changes in responsibilities or portfolios occur, the necessary updates will be affected by means of an Annex.



ANNEX

Annex 1: Glossary of Gender Mainstreaming-related terms

Gender

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, expectations, activities, behaviours and attributes that society at any given time associates with a person of any sex, assuming any form of gender identity or gender expression. Such gender systems are institutionalised through education systems, political and economic systems, legislation, and culture and traditions. In utilizing a gender approach, the focus is not on individual women and men, but on the system, which determines roles and responsibilities, access to, and control over, resources, and decision-making potentials.

Sex

The biological characteristics that define humans as female or male.

Gender Budgeting

Gender budgeting is an application of gender mainstreaming in the budgetary process, requiring a gender-based assessment of budgets, incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process, and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality.

Gender Equality

Gender equality refers to the equality of rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for women and men and girls and boys. Full gender equality ensures that the differing needs and priorities of women and men, girls and boys are given equal weight in planning and decision-making.

Gender Mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is the process of assessing the implications of any planned action, law, policy, or programme and their implementation, in all areas and levels, for women and men. It is the systematic consideration of the differences between the conditions, situations and needs of women and men, girls and boys and the reorganisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so as to incorporate a gender perspective in all policies, at all levels, and at all stages by the actors normally involved in policy making.

Gender Blindness

Gender blindness is the term used for treating all genders the same regardless of their biological or cultural differences hence not seeing how men and women are differently affected by a situation due to their different roles, needs, status and priorities in their societies.

Equal Pay for work of Equal Value

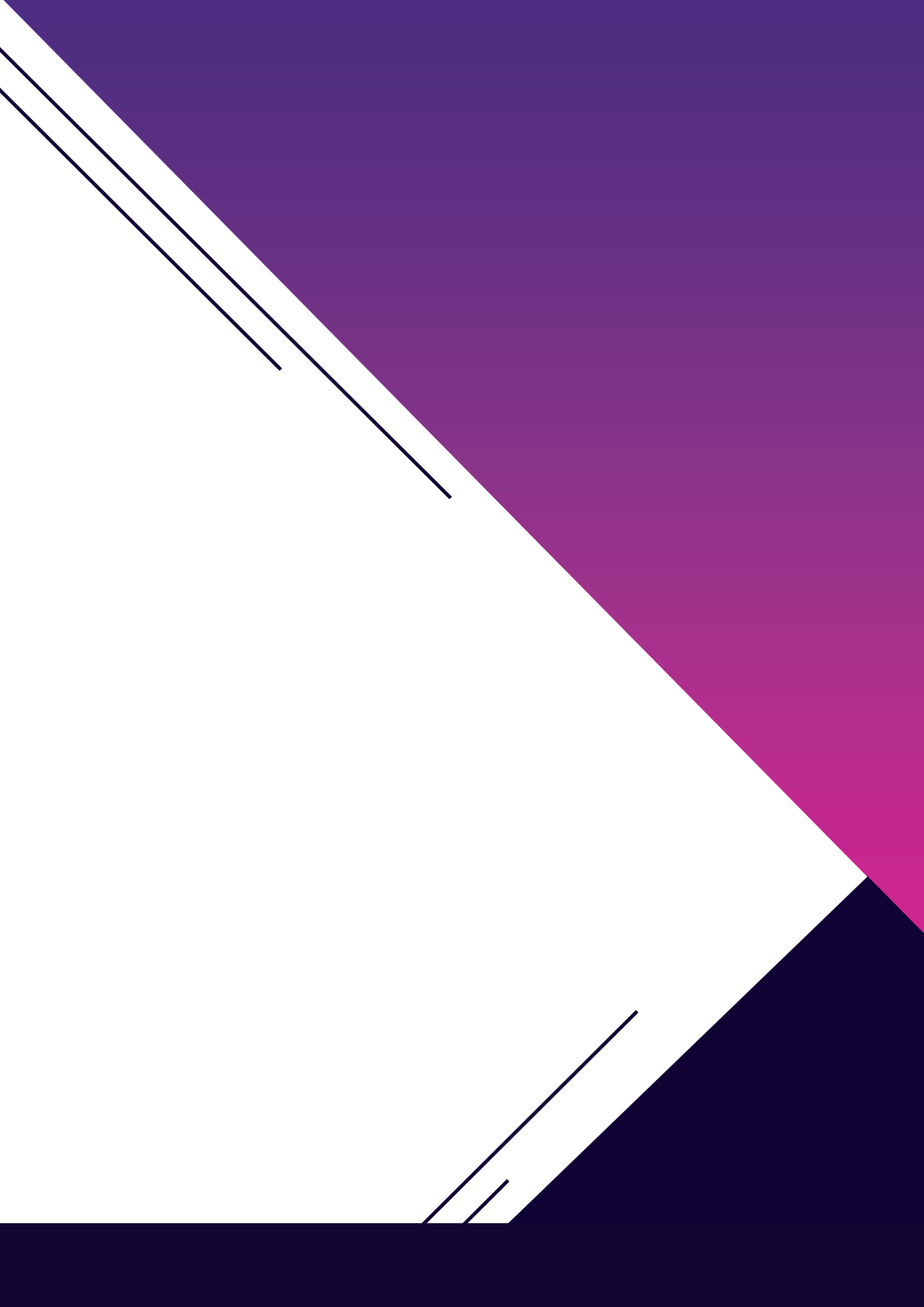
Equal pay for work to which equal value is attributed, without discrimination on grounds of sex or marital status, with regard to all aspects of pay and conditions of remuneration.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is the analytical tool for studying, understanding, and responding to the ways in which sex and gender intersect with other personal characteristics and identities, and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of discrimination.

Annex 2: Acronyms

AI	Artificial Intelligence
BA	Broadcasting Authority
CCWR	Consultative Council for Women’s Rights
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CfR	Commissioner for Revenue
CRPD	Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability
DIER	Department for Industrial and Employment Relations
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
EU	European Union
GEI	Gender Equality Index
GEMSAP	Gender Equality and Mainstreaming Strategy and Action Plan
GMU	Gender Mainstreaming Unit
GPG	Gender Pay Gap
HRD	Human Rights Directorate
ICT	Information and communications technology
IPS	Institute for Public Services
LAM	Legal Aid Malta
MEYR	Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation
MEFL	Ministry for the Economy, European Funds and Lands
MHSR	Ministry for Home Affairs, Security, Reforms and Equality
MSPC	Ministry for Social Policy and Children’s Rights
MFET	Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade
MFH	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Ministry for Health
MFE	Ministry for Finance and Employment
MIVC	Ministry for Inclusion, Voluntary Organisations and Consumer Rights
MFJ	Ministry for Justice
MFAA	Ministry for Active Ageing
NCPE	National Commission for the Promotion of Equality
NSO	National Statistics Office
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
P&SD	People and Standards Division
STEM	Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
UM	University of Malta





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