



National Council
of Women Malta
Founded 1964

II-Mara

Newsletter of the National Council of Women - Malta



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Members of



International Council of Women

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



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Participants with their Tutor Mr. Cassar during the Food Handling Course

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Il-Mara

Newsletter of the National Council of Women - Malta



National Council of Women Malta
Founded 1964

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Editorial

Natalie Padovani

Editor – Il-Mara

As an introduction to this reputable newsletter, allow me to give a brief account of myself and my work experience.

Coming from a family that believe in sound core values, I embarked on the tourism sector and have along the years seen the various aspects of the trade especially how challenging it was for many women across the employment chart being originally male-managed.

Nowadays what comes to mind in the forefront on a global daily basis is nothing other than drones, missiles, destruction of human life in hundreds and thousands in the entire region especially, but not only, of the Middle East. The pope's entreaty to stop the violence in the various regions, seems to have fallen on deaf ears. How many women, children, health operators, have fallen victims to this unequalled tragedy.

Yet we still feel the urgency to roll up our sleeves and help, even in our own small way on the local level, to do our bit.

Concerning more closely women: The European Commission's decision on EU funded abortion tourism is still being interpreted. It includes the misuse of an allocated social fund that was never meant for the provision of abortion. This proposal could represent a direct challenge to Malta's law protecting life in the womb. This is why amongst other issues, further in-depth education especially among adolescents, is required to instil the meaning of human life and its protection. This applies also with regards to euthanasia. A delicate subject that still needs deeper thought.

I would like you to enjoy this first edition of Il-Mara for the year 2026 and on behalf of the National Council of Women, I extend my best wishes for a joyful and peaceful Easter.

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President's Message

Mary Gaerty
President
National Council of Women Malta

Dear Ladies and Friends,

I greet you as the new president of the National Council of Women, as I was again elected as president. The NCW has become a well ingrained part of my life and although the Council has been working towards equity between the men and women for the last 62 years, still disparity exists.

Malta's gender pay gap persists and this will eventually result in lesser pensions for women, especially when considering the fact that upon the loss of the husband the widow must relinquish one of the pensions and choose either hers or her spouse's. My question always was, but would not both have contributed?

This year has started literally with a bang- the continuing war in Ukraine, Gaza and now Iran. I shall not enter into the politics of it all, but the barrage of missiles released across several countries is a great concern. Although perceived far from our country, yet the effects will be felt throughout the world, be it for fuel, trade, transport and most of all on people, destabilising our mental wellbeing due to anxiety of what if this war comes too close to home. As of March 2025-2026, the European Union has urged citizens to prepare for potential emergencies by maintaining a 72-hour (3-day) emergency kit. As part of the new EU preparedness Union Strategy, it is recommended to stockpile essential supplies, such as water, food, medicine, a radio and cash, so in case of an environmental or conflict crises, at least we could be initially prepared. Recently the topic of preparedness in case of disaster was discussed and those present were surprised at how proactive the various departments; water, energy, civil protection etc, are in order to assist the population. This is also a matter that each and every one of us should have the basic knowledge in case of need, according to age and physical ability, location and accessibility. We need to know what to do in case of such events. It is also important to support one another. Any initiative that we are asked to follow needs to be well heeded. May we never be faced with such a situation!!

In the last budget, proposals for tax benefits were announced by the Finance Minister, in order to encourage families to have more than one child. As in several countries, Malta is experiencing a severe decline in its birth rate and although the free childcare has been a success, it is not what all the families wish, since they are not willing to part from their babies as early as when the baby is just a few weeks old. The preference is for one parent, generally the mother, to stay at home and care for the child during the first two years, but with the stay-at-home parent receiving full wages equivalent to those received by the parent prior to the baby's birth. The first 18 weeks of maternity leave must be taken by the mother in order to regain her health and bond with the child, however the rest of the time can be shared between the parents. Support to families is of utmost importance, so as not to create any undue pressures, especially considering the mental, physical and financial pressures that the caring of a child brings along with it.

We are already seeing the wonderful effects of spring, with yellow and mauve flowers colouring our countryside, leaving behind the weather we have experienced at the beginning of this year, especially with storm Harry. This was a new experience for many of us, and I myself never recall such strong winds and treacherous seas. The warnings to stay away from seafront areas where high waves were battering were adhered to by many and at times like these we thank the departments that go out of their way to be on the alert 24/7 in order to assist anyone in need. We thank them all for their bravery and response.

While wishing you all a Happy and Blessed Easter I hope that you will enjoy reading our news and following us on Facebook and social media. We have some interesting talks planned out for the coming months and I hope you will join us either in person or online. May I also remind you that our office secretary is available in the mornings for any queries.

Best of health to all.

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NCW Annual General Meeting: 2026

Promoting Empowerment and Leadership

The Annual General Meeting of the National Council of Women was held on Saturday 31st January 2026, at The Victoria Hotel, Sliema.

NCW Hon General Secretary Dr Daniela Cassola, presented the Annual Report for 2025 highlighting the important initiatives carried out at National, European and International level, which also included UN and Commonwealth participation which reflected the contribution of NCW in the global scenario.



NCW participated in national discussions on key social issues affecting women, families, and community wellbeing. During 2025 the NCW issued a number of public statements and press releases, including the reaction to the National Budget, as well as concerns related to a number of issues such as second-hand smoke, and the impact of traffic. NCW also expressed its opposition to the legalisation of euthanasia and called for a national commitment to quality palliative care, while emphasising the ethical and societal implications of end-of-life policy choices. NCW also participated in discussions linked to Envision 2050, and consultations on the introduction of miscarriage leave.



Mary Gaerty, the newly elected President urged young women to venture further and choose careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). She also highlighted the fact that the National Council of Women is looking ahead at the constant changes in a global world, not least in the digital transformation and this is reflected in the 2026 resolutions. President Mary Gaerty encouraged women to make their choices and decisions based on reliable and researched information and ensured that throughout 2026 NCW will focus on supporting and inspiring women to step confidently into leadership roles.



Guest speaker Ms Mary Buttigieg Said, from the Malta Midwives Association, gave a presentation on 'Reducing Exposure to Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals (EDCs) to protect health in Malta'. She emphasised that EDCs are substances that may interfere with the hormonal system and are increasingly associated with various adverse health outcomes across the life cycle. She made the audience aware that exposure to everyday products which includes certain plastics, food contact materials, personal care and beauty products, household cleaning products, pesticides and industrial pollutants can be harmful to all.

In a highly interactive debate with members of the Assembly, the Meeting discussed and approved a number of resolutions, which will form the basis of NCW's commitments for 2026 which included: Combatting all Forms of Harassment; Promoting Equitable World Peace with Respect for Cultural and Religious Differences; Empowering Women in the Age of New Technologies: Challenges and Opportunities; Supporting Parents of Young Children in a Digital World and Strengthening Protections from Online Harms; Reducing Exposure to Endocrine Disruptors to Protect Health in Malta; and Ethical Media Portrayal of Victims of Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence.

The NCW Executive Committee for 2026 includes President Mary Gaerty, Hon. General Secretary Marie Demicoli, Vice Presidents: Dr Daniela Cassola, Doreen Borg Zammit and Sarah Scerri, Hon. Treasurer Therese Cassola, Members: Mary Buttigieg Said, Gertrude Abela, Lara Gail Dougall, Tiziana Gatt, Natalie Padovani and Grace Attard, Ex-Officio Hon. General Secretary Doris Bingley and Office Secretary Gracianne Spiteri.



Digital Entrepreneurship Course Certificate Giving Ceremony

After a very successful completion of the Digital Entrepreneurship Course, the National Council of Women organised a certificate giving ceremony during a dinner held at Haywharf Restaurant, Floriana.

Mrs Mary Gaerty NCW Vice President presented the certificates to Participants, who attended and completed the course entitled, “Think, Learn and Succeed”.

This course was funded by the International Council of Women under Small Development Projects by ICW-CIF. The project aimed to combat poverty and social exclusion through education with a focus on business and technology. It provided women with the opportunity to start their own online business develop entrepreneurship skills, build confidence and achieve financial independence.



National Council of Women Foundation Day and Christmas Celebrations 2025

The National Council of Women continued to strengthen member engagement through social and community activities. On 11th December 2025, the National Council of Women organised its Foundation Day and Christmas Dinner at Palazzo Capua. This event was very well attended. It was a very enjoyable evening, which commemorated two special occasions, while serving as a good opportunity for members to meet.



International Women's Day with President Roberta Metsola



On 6th March 2026 NCW Executive Committee Members, President Mary Gaerty, Hon General Secretary Marie Demicoli, Ex-Officio General Secretary Doris Bingley, Hon Treasurer Therese Cassola and Committee Member Gertrude Abela attended a special event hosted by European Parliament President Robert Metsola at Palazzo de Piro, Mdina. It was indeed an inspiring discussion about women in leadership roles.

President Metsola discussed the challenges of being a woman in politics and the importance of balancing professional life with family life and to have a strong support network. She emphasized the message, "Women are unstoppable when we rise".

NCW Press Release for International Women's Day 2026

This year's United Nations theme for International Women's Day 2026 is Rights, Justice and Action for All Women and Girls. International Women's Day is celebrated in many countries around the world. It is a day when women are recognised for their achievements without regard to divisions, whether national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic or political. Officially recognized by the United Nations in 1977, International Women's Day first emerged from the activities of labour movements at the turn of the twentieth century in North America and across Europe.

The National Council of Women Malta has a long history of advocating for women's rights and through its affiliation with the International Council of Women and the European Centre of the International Council of Women works globally for gender equality and empowerment.

The National Council of Women was founded in 1964 – the year of Malta's independence. Since then, it has grown in influence, strength and commitment. NCW has been proactive in highlighting the still existing problem of gender-based violence, through which women have been encouraged to abandon abusive relationships. However, this type of violence has throughout the years developed into other forms, such as, misogyny, discrimination, harassment and deepfake AI. These forms of crime require a quick and robust action to safeguard women and girls from psychological and physical harm. Rather than reporting such abuse many survivors choose instead to alienate, withdraw, and try to survive. Although a lot has been achieved for the protection of victims there is still a lot to be done.

The National Council of Women has celebrated achievement accomplished in women's empowerment during these past 60 years but still the gap in equality persists. Women are still poorly represented in the political arena and in positions of decision making. Due to family commitments, many women seek jobs of lower responsibilities even though they are overqualified. This affects their pension later in life due to the lower wages earned throughout their working life. This also impacts on the gender pay gap.

NCW has lobbied for a better work-life balance through its representation on various boards at national and EU level. In fact, the EU has implemented several corrective measures such as the Work-Life Balance Initiative to achieve more flexible working arrangements and a better quality of life.

Women still face abuse and injustice at a time when gender equality faces mounting resistance and women's rights continue to be undermined. Strong laws and policies across countries and generations are needed to protect and advance these rights.

We need to keep working to defend equality, challenge discrimination, and take steps toward a fairer future. The National Council of Women wishes all Women and Girls a well-deserved Happy Women's Day.

NCW President Mary Gaerty awarded Mara Award for Entrepreneurial Vision



The National Council of Women is proud to announce that NCW President Mary Gaerty received the Mara Award for Entrepreneurial Vision. As the founder of her company, Mary Gaerty has been a true entrepreneur and leader, while also being instrumental in shaping Malta's waste management. Mary has worked in the field of sustainable environment both locally and at European level.

MARA is an annual event that is organised by Dr Lydia Abela, spouse of the Prime Minister to honour women in various fields and recognise their hard work, dedication and talents.



The National Council of Women would like to congratulate all other winners for their respective awards in various fields. May their contributions and careers serve as an example for other women.

Request for Membership Renewal 2026

NCW kindly asks you to settle your membership fee for the year 2026. Membership fees are as follows:

Ordinary Member:	€15.00
Affiliated Organisation:	€25.00
Life Membership:	€95.00
New Members:	€15.00 + €5.00 Registration Fee

Payment can be done by cash, cheque (payable to National Council of Women), Revolut on Mobile No. 7970 9727 (Ref: your name + NCW) or by internet banking, in which case the following are NCW's bank account details:

Bank Details: APS Bank Ltd, APS Centre, Tower Street, B'Kara BKR4012

NCW Details: National Council of Women, Pope Pius XII Flats No 3, Mountbatten Street, Blata l-Bajda HMR 1579

IBAN: MT98APSB77046002866912866930013

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Please ignore this notice, if you are a life member or if you have already affected payment.

Due to postage increases, only fully paid-up members will receive a copy of the newsletter in the post but everyone is welcome to come to NCW Centre to collect a copy during office hours.

International Women's

On the occasion of International Women's Day 2026, the National Council of Women, in conjunction with its affiliated organisations, organised a special celebration mass.

The mass was held on Sunday 8th March 2026 at St Patrick's Church, Sliema. This mass was celebrated by Fr Manuel Camilleri SDB. It was well attended and the National Council of Women welcomed special guests Ms Ursula Cringle, Australian Dep. High Commissioner, and Mr & Mrs Jaroslaw Mikus, Charge d'Affaires for the Embassy of Poland. Members of the Malta Armed Forces and the Malta Police force were also present. Mass was followed by a reception held in the Church's reception hall.

A special thank you goes to Rev. Fr. Manuel Camilleri SDB and the Salesians at St. Patrick's Church, in Sliema, for welcoming us and celebrating this special occasion with us.

NCW would also like to thank Sherries Estates for their generous donation of a beautiful plant and Mrs Mary Gaerty for the fruit basket as part of our offering during mass.



Day Celebration Mass





Are We Teaching Girls Confidence, or Performance?

Dr Daniela Cassola
1st Vice President, NCW

We say we want girls to be confident. It has become one of the defining aims of modern parenting and education: to raise girls who speak up, stand tall, believe in themselves and know their worth. On the face of it, the ambition seems unassailable. Who could possibly object to confidence?

And yet it is worth asking what, precisely, we mean by it. Because all too often, what girls are being encouraged to develop is not confidence in its truest sense, but something more brittle and more public: performance. That distinction matters.

Real confidence is not about seeming impressive. It is not about always saying the right thing, looking composed, projecting ease or coming across as socially assured. It is quieter than that, and far more durable. It is the inner steadiness that allows a girl to make mistakes without being undone by them, to think for herself, to tolerate disapproval, to set boundaries and to resist the pressure to become whatever others would like her to be. It is rooted not in applause, but in self-knowledge.

Performance, by contrast, is about presentation. It is about how one is received, how one appears and how well one manages the gaze of others. Girls are growing up in a culture that places enormous value on precisely that. They are encouraged to be visible, articulate, polished, expressive and empowered, but often in ways that remain closely tied to appearance, likeability and public display.

Social media has sharpened the problem. It offers girls endless opportunities to present themselves, but also endless opportunities to assess, adjust and refine that presentation. A photograph can be retaken. A caption can be improved. A face can be filtered. A personality can be curated. What emerges is a version of confidence that is highly legible, highly marketable and often deeply performative.

A girl may look self possessed online while feeling deeply uncertain underneath. She may learn how to project confidence long before she has had any real opportunity to develop it, that is no small matter. Once confidence becomes something to be performed, girls may come to feel they must always appear composed, attractive, successful and entirely in command of themselves. They may become skilled at managing impressions while privately wrestling with anxiety, self doubt or sheer exhaustion. They may start to believe that being confident means being effortlessly presentable, socially fluent, emotionally tidy, visually appealing and permanently ready to be seen.

But that is not confidence. It is self-consciousness dressed up as strength, what girls need is not the pressure to look confident at all times. They need the freedom to grow into confidence slowly, imperfectly and away from constant scrutiny. They need room to be unsure, awkward, thoughtful, in progress. They need the chance to discover who they are without feeling that every stage of that process must be displayed, judged or turned into content.

Adults, too, can be part of the confusion. We praise girls for being outspoken, poised, camera ready and full of confidence, and these may well be positive qualities. But they are not the whole story, nor are they necessarily the most important part of it. A quieter girl may possess excellent judgement, self respect, moral clarity and emotional depth, yet receive less recognition because her strengths are less visible. In a culture so easily taken in by polish, we risk overlooking substance.

There is also something faintly unfair in telling girls to be confident while surrounding them with conditions that make real confidence harder to attain. We tell them to be themselves, then expose them to a constant stream of edited beauty, relentless comparison and impossible standards. We tell them they can do anything, yet too often still reward them most readily for being pleasing, attractive and socially effortless. We speak of empowerment but sometimes package it in forms that amount to little more than self-display with a modern gloss.

Girls deserve better than that, they deserve to be taught that confidence is not about being admired. It is about being grounded. It is the ability to trust one's judgement, to recover from embarrassment, to withstand rejection, to question unhealthy norms and to remain steady when approval is nowhere to be found. It is not loudness. It is not perfection. It is not performance. Nor does it have to look the same in every girl. Confidence may be outspoken in one child and reflective in another. It may appear as leadership, but equally as discernment, resilience, independence or quiet self-possession. We do girls no favours by reducing it to a single, highly visible model.

If we genuinely want to raise confident girls, we need to think more carefully about what we are praising and what we are preparing them for. We need to value depth as much as polish, character as much as charm, and inner life as much as outward presence. We need to help girls build selves that are sturdy enough to hold when validation falls away.

The question is not whether confidence matters. Of course it does. The question is whether we are nurturing the kind of confidence that will sustain girls in real life, or merely teaching them how to look convincing on display. That is a distinction well worth taking seriously.



Ensuring Justice for Women and Girls: Reflections from CSW70

Doreen Borg Zammit
Vice President, NCW

The 70th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70) was held from 9 to 19 March 2026 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City. As the largest global gathering dedicated to gender equality, CSW70 brought together governments, civil society, and international organisations to address one of the most pressing challenges of our time: ensuring justice for all women and girls.



This year's priority theme, "Ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls," highlighted the persistent inequalities that continue to limit women's rights worldwide. Despite progress in legal frameworks, many women and girls still face barriers in accessing justice systems, leaving them vulnerable to discrimination, violence, and exclusion. Bridging this gap remains essential to achieving meaningful and lasting gender equality.

The opening session, held in recognition of International Women's Day, set a powerful tone for the discussions that followed. Women from diverse backgrounds shared their personal stories, reflecting on the challenges they have faced as well as their achievements. Their testimonies underscored a critical reality: while some regions have made significant strides, many women and girls—particularly in less developed contexts—continue to struggle for basic rights such as education, legal protection, and equal opportunities. These disparities highlight the urgent need for global cooperation and sustained commitment.



Among the distinguished speakers was António Guterres, alongside senior representatives including the President of the 80th Session of the UN General Assembly, the Executive Director of UN Women, and the President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). In his address, António Guterres delivered a clear and compelling message, stating that "gender equality is fundamentally a question of power." He emphasised that millions of women and girls worldwide still struggle to obtain justice, with women enjoying only about 64% of the legal rights available to men. This imbalance reflects the continued influence of patriarchal systems that limit equal participation and opportunity. Although progress has been made in recent years—such as constitutional reforms in over 40 countries and strengthened laws against violence in 90% of nations—these advancements are not enough. Women remain significantly underrepresented in key decision-making arenas, particularly in peace negotiations and security processes. Evidence shows that when women are included, peace agreements are more sustainable, and societies are better equipped to recover and thrive. Another key issue highlighted during CSW70 was the underrepresentation of women and girls in STEM education and careers. This gap not only limits opportunities but also risks widening future gender pay disparities. Increasing women's participation in leadership roles, decision-making processes, environmental governance, and access to resources is therefore essential for inclusive development.



A notable outcome of CSW70 was the adoption of the agreed conclusions document during the first session—an important step forward in global consensus-building. However, some issues, particularly those related to gender terminology, remained contentious and required extensive negotiation before final agreement was reached. Beyond the main sessions, CSW70 featured a wide range of parallel events organised by Permanent Missions, Member States, international organisations, and UN agencies. These events provided a valuable platform for dialogue, knowledge-sharing, and collaboration. Given the number of sessions held simultaneously, participants were required to prioritise attendance based on relevance and interest.

I had the opportunity to attend several of these events, including those organised by the International Council of Women (ICW), the Permanent Missions of Malta and Portugal, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the European Union, and Canada. These discussions were highly insightful, offering diverse perspectives on how countries and institutions are addressing shared challenges and setting future priorities. It became clear that many of the issues discussed are common across nations, reinforcing the importance of collective action. While many events took place within the UN Headquarters, others were hosted in nearby venues. Due to limited capacity, several sessions required prior registration or accreditation. Participants also had access to ministerial meetings, where Member States presented updates on their progress in advancing gender equality and justice for women and girls.

From a personal perspective, attending CSW70 was both enriching and thought-provoking. The meetings provided an important platform for exchanging ideas and gaining deeper insight into global challenges. However, it was also evident that some issues remain sensitive or underreported. In certain contexts, injustices are not fully disclosed due to institutional or political constraints, highlighting the need for greater transparency and accountability.

The National Council of Women Malta (NCW Malta) was proud to be represented at this significant global forum. I am honoured to have had the opportunity to represent the Council, which holds special consultative status with ECOSOC. This status enables participation in UN meetings and engagement in international advocacy efforts. Through its affiliation with the ICW, NCW Malta has continued to contribute to advancing gender equality on a global scale. It is also important to note that not all representatives from Member States were able to attend CSW70. Some faced challenges in obtaining visas due to restrictions imposed by the host country, highlighting ongoing barriers to inclusive global participation.

CSW70 reaffirmed the urgent need to strengthen access to justice for women and girls worldwide. While progress is evident, significant gaps remain. Greater inclusion of women in decision-making, improved access to education and resources, and stronger legal frameworks are essential to achieving true gender equality. Ultimately, ensuring justice and equality for women and girls is not only a matter of rights—it is fundamental to building a more just, inclusive, and sustainable world for all.

Commonwealth Foreign Ministers' Meeting



Foreign Ministers from across the Commonwealth met at Lancaster House, London for the 26th Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting (CFAMM). On this occasion Commonwealth Secretary General Shirley Botchwey was delighted to meet Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Dr Ian Borg in London, ahead of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group meeting and she said that she looks forward to working with Malta to continue advancing democratic governance, accountability, and the commonwealth shared values. The Hon. Dr Ian Borg is currently the Chair of the 72nd Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG).

During this CMAG meeting, the nine members of the Group, which comprised ministers and other distinguished representatives from Antigua and Barbuda, Botswana, Canada, Grenada, Malaysia, Mauritius, Samoa, and Zambia discussed the latest developments in countries within the Commonwealth. Discussions were conducted concerning democratic governance and accountability, as well as how the Commonwealth can adapt to global instability and work collectively to promote resilience, cooperation, and shared prosperity among member states. Participants also reviewed policy priorities in preparation for the 28th Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), which will take place in St John's, Antigua and Barbuda in November 2026.



Building Resilience Together: A Shared Vision for Malta's Sustainable Future

Tiziana Gatt
Executive Committee Member, NCW

The National Council of Women Malta (NCW Malta) continues to play an active and constructive role in shaping a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable future for Malta. Working collaboratively with a broad range of civil society organisations within the Sustainable Development Network Sub-Committee, NCW Malta has contributed to a comprehensive set of policy recommendations aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These joint proposals focus on sustainable infrastructure, clean energy, innovation, social equity, and participatory governance, reflecting a shared vision that balances economic

development with environmental stewardship and social justice.

A central priority of the Sub-Committee's work is the modernisation of Malta's infrastructure in ways that serve people and communities. In transport, the participating NGOs advocate for expanded pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, improved public transport connectivity, and exploration of maritime and alternative mobility solutions. Planning is framed as inclusive and data-driven, ensuring that the needs of families, workers, elderly persons, and vulnerable groups are fully considered.

Energy reform is another key focus. The recommendations promote greater investment in renewable energy, particularly solar power, alongside stronger energy efficiency standards and building retrofitting programmes to reduce household costs. Importantly, the proposals call for long-term planning for the recycling of renewable energy infrastructure and for energy subsidies to be better targeted toward low-income and vulnerable households, ensuring fairness in the transition to clean energy.

Housing policy is approached through both social and environmental lenses. The recommendations include expanding affordable and social housing, strengthening transitional housing to prevent homelessness, and embedding sustainability standards into new developments. Monitoring rental markets and discouraging long-term property vacancy are also proposed to safeguard affordability and social cohesion.

The Sub-Committee further emphasises sustainable economic transformation through innovation funding, support for green startups, investment in research and development, and encouragement of social enterprises. Education and lifelong learning are identified as essential tools for preparing citizens for emerging green sectors, while inclusive pathways ensure that no one is left behind.

Environmental protection underpins all these proposals, with calls for circular economy practices, biodiversity integration in planning, and enhanced environmental monitoring. Through its collaborative engagement, NCW Malta reaffirms its commitment to gender equality, social inclusion, and sustainable development. The recommendations represent a collective roadmap developed with partner NGOs, offering Malta a balanced and forward-looking path toward long-term resilience and shared prosperity.



News from NCW's Affiliated Organisations

Malta Girl Guides Celebrate 100 Years of World Thinking Day

The Malta Girl Guides joined millions of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts around the world in celebrating a historic milestone: the 100th anniversary of World Thinking Day, observed globally by the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS).

To mark this special centenary, the Malta Girl Guides held Scarf Day on Friday, 20 February. On this day, members were encouraged to wear their Guiding scarf at school and, where applicable, at their place of work.

World Thinking Day is celebrated annually on 22 February and is a moment for Girl Guides worldwide to reflect on shared values, international friendship, and the global sisterhood that unites over 10 million members across more than 150 countries. This year's theme, "Our Friendship", focused on celebrating the bonds, connections, and sense of belonging that Girl Guiding has fostered across generations, cultures, and countries. This highlights how friendship has always been at the heart of our Movement, empowering girls to grow in confidence.

Wearing the Guiding scarf is a simple yet powerful symbol of belonging. On Scarf Day, Malta Girl Guides proudly wore their scarves as a visible sign of their commitment to service, leadership, and community. The initiative also aimed to spark positive conversations and raise awareness about the role of Guiding in empowering girls and young women.

The Malta Girl Guides thank schools, employers, and the wider community for their support in recognising this important occasion and in helping members celebrate 100 years of World Thinking Day in a meaningful and visible way.



Malta Girl Guides at The Academy



Last November, Jessica Sciberras, the Chairperson of the Youth Committee, and Keira McBride, the Assistant Chairperson, proudly represented the Malta Girl Guides at The Academy, which this year was held in Corinth, Greece. The Academy is a European training event for scouts and guides that brings together participants and facilitators from across the continent to connect, network, and learn new and dynamic skills.

Throughout the programme, Jessica and Keira engaged in several different workshops and sessions aimed at strengthening and enhancing programmes, which included:

- Improving youth programmes through strategic planning and encouraging youth empowerment within the organisation, emphasising youth participation and succession planning
- Making use of different scouting and guiding tools to build better communication and better practices.
- Advocating and promoting sustainability and how to include sustainable development in work and practices.

Jessica and Keira also got to experience networking lunches and dinners, an open café, and a marketplace, as well as peer groups, which were great opportunities to share and connect with guides and scouts from around the world. Through this, they were able to exchange best practices and gain advice to enrich and strengthen their learning.

Beyond these sessions, the Academy also offered cultural experiences. During International Night, Jessica and Keira proudly showcased Maltese delicacies and traditions, sharing Malta's taste with other participants, as well as getting to know the various other cultures which were found at the event. They also enjoyed a memorable Greek night, where they were introduced to the different music, flavours and traditions of the host country.



Aċċessibilità għal dawk b'diżabbiltà u l-anzjani

Doris Zammit

Kunsilliera, Kunsill Lokali Qormi

Dekasteru għall-Anzjanità Attiva

L-anzjanità u d-diżabbiltà huma esperjenzi kumplessi u varjati, li jinkludu firxa wiesgħa ta' kundizzjonijiet fiżiċi, sensorali, intellettuali u anke kundizzjonijiet ta' saħħa mentali.

Għalkemm sar progress sinifikanti fil-promozzjoni tal-inkluzjoni u l-aċċessibilità, il-hajja ta' kuljum tkompli toħloq sfidi uniċi u kultant kbar għall-anzjani u persuni b'diżabbiltà. Dawn l-isfidi jmorru lil hinn mill-effetti immedjati tal-kundizzjoni tagħhom, u jintmessu ma' diversi aspetti tas-soċjetà, mill-infrastruttura fiżika sa attitudnijiet li issa saru parti mis-soċjetà.

Li nifhemu dawn l-isfidi ta' kuljum huwa essenzjali biex tinholoq dinja aktar ġusta u aċċessibbli—waħda li fiha kull persuna tista' tipparteċipa bis-sħiħ u tgħix b'dinjità.

Aċċessibilità f'Postijiet Pubbliċi

Waħda mill-isfidi l-aktar immedjati u viżibbli għall-anzjani u persuni b'diżabbiltà tinsab fejn dawn il-persuni jridu jinnavigaw fl-ambjent mibni. Hafna spazji pubbliċi, maħsuba mingħajr konsiderazzjoni għad-diversità tal-htigijiet ta' dawn il-persuni jistgħu jsiru ostakli kbar hafna.

Per eżempju għal dawk li jużaw sigġu tar-roti jew għajnuniet oħra tal-mobbiltà, in-nuqqas ta' rampi jew lifter funzjonali jista' jzommhom milli jidhlu għal kollox f'bini jew f'faċilitajiet pubbliċi.

Toilets pubbliċi hafna drabi mhumiex adattati—kabini żgħar wisq, nuqqas ta' maqbad, sinkijiet jew dryers li ma jintlahqux. Anke bibien dojq jew iduru (revolving) jew bibien tqal hafna li biex tiftagħhom trid timbotta 'l ġewwa jew 'l barra u bilgri jingħalqu warajk għax ikunu awtomatiċi, mingħajr ma jtuk ċans tilhaq toħroġ. B'hekk dawn il-persuni jkunu jiġu sfurzati jistennew min jgħinjom inkella la jkunu jistgħu jidhlu u lanqas johorġu.

Bankini mhux lixxi, bankini miksura, jew toroq biċ-ċangaturi jistgħu jkunu ta' theddida għal min għandu diżabbiltà fil-mixi jew nuqqas ta' vista, b'hekk jiżdied ir-riskju li dawn jaqgħu u jwegġgħu. In-nuqqas ta' pavimenti li jistgħu jhossu meta jiġu biex jaqsmu jew sinjali tas-smiġħ viċin is-sinjali tat-traffiku aktar u aktar jiżolaw lil dawk il-persuni b'nuqqas ta' vista, fejn dawn meta jiġu biex jaqsmu waħedhom ikun perikoluż.

Ostakli fit-Trasport

Is-sistemi tat-trasport pubbliku spiss isiru sors ta' frustrazzjoni. Hafna xarabanks u anke subways, m'għandhomx rampi jew lifts aċċessibbli jew li ssir manutenzjoni tajba tagħhom jekk għandhom. Anki meta jkunu aċċessibbli ssib li m'għandhomx post fejn jitle' sigġu tar-roti, nuqqas ta' sigurtà jew xufiera li mhumiex imharrġa biex jgħinu passiġġieri anzjani jew b'diżabbiltà jitlegħu x-xarabank u għaldaqstant għal dawn il-passiġġieri li jivvjaġġaw bix-xarabank isibuha diffiċli jew impossibbli. Anke meta r-rotot tax-xarabank mhumiex frekwenti tillimita l-mobbiltà u gġieghel lil dawn l-individwi biex jiddependu minn trasport privat li jkun jiswa l-flus jew il-qalb tajba ta' xi nies oħra.

Dan iwassal għal piż ekonomiku kbir: vetturi speċjali, taksis aċċessibbli jew servizzi privati jkunu jiswew hafna, u spiss ikunu barra mill-but ta' min diġà jiffaċċja sfidi fl-impjeg biex niehdu eżempju. Għaldaqstant dan in-nuqqas ta' trasport li jista' jilhqgħu kulhadd direttament iwassal għal nuqqas ta' aċċess adegwat biex wiehed jaasal fuq il-post tax-xogħol, skola, l-isptar u attivitajiet soċjali. B'hekk inkunu qegħdin effettivament inċekknha lid-dinja għal dawk il-persuni anzjani u bi bżonnijiet speċjali u nillimtaflhom l-opportunitajiet biex ikunu indipendenti u parteċipi fil-komunità.

Stigma u Diskriminazzjoni

Minbarra l-ostakli fiżiċi, hafna persuni b'diżabbiltà jiffaċċjaw attitudnijiet negattivi, stereotipi u diskriminazzjoni. Hafna drabi jiġu ttrattati b'mod patronizzanti jew esklużi kompletament. L-idea li persuni b'diżabbiltà huma dejjem bla saħħa, morda, jew inferjuri intellettwalment, tbaxxi il-kapaċitajiet, il-kunfidenza u l-potenzjal tagħhom. Dan jista' jwassal biex iħossuhom qishom invisibbli fis-soċjetà. L-impatt tal-istigma u diskriminazzjoni kontinwa tista' twassal għal ansjetà, dipressjoni u nuqqas ta' motivazzjoni, iħossuhom jistħu, u l-istima lejhom infushom tkun baxxa. Twassal ukoll biex individwi ma jkunux iridu jkomplu jsegwu edukazzjoni jew opportunitajiet ta' xogħol jew jipparteċipaw fis-soċjetà. Id-diskriminazzjoni tista' tkun sistematika tidher meta jiġu biex jikru xi dar, fl-applikazzjonijiet tal-housing, jew anke biex jithalltu soċjevolment. Dejjem sfida biex jiġu aċċettati u jieħdu l-istess trattament bħal haddiehor.

Sfidi fil-Komunikazzjoni

Komunikazzjoni effettiva hija fundamentali biex wiehed jithallat ma' persuni oħra, imma sfortunatament hafna persuni anzjani u b'diżabbiltajiet isibu ma' wiċċhom diversi sfidi hawnhekk. Dawk il-persuni li huma torox jew neqsin mis-smiġħ, in-nuqqas ta' persuna kwalifikata fil-lingwa tas-sinjali, interpreti fi sptarijiet, skejtel u avvenimenti pubbliċi jista' jwassal għal nuqqas ta' ftehim u esklużjoni.

Bl-istess mod min għandu nuqqas ta' vista spiss ma jsibx informazzjoni fuq Braille, stampar b'font akbar jew b'aċċess awdjoviziv jippermetti li lil dawn l-individwi b'nuqqas ta' vista ma jkollhomx aċċessibilità għal dokumenti, materjal edukattiv, jew esperjenzi kulturali. Persuni li għandhom diżabbiltà biex jitkellmu ikollhom jithabtu biex jiftehmu, u b'hekk iwassalhom għal frustrazzjoni u iżolazzjoni.

Ejjeu flimkien nagħtu spinta aktar qawwija sabiex dawn l-isfidi għall-anzjani u dawk b'diżabbiltà nibqgħu naħdmu fuqhom sakemm insibu soluzzjonijiet ġusti u ma nħallu lil hadd ibati fis-skiet.

Women in Victorian Photography in Malta: Pioneers, Practitioners, and Emancipators

The rise of photography in nineteenth-century Malta unfolded against the backdrop of Victorian modernity—where a new visual medium reshaped memory, representation and commercial enterprise. While dominant narratives have traditionally foregrounded male photographers, recent scholarship by Dr Charles Paul Azzopardi reveals that women were not peripheral to this history but played vital roles, ranging from facilitators and collaborators to studio proprietors and professional operators. Among these figures, several stand out for the ways in which their engagements with photography epitomised, expanded, and challenged the gendered expectations of Victorian society in Malta.

Lucrezia Preziosi – The Unseen Partner

Lucrezia Preziosi née Metropoli represents one of the earliest examples of how women underpinned photographic enterprise in Malta through economic and material support. Her ownership of key studio premises enabled her husband, Leandro Preziosi—long regarded as a central figure in Maltese photography—to establish a commercial practice. This behind-the-scenes role illustrates how women's contributions have often gone unacknowledged in traditional histories, even though they were essential to the infrastructure and sustainability of early photographic studios.

Sarah Ann Harrison – Malta's First Female Studio Owner

In contrast to these hidden contributions, Sarah Anne Harrison occupies a place of visible agency. An English photographer who settled in Senglea, she is currently recognised as the earliest documented female photographer to have operated her own studio in Malta—from 1864 to 1871—under her own name. By publicly presenting herself as a photographer—selling cartes de visite and portraits—she claimed a professional identity at a time when commercial photography was overwhelmingly male-dominated.

Alfonsina (Alphonsa) Ellis – A Partner in Practice

While female photographers operating independently were rare, women also participated in photography through collaboration and partnership. Alfonsina Curmi was married to Richard Ellis—one of Malta's most prolific and influential photographers. Although the historical record tends to centre on her husband's work, newer research underscores that women like Alfonsina played supportive, managerial and possibly creative roles within these long-running studios.

Adelaide Conroy (née Anceschi) – From Apprentice to Professional

Another key figure in this narrative is Adelaide Anceschi, later known in business directories as Mrs Conroy following her marriage to photographer James Conroy. Operating in Valletta in the 1870s, Adelaide transitioned from studio collaborator to recognised professional. Her advertisements in periodicals under her own professional style suggest deliberate self-positioning as a female photographer, even as she worked in a context where English and Italian men dominated the trade. Adelaide's career signifies an early form of professional emancipation, carving space for women—not solely as assistants but as named practitioners.

Giuseppa Grech Cumbo – Inheriting and Leading

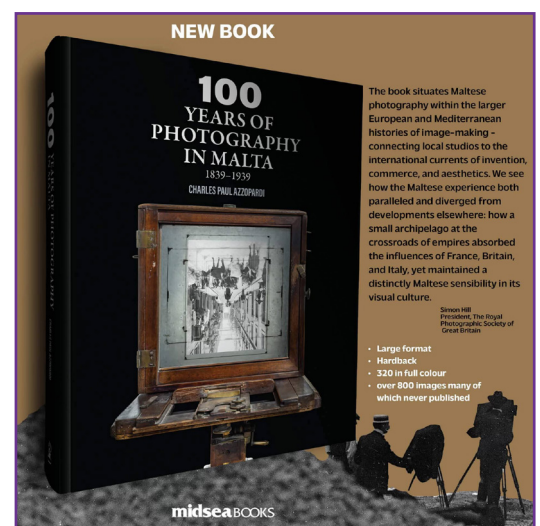
Finally, Giuseppa (Giuseppina) Grech Cumbo marks an important milestone in Maltese photographic history: she is often identified in archival sources as the first Maltese woman formally recorded as a photographic operator. Unlike her predecessors, whose participation was often informal or ancillary, Grech Cumbo inherited her father's studio into her dowry and legally operated it in her own right. This represents a significant emancipatory moment—a woman taking leadership within the legal and commercial frameworks of the time, when women's economic independence was severely constrained by Victorian social structures.

Legacy and Reassessment

Taken together, these women illustrate the multifaceted ways in which Victorian photography in Malta both accommodated and contested gender norms. From the hidden enabler (Lucrezia Preziosi) to the studio proprietor (Sarah Anne Harrison), and from the collaborator (Alfonsina Ellis) to the professional operator (Adelaide Conroy and Giuseppa Grech Cumbo), they chart a spectrum of engagement that expanded women's presence in public and commercial life. Their stories remind us that the history of photography—far from being a tale of technical innovation by men alone—was also shaped by women whose contributions pushed against the boundaries of their era, sowing early seeds of professional and economic agency that would resonate well into the twentieth century.

By Dr Charles Paul Azzopardi

For more information, peruse the publication *100 Years of Photography in Malta, 1839–1939*, by Dr Charles Paul Azzopardi <https://www.midseabooks.com/shop/art-photography/100-years-of-photography-in-malta/>



Forthcoming Events

Food Handling Course at NCW Centre, Blata l-Bajda

Date: Sunday (Held throughout the year)

Duration: 5 hr training programme

Tutor: Mr Joseph Cassar

Course fee: 32 Euro 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.

Herbs and Health Benefits

— Getting to know your plants —

Talk by Mrs Sarah Xerri

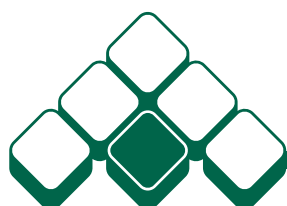


Talk followed by Tea at Sherries Garden Centre, Sherries Estates, Burmarrad

Date: Saturday 16th May 2026

Time: 3.00pm to 5.00pm

More details will follow closer to date



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