

Gender Equality and Youth

Dr Joanne Cassar

University of Malta

Aim of Presentation

- EU Youth Strategy
- Council of Europe guidelines
- Gender equality and youth in Malta
 - (i) National Youth Policy
 - (ii) National Minimum Curriculum
 - (iii) Youth Activism

The EU Youth Strategy

In 2009, the Council of the EU endorsed the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018), known as the *EU Youth Strategy - Investing and Empowering*. Its objectives are to:

- create more and **equal opportunities** for all young people in education and in the labour market, and
- promote the active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity of all young people.

This strategy was adopted by EU Youth Ministers in 2009.

The EU Youth Strategy

The EU Youth Strategy advocates a cross-cutting approach, branching out into eight different policy areas and 'fields of action':

- Education and Training
- Employment and Entrepreneurship
- Social Inclusion
- Health and Well-being
- Participation
- Culture and Creativity
- Volunteering
- Youth and the World.

The EU Youth Strategy

How are these objectives being achieved?

- Through specific youth initiatives targeted at young people to encourage non-formal learning, participation, voluntary activities, youth work, mobility and information
- Through 'mainstreaming' cross-sector initiatives that ensure youth issues are taken into account when formulating, implementing and evaluating **policies** and **legislation** that significantly impact young people, such as those related to education, employment, health and well-being

Guidelines by the Council of Europe and its partners on integrating and mainstreaming gender equality amongst youth through intercultural youth activities

1. a human rights-based approach
2. gender-balanced participation in youth activities and measures to ensure the participation of young parents
3. language and representation in materials related to educational activities
4. gender-sensitive educational approaches
5. creating safe environments and practical concerns: accommodation, working facilities, access to toilets, etc.



Gender Equality and Youth in Malta

In Malta there are 101,476 people between the ages of 13 and 30 years (National Statistics Office, 2014):

- 52,288 are males
- 49,188 are females

Malta has less than 3% of its youth population composed of EU foreigners (aged 15-29), who became citizens of Malta (European Commission, 2012).

Indicators of Gender In/Equality



- Seven women MPs out of a total of 67
- Three out of 6 (50%) MEPs are female
- President of Malta is female
- More female than male students graduate from the University of Malta
- Gender divide between students studying engineering and computer sciences both male dominated and teaching and caring professions which are chosen predominantly by female students
- The Gender Issues Committee within the University of Malta was set up in 1991.
- The voting age for general elections and MEP elections has been lowered from 18 to 16 years.

Indicators of Gender In/Equality



- Women in Malta earn almost half of what men earn, the second-highest gap across the EU. Males in Malta earn 45.6% more - EU average 39.6% (Eurostat, 2017).
- Women in the EU earned on average 16% less than men in 2016

<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-press-releases/-/3-07032018-BP>

Maltese National Youth Policy

Towards 2020: A shared vision for the future of young people

The Policy is committed to implement the *The EU Youth Strategy*. It states:

- “Every young person is of equal value and should be given equal respect, dignity and opportunity, regardless of age, experience, beliefs, ethnicity, physical and mental capacities, socio-economic background, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression.”

National Youth Policy Towards 2020: A shared vision for the future of young people

“Young people should have user-friendly access to quality services and equality of opportunity with the aim of ensuring their active participation in the economy and society.”

National Minimum Curriculum (1999)

Gender equality was one of the educational objectives listed in the *National Minimum Curriculum* which indicates the knowledge students and young persons needed to acquire and the skills and attitudes they needed to develop.

The legal basis for the Maltese *National Minimum Curriculum* can be found in the Education Act (Chap. 327) that was established by the Maltese Parliament in 1988 to consolidate and amend the law concerning education

National Curriculum Framework (2012)

“acknowledges and respects individual differences of age, gender, sexual orientation, beliefs, personal development, socio-cultural background, geographical location and ethnicity.”

Gender equality however is not mentioned.

National Curriculum Framework

"Certain stakeholders criticised the NCF on the basis that it makes limited reference to gender issues and no reference to sexual orientation issues."

Youth Activism

- International research documents the phenomenon of contemporary young women repudiating or disinvesting from identifications with feminism (Jowe 2004: 99; Baker 2008; Scharff 2012).
- They constitute feminism as obsolete by a postfeminist media context that suggests women are now equal in education, the workplace and the home (McRobbie 2008; Ringrose and Renold 2010).

Youth Activism

However there is growing interest in research that explores girls' political, activism through:

- Girls' online identity formation (Weber and Mitchell 2008; Currie et al. 2009)
- Media practices such as blogging and digital social networking (Piepmeier, 2009; Zaslow 2009; Ringrose 2011; Keller 2012).

Youth Activism

Example SlutWalk (2011)

- Protest marches calling for an end to rape culture, including victim blaming and slut shaming of sexual assault victims.
- Participants protested against explaining or excusing rape by referring to any aspect of a woman's appearance.
- They started in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, after a police officer suggested that "women should avoid dressing like sluts" as a precaution against sexual assault.
- Subsequent rallies have occurred globally and produced a transnational movement (Ringrose and Renold 2012).





In June 2016 a judicial protest by the **Women's Rights Foundation** in Malta signed by 102 women was filed calling for the licensing, importation and distribution of emergency contraception. This was granted a few months after, following protest marches in the streets. attended by a number of young people. Opponents of this decision reacted by filing a judicial protest against the Medicines Authority on the grounds that emergency contraception pharmaceuticals can cause a chemical abortion.

In March 2018 the same Foundation asked for the provision of safe and legal abortion to all women in Malta.



The protest march was organised by **Gender Equality Malta**, a non-profit, youth-led organisation set up in 2016. It focuses on the attainment of gender equality in Malta through laws, policies, and awareness or educational campaigns. It advocates open discussion, dialogue and co-operation with all bodies concerned.



NETWORK OF YOUNG WOMEN LEADERS

This NGO set up in Malta supports, promotes and encourages young women in leadership positions with special focus on the political sphere, in view of a tangible need for an increase in the participation of young women.

NYWL seeks to identify and advocate against the existing structural barriers that hinder full participation of women in leadership positions.

NYWL seeks to foster the notion that upholding and furthering gender equality and women's rights is pertinent to their representation in institutions and society in general.

Marriage Equality



In 2017 Malta became the 25th country in the world and the 15th in Europe to legalise marriage equality.

The Marriage Equality Act

recognizes that any person irrespective of gender identity and

This law stipulates that the institution of marriage is gender neutral and ensures that unnecessary references to parents' gender or sexual orientation are not included in their children's birth certificates

WE MADE HISTORY





Young
People at
the
Forefront

Conclusion

Young people are key indicators of the state of the nation. They reflect its standards of gender equality and are shaped by it.

Equal access to better education, health services, employment, training, career prospects and leisure forms part of their fundamental rights.

Young people in different parts of the world seem to be assuming more responsibility in counteracting existing gender inequalities and increasing their recognition that gender equality is key to quality of life.