



National Council
of Women Malta
Founded 1964.

Il-Mara

Newsletter of the National Council of Women - Malta



Members of



International Council of Women

Founded 1888

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



European Centre of the International Council of Women

Founded 1961

In Special Consultative Status with the Economic & Social Council of the UN

Executive Committee Members 2025

President:	Dr Rebecca Janelle Berry Wellman
Hon. General Secretary:	Dr Daniela Cassola
1 st Vice President:	Mary Gaerty
Vice President PR Officer:	Lara Gail Dougall
Vice President:	Doreen Borg Zammit
Hon. Treasurer:	Iona Baldacchino
Assistant Hon. Treasurer:	Therese Cassola
Membership Secretary:	Gertrude Abela MQR
Assistant Secretary:	Tiziana Gatt
Members:	Grace Attard MQR Sarah Xerri Mary Buttigieg Said
Ex-Officio:	Doris Bingley, Hon. General Secretary
Office Secretary:	Gracianne Spiteri

Front Cover

Participants of the 15th Edition of the Bice Mizzi Vassallo Music Competition together with the Organising Committee, Judges and Sponsors.

Office Hours

Monday to Friday
9.00 - 13.00

Membership Subscription Rates

New Individual Membership	€20.00
Annual Renewal	€15.00
Affiliated Organisations	€25.00
Associated Organisations	€25.00
Life membership	€95.00

Members and Affiliated Organisations are requested to keep their subscription fees up to date.

Il-Mara

NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN - MALTA



National Council of Women Malta
Founded 1964

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

EDITORIAL

The past few months have been exceptionally active for the National Council of Women, characterised by sustained advocacy, increased public engagement, and a steady flow of issues requiring thoughtful deliberation. Throughout this period, NCW has remained consistent in its mission to represent the concerns of women, families, and the wider community with clarity and integrity.



Our recent press releases and discussions across different platforms reflect the breadth and seriousness of the matters we have been addressing. These include our considered reaction to the National Budget, concerns surrounding euthanasia, the escalating problem of second-hand smoke (including cannabis smoke), and the growing burden of traffic and time loss on women's daily lives. Each of these topics carries profound implications for wellbeing, equity, and quality of life.

These public statements and internal discussions serve as a reminder of the Council's ongoing responsibility to ensure that women's perspectives are not only voiced but genuinely taken into account in national decision-making. Our work continues to be guided by evidence, collaboration, and the firm belief that respectful, informed dialogue can pave the way for meaningful progress.

In parallel, we have continued to explore opportunities to empower women through education. One such initiative was the Digital Entrepreneurship Course, which equipped participants with practical digital and business skills. This course stands as an example of the Council's ability to respond to emerging needs and create impactful learning opportunities when resources allow.

As we approach the Christmas season, the weeks ahead offer a timely moment to pause, reflect, and look forward with renewed purpose. They also present an opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to all members, volunteers, contributors, and partner organisations who have supported our work during this particularly intensive period.

On behalf of the National Council of Women, I extend my warmest wishes to all our readers. May this festive season bring peace, wellbeing, and a renewed sense of hope for the year ahead.

Dr Daniela Cassola
Honorary General Secretary
National Council of Women Malta

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL 2026

We kindly ask you to settle your membership fee of €15 before the Annual General Meeting held on Saturday, 31st January 2026.

Due to Central Bank Regulations, cheques of €20 or below are no longer permitted, so we advise you to either pay your dues for this year by internet banking or if you prefer sending a cheque please pay membership fee for two years 2026 and 2027. For any member who would like to become a Life Member, the fee is €95.

President's Message

Dear Friends,

Another year is coming to an end, but not before we celebrate Christmas and welcome the New Year. It has indeed been an extremely busy year due to debated issues such as euthanasia, the drug and alcohol problem, the traffic problem and more recently also the wakeup call regarding the low birth rate in our country. Some of these concerns were addressed during the national budget for 2026.

As NCW we have participated in all these discussions through our representation in the Civil Society Committee within the MCESD (Malta Social and Economic Dialogue). Discussions about Envision 2050 are still ongoing and it is essential that we as citizens participate by giving our opinions as to what we aspire to have in 2050. Some of us will not be here but I am sure that through our present experience we can put forward our recommendations which may be implemented, so that our youngsters will have a better life.

Recently several countries have been giving more consideration to the effects of social media on our children and even recommending that access be restricted to the over 13 or even 16-year-old youths. Will this ever happen? I was reading about experiments where 13-year-old students were asked to give up their smartphones for a week. All of them reported that they found more time to exercise, to communicate with friends and be more present with their families. During this year we also participated in discussions regarding the introduction of miscarriage leave. This will be launched in the coming days.

I hope that you will all have a wonderful Christmas, remembering about and being kind to those who are passing through a difficult period, sparing some time to stop from our usual work and chores to give meaning to our lives and that of others through love for one another.

Wishing you all and your loved ones A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS and A HEALTHY AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR.



Mary Gaerty
1st Vice President
National Council of Women Malta

End of Summer Quiz Night

On 19th September 2025, NCW members, friends and relatives met up for an evening together at The Exiles in Sliema. The evening proved very enjoyable for all who attended. NCW 1st Vice President Mary Gaerty thanked Mr George Cassola for preparing a very mind-boggling quiz featuring a variety of questions on general knowledge. The quiz was indeed challenging for each team to solve, while enjoying the meal. The winners were awarded a lovely plant each, kindly donated by Sherries Estates/Garden Centre.



Contents

Editorial	2	Prof. Dame Clare Gerada appointed Life Peer	11
President's Message	3	Maltese-born Noreen Burroughes Awarded MBE for	
STEM Minis – Summer 2025	4	Championing Women in International Trade and Entrepreneurship ..	11
Food Handling Certificates Presentation	5	Commonwealth Foundation's New Director-General	12
Participation in the MCAST Freshers Week.....	5	Il-Proġett 'Stop the Violence' mill-Malta Girl Guides Association	13
Meeting with Opposition Leader, Dr Alex Borg	5	A Short Digital Entrepreneurship Course.....	14
Attendance at the Labour Party Annual Conference	5	Empowering Women: Confidence & Leadership Workshop	15
Visit to the European Commission and the European Parliament....	6	Annual General Meeting	16
The 15th Edition of the Bice Mizzi Vassallo Music Competition	7	End of Summer Quiz Night	16
The Ghonnella	10	Food Handling Course at NCW Centre, Blata l-Bajda	16
Woman Unclouded	10		

STEM Minis – Summer 2025

The STEM Minis Summer Programme returned once again in 2025, bringing with it another season of curiosity, discovery, and imaginative learning for young children aged three to seven. As always, the programme was entirely free of charge and run on a voluntary basis, supported through the generous provision of materials from the Findel CASTME Education Award. This support allows STEM Minis to remain accessible to all families and continues to make a meaningful contribution to STEM engagement in early childhood.

This summer's programme consisted of five sessions, each designed to introduce children to different scientific ideas through play, hands-on exploration, and sensory-rich activities. The first session explored the world of sound. Children experimented with vibrations by creating their own telephones using cups and string and then moved on to make musical instruments out of everyday "trash" such as soap boxes, toilet rolls, yoghurt tubs, stale cereal, rubber bands, and small plastic containers. Working together, they learned to keep a steady beat and had the chance to play their inventions alongside a selection of real percussion instruments. The session blended physics with creativity, showing children that science can be found in the simplest household items.



The second session shifted the focus to insects, with particular attention to bees and their essential role in pollination. The children learned the basic anatomy of insects - head, thorax, abdomen, and six legs - and explored insect life cycles. They engaged in a fine-motor activity where they used tweezers to pick up wooden ladybirds, butterflies, and pompom "eggs," transporting them to felt flowers. A pollination activity followed, where handmade bees and butterflies, created from popsicle sticks, tissue-paper wings, and pipe-cleaner legs, "flew" onto paper flowers dusted with yellow powder. The excitement on the children's faces as the "pollen" stuck to their insects' legs perfectly illustrated how hands-on learning makes scientific concepts meaningful.

The third session, Secret Spies, was one of the most memorable. Children arrived to find a dress-up box full of props and costumes, allowing them to become spies for the day and choose their very own spy names. They learned about fingerprints and examined their own using paint before identifying loops, whorls, and arches. Equipped with this new knowledge, the young detectives worked together to solve "The Case of the Missing Diamond," where they had to match fingerprints to identify the robber. The excitement continued with invisible ink messages written using lemon juice and revealed over heat, a matching game involving animal tracks, and a series of escape-room-style puzzles using codes, number lines, and problem-solving challenges. Solving all the puzzles rewarded them with a three-digit code that opened a locked treasure chest filled with biscuits. The combination of science, mystery, and teamwork made this session a clear favourite.



Magic Potions, the fourth session, introduced the children to chemistry through a series of fun and safe reactions. The children watched in amazement as balloons inflated through the reaction of baking soda and vinegar. They created simple lava lamps using oil, coloured water, baking soda, and vinegar, marvelling at the bubbling movement within the cup. Finally, they explored oobleck, the fascinating non-Newtonian mixture of cornstarch and water that behaves as both a solid and a liquid. Their enthusiasm while squeezing, tapping, and watching it ooze demonstrated the power of sensory-based science learning.



The final session of the summer took place outdoors at Buskett, where the children became Nature Explorers for the morning. With scavenger hunt lists in hand, they searched for items such as spiders, moss, seed pods, tree stumps, and green or brown leaves. Along the way, they collected a variety of leaves, which they later examined at the picnic tables, comparing edges, shapes, and sizes before creating leaf rubbings. The session also included time for free exploration, during which some children attempted to build a "snowman" using sticks, pinecones, and leaves. The morning ended with a small picnic, making the final session both educational and memorable.

Feedback from parents this year was exceptionally positive. Many expressed appreciation for the creativity and organisation of each session, as well as gratitude for the welcoming and calm environment created for their children. Parents consistently highlighted how much their children looked forward to each session and how eagerly they spoke about their experiences at home. Their comments reinforced the value of keeping the programme free and accessible, and the importance of providing high-quality early STEM opportunities within the community. The 2025 edition was a wonderful example of how simple materials, thoughtful planning, and a spirit of exploration can come together to create meaningful and joyful STEM experiences.

Dr Daniela Cassola
Hon. General Secretary



Food Handling Certificates Presentation



On 19th September 2025 certificates were presented to students who attended the Food Handling Course organized earlier in the year. During this course, which is organized on a regular basis by NCW, participants learn about food safety, hazards, allergies and intolerances. The certificates were presented by Ms Mary Gaerty, NCW 1st Vice President.

The next Food Handling Course will be organized in February 2026. For more information contact the NCW office on 21248881 or info@ncwmalta.com



Participation in the MCAST Freshers Week



During the first week of October, Ms Sarah Xerri represented the National Council of Women during the MCAST Freshers Week at the Paola Campus. The work carried out by the National Council of Women was discussed with students in order to inform them of what our mission is, as well as encourage them to consider becoming members. Dr Julia Farrugia Portelli, Minister for Inclusion and Social Wellbeing, was also present.



Meeting with Opposition Leader, Dr Alex Borg

On 3rd October 2025, several NCW Executive Committee members attended a meeting with Opposition Leader, Hon Dr Alex Borg and Hon Graziella Attard Previ, Spokesperson for Equality and Civil Liberties at the Nationalist Party Headquarters.

The main areas which were discussed included Family, Education, Health and Women's issues. Other points which were mentioned during the meeting included the Environment, Public Health, Traffic Growth Management, Transport and Urban Planning.



Attendance at the Labour Party Annual Conference

The Labour Party Annual Conference took place on 26th October 2025, at the Labour Party Headquarters in Hamrun. NCW member, Ms Sarah Xerri attended the conference.

The Hon Prime Minister Dr Robert Abela delivered a speech which focused mainly on the budget, which was to be delivered the following day. Various topics were discussed during the conference, with considerable emphasis being placed on certain initiatives, such as the increase in pensions for the elderly and in the children's allowances. Those present welcomed and thanked the prime minister for the work being carrying out.



Visit to the European Commission and the European Parliament

24–26 September, Brussels

Representatives of the National Council of Women Malta—Ms Therese Cassola, Ms Marie Demicoli, Ms Gertrude Abela and Ms Iona Baldacchino—participated in an information visit to the European Commission and the European Parliament in Brussels. The visit took place from 24th to 26th September and was organised upon the invitation of the Malta European Commission Representation. Delegates from various women’s organisations also formed part of the group.

European Commission

The programme commenced with a visit to the European Commission’s Charlemagne Building. Ms Oana Chitescu delivered the first presentation: “**Shaping Europe’s Future – The European Commission at Work.**” The session



provided an overview of the Commission’s role, priorities, and current legislative initiatives. This was followed by a presentation by Ms Julia Koch-De Biolley, Head of the European External Action Service Taskforce for Equality, who led a discussion on “**The Role of Women in EU External Action and Economic Diplomacy.**”



Before lunch, Ms Rune Vanleeuw presented the work of DG JUST, with a focus on combatting violence against women across member states. Lunch was hosted by the European Commission, during which participants had the opportunity to meet Mr Clint Tanti, Head of Cabinet of Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport, Mr Glenn Micallef. The afternoon session featured Ms Valerie Reyser from the Directorate-General for Human Resources and Security, who gave a presentation on the **Female Talent Development Programme**, outlining the Commission’s initiatives to strengthen gender balance and promote women’s leadership within EU institutions.

European Parliament

The following day was dedicated to meetings at the European Parliament. Delegates

met policy officers from the Cabinet of President Roberta Metsola and discussed the Parliament’s ongoing efforts to defend and promote women’s rights across the EU. Areas addressed included gender equality in the workplace, political participation, tackling gender-based violence, ensuring equal pay, and improving representation of women on corporate boards. It was noted that the European Parliament organises an annual **Gender Equality Week**, providing an opportunity to review progress, highlight challenges, and identify new measures to advance the rights of women and girls across the European Union.



Mr Neil Smart Costantino, Parliamentary Assistant to President Metsola, facilitated a visit to the President’s office. Although President Metsola was attending a high-level meeting in New York, participants were still able to tour the premises and gain insight into the work carried out by the President.

The final session of the visit featured **MEP Thomas Bajada**, who provided a comprehensive explanation of the workings of the European Parliament. He outlined the structure of parliamentary seating, the organisation of political groups, and the procedures governing debates and voting.



On behalf of the National Council of Women Malta, sincere thanks are extended to the European Commission Representation in Malta—particularly **Ms Mariella Mangion and Ms Claudine Camilleri**—for organising a memorable, insightful, and highly informative visit. The visit also served as a networking opportunity, making new friends and meeting other stakeholders from Women’s Organisations.

Marie Demicoli
Past Vice President
National Council of Women Malta

The 15th Edition of the Bice Mizzi Vassallo Music Competition

The Bice Mizzi Vassallo Music Competition is a prestigious event that, since 1987, has been a platform for young pianists and string players to show their talent and passion for music. This competition has earned its reputation and prestige in Malta through the dedication and commitment of many over almost four decades.



First there is the National Council of Women that believed in the value this competition has locally and in honouring the musical career and dedication of Bice Mizzi herself. Secondly, the input and work of past music committee members, such as Cecilia Xuereb and Helen Degabriele who always had music at heart and worked to set up this competition. Let us not forget late members especially Cynthia Turner and Jane Spiteri who have been there since its birth.

Its reputation in excellence is earned through a long history of identifying high calibre adjudicators, maintaining high standards and striving to choose acclaimed music courses and training for the winners to perform and study abroad.

In this edition, we are especially proud to introduce a new category for younger, budding performers, giving more opportunities to young musicians who are developing their musical talent. Dr Corinne Bowman Briffa, Chairperson of the BMV Organising Committee together with Tatjana Chircop and Rosette Fenech, achieved sponsorships so that the winner of the young budding performers category will be awarded an open voucher to the concerts held at the Manoel Theatre, while the winners of the two senior categories will be awarded masterclasses and to perform in a concert at the MusicaRiva Festival held in Riva del Garda, Italy next summer. All winners will also have the opportunity to perform in a concert locally next year.

We would also like to extend our thanks to our main sponsor, the Alfred Mizzi Foundation, represented here today by Ms Lisa Villette, who have showed interest in this competition and who are generously supporting it for the second time. We are also grateful to the National Student Travel Foundation (NSTF), for generously sponsoring the flights. I would also like to give a special thank you to Adrian Mamo of the Manoel Theatre, for his support of the competition and for sponsoring the prize for the new younger performers category. And finally to Dr Otto Karasek for his generous personal support toward this event.

The distinguished panel of judges at this edition include:

- the chair of the panel, Tatjana Chircop, a distinguished violinist and chamber musician whose dedication continues to inspire young performers.
- Charlene Farrugia, a leading pianist currently associate professor of piano at Music Academy in Croatia
- Carmine Lauri, the first-ever BMV winner in 1987, until recently co-Leader of the London Symphony Orchestra and now Director of newly formed De Valette Chamber Orchestra.
- Dr Max Erwin, head of the Department of Music Studies at the University of Malta.
- Mro Michael Lessky, an internationally acclaimed conductor with extensive experience across Europe.
- Professor Lorenzo Fiorito, professor of musicology and an acclaimed music critic for leading publications. Professor Fiorito has also been instrumental in coordinating the collaboration we set up with MusicaRiva who will be hosting our winners of the senior categories.



Adapted from the speech delivered by **Dr Corinne Bowman Briffa**, Chairperson of the BMV Organising Committee at the final round of the 15th edition of the Bice Mizzi Vassallo Music Competition on Saturday 18th October 2025.

The Bice Mizzi Vassallo Music Competition, founded by the National Council of Women in honour of the late pianist Bice Mizzi Vassallo, continues to uphold its mission of nurturing Malta's young musical talent and providing them with opportunities for professional growth and international exposure. Through this initiative, NCW seeks to promote artistic excellence, discipline, and cultural appreciation among Malta's youth — values that remain central to the Council's educational and cultural vision.

Well done to all participants for their inspiring performances and unwavering dedication to music and congratulations to the winners of this edition.

This year the competition featured two main categories: Category A – Young Budding Performers and Category B – Senior Section, with prizes awarded as follows:

Category A – Young Budding Performers

- 1st Prize: **Luke Muscat**
- Special Prize for Interpretation of Modern Music: **Gabrijel Cordina**

Category B – Senior Section

- 1st Prize (Strings): **Kurt Falzon**
- 1st Prize (Pianoforte): **Kellyann Spiteri**

The 15th Edition of the Bice Mizzi Vassallo Competition for Young Musicians



Kurt Falzon – Winner of the Strings Category – Senior Section



Kellyann Spiteri – Winner of the Pianoforte Category - Senior Section



Luke Muscat – Winner of the Young Budding Performers Category



Gabrijel Cordina – Special prize for Interpretation of Modern Music



Saturday, 18th October 2025 at 18.30 hours at the Sala Isouard, Manoel Theatre, Valletta



The Ghonnella: a symbol of Femininity, Strength, and Cultural continuity

By Dr. Zoi Arvanitidou

There are symbols that transcend time, that carry within them stories, emotions, and identity. One of them is the Ghonnella, the characteristic women's garment of Malta, which for centuries accompanied the women of the island in their daily lives, in celebrations, prayers, and in their walks through the streets of Valletta and the villages. The Ghonnella, with its black or dark hood that covered the head and body, was much more than a simple garment. It was a reference point of female dignity, social status, and inner strength. It was a way for women to stand with modesty, but also with pride, in a changing world. Today, through actions such as the TRACtion project at the University of Malta, we have the opportunity to revisit these cultural symbols not as museum objects, but as living expressions of identity, creation, and inspiration, and to give voice again to them, of the past, through the creativity of people today.

The Ghonnella can become a vehicle of empowerment. As the past owners of the garment used it to display their claim of rights through customs, the present-day women will be able to take it as a source for their individuality and at the same time as a sign of their identity. It would be a mistake not to mention that many artists, along with fashion designers in Malta, are again getting inspired by the Ghonnella form, tearing it apart, recreating it, yet always being mindful of the historical significance it carries. The Ghonnella and its layers of veil and sophisticated shapes create a riddle: it conveys at once modesty and security, while, on the other hand, it radiates an invisible but authoritative power. It was a piece of clothing that rendered women able to walk about in public places without their dignity being compromised. At a time when Ghonnella was very much a sign of control of gaze and presence, a little bit of a gentle, yet strong act of female self-determination, even within strictly defined roles.

Malta has a diverse and rich cultural heritage. Women have always been connected to their past in Malta through music, festivals, and local costumes. Women have preserved, with perseverance and love, language, traditions, and family values. And Ghonnella has been, for centuries, their visible signature. The celebration of these symbols is not just remembrance but empowerment-based. We remember Ghonnella not to go back, but to move forward with roots. Cultural identity can become a tool for dialogue, participation, and creation.

Nowadays, the Maltese woman of today no longer wears the Ghonnella, but the same spirit she carries, the strength that accompanies it, to keep safe, to be respectful, the power to maintain and contribute to identity, has taken root in her. The simple Ghonnella reminds us that female power does not necessarily have to be loud. It could be silent and buried in cultural folklore. As Malta grows and comes to celebrate diversity, the Ghonnella can also become a symbol of national unity and celebrate its cultural pride. It asks us to pay tribute to all the women who went before, to listen to their stories, and to make the tradition a living place of creation. A garment from bygone eras can also remind one that tradition and advancement do not contradict. Bringing them together is how we build bridges, across generations, between worlds, and still, women are writing Malta's history on a daily basis with their own voices.



Woman Unclouded

Where Professional Insight Meets Lived Experience

There's nothing more powerful than offering what we have to support one another. Everyone has something to give - whether through personal experiences or knowledge.

This is what *Woman Unclouded* aims to be: a space that helps "uncloud women's hearts and minds" through shared experiences and expertise.

Created by Times of Malta journalist Claudia Calleja, the idea took root when she became a parent- an eye-opening experience that made her realise how much practical and emotional guidance she wished she had known... a feeling present through life's stages. Claudia's perspective is shaped by the roles she holds - daughter, sister, wife, mother, friend, and colleague- all seen through the lens of a journalist. These experiences place her at the heart of the physical, emotional, psychological, and societal realities faced by women across generations and fuel her interest in stories that reflect everyday life and its challenges.

The evolving platform brings together women's stories, reflections and professional views - to create clear, practical, and inspiring content on a range of subjects. *Woman Unclouded* is now expanding its content and welcoming more voices. To join in - by sharing ideas, experiences, expertise, advice or research - email hello@womanunclouded.com. Have a look: <https://www.womanunclouded.com/>

Professor Dame Clare Gerada appointed Life Peer in the House of Lords

NCW would like to congratulate Professor Dame Clare Gerada on her appointment to the House of Lords as a crossbench peer.

Dame Clare Gerada's long service and invaluable contribution to medicine and mental health have been recognized by the House of Lords Appointments Commission. This appointment also makes Professor Dame Clare Gerada as the first Maltese woman to sit in the Lords.

Dame Clare Gerada was born in Malta, but she lived in the UK for most of her life. She has in fact worked in the NHS since 1983, specializing in psychiatry and general practice. She is a senior GP partner at the Hurley Group in London. Dame Clare Gerada also led the NHS Practitioner Health between 2008 and 2020. This is a confidential service intended to support health professionals with any issues of mental health or addiction. In 2019 she also founded the NHS Primary Care Gambling Service. Dame Gerada occupied various leadership roles including chairing the Royal College of General Practitioners between 2010 and 2013, as well as serving as its president between 2021 and 2023. In 2020 she was also appointed Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire for her services to mental health and the NHS.



Maltese-born Noreen Burroughes Awarded MBE for Championing Women in International Trade and Entrepreneurship

NCW celebrates Noreen Burroughes Cesareo as a Maltese role model, inspiring the next generation of Maltese women leaders in leadership, enterprise and beyond.



Noreen Burroughes Cesareo, awarded an MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) by His Majesty King Charles III in the Birthday Honours in June 2025, stands as a Maltese-born leader making a global impact on women's economic empowerment, entrepreneurship, and trade. The honour recognises her outstanding services to entrepreneurship and her long-standing advocacy for women in international trade.

With more than a decade and a half dedicated to women's economic empowerment and girls' education, Noreen has shaped inclusive global markets by championing capacity-building, inclusive supply chains, and gender-responsive business models. Her work fuses research, policy influence, business leadership and grassroots advocacy – enabling women to upskill, embrace digital and business capabilities, and access international trade and investment opportunities. She has built an international reputation as a strategist, international marketer, and connector across Europe, North America, MENA and beyond. Her expertise spans strategic policy advisory, business growth programmes and ecosystem development – all anchored in the conviction that sustainable growth depends on women participating fully as business leaders, exporters, and innovators. Despite her global reach, she remains deeply proud of her Maltese heritage and committed to supporting opportunities for women in Malta.

Born, raised, and educated in Malta, Noreen studied at the Immaculate Conception School, Tarxien, and De La Salle College, Cottonera. She graduated from the University of Malta with a BA in Communications, Journalism and Contemporary Mediterranean Studies, and an MA in Marketing. She spent many years actively involved in the Malta Girl Guides Association and was also a member of Soroptimist International Malta.

Noreen is now focused on advancing women-led businesses globally. A driving force within OWIT (Organisation of Women in International Trade), she is the founding President of OWIT UK and the global President (2026–28). She works closely with governments, industry bodies and international institutions to expand economic opportunities for women. She also leads Market Accents, the strategic marketing and business growth advisory firm she founded in 2007, and serves on several boards including the UK APPG for Women and Enterprise, SAVVITAS and World Business Women, the Commonwealth Girls Education Fund (CGEF), Malta Opera, and the Malta Business Network Foundation. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.

Noreen's MBE not only celebrates her achievements but shines a light on the vital role of women in trade and enterprise. Through her leadership, mentoring and advocacy, she continues to open doors for women entrepreneurs and amplify Malta's commitment to gender equality on the world stage. As Noreen says, "empowering women is not just about equity—it is about unleashing economic potential that benefits entire societies."

Commonwealth Foundation's New Director-General

As Dr Anne T. Gallagher AO's second and final term concluded, Razmi Farook takes the helm as ambassador for civil society in the Commonwealth. Following approval from its 51 member countries, Razmi Farook was announced as the new Director-General of the Commonwealth Foundation, the Commonwealth's agency for civil society. Ms Farook assumed the role on 1 September 2025 at the Foundation's offices in Marlborough House, London.

Razmi Farook brings exceptional leadership experience from senior roles in civil society and intergovernmental organisations, including the United Nations, the International Federation of the Red Cross, and ActionAid International. Her career has focused on supporting marginalised and war-affected communities, advocating for equity, inclusion, and active civil society participation in governance and decision-making processes. Her work includes leading humanitarian diplomacy with ASEAN and its member states on disaster resilience, managing complex humanitarian portfolios across Africa, Asia-Pacific, and the Middle East, and most recently directing ActionAid's Asia Region and Global Humanitarian Programmes. Her commitment to civil society, human rights, and sustainable



development positions her uniquely to guide the Foundation's future work.

On news of her appointment, Razmi Farook said: 'I am thrilled to be joining the Commonwealth Foundation as Director-General, having committed so much of my career to working internationally to strengthen the role of civil society, support governments, and place communities at the heart of everything I do. I will relish the important platform the Commonwealth Foundation provides to build global civil society solidarity and intergovernmental cooperation, especially at this critical moment in history when our common values and principles are being put to the test. It is my ambition to explore how we can harness the richness of the Commonwealth's diversity and partnerships as a force for positive change and progress. I am committed to meaningfully engaging those at the forefront of the climate and health crises to find solutions to the urgent challenges they face—as well as continuing the Foundation's critical work around promoting democracy, human rights, and peace. It is a great honour to lead the Foundation, and to be part of a transformative and inclusive multilateral platform at a time when global cooperation is needed more than ever.'





**A PATH
TOWARDS
SOLACE &
SERENITY:
MISCARRIAGE
SUPPORT GROUP**

For women & partners

Take one day at a time. It's okay to have feelings of grief, anger, resentment, sadness and so much more.

For anyone who's anxious about going to a group, give it a try. You will be in a supportive environment, often a small group and you don't have to share unless you're ready to. Sometimes you realise more about your own feelings by listening to others.

I was quite nervous of going and I was worried I might break down in front of a group of strangers. As it happened I found the session extremely helpful and I am really looking forward to going again!

Date: Every first Monday of the month
Venue: Malta Midwives Association (62, Office 1, Triq il-Koncizzjoni, Msida)
Time: 18:00 to 19:30
Maltese/English (depending on the audience)
Free attendance - no need to book
Tea/coffee and sandwiches provided

Conducted by: Ms Danielle Scerri Bachelors in Psychology, a Masters in Transcultural Counselling (B.Psy (Hons)(Melt), M.A.(T.Couns.) (Melt), BICA accredited Counsellor (British Infertility Counselling Association).

Do not hesitate to contact us on:
info@maltamidwivesassociation.com

We appreciate if you fill in the questionnaire, using this link: <https://forms.gle/V88pk4Uwic2q38MdT>

The Malta Midwives Association organises Miscarriage Support sessions every first Monday of the month. These are offered free of charge, and women/couples can attend.

GO FreedomPlus Plan

EVERYDAY SAVINGS

1000s OF DISCOUNTS

GET 3 MONTHS FREE

cloudigo vjsm.com.mt MLI eden XP

FIND OUT MORE!



GO better every day

Il-Proġett 'Stop the Violence' mill-Malta Girl Guides Association



X'jinvolvi l-Proġett Stop the Violence?

Il-proġett Stop the Violence maħluq minn WAGGGS (l-Assoċjazzjoni Dinjija tal-Girl Guides u l-Girl Scouts) flimkien mas-sezzjoni tan-nisa tal-Ġnus Mghaqda, huwa kampanja globali immedija fl-2011, bl-għan li tikser il-kultura tas-silenzju madwar il-vjolenza sessista u tagħti s-setgħa lill-bniet bil-hiliet u l-għarfien biex jirrikonoxxu l-vjolenza u jtkellmu għad-drittijiet tagħhom. Komponent ewlieni huwa l-kurrikulu Voices Against Violence, programm edukattiv mhux formali għat-tfal u ż-żgħażaġh.

Kif beda f'Malta?

F'Malta il-proġett inbeda' mil-Malta Girl Guides (MGG) wara li fl-2011 is-Sa Joyce Schembri wiegħbet għal-sejha ta' voluntiera interessati biex jattendu taħriġ fil-Messiku dwar il-proġett. Membri minn 26 nazzjon differenti wiegħbu għal din is-sejha fejn flimkien tharrġu u żvillupaw kurrikulu ta' edukazzjoni informali li jindirizza dan is-sugġett. Ftit ġimghat wara, beda ix-xogħol f'Malta biex jiffirma grupp ta' voluntiera speċjalizzati biex iharrġu voluntiera oħra dwar it-temi sensitivi tal-vjolenza domestika u l-vjolenza abbażi tal-ġeneru.

Taħriġ għal mexxejja tal-Malta Girl Guides

Matul is-Sajf li għadda, 50 voluntiera adulti minn madwar l-Assoċjazzjoni, kollha mexxejja tal-Malta Girl Guides, ingħaqdu flimkien biex jitharrġu dwar il- badge curriculum, Stop the Violence – Empowering Girls to speak up! Dan il-programm huwa mfassal biex jagħti lill-mexxejja l-għarfien, il-hiliet, u l-kunfidenza biex joffru lill-bniet u t-tfajliet membri, ir-rikonoxximent, il-fehim u l-kapaċità li jtkellmu kontra kull forma ta' vjolenza.

It-taħriġ esplora firxa ta' temi importanti, mill-fehim ta' x'jikkostitwixxi vjolenza fil-ħafna forom tagħha, sa hiliet għal-mexxejja biex jiggwidaw id-diskussjonijiet u jorganizzaw attivitajiet adattati għal eta' tal-bniet. Billi nsahhu l-hila tal-voluntiera tagħna, niżguraw li l-bniet mhux biss ikunu konxji tad-drittijiet tagħhom iżda jingħataw ukoll is-setgħa li jtkellmu għalihom infushom u għal oħrajn f' ambjenti sikuri u ta' appoġġ.

X'se jkun l-impatt ta' din l-inizjattiva?

L-impatt ta' din l-inizjattiva huwa sinifikanti. Ladarba l-mexxejja mharrġa jimplimentaw il-programm fil-prattika, huma se jilhqqu direttament 449 tifla fit-taqsimiet kollha. Dawn l-attivitajiet se jgħinu lill-bniet jirrikonoxxu sinjali ta' twissija (red flags), jibnu reżiljenza, kunfidenza u għarfien kritiku dwar kwistjonijiet li jaffettwawhom ħajjithom. Iżda l-impatt ma jispicċax hemm, l-għarfien u l-il-hiliet miksuba mit-tfajliet se jkomplu jhallu impatt lil hinn mil-grupp tagħhom, billi jinfluwenzaw lil shabhom,

lill-familji u lill-komunitajiet tagħhom. Hekk kif membri godda jissieħbu fl-Assoċjazzjoni tal-MGG, huma wkoll se jibbenefikaw minn dan it-taħriġ, filwaqt li jiżguraw li l-effetti pożittivi tiegħu jkunu dejjiema u estensivi.

Dan it-taħriġ huwa parti mill-impenn kontinwu tal-MGG li noholqu dinja fejn kull tfajla tħossha sigura, stmata u kapaċi issemma' lehinha. Il-vjolenza fi kwalunkwe forma m'għandha l-ebda post fis-soċjeta' tagħna u billi nahdmu ma' tfajliet minn eta' żgħira, inkunu qed nġinu biex nibnu ġenerazzjoni li tkun kunfidenti li tisfida mġibiet dannużi u li tkun favur il-bidla.

Permezz tad-dedikazzjoni tal-50 voluntiera imharrġa u l-entuzjażmu tal-bniet u tfajliet li se jintlahqu, il-programm Stop the Violence mhux biss qed jagħmel differenza immedjata iżda qed jikkontribwixxi wkoll għal bidla kulturali usa' li tipprijoritizza s-sikurezza, l-ugwaljanza, u u t-tiħiħ tal-vuċi tal-membri.

Il-Proġett tal-MGG Stop the Violence Training – Empowering Girls to Speak Up! seta' jsir permezz ta' fondi li jgħamlu parti mil-programme Together We Empower Programme, immexxi mil-Kummissjoni dwar il-Vjolenza Abbażi tal-Ġeneru u l-Vjolenza Domestika u s-Segretarjat Parlamentari għal-Ugwaljanza u r-Riformi.



Think, Learn and Succeed – A Short Digital Entrepreneurship Course



The International Council of Women is funding a specific project by the National Council of Women Malta entitled “Think, Learn and Succeed - A Short Digital Entrepreneurship Course”. This 40-hour training programme provided an overview of business for women, including areas such as online security and digital marketing.



Modules included – business planning, online business promotion and digital marketing, the creation of digital content, ICT and online security, as well as e-commerce.

The course is targeted at vulnerable groups such as single women, and females who would like to set up their own business. Business owners seeking to expand their respective sales on a global scale may also find this course useful for them, as well as those persons who would simply like to increase their knowledge on the subject.

The aims and objectives of NCW Malta are geared to combat poverty and social exclusion through education. Through this course participants can develop a better understanding of what it takes to sustain an e-commerce business. Unfortunately, some females who are already in business are hesitant to break into e-commerce because of security concerns, or they simply lack the knowledge and understanding about this element of business that has become so essential today, and even more so in the future. The sustainability of a business project is very important so there will be follow-ups with the participants. Social media and our website will be used to promote the outcomes.

NCW Malta wanted to give the best expertise to the participants, and it was important to have very highly qualified tutors. NCW approached the Department of Technology and Entrepreneurship Education at the University of Malta and Dr Emanuel Mizzi, Head of the Department, together with Dr Diane Vassallo were very glad to contribute to this educational endeavour by finding the best tutors to hold the sessions.

The course was held in the evenings starting in September 2025 and ending in December 2025, and it was offered free of charge. The Lecturers and Students gave NCW Malta the following feedback:

Dr Emanuel Mizzi, Lecturer

Over the course of my three sessions for Module 1 – Planning Your Business, I had the opportunity to accompany the participants through an exploration of entrepreneurship and its broader impact. We began by unpacking the meaning of entrepreneurship, emphasising not only innovation and initiative but also sustainability and social responsibility as key drivers of enterprise. It was inspiring to see how participants connected these ideas to their own ventures and experiences. In the following sessions, we delved into the Business Model Canvas, breaking down its nine components to understand how each contributes to a cohesive business plan. Through discussion and collaboration, participants examined how a deep analysis of these elements can strengthen their entrepreneurial initiatives, helping them identify opportunities, anticipate challenges and design strategies for long-term success.

I am grateful that participants were inclined to share their entrepreneurial journeys, challenges and aspirations, enriching the group's learning experience. By reflecting together, we can build a stronger understanding of how thoughtful planning and sustainable thinking form the foundation of impactful entrepreneurship.

Dr Diane Vassallo, Lecturer

The National Council of Women offered an engaging and highly practical short course in Digital Entrepreneurship, designed to support women who wish to develop or strengthen their online business ventures. The programme introduced participants to the essentials of business planning, digital marketing, content creation, online safety, and the core components of e-commerce. Delivered through hands-on, accessible sessions, the course was ideal for beginners as well as small business owners looking to expand their digital presence. I was glad to coordinate the course as part of the University of Malta's Faculty of Education ongoing outreach efforts, with the collaboration of Dr Emanuel Mizzi from the Department of Technology and Entrepreneurship Education. Together, we helped to ensure that participants receive high-quality guidance, practical tools, and the confidence to navigate today's digital economy.

Ms Gabriella Govus, Lecturer

The workshop series for women entrepreneurs successfully empowered participants with essential digital and AI-driven skills to strengthen their online presence. Through engaging, hands-on sessions, participants learned to harness both creative design tools and AI platforms to streamline and enhance their content creation process. They explored how to generate logos, business cards, video reels, and promotional clips, and how to build blog platforms that effectively showcase their brand and story. AI tools played a key role in simplifying complex tasks such as image generation, branding suggestions, caption writing, and video editing—helping participants produce professional-quality materials efficiently. The sessions encouraged active collaboration, creativity, and peer learning, with each participant developing a personalised digital portfolio by the end of the course. Overall, the initiative not only enhanced their technical and creative confidence but also demonstrated how AI can serve as an empowering partner in entrepreneurship, digital visibility, and innovation.

Daniela Mifsud, Student

The course covered a wide variety of topics, offering a comprehensive understanding of digital entrepreneurship from multiple perspectives. I particularly appreciated that the lecturers came from diverse backgrounds and areas of society, bringing valuable real-world insights and different approaches to innovation and business development. This mix made the sessions engaging, relevant, and inspiring. The topics were explored from both academic and practical perspectives, which allowed participants to connect theory with real-world applications. Case studies, examples of current digital trends, and interactive discussions encouraged critical thinking and creativity. The balance between conceptual learning and hands-on exploration made the course both informative and useful. Overall, it provided an excellent foundation for understanding how digital tools and entrepreneurial thinking can be combined to create new opportunities in today's fast-changing business environment.

Empowering Women: NCW Hosts Confidence & Leadership Workshop

This September the National Council of Women Malta organised a workshop at the NCW Learning Centre aimed at supporting and inspiring women to step confidently into leadership roles. The session, led by visiting UK coach Ginet Esprit, founder of the Empower Coaching Network (UK), offered an engaging space where participants could reflect on their strengths and build the mindset needed to grow as leaders. Although announced at short notice, the workshop attracted a motivated group of women who embraced the opportunity for personal development. Ginet's warm, dynamic style created a safe atmosphere where everyone was comfortable to participate and share.



Exploring Confidence and Self-Belief

The session focused on a theme many women relate to: the quiet impact of self-doubt. Through discussion and reflection, participants explored how lack of confidence can hold people back - and, more importantly, how it can be challenged and overcome. Ginet invited attendees to think about moments when they hesitate to speak up, volunteer, or take opportunities, and helped them understand how these moments affect their sense of leadership. Using relatable examples, she guided the group to recognise that these feelings are common and that confidence is something that can be strengthened over time.

Ginet highlighted how common these feelings are, sharing several striking statistics that immediately resonated with participants:

- 54% of women report feeling like imposters, often doubting their own skills even when they are performing well.
- 75% of women in senior roles admit that they still struggle with self-doubt, showing that these feelings can follow women at every stage of their career.
- 60% of men apply for jobs even when they do not meet all the listed requirements, demonstrating a comfort with risk-taking. In contrast, almost all women wait until they tick every box before applying - a hesitation

that frequently causes them to miss out on opportunities they are fully capable of managing.

These figures prompted thoughtful discussion about how confidence - or the lack of it - shapes decisions in school, at work, and in everyday life. Many participants were relieved to discover that these doubts are widespread and not a reflection of personal weakness, but rather a shared experience that can be addressed and overcome.

Practical Tools for Personal Growth

Throughout the workshop, Ginet introduced simple and effective strategies that women can use to strengthen their self-belief. These included:

- learning to recognise unhelpful thoughts
- reframing doubts and comparing them against real evidence
- acknowledging personal successes, even small ones
- taking manageable steps outside one's comfort zone
- practising leadership in small, everyday situations

The emphasis was on building confidence gradually through consistent, practical action.

A key message was that confidence does not develop in isolation. Ginet encouraged participants to surround themselves with supportive peers, mentors, and friends who remind them of their strengths and encourage them to grow. The group discussions highlighted how valuable it is to connect, share experiences and lift each other up.

A Positive and Motivating Experience

The atmosphere was energising and encouraging - a true example of what happens when women come together with the intention to learn and support one another. For NCW, this workshop forms part of its ongoing commitment to equipping the next generation of women with the mindset, skills, and support they need to lead - at home, at school, at work, and in society.

Dr Daniela Cassola
Hon. General Secretary



FORTHCOMING EVENTS



Seasons Greetings

*NCW President
and
the Executive Committee
wish all NCW Members
and their loved ones
a Holy and Peaceful Christmas
and a Prosperous New Year 2026*



Food Handling Course at NCW Centre, Blata I-Bajda

- Date:** Sunday (held throughout the year)
Next course will be held in February 2026
- Tutor:** Mr Joseph Cassar
- Duration:** 5 hr training programme
- Course fee:** €32 per person



The course is held at NCW Learning Centre. It is a one-day course covering the following topics:

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

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

For further information you may call on 21248881/21246982 or email: info@ncwmalta.com.

Payment must be affected in advance either in cash, by cheque or via Revolut on 79709727.

Save the Date

National Council of Women Annual General Meeting

Saturday 31st January 2026

Victoria Hotel, Gorg Borg Olivier Street, Sliema



National Council of Women Malta

Founded 1964

More details will follow in due course.