

**Opening Speech delivered by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta, at the Launch of the Gender Pay Gap Awareness Video produced by the President's Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society, 12 November 2018**

**Distinguished guests,**

**Dear friends,**

**I am pleased to welcome you to Sant Anton Palace, for the launch of this video about the Gender Pay Gap.**

**I brought the issue of the gender pay gap to the fore, during my speech on Republic Day in 2016. I must note that both major political parties, represented in parliament, have committed themselves, through their electoral manifesto, to address this important concern.**

**This video, which we will be launching today, is the direct result of a conference which took place earlier this year, organised by the President's Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society.**

This conference drew the attention to the need for more work to be done, to close the existing gender pay gap.

I hope that this video will further explain our concern about the gender pay gap, as, up till now, there is still some confusion between issues of equal pay and gender pay gap.

These are two different issues.

Equal pay is already covered by legislation, while the gender pay gap is not.

The conference, organised by my Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society, earlier this year, received the support of diverse stakeholders, many of whom are represented here today.

These included the Centre for Labour Studies at the University of Malta; the National Statistics Office; the National Trade Union Forum; EMPOWER - the Platform of Organisations for Women; Ernst and Young Malta; and the former Minister for Equality in the Icelandic Parliament, who legislated the very first gender pay gap law.

Let me take this opportunity to once again thank all of you for your contributions, which helped the Foundation to continue its work to increase awareness on this important topic.

During the conference, our efforts focused on highlighting the social injustices, which are inherent to the gender pay gap. Furthermore, it is important to remember the far-reaching social and economic implications which such injustices create, against the plight of gender equality in our society.

The existence of a gender pay gap stops us from having an inclusive economy, and creates another barrier to fair distribution of wealth.

Undoubtedly, the gender pay gap is a direct impediment, which prevents us from achieving full gender equality and effective social justice in our society.

Gender pay gap does not only create gender inequality during working age, but it also directly effects the pensions of retired women.

According to data from the World Economic Forum, the gender pay gap is one of the factors that is making one third of women poorer, when compared to men, when they are reaching the age of retirement.

For this reason, the video we are launching today is offering an informative approach, to educate both women and men about the gender pay gap, and to build awareness about the complex factors, which are contributing towards it.

I hope that, after watching this video, people will become more empowered to search for and to achieve practical solutions, to address gender inequality in this sector.

We must note that there have been a number of significant developments in the economic empowerment of women in Malta.

The increased rate of gainfully occupied women is a most important factor, in the process of achieving gender equality.

However, we must not be complacent, and accept this fact as the main equality achiever.

We now need to address the ongoing challenge of the gender pay gap.

On a national level, indicators are telling us that the gender pay gap in Malta currently stands at 11 per cent.

However, this does not account for variation by industry. For example, the gap between women and men working in the financial and insurance sector is a staggering 28.3 per cent, and the gap between women and men involved in professional, scientific, and technical activities is 23.1 per cent.

We must acknowledge the fact that the gender pay gap in Malta has almost tripled over four years: from 4.5 per cent in 2014 to 11 per cent in 2018.

This indicator shows us that we must address this issue immediately, so as to intervene with this spike.

Furthermore, according to research from the Department of Labour Studies, we know that women in comparison to men, are employed less often and are engaged in lower-paid sectors.

We are told that women work, on average, 6 hours longer per week than men, but they are paid for fewer hours, and they face more difficulties to achieve promotions.

In order to make a long-term and sustainable change, I believe that we must follow the United Nations' Agenda 2030, and its seventeen Sustainable Development Goals. This is a mandate that our country is ascribed to, and must achieve.

Agenda 2030 is a roadmap for the future of our world, which promotes essential values of human dignity, gender equality, positive peace, and inclusive prosperity.

Sustainable Development Goal Number 5 specifically targets the need for gender equality, and for the empowerment of women and girls, as part of Malta's commitment to a future of equality, equity, and justice for all.

In the spirit of Agenda 2030, my Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society has closely collaborated with V Squared and Ernest and Young Malta, to produce the awareness video which is being shared today.

The video aims to dispel the many myths which still exist concerning the gender pay gap, and to encourage visibility about the complex factors which contribute towards it.

It is not a straightforward issue, and it, therefore, requires our full engagement and involvement to be able to tackle it holistically, and effectively.

These complex factors will be addressed in a panel discussion, as part of today's launch. At this point, let me commend the participants, who were involved in the production of this video.

These include Dr Sharon Attard De Giovanni, representing my Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society; Ms Rachel Cachia, on behalf of VSquared; and Francesca Fenech Conti, founder of "Women for Women" and a prominent advocate for women's rights.

I am convinced that all of us believe that the socio-economic empowerment of women will not only benefit women, as an intrinsic part to achieve our rightful dignity.

It will contribute to the holistic wellbeing of our families, our communities, and our societies as a whole.

Our efforts to achieve full gender equality and equity in the economic sectors of our country will reflect our underlying commitment, to promote universal human rights and fundamental freedoms, as women's rights are human rights.

Let's make this year a special year, to fully celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the UN Declaration of Universal Human Rights, by legislating on this issue.

Let me take this opportunity to encourage parliament to take up this issue, to ensure that it is effectively addressed.



I am also pleased to note that, recently, the Commissioner for Equality has identified the issue of gender pay gap as one of her initiatives.

On the other hand, while there have definitely been improvements, in terms of legislation and policy our Maltese society must keep up the same momentum to make the necessary cultural leap, by replacing attitudes of prejudice and discrimination with a celebration of equity and equality.

Let me, therefore, conclude by urging all of us, including our authorities, private sector, and civil society, to go to the next level of achieving full gender equality, by working to close the gender gap through awareness and legislation, for the benefit of all women but also, in the best interest of the girls and young women who will join the Maltese work force in the future.

Thank you for your attention.