

Approved Resolutions: NCW Annual General Meeting

January 2011

1. Title of Resolution Separated Women's entitlement to pensions Approved resolution NCW AGM 2011

Organisation/Committee presenting resolution: NCW Social Issues Committee

Justification

Many women who are separated from their husbands often face problems in receiving the pension cheque to which they are entitled, especially those who separate while in their 60's.

It is understood that when the separation occurs and the woman has been awarded maintenance from the husband who is also a pensioner the entitlement to the woman is not automatically sent to the woman by the government, but she is at the mercy of her separated husband to give her the amount in cheque or cash. *This applies to both parties.*

Often men are unreliable or deliberately do not send the cheque to the separated wife on a regular basis. The woman's only option is to take her separated husband to court which as we all know is a long and costly process and sometimes fruitless.

NCW strongly recommends

that the necessary measures be taken so that the amount to which the woman is entitled will be immediately deducted at source from the salary or pension of the separated husband and sent to the separated wife on a regular monthly basis

2. Title of Resolution: Engaging Men and Boys in the elimination of violence against women and girls: NCW Approved Resolution AGM 2011

Organisation/ Committee submitting proposal for a resolution: NCW Executive Committee

Justification

On 20 April 2010, the Commission approved a communication presenting an Action Plan implementing the "Stockholm Programme". The Action Plan sets out precise actions to be taken and aims at delivering the political mandates of the Stockholm Programme. The Action Plan envisages the preparation of a strategy to combat violence against women, domestic violence and female genital mutilation to be launched in 2011. The suggested timeframe for the EU strategy on violence against women is 2011-2015. Within the

framework of the strategy, the Commission is also planning to launch an awareness-raising campaign.

The economic as well as human cost of violence against women is of daunting proportions. A stocktaking study of the Council of Europe estimated annual cost of violence against women in Council of Europe member states to be as high as 34 billion Euros#. It is estimated that domestic violence alone costs EU member states 16 billion Euros each year#. This estimate reflects costs in health services, including mental health and long term disability caused by injuries; policing and justice system costs; mortality; and the loss of economic productivity from victims. Many victims may lose their jobs, may become homeless, and may revert to substance abuse, all of which has a longer term impact on their productivity and their need to draw on state resources.

The €16 billion figure is based on prevalence and impact data, which presents a number of limitations. There are significant problems in gathering evidence on violence against women and girls, not least the fact that it is chronically under-reported – which points to the importance of further work to establish a secure evidence base. As with other types of cost analysis, caution should be applied to the estimate of human and emotional costs of domestic violence, as these are particularly difficult to measure. An analysis of the cost of domestic violence in France, for example suggests that human and emotional cost of domestic violence are estimated to be around 22% of the total#.

Despite the caveats around data availability and analysis, it would appear that while the cost of violence against women is of the order of billions, budgets devoted to tackling this problem are of the order of millions, i.e. a rate of 1:1000. There is strong business case for an adequately funded comprehensive strategy to fight violence against women.

The social and economic benefits of tackling violence effectively will promptly offset the economic burden it represents to the European economy. As far as domestic violence is concerned, it is estimated that for every €1 more spent on prevention policies, €87 can be saved on the total cost of domestic violence, with €33 of that total being a saving on the direct costs#. An increase in support, justice and enforcement budgets for example, should yield short term as well as long term savings in the health costs. Through monitoring of the EU strategy, the economic benefits could be measured and evaluated.

As well as the direct impact on individuals and the aggregate costs to society, violence against women and girls shapes the structure of women's place in society; their health, economic independence, access to employment and education, integration into social and cultural activities, economic independence, participation in public and political life, and relations with men.

Men and boys may also be victims of some forms of violence and the importance of this is not diminished by the development of the strategy on violence against women. However the prevalence and the particular dynamics of violence against women distinguish it from gendered (or other) violence against men. Violence against women therefore requires a distinctive response. The majority of victims of crimes such as rape

or domestic violence are women and the overwhelming majority of perpetrators are men. This cannot be separated from social power relations between men and women.

Recommendations

Education campaigns and programmes to engage men and boys in the elimination of violence against women need to be based on a better understanding of men as individuals and therefore help eliminate stereotyping of men also

The EU strategy should encourage member states to develop prevention programmes aimed at men and boys as important targets

- The strategy should seek to tackle the myth that naming violence against women and girls as a gendered issue is equivalent to labelling all men as potential perpetrators, or that perpetrators are never motivated to change their behaviour. This should be aimed at encouraging men to have a proactive, rather than defensive, response to campaigns.
- Prevention work and campaigns targeted at men and boys should encourage them not to tolerate or perpetrate violence against women and girls.
- Prevention work and campaigns targeted at men and boys should address those men and boys who commit violence against women and girls with the aim to stop them perpetrating violence, and men and boys in general to make them stand up against violence against women.
- When addressing men and boys, the strategy should aim at tackling gender stereotypes, and in particular stereotypes on masculinity. It should aim to lift taboos and encourage men and boys to discuss the impacts of violence.

Perpetrators

The spiral of violence against women and girls could be halted by improving services to help perpetrators understand the cause of their behaviour and take responsibility for it and prevent further acts of violence.

The EU strategy should call on member states to establish services and early interventions working with perpetrators and helping them to deal with their discriminatory and aggressive behaviour. The root causes of perpetrator behaviour should be investigated to inform the design of interventions, and services and interventions should be evaluated to inform the design of further work in this area. Services designed to help perpetrators should in no way undermine the availability and support to victim support services.

- Offenders who want to step away from a pattern of violence should receive targeted help including close supervision, treatment and assistance. Services should also be available after sentencing occurs and in prison.
- The aim of these programmes should be to improve the safety of victims and should be informed by a victim friendly coordinated approach.
- These programmes should be made available for all forms of violence against women, not only domestic violence as is currently the case in many member states.

Continuing support to the DAPHNE programme should also be a priority of the EU strategy.

- The strategy should consolidate the existing Daphne programme by ensuring its continuation after 2013 and providing additional sustainable and substantial resources.
- The Daphne Programme currently supports activities in the field of violence against children, young people and women and its financial support has therefore to be distributed according to the different target groups.
- The Daphne programme should ensure that appropriate funding is dedicated to actions aiming at eradicating all forms of violence against women and girls, including perpetrator programmes. It should ensure that the gender dimension in the two other target groups (namely children and youth) is recognised when taking funding decisions.
- The EU strategy should ensure that the ability of other programmes to finance measures on violence against women and girls is explored, in line with the principle of mainstreaming this issue through a range of EU policies and structures. In particular, the role of funding streams on research, health and security and safety issues should be examined, recognising that violence against women and girls is a significant dimension of security and safety for the EU.

3. a. Title of resolution

Have a designated Breast Care Unit: NCW Approved Resolution for AGM 2011 NCW Approved Resolution for AGM 2011

Name of Organisation

Breast Care Support Group Europa Donna Malta

Justification

- a. Presently the Breast Care Unit is part of the general surgical outpatient department.
- b. Space is so limited that there is no quiet room in which to support patients who have just been given bad news.
- c. The waiting room is shared by different patients, with some waiting for minor conditions together with those who are waiting for life changing news.

Recommendations

Setting up a designated Breast Care Unit which addresses these limitations to provide a more comfortable and supportive environment to women during such a stressful time.

b. Title of Resolution

Incorporate Breast Awareness in the School Curriculum NCW Approved Resolution AGM 2011

Justification

- a. Ideally breast awareness should be taught at an early age, to ensure it becomes a natural aspect of every girl's life. Learning about breast awareness early will also reduce the fear that is presently associated with it.
- b. Presently only some schools organise breast awareness sessions for their students and their parents.

Recommendations

Incorporating breast awareness in the school curriculum to ensure that all secondary school students would be receiving information about breast awareness. as this is the ideal age and time when young teenage girls are available, as following secondary school, students will all disperse in different sectors which makes it more difficult to reach them all.

4.Title of Resolution:**Women and Mental Health NCW Approved Resolution AGM 2011****Organisation/Committee submitting resolution**

Social Issues Committee National Council of Women

Justification

The number of women suffering from mental illness is rising faster than among men. The burdens of keeping a job, multiple roles in the family and in caring for others are driving women to nervous breakdown and suffer from mental illness.

Exposure to sexual and domestic violence renders women more susceptible to post traumatic stress disorders, anxiety disorder, bi-polar disorders depression, borderline personality disorder, eating disorders post partum depression and schizophrenia. Women need to be supported and their mental health needs are to be addressed comprehensively with more services in the community.

NCW recommends:

- Provision of appropriate mental health indicators with the aim of improving the assessment of needs both at a national and European level
- Identifying the legal issues concerning women with mental health problems and priority should be given to decision-making in court procedures.
- Revision of laws to ensure complete protection when committing them to a mental institution, specifically in cases of separation.
- The need for more psychological and social services in the area of mental health. for women

- Raising awareness among women of the services provided and empowering them to seek help.
- Empowering women with mental health problems to seek help overcoming the stigma through ongoing information about the services provided.
- Family burdens and lack of work life balance are creating stress. The state should invest in more family friendly measures at the workplace, consider the maternity and paternity leave, consolidating the concept of teleworking from their surroundings which will alleviate the stress on women trying to balance between career and family.
- In the case of women suffering from post natal depression; measures and services to ensure that there is ongoing maternity aftercare after they are discharged from hospital.
- More support to family members of women suffering from mental health problems.
- Education campaigns to increase awareness on mental illness and reduce stigma.
- Introduce curriculum topics on mental illness and on family friendly measures and gender balance to develop a culture which supports gender equality.
- Employers should ensure that their employees with mental health problems are adequately treated comprehend their situation especially if they abstain from work more often.
- More facilities in the community for women suffering from substance abuse addictions and/or violence and for those released from prison.

5. Title of Resolution: Increasing initiation and duration of breastfeeding rates to ensure long term benefits for the Maltese population. NCW Approved Resolution AGM 2011

Name of Committee submitting resolution: Malta Midwives Association

Justifications

- a) Breastfeeding has been widely acknowledged as the best means of giving infants a healthy start to life. The promotion, protection and support of breastfeeding are a public concern and a health priority. Low rates and early cessation of breastfeeding have important adverse health and social implications for women, children, the community and the environment, and will result in greater expenditure on national health care provision and increase inequalities in health.
- b) The breastfeeding initiation rates in Malta are still very low, especially when compared to the north European countries. In 1995, 45% of Maltese mothers were breastfeeding (exclusively or mixed feedings) at the time of discharge from St Luke's Hospital, this figure rose to 57% in 2008 (National Obstetric Information and Statistics, 1995-2007). Although these reports have suggested a slow initiation improvement in breastfeeding locally, these figures are still much lower than the targets set out in the National Breastfeeding Policy which calls for a 90% breastfeeding rate on discharge from hospital remaining as high as 80% at four months (Health Division Malta, 2000, pg11),
- c) The European Union, through its institutions: "emphasizes...the importance of nutrition as one of the key determinants of human health", "is concerned by the consequences of the increase in obesity and overweight...particularly among children and adolescents"; "considers that action on nutritional health must be given an adequate place in the future Community action programme on public health".
- d) Childhood obesity is a growing problem. Kries, et al (1999) demonstrated that babies who were exclusively breastfed for 3 to 5 months were shown to reduce the risk of being obese or overweight by 35%. Various studies show that babies who are exclusively breastfed for six months are less likely to become adults who are overweight, obese, hypertensive and suffer from elevated cholesterol (Owen, et al. 2002; Bergmann, 2003; Ip et al, 2007). Babies exposed to formula feeding early in life, may develop a series of immune responses leading to Type I diabetes mellitus (Villalpando & Hamosh, 1998). Thus investing in breastfeeding at the start of life will save money on treatment reducing premature deaths and permanent disabilities from strokes.
- e) Exclusive breastfeeding protects the infant against a number of childhood illnesses. Studies have shown that working mothers, who were or are still breastfeeding, are less absent from work because the babies are less ill (Cohen et al. 1995).
- f) The increasing needs for a woman to return to work is currently causing women to stop breastfeeding because of the lack of facilities or support at the workplace.

Recommendations

In light of the World Health Organization recommendation of exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months, women should have adequate maternity leave and provision of baby-friendly work places. Facilities should be available to help working women to meet their infant feeding goals. James Grant, the late Executive Director of UNICEF, states:

“The promotion of breastfeeding must not be seen as an excuse to exclude women from the labour force. The burden should no longer fall on women to choose between breastfeeding and work. The burden is on society to facilitate breastfeeding and indeed child care”.

Therefore, breastfeeding women need support from the family, from the Health Care System, and require public health policies together with social policies and culture. This can be achieved through the following recommendations:

- a) Ensure adequate paid maternity leave. Ensure maternity protection provisions to women who are not currently entitled to these: e.g. women with short term contracts, casual and part-time workers, students.
- b) Truly offer flexible work hours to breastfeeding women, part-time schedules, job sharing, tele-work options.
- c) Work places become baby-friendly by providing the necessary basic facilities for nursing mothers. In this, the state is to act as a role model for the private sector. A clean, private and safe area is provided for the expressing and storing of breast milk.
- d) Breastfeeding women need to be allowed breastfeeding/lactation breaks.
- e) Breastfeeding women are not discriminated in any way, ensuring job security and employment protection.
- f) The right of women to breastfeed must be protected.
- g) Provision of infant/child care centres.
- h) The development and enforcement of legislation to ensure legislative support and protection are in place to enable working mothers to exclusively breastfeed their infants for 6 months and to continue thereafter.
- i) A study on the viability of setting up of a human milk bank should be considered and researched.

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6. Title of Resolution: Proposals for Pensions Reform NCW Approved Resolution AGM 2011

Organisation/Committee – NCW Executive Committee

Justification

Background

Pensions reform is a complex exercise. There is the need for convergence of the following:

- **Integrating policies on economic growth and increase in employment rates, in particular through incentives in the case of working mothers and older citizens; reviewing widows' social security schemes, contributory and non-contributory pensions schemes**
- **Addressing the demographic deficit** is an immediate priority – pensions system reforms to allow and further incentivise (tax incentives) people to remain in the labour market and also further develop employability skills (2010 - 4 people in active age to 1 pensioner;) (2030 – 3 people to 1 pensioner;) (2060 - 2 people to 1 pensioners)
- **As a result of the recession and its aftermath the need to address the public deficit, not necessarily through budget cuts as much as through better use of public finances that reduce financial waste, waste of human resources and abuse of benefits (productivity)**
- Over the last three years Malta National Budgets have moved from tax-based policies to active policies in a number of areas including the labour market, energy, environment and others to spur economic growth. There is the need to retain such policies in a wider range of areas

Recommendations

- There is an **urgent need to understand and introduce the concept of gender budgeting**, which NCW has been proposing for the last 5 years
- **Reaching the EU 2020 targets including the 75% employment rate for women and men**
- **Keeping in line with Commission Consultation paper on the revision of working time: the work-life cycle; adapting to the Maltese labour market**
- Adopting the Malta Qualifications Framework Programme
- Priority to be given to the **development of Education and Lifelong learning for all and vocational training** to facilitate job mobility
- **Improving the business environment in particular in the context of SMEs – (current White Paper – A Small Business Act)**
- The concept of **Innovation** to be the underlying theme of all policies
- Focus on Key Enabling Technologies, (KET), ICT and R&D to stimulate development and to support the commercial and industrial application of these technologies
- **Adequate information for the citizens; clarifying information on social security schemes and private schemes, occupational schemes and individual schemes and voluntary and mandatory schemes**
- **MCESD and MCESD Civil Society to discuss pensions reform and submit a ‘consensus’ document**

Adequate, Sustainable Pensions Systems

Reviewing the current system

Recommendations

- Making the necessary adjustments to ensure fair pension systems in the context of poverty and social exclusion – establishing a system to guarantee **an adequate adjustable minimum pension**
- Actuarial studies to assess current **sustainability of pensions**: is the current equation sustainable : 12.50% government, 12.50% employers and 10% employees. With increasing new forms of work organization, increase in part-time work (especially in the case of the female population) and family friendly measures, the model to be adopted today needs careful study to have a clear picture of government income in particular from NI contributions
- **Separation of funds** for social benefits systems: health care and long term care , social benefits related to the labour market, pensions - the need for a separation of the contributory and non-contributory fund
- **Separation of pensionable age and retirement age**. The need to gradually increase the pensionable age taking into consideration types of work and workers. Further incentives for older workers to remain in employment (retirement) both in the public and private sectors
- **Part time work, reduced hours, teleworking, job sharing are counter-productive to full pension entitlement and therefore measures such as eg. a system where women will have the option to pay the difference in NI contributions in a staggered manner should be studied and introduced;**

(b) government to offer credits to ensure entitlement to adequate pension entitlement; .(c) these measures should also include the contribution of employers

- **There is also the need of an exercise to review the minimum contributions for a full pension entitlement in particular in the case of women**
- **Statistics on contributory and non-contributory beneficiaries by gender show a higher % of women beneficiaries in the non-contributory than men (NSO 2008). Measures to address this situation need to be taken**
- **Statistics on working mothers (a) entry (b) exit (c) re-entry in the labour market are not provided by NSO. This data is necessary so that government can adopt the adequate policy to ensure the increase of female participation in the labour market**
- **A revision of social benefits for single parents through active labour market policies such as training for employment, childcare subsidies for single parents who opt for employment; and review the gap between minimum wage and social benefits which is currently acting as a disincentive to enter the labour market**
- **ETC schemes**

Supplementary Pensions

Establishing the second, third pillar pension systems

Recommendations

- **A sound basis to safeguard the functioning and accountability of the Second Pillar** with access to individuals at all levels of society. The adequate involvement of all stakeholders to share the burden of the second pillar.
- **Medium to long-term policy decisions**
- **Supplementing public and private systems with *pension packages***
- **Statutory measures offer more security** than market/commercial options
- **Incentives for third pillar pensions systems**

7. Title of Resolution:

**The European year for Volunteering 2011 NCW Approved Resolution
AGM 2011**

Name of Individual/Committee submitting resolution NCW Executive Committee

Justification

While appreciating the increased role of Local Councils in their contribution to society, NCW is deeply concerned that there is hardly any visibility of the voluntary sector and its

social and economic contribution to society in the consultation document Pre budget 2011

Moreover there is no mention of the European Year for Volunteering 2011

The valuable contribution made by those many citizens who, by volunteering in a variety of areas, place themselves at the service of society and social cohesion should be given recognition

Recommendations

In line with The EU Commission proposed four objectives for a successful outcome of the EU Year 2011 and its follow-up on Volunteering NCW proposes

1. The creation of an enabling environment will help anchor volunteering as part of promoting civic participation and people-to-people activities.

- Strengthening the legal framework is necessary to secure the infrastructure required for voluntary work at local, regional, national and European level and to make it easier for people to get involved. Furthermore, the requisite financial and political conditions must be in place to remove any obstacles to voluntary work.

2. To facilitate volunteering and to encourage networking, mobility and cooperation, voluntary organisations are to be empowered and the quality of the activity improved.

- Promoting voluntary organisations as places and catalysts for civic engagement is crucial: these organisations are for the most part the first and only contact point for volunteers and have often been set up by volunteers themselves. In 2011, particular attention should be paid to exchanges of experience and to improving the capacity and quality of work of voluntary organisations, which are the backbone of civil society and voluntary participation.

3. Volunteering activities are to be rewarded and recognised, not least by encouraging appropriate incentives for individuals, business and organisations

- In connection with improving quality, the Commission proposal refers *inter alia* to "professionalisation". The main aim is to safeguard the quality of volunteering activity. Volunteers have the right to invest their free time in sectors they enjoy. Their commitment provides a service to society, to individuals – and also to themselves. Action is needed to secure the funding and staffing required to raise skills levels, to provide, further education and training and to give support during voluntary work

4. The general public are to be made more aware of the value and importance of volunteering.

Raising awareness among the general public requires sufficient resources.

- An effective and successful EU-level awareness-raising campaign conveying the opportunities and usefulness of volunteering would, if the message is really to get through to people, requires adequate funding

8. Tema tar-Rezoluzzjoni

Thejjija Qabel Zwigijiet bic-Civil NCW Approved Resolution AGM 2011

Proposti / Rezoluzzjonijiet mill-Catholic Enquiry Centre f'Dar l-Emigrant

Gustifikazzjoni

Il-preparazzjoni qabel zwigijiet bic-civil hija mixtieqa hafna biex koppji bhal dawn ikunu meghjuna jippreparaw ruhhom ahjar ghaz-Zwieg u b'hekk ikollhom ghajnuna halli jiformaw Zwieg b'sahthu u Familji maghqudin. Is-Socjeta' Maltija ghandha bzonn hafna ta' familji aktar b'sahhithom

Rakkomandazzjoni tal-NCW

Li l-Gvern jibda joffri preparazzjoni xierqa qabel iz-Zwieg ghal dawk il-koppji li huma residenti hawn Malta u jixtiequ jizzewgu bic-Civil u mhux bil-Knisja.

Il-Catholic Enquiry Centre lest li joffri ghajnuna f'din il-Preparazzjoni qabel iz-Zwieg.

9. Resolution presented by the Malta Midwives Association NCW approved resolution AGM 2011

Title of Resolution: **Normalising Childbirth**

Committee submitting resolution: **Malta Midwives Association**

Justification/s

a. Maternity care in Malta is over medicalised, to the detriment of women, babies and families. The National Caesarean Section Rate DOUBLED within a few years. Recent data shows that the rate of artificially induced births is 36% while the caesarean section rate is 33% and the rate of mothers who are breastfeeding when they leave the hospital is 61%. The European Perinatal Report published in December 2008 give details of the actual situation in Malta.

This increase in operative deliveries has **NOT BEEN ACCOMPANIED BY MEASURABLE IMPROVEMENT IN THE OUTCOME OF THE BABY.**

b. In the majority of cases labour is induced for no plausible reason. Medicalization of labour carries a great incidence of operative delivery consequently increasing morbidity. Thus the process of birth becomes unnecessarily labour intensive with increased cost on the tight health budget which can be used more efficiently.

c. The above along with the lack of informed consent is disempowering women. They are made to feel that they do not have an option in the management of their labour.

NCW recommendation/s

To decrease the high rate of intervention during pregnancy and childbirth and to increase the rate of normal childbirth by applying evidence based research into practice which is extremely essential. This can be achieved by:

a. Adopting the W.H.O / N.I.C.E Guideline (National Institute for Clinical Excellence) U.K and by treating pregnancy as a normal physiological process unless there is an underlying medical problem.

b. The public need to be informed by being given the right/unbiased information.

c. The medical profession will be able to dedicate more of their time to the women with obstetric and/or medical problems.

d. Midwives **who are licensed health care professionals** are allowed to practice the art of midwifery autonomously and to its fullest in giving care to women with low risk pregnancies, from antenatal through birth and to the postnatal period according to the E.U Legislation, WHO / NICE & ICM definition.

e. Establishing Midwifery Led Practice in the local health care setting since this had proven to lessen unnecessary interventions during pregnancy and childbirth, improved health outcomes to mothers and babies and provide dramatic cost savings.

f. Public money will be used more effectively and efficiently according to clinical needs. Great savings will be made since:

- Unnecessary interventions often result in poor outcomes for mother and baby, prolong hospital stay, reduce the quality of care, as well as increase costs
- Improvement in the long term health of the mothers and babies will reduce the chronic care burden.

10. a. Title of Resolution – Maltese MATSEC exams NCW Approved Resolution AGM 2011

Name of Individual/Committee submitting resolution – Education Committee

Justification/s

- a. Number of children failing is abysmal according to statistics

Latest statistics

Paper 2A	Paper 2B
Registered to sit - 2689	Registered to sit 2547
Grade 1 - 111	Grade 4 - 173
Grade 2 – 461	Grade 5 - 397
Grade 3 – 488	Grade 6 – 292
Grade 4 - 790	Grade 7 - 268
Grade 5 – 473	
U - 353	U – 1250 (This is nearly 50% of Candidates)
Absent – 13	

N.B. The U grades are accounting for slightly more than 20% of all candidates.

- b. Exam not reflecting the students’ ability in the usage of the language
- c. When applying for a job they have no certificate showing competence in the language if they have failed the exam due to their lack of knowledge in literature

NCW recommendation/s

- a. Separate exams for Language and Literature

or

Literature and Language results given as percentages on the final result paper. By doing this candidates would know their level of competency in both areas.

- b. Requirements for Junior College/6th form should be in Language only unless Maltese is one of the subjects chosen to be followed at a higher level. In that case it will be in Language and Literature

**10. b. Title of Resolution – Inclusive Education in Maltese Schools
NCW Approved Resolution AGM 2011**

Name of Committee – Education Committee

Justification/s

- a. There is no continuity as regards assessments
- b. Referrals are followed up after a long time

NCW recommendation/s

- a. Incos (co-ordinators for LSAs) are required in all Primary and Secondary Schools
 - b. More Counsellors/Guidance Teachers are needed
 - c. Other professionals like Social Workers, Speech Therapists, Occupational Therapists should also be more available
 - d. Specialists in specific learning difficulties (SPLD) are required.
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11. Title of Resolution: The Extension of the Maternity Leave Directive (Directive 92/85 EEC) NCW Approved Resolution AGM 2011

Organisation/ Committee submitting resolution: NCW Executive Committee

Justification:

In view of the vote in the European Parliament on the maternity directive, on the 20 October, and the subsequent vote by the Council of Ministers, the National Council of Women is urging all concerned to take into consideration the following proposals

Background note

The costs of maternity and paternity leave need to be addressed through a wider perspective. There is the need to clarify that the primary aim of the controversial Directive 92/85 EEC on maternity leave is to introduce measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding. The second aim is to pave the way for a sharing of family care and work responsibilities for both men and women.

Avoiding narrowing the scope and implications of the Maternity Leave directive is necessary ; consequently, the importance of a holistic and comprehensive approach to these matters, to see the whole picture and achieve economic and social progress is a priority. In this context, policy makers must consider different needs, competing values and conflicts of interest in issues such as demographic concerns (including low birth rate and fast growing number of pensioners); labour market needs; accessible and affordable childcare facilities; reconciliation of working, family and private life; the fight against poverty and social exclusion; the best interest of the child; equal opportunities for women and men; solidarity between generations and education and lifelong learning

Keeping women in the labour market is a priority. Labour market inequalities make it rational for many women, rather than their male partners, to give up employment to care for children or others. Longer spells of unemployment to reconcile work and maternity can have negative consequences for experience, skills and motivation for re-entry into the **labour market**.

At EU level, the gap between women and men with dependent children is also high (19 %). In Malta NSO needs to provide data on patterns of working mothers including single parents entry, re-entry and non-return to the labour market so that government can assess the costs of loss of female workers potential to be able to address the deficit

Developments are also addressing the needs of self-employed workers. SMEs, in the EU and in Malta are the backbone of our economy. The recent adoption of the Directive on Self-employed Workers and Assisting Spouses endorsed by EU governments Brussels (7 June 2010) improves the social protection rights of millions of women in the labour market, boosting female entrepreneurship.

In line with the priorities of the EU2020 Strategy and the revised Commission Working Time Directive, there is the need for a national policy, a package of family-friendly measures *for both the public and private sector* whilst taking into consideration the situation of SMEs. This will ensure a level playing field in the sharing of costs and benefits for maternity and paternity leave by both private and public sector, offering opportunities for an increase in employment rates

NCW will be looking carefully at the reasons of other countries who voted against, as in many of them the overall package of maternity, paternity and parental leave already goes beyond what is in the proposed directive; in other cases the decision may have been tied up with austerity measures; however since Malta was not very badly hit by the recession, there wasn't the need to include austerity measures in Budget 2011.

Although financial incentives by government to encourage female participation in the labour market have not been lacking, they are not reaching their goal. We need to find out if the lack of measures that will allow mothers and also fathers to be with their children during the most sensitive and vulnerable phases in their life are the real obstacles and if so ensure that the relevant policies address these needs.

Recommendations

The extension of maternity and paternity leave directive will come into force in three years time. This should allow government in agreement with the social partners time to consider the reform of maternity and parental leave payment through sharing the financial costs such as through the NI contributory system for all/part of the 18 weeks by introducing

- Financial incentives for private sector who introduce positive action of integrated maternity and parental leave

- Research study on the cost of non-participation of women of child rearing age in different occupations
 - ETC Schemes for the provision of supply workers during maternity and paternity leave
 - Introduction of a Maltese legal framework for **Temping Agencies**
 - Collective agreements with options to include lifelong learning opportunities by employers for women and men on parental leave or career breaks
 - Government needs to further expand and subsidise **care services for children and for sick, disabled and elderly people**, and enhancing their accessibility, **through private/public partnerships through Structural Funds**
 - **Introduce a framework for child minding services within the community for those mothers who can use adequate facilities at their home to offer the services**
 - Legal provision on parental leave in order to encourage sharing care responsibilities between mothers and fathers
 - NCW therefore calls on all stakeholders to study carefully the revision of this directive by the Commission in the coming months. NCW reiterates that it is by consensus on long-term measures (the directive will not come to force before three years) that we can boast of a working force with a more balanced male/female participation.
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