



# **STOP VIOLENCE**

Commission on Gender-based Violence  
and Domestic Violence

# **ANNUAL REPORT**

COMMISSION ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE  
AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
**2023**





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## **Message from the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for European Funds, Equality, Reforms and Social Dialogue**

In 2023, Malta continued to intensify its efforts to prevent and combat gender-based violence and domestic violence. The work of the Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence, in close cooperation with multiple stakeholders, entities and civil society, resulted in an eventful year marking collaborative commitments to address the realities and ramifications of gender-based violence and domestic violence. Ultimately, the aim of the Commission has been and continues to be to empower victims and survivors to receive the necessary support in our society.

Reflecting on the government's achievements in 2023, the main highlight was the launch of Malta's third National Strategy on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence. Ensuring protection and support for victims and survivors, prevention, effective prosecution and coordinated policy development are the key pillars of this strategy, aligning with the core priorities of the Istanbul Convention. This strategy illustrates the salient priorities for tackling gender-based violence and domestic violence on a national level through cohesive actions envisioned for the next five years in joint efforts with relevant stakeholders, entities and civil society. The importance

of proactive collaboration across multiple sectors was also emphasised in the research findings of the study, 'Safety in Childhood – A Prevalence Study of Childhood Abuse Experiences in Malta', which were presented at a national conference in April 2023. For the first time in Malta, this study examined the prevalence of violence and abuse experienced and witnessed by children in family settings. The results continue to emphasise the need to enhance our efforts in early interventions in order to aid victims and their children, to rehabilitate perpetrators of gender-based violence and domestic violence and to also prioritise preventive actions from an early age with children.

In 2023, the Commission continued to raise awareness on gender-based violence and domestic violence through diverse means and with various groups and communities within our society. These efforts were amplified during the 'Beat the Silence' campaign for the annual 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence. This campaign shed light on the impacts of gender-based violence and domestic violence and highlighted the existing support services which professionally assist victims and perpetrators. Moreover, the Commission provided several training opportunities for professionals, including tailored training for members of the judiciary and journalists to promote a victim-centred approach.

As the government's efforts and commitments in addressing and combatting gender-based violence and domestic violence endure, the Commission, as the national coordinating body of the Istanbul Convention, will continue to implement and monitor policies and initiatives together with stakeholders, entities and civil society to foster a safe and equitable society with zero-tolerance towards all forms of gender-based violence and domestic violence.

### **Hon. Chris Fearne**

*Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for European Funds, Equality, Reforms and Social Dialogue*



## Message from the Parliamentary Secretary for Reforms and Equality

As we reflect on the strides made by the Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (CGBDV) over the past year, it is evident that together, we are advancing towards our common objective of eradicating all forms of gender-based violence and domestic abuse in Malta.

I am pleased to announce that a substantial amount, over 70% of the recommendations outlined in the Valenzia Report for the prevention of domestic violence have been successfully implemented. This demonstrates the Government's unwavering dedication to action and tangible progress in this critical area.

Efforts are ongoing to enact further measures outlined in the Valenzia Report, including crucial amendments to our criminal code aimed at providing clearer definitions of domestic violence cases. Significantly, the domestic violence unit within the Malta Police Force have been reinforced with additional officers and social workers, bolstering our capacity to address reported cases promptly and effectively.

The Commission's sustained awareness campaigns on gender-based violence and domestic abuse have yielded encouraging results, with an increase in reported cases to the police. This

indicates a positive shift, as survivors are increasingly empowered to seek justice and support rather than suffer in silence.

Work completed throughout 2023 will come to fruition in the upcoming year, particularly, with the inauguration of the Santa Luċija hub, providing a dedicated space for domestic violence survivors and their children in an improved and supportive environment.

Work is ongoing to increase comprehensive assistance to survivors. The government through its agencies and agreement with non-governmental organisations, is committed to continue to offer shelters, legal aid, and other essential services to those affected by gender-based violence and domestic abuse.

I commend the commendable efforts of the Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence in enhancing the capacity of service providers and training to members of the judiciary to better handle such cases with sensitivity and efficacy. The appointment of a second magistrate dedicated to domestic violence cases will also help to prioritise and address these issues in a swifter manner.

Looking ahead, the CGBDV has charted a clear roadmap with the launch of the third National Strategy on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence, guiding our actions until 2028. Initiatives to raise awareness and enhance stakeholder capacity will continue to be a focal point of our efforts.

Nevertheless, it is disheartening that despite our collective endeavours, individuals still endure the trauma of domestic violence. The Government remains resolute in its commitment to support survivors and combat this societal scourge.

**Hon. Rebecca Buttigieg**  
*Parliamentary Secretary for  
Reforms and Equality*



## Foreword by the Commissioner

The launch of 'UNITE. ENGAGE. ELEVATE.', the National Strategy on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (2023 – 2028) was crucial to give a collective vision for the gender-based violence and domestic violence sector.

The Strategy was built on listening to the difficulties faced by victims and their families, as well as those who form part of the ecosystem of support services. The GREVIO recommendations and previous research conducted locally and internationally were factored in. A living document, the National Strategy accentuated continuity and sustainability to prevent gender-based violence, offer and improve support and protection measures, and strengthen prosecution processes.

Ultimately, the Strategy reflects three of the Commission's fundamental principles: unity, intersectionality and a whole family approach.

Throughout my initial months as Commissioner, I prioritised understanding and bringing stakeholders together, including public entities as well as non-governmental organisations. No single entity or organisation can bring an end to gender-based violence and violence against women by itself. It is therefore the Commission, as co-

ordinating body of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, known as the Istanbul Convention, which is responsible for promoting this togetherness.

Engaging civil society and society at large is one way of doing this. One of the main functions of the Commission remains that of prevention. Through training opportunities and awareness raising efforts, which came to a peak during the annual 16 Days of Activism, we managed to engage several social groups, including professionals, journalists, the judiciary, elderly, children, and athletes. Our effort to reach out to migrant and foreign communities living in Malta and Gozo also persists as we also connected with Ambassadors and Consulars representing different communities.

While looking forward for the year 2024 to carry out the implementation and further strengthen collaborations, I take this opportunity to thank all those involved in this sector for their passion and commitment in addressing this form of social injustice.

### **Ms Samantha Pace Gasan**

*Commissioner on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence*



## 1. The Commission

The Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (CGBVDV) was established in line with Article 10 of the Istanbul Convention and its primary objective is to monitor the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in Malta. The Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Act (Chapter 581 of the Laws of Malta) outlines the Commission's set-up, functions, remit and legal obligations.

The responsibilities of the Commission include:

- Advising the Minister and state institutions on all matters related to gender-based violence and domestic violence, including the necessary measures to ensure adherence to the Istanbul Convention and Chapter 581 of the Laws of Malta.
- Overseeing and monitoring the implementation of the concurrent national strategy and action plan on gender-based violence and domestic violence by maintaining network and coordination among all pertinent stakeholders and non-governmental organisations.
- Supporting research in the field of gender-based violence and domestic violence.
- Monitoring national standards for support services assisting victims and perpetrators of gender-based violence and domestic violence.
- Coordinating and organising specialised training for professionals in the field in accordance with the annual training needs analysis.
- Aiding in gathering comprehensive statistical data relevant to the field at regular intervals from the state, public sector, agencies and other relevant entities.
- Collaborating with relevant national institutions to carry out population-based surveys to evaluate the prevalence and trends of all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention and Chapter 581 of the Laws of Malta.
- Handing information to the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) to foster international cooperation and facilitate international benchmarking.
- Disseminating information among the public on the available support services, the Commission's initiatives and prevention.
- Delivering periodic awareness-raising campaigns for the general public with the aim of achieving a greater level of understanding on the different manifestations of all forms of gender-based violence and domestic violence and the need to prevent and tackle gender-based violence and domestic violence.
- Collaborating with educational authorities to inform students on the forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention and Chapter 581 of the Laws of Malta whilst addressing prevention.
- Providing guidelines to the media on prevention and the forms of violence listed in the Istanbul Convention and Chapter 581 of the Laws of Malta.

## 1.1 Members of the Commission

The Commission is headed by a chairperson and twelve board members together with a board secretary.

**Chairperson:** Commissioner Samantha Pace Gasan

**Board members:**

- Dr Cheryl Azzopardi
- Dr Bryony Balzia Bartolo
- Insp. Louise Calleja
- Mr Christian Camilleri
- Dr Charles Cassar
- Ms Catherine Fenech
- Ms Sarah Haider
- Ms Renee Laiviera
- Dr Alessia Psaila Zammit
- Ms Antonella Rogers
- Ms Marika Tonna

**Board secretary:** Ms Pearl Agius

**Staff members:**

- Ms Sasha Farrugia (Senior Manager)
- Ms Therese Caruana (Manager I Research)
- Ms Mandy Cascun (Manager I Projects)
- Ms Valentina Fiorini (Manager I Projects)

## 2. Commission meetings

Seven Commission board meetings were held during 2023. The Parliamentary Secretary for Reforms and Equality, Hon. Rebecca Buttigieg, attended the meeting held on 15 March. A new Commissioner, Ms Samantha Pace Gasan, was appointed in July following the departure of Ms Audrey Friggieri.

**Table 1. Dates of Commission board meetings**

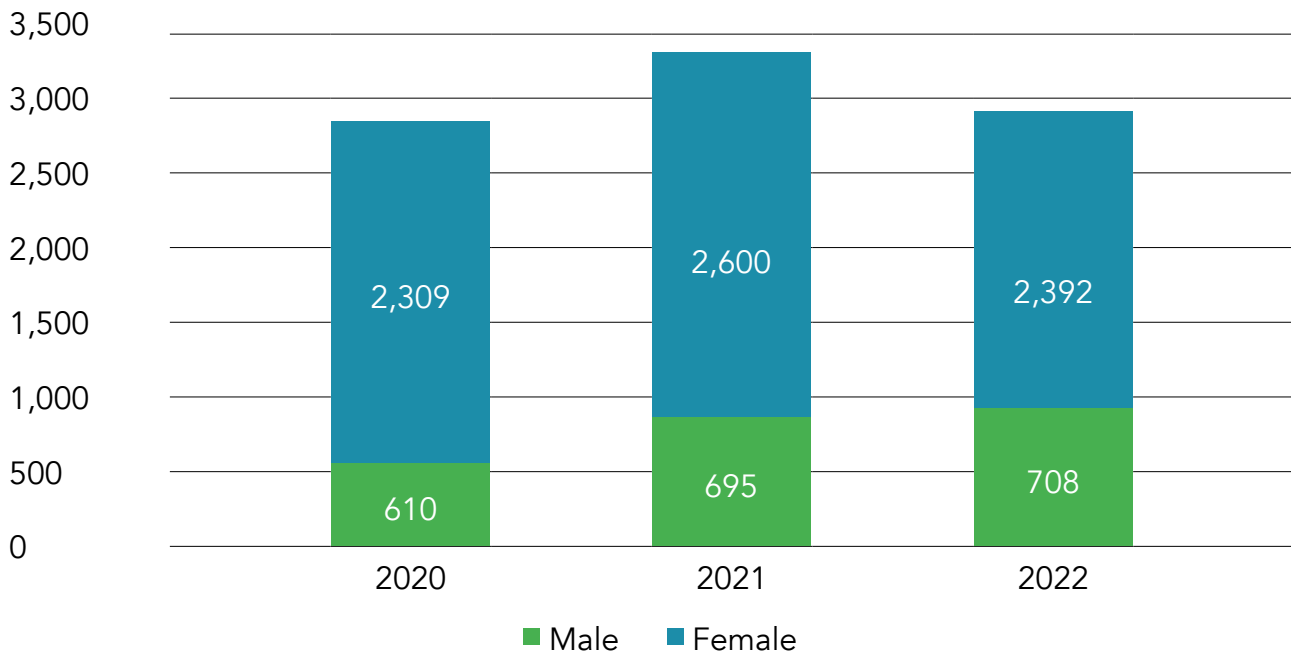
<b>Meeting 1</b>	19 January
<b>Meeting 2</b>	15 March
<b>Meeting 3</b>	2 May
<b>Meeting 4</b>	28 July
<b>Meeting 5</b>	18 September
<b>Meeting 6</b>	16 October
<b>Meeting 7</b>	7 November

Themes discussed during the board meetings included the setting up of the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Meeting (MARAM), the various training programmes for professionals organised by the Commission, the development of the third National Strategy on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence and the 16 Days of Activism awareness-raising campaign.

### 3. Research and statistical reporting

The National Statistics Office is responsible for collecting local data on gender-based violence and domestic violence on behalf of the Commission on a yearly basis. The data gathered from both governmental and non-governmental service providers during 2022 is forwarded to the National Statistics Office to harmonise during 2023 and presented in this report.

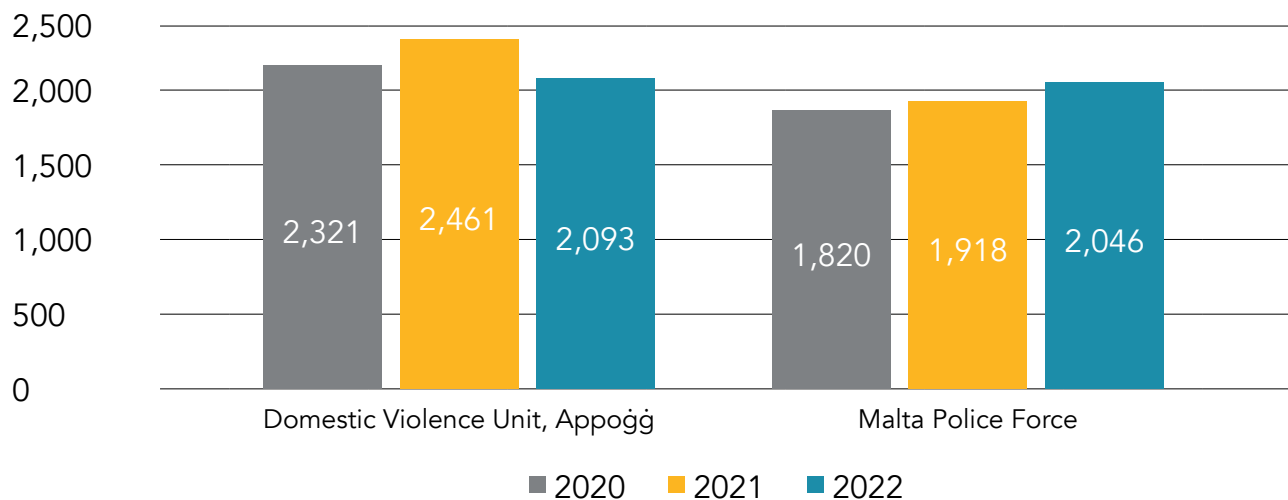
**Chart 1. Number of persons using domestic violence services by gender: 2020-2022**



**Note:**

- This table does not tally with the other tables since it is based on the total number of individual persons and not on the number of cases/reports across services.
- Services included: Dar Merħba Bik, Dar Santa Bakhita (2021, 2022), Dar Emmaus (2022), Il-Milja, Għabex (Aġenzija Appoġġ), Domestic Violence Unit (Aġenzija Appoġġ), Victim Support Malta (2021, 2022), Malta Police Force, and Emergency Health Services.

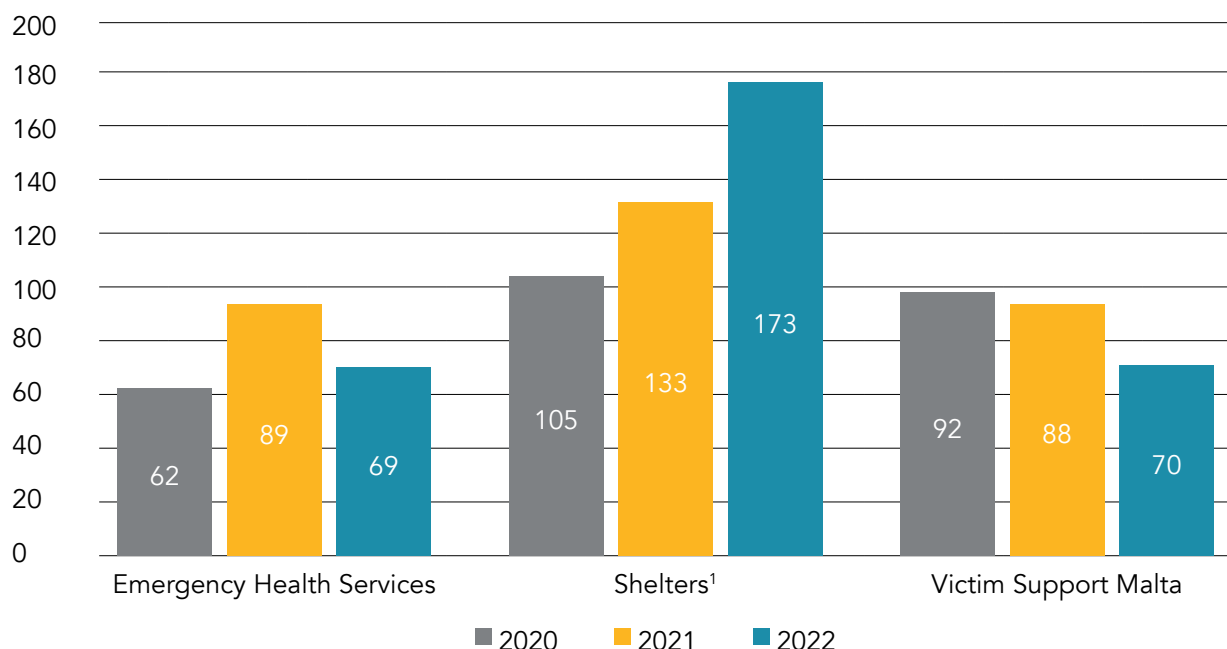
**Chart 2. Number of individual cases registered with the Malta Police Force and service providers by service: 2020-2022**



**Note:**

• Total figures represent the number of cases registered at the respective service, persons accessing services multiple times feature more than once.

**Chart 3. Number of individual cases registered with Emergency Health Services, domestic violence shelters, and Victim Support Malta: 2020-2022**

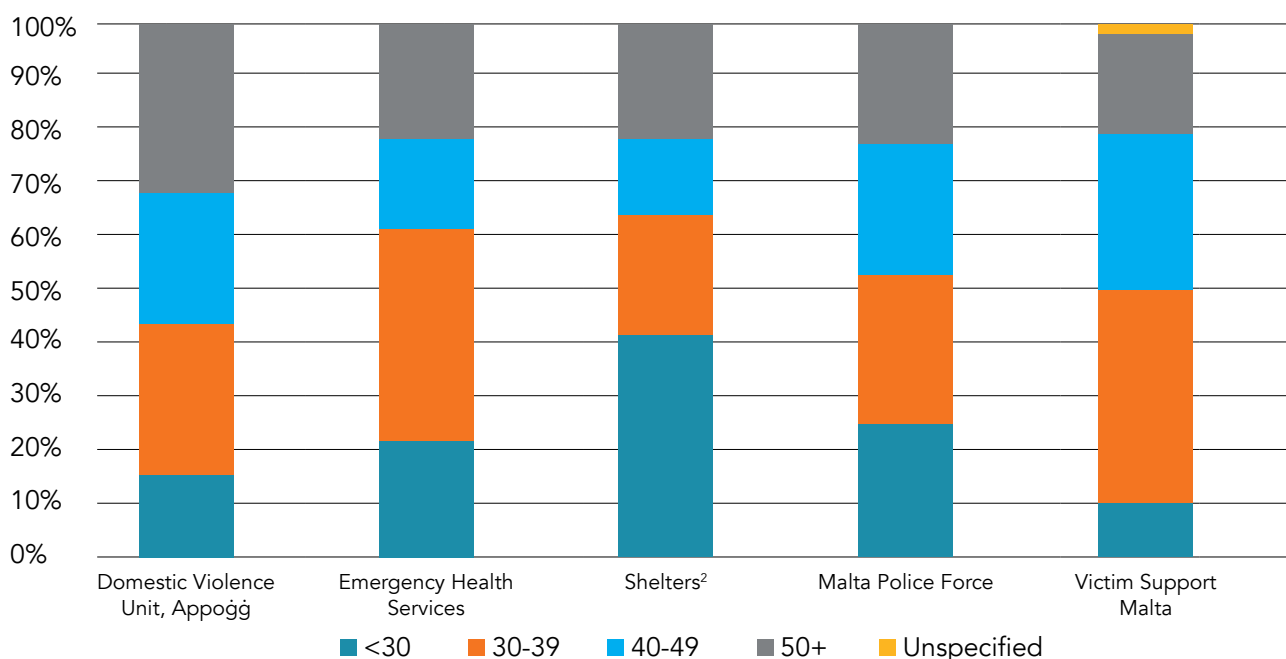


**Note:**

• Total figures represent the number of cases registered at the respective service, persons accessing services multiple times feature more than once.

<sup>1</sup>Shelters include Dar Merħba Bik, Dar Santa Bakhita (2021, 2022), Dar Emmaus (2022), Għabex, and Il-Milja.

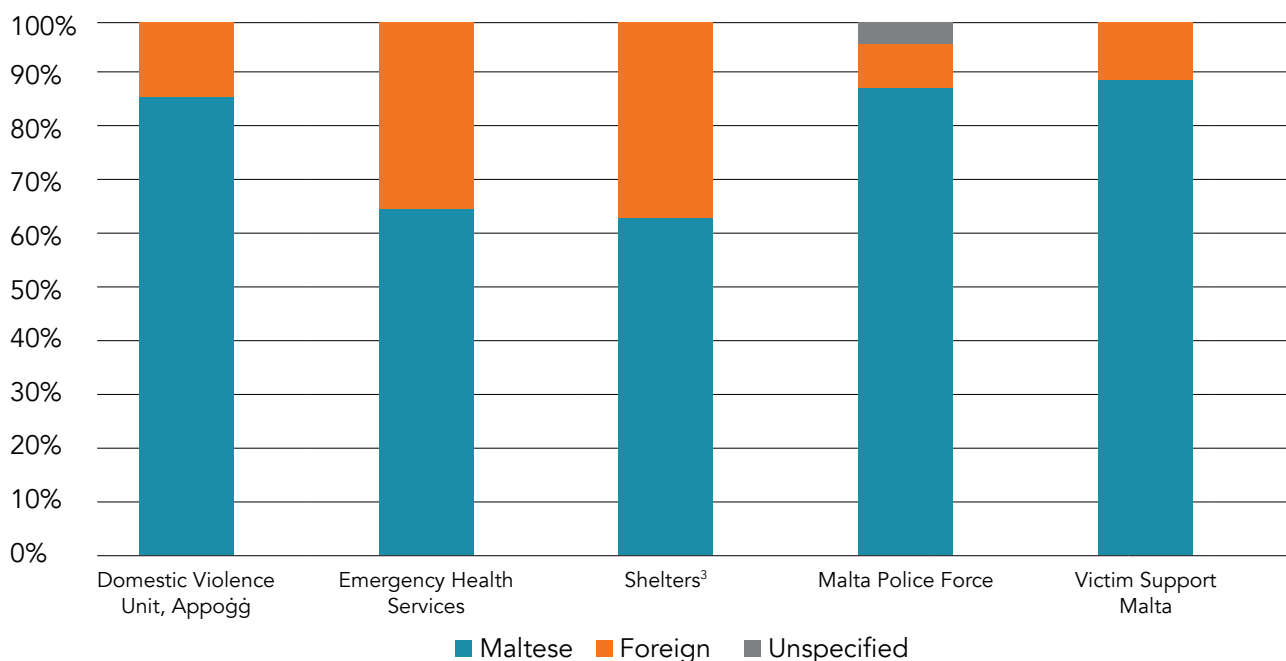
**Chart 4. Number of individual cases registered with the Malta Police Force and service providers by service and age-group of service user: 2020-2022**



**Note:**

- Total figures represent the number of victims registered at the respective service. Persons accessing different services or the same service multiple times are counted more than once.

**Chart 5. Number of individual cases registered with the Malta Police Force and service providers by service and broad citizenship of service user: 2022**

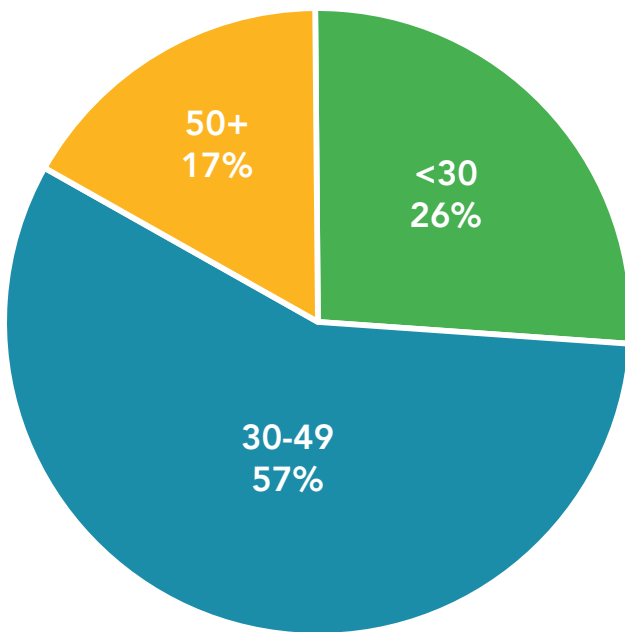


**Note:**

- Total figures represent the number of cases registered at the respective service, persons accessing services multiple times feature more than once.

<sup>2,3</sup>Shelters include Dar Merħba Bik, Dar Santa Bakhita (2021, 2022), Dar Emmaus (2022), Għabex, and Il-Milja.

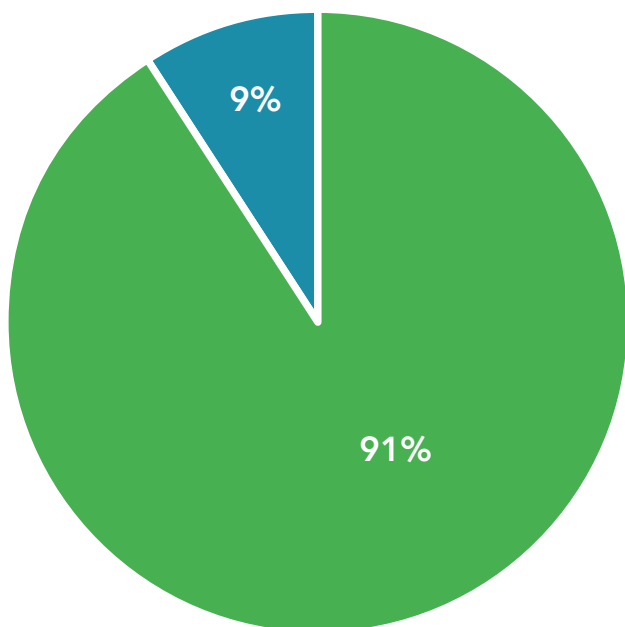
**Chart 6. Number of persons registered with services for perpetrators of domestic violence by age of service user: 2022**



Perpetrator		2022
Age	<30	71
	30-49	155
	50+	46

**Notes:**

- Services targeting perpetrators of domestic violence consist of the 'Stop!' programme and the 'Child to Parent Violence' service at Aġenzija Appoġġ and the Department of Probation and Parole.
- Figures represent a sum of the number of individual persons registered at each perpetrator service and therefore persons accessing different services are counted more than once.



Gender of Perpetrator	2022
Total	268
Male	245
Female	23

■ Male ■ Female

**Notes:**

- Services targeting perpetrators of domestic violence consist of the 'Stop!' programme and the 'Child to Parent Violence' service at Aġenzija Appoġġ and the Department of Probation and Parole.
- Figures represent a sum of the number of individual persons registered at each perpetrator service and therefore persons accessing different services are counted more than once.

#### 4. Launch of research findings: 'Safety in Childhood – A Prevalence Study of Childhood Abuse Experiences in Malta'

On 24 April, the Parliamentary Secretariat for Reforms and Equality and the Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence organised a national conference to present the findings of the 'Safety in Childhood – A Prevalence Study of Childhood Abuse Experiences in Malta' research study.

The Department of Child and Family Studies within the Faculty for Social Wellbeing at the University of Malta was commissioned by the CGBVDV to conduct this research study. Such project was the first of its kind in Malta as the primary aim was to obtain a local prevalence rate of individuals who experienced and/or witnessed violence in their childhood. The research team consisted of Dr Clarissa Sammut Scerri, the lead researcher, together with Dr Ingrid Grech Lanfranco, Ms Lara Pace and Ms Maria Borg.

During the conference, Dr Clarissa Sammut Scerri presented the findings from this study which illustrated that the most prevalent forms of abuse experienced by children are peer and sibling victimisation

(75.3%), followed by child maltreatment (61.4%) and children who witnessed or were exposed to domestic violence (52%). The statistics also indicate that children who experience one form of violence tend to experience other forms of violence as 70.2% of respondents endured two forms of abuse or more. This data was gathered from a quantitative survey with a representative sample of 433 participants aged between 18 and 24 years. In this survey, the participants responded to retrospective questions reflecting on their childhood experiences with domestic violence, maltreatment, neglect, peer and sibling abuse and sexual violence.

Dr Sammut Scerri concluded her presentation with a list of recommendations for policy and practice to address, prevent and combat childhood abuse experiences. The findings demonstrate the significant need for more collaboration across government sectors and NGOs to tackle cases of children experiencing peer and sibling victimisation, maltreatment and children witnessing domestic violence and to prioritise early



*Dr Clarissa Sammut Scerri delivering a presentation on the research findings during the conference*

intervention when detecting signs of these forms of abuse.

Following the presentation about the key results from this study, two panel discussions were held to delve deeper into the notable findings. Minister for Justice Hon. Jonathan Attard, Minister for Social Policy and Children's Rights Hon. Michael Falzon, Parliamentary Secretary for Reforms and Equality Hon. Rebecca Buttigieg, Assistant Police Commissioner Dr Dennis Theuma, Dr Bryony Balzia Bartolo and Dr Nicholas Briffa participated in these panels. The theme discussed during the first panel focused on how collective action is significant to prevent and combat violence experienced by children. A discussion on the realities of domestic violence victims who due to dependency on their partner refrain from continuing with court procedures

against perpetrators of domestic violence took place during the second panel.

The European Commissioner for Equality, Dr Helena Dalli, and the Pro Rector for Student & Staff Affairs and Outreach at the University of Malta, Prof Carmen Sammut expressed the commitment undertaken by the European Union and the University of Malta to strengthen services related to children experiencing violence.

A clip showcasing an adult victim narrating his experience of living within an abusive family during his childhood was displayed to raise more awareness on the manifestations of child abuse and the realities children who experienced family violence endure both in their childhood and in their adulthood. The conference was also livestreamed on the Commission's Facebook page.



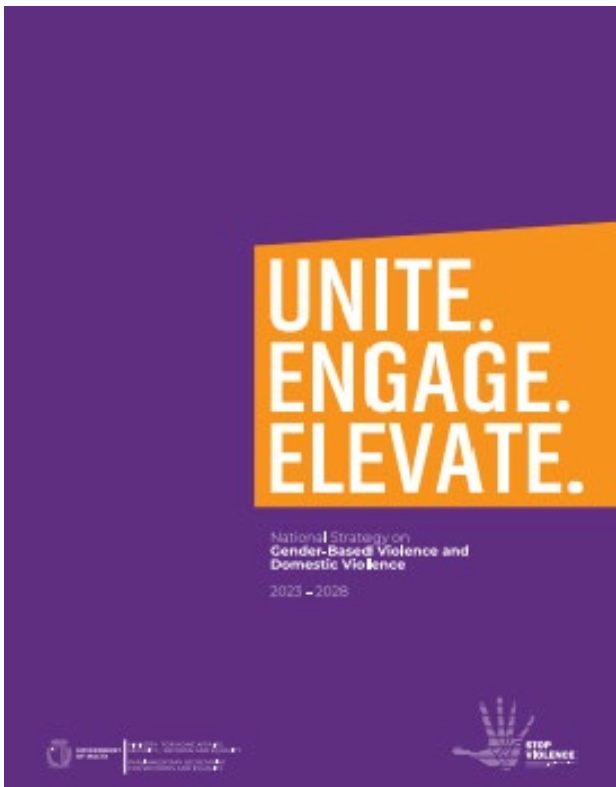
## 5. The National Action Plan

With the second National Strategy and Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (2021-2022) coming to an end, the Commission launched Malta's third National Strategy on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (2023-2028) titled, 'UNITE. ENGAGE. ELEVATE.', on 29 November during a press event at Spazju Kreattiv, Valletta.

The development of this strategy entailed desk-based research and consultation meetings with relevant stakeholders, including non-governmental organisations working in the field. Like its precedent, it is built on the four pillars of the Istanbul Convention and incorporates a more longitudinal vision in its measures and actions, given its five-year timeframe.



*Commissioner Pace Gasan presenting the third national strategy*



*Third national strategy and action plan document*



*Third national strategy and action plan document*

### **5.1 The Inter-Ministerial Committee**

The Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) is composed of high-level representatives from the following ministries, departments, entities and agencies:

- Office of the Attorney General
- Court Services Agency
- Department of Justice
- Department of Probation and Parole
- Foundation for Social Welfare Services
- Human Rights Directorate
- Legal Aid Malta
- Ministry for Education, Sports, Youth, Research and Innovation
- Ministry for Gozo and Planning
- Ministry for Health and Active Ageing
- Ministry for Justice and Reform of the Construction Sector
- Malta Police Force
- Policy Development and Programme Implementation Directorate within the Ministry for Home Affairs, Security, Reforms and Equality
- Victim Support Agency

As the designated coordinating body in line with Article 10 of the Istanbul Convention, the Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence chaired a total of eight meetings with the IMC to discuss service provision, policy development, awareness-raising and training initiatives and the development of Malta's third national action plan. Non-governmental organisations were invited to participate in the IMC meeting held on 16 March to strengthen inter-agency cooperation and collaboration in the delivery of services.

**Table 2. IMC meetings in 2023**

<b>Meeting 1</b>	11 January
<b>Meeting 2</b>	15 February
<b>Meeting 3</b>	16 March
<b>Meeting 4</b>	20 April
<b>Meeting 5</b>	23 May
<b>Meeting 6</b>	6 September
<b>Meeting 7</b>	5 October
<b>Meeting 8</b>	16 November

## 5.2 One-to-one meetings

On assuming the role of Commissioner on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence, Commissioner Samantha Pace Gasan engaged in one-to-one meetings with stakeholders who are represented in the Inter-Ministerial Committee to discuss the specific roles of each stakeholder and to identify the challenges encountered by each respective stakeholder.



*Meeting with the Foundation for Social Welfare Services*

**Table 3. One-to-one Meetings**

<b>Meeting with the Victim Support Agency</b>	<b>3 August</b>
<b>Meeting with the Ministry for Justice and Reform of the Construction Sector</b>	8 August
<b>Meeting with the Ministry for Health and Active Ageing</b>	<b>22 August</b>
<b>Meeting with the Malta Police Force</b>	23 August
<b>Meeting with the Domestic Violence Services (Foundation for Social Welfare Services)</b>	<b>28 August</b>
<b>Meeting with the Department for Probation &amp; Parole</b>	29 August
<b>Meeting with MARAM's Chairperson</b>	<b>31 August</b>
<b>Meeting with the Housing Authority</b>	5 September
<b>Meeting with the National Statistics Office</b>	<b>13 September</b>
<b>Meeting with the Court Services Agency</b>	25 September
<b>Meeting with the Legal Aid Agency</b>	<b>26 October</b>
<b>Meeting with the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation</b>	5 October

## 6. Stakeholder meetings

### 6.1 NGOs' Forum meetings

In 2023, the Commission hosted three meetings with non-governmental organisations to foster coordination and to stay informed on the real-life challenges that victims of domestic violence and gender-based violence experience. Furthermore, as the Commission was finalising the drafting of the third National Strategy on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (2023 – 2028), non-governmental organisations were engaged in consultations in order to incorporate their input and to update them on the progress concerning the National Action Plan. The meetings were held on:

**Table 4. NGOs' Forum Meetings**

<b>Meeting 1</b>	10 March 2023
<b>Meeting 2</b>	3 May 2023
<b>Meeting 3</b>	31 August 2023

### 6.2 Courtesy visit by Ireland's Ambassador to Malta

On 12 September, H.E. Caroline Whelan, Ireland's ambassador to Malta, visited the offices of the Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence. During this visit, H.E. Whelan together with Commissioner Samantha Pace Gasan and the Commission's team, discussed several issues related to gender-based violence and domestic violence in the context of Ireland and Malta and explored the possibility for future collaboration between the Commission and the Embassy of Ireland in Malta.



*H.E. Caroline Whelan, Commissioner Samantha Pace Gasan and the CGBVDV team*

### 6.3 Meeting with Shelters' Network

On 23 October, Commissioner Samantha Pace Gasan was invited to a meeting organised by the Shelters' Network. In this meeting, the Commissioner, the organisations running domestic violence shelters and other services exchanged their expertise and shared good practices in relation to domestic violence and gender-based violence. Service providers discussed prominent challenges they face as well as those experienced by their clients. Recommendations put forward during this meeting were considered and included in the National Strategy on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence 2023 – 2028.



*Hon Buttigieg, Commissioner Pace Gasan, Prof Carmen Sammut and students from the Equity Office*

### 6.4 Meeting with the Equity Office

During the 16 Days of Activism 2023, the Equity Office within the University of Malta coordinated a meeting with the Parliamentary Secretary for Reforms and Equality, Hon. Rebecca Buttigieg, and Commissioner Samantha Pace Gasan. Prof. Carmen Sammut, the Pro-Rector for Student & Staff Affairs and Outreach at the University of Malta, and University student-representatives presented initiatives and ideas related to gender-based violence and domestic violence which were proposed by University students, specifically to promote safety on and around campus.



*Hon Buttigieg, Commissioner Pace Gasan, Prof Carmen Sammut and representatives of student organisations*

## 7. Training for professionals

The Commission held a training needs analysis exercise with the members of the IMC in January to plan training initiatives for 2023. The stakeholders commended the organisation and relevance of the multi-agency training delivered throughout 2022 and put forth proposals of additional topics which could potentially be included in the programme. The provision of training for various professionals working in the field of gender-based violence and domestic violence was one of the Commission's budget measures for 2023. Thus, throughout the year, the Commission designed and delivered several training programmes for professionals.

### **7.1 Multi-agency training on gender-based violence and domestic violence**

In 2023, the Commission coordinated the delivery of four rounds of multi-agency training for frontline professionals. These were held in March, May, October and November at The Academy for Disciplined Forces, Ta' Kandja and The Meeting Place, Marsa. Each training round was extended to three days in accordance with the feedback provided by the IMC during the training needs analysis. The Commission invited several experts in the

sector to contribute towards this training programme and the topics addressed included the Istanbul Convention, the national legislative framework on gender-based violence and domestic violence, psychological aspects of gender-based violence and domestic violence, working with clients experiencing trauma, working with perpetrators of violence, persons with disability in situations of domestic violence, experiences of the LGBTIQ+ community in relation to gender-based violence and domestic violence and understanding parental alienation in the context of complex marital separations.

Participants who attended the training included professionals from the following ministries, entities, agencies, departments and organisations: the GBDV Unit within the Malta Police Force, the Foundation for Social Welfare Services and its Gozo Branch, the Ministry for Health, the National School Support Services, the Department of Probation and Parole, Legal Aid Malta, Victim Support Agency, the Human Rights Directorate and non-governmental organisations. A total of 122 professionals participated in the four rounds of training.



*Mr Karl Grech delivering a training session*



*Dr Desiree Attard delivering a training session*



*Prof Marceline Naudi delivering a training session*



*Dr Claire Azzopardi Lane delivering a training session*

## **7.2 Training for journalists**

Throughout April and May, the Commission oversaw the delivery of training for media journalists working with the Public Broadcasting Services (PBS) on the ethical and intelligent reporting of cases of gender-based violence and domestic violence. The aim was to sensitise journalists on the impact of gender-based violence and domestic violence, address the root causes and provide ethical considerations and an understanding of the existing guidelines on the reporting of such cases.

The sessions were led by Prof. Marceline Naudi and Dr Lara Dimitrijevic at the PBS premises. Topics addressed included understanding violence against women, domestic violence and gender-based violence and the subsequent effects and consequences and ethical considerations as well as understanding existing guidelines on reporting gender-based violence and domestic violence. The sessions were planned around the teams' shifts so that all journalists could participate in this training programme.





*Commissioner Friggieri, Dr Dimitrijevic & Prof Naudi with PBS journalists*

### **7.3 Training for members of the judiciary**

On 26 May, the Commission collaborated with the Judicial Studies Committee on the organisation of a one-day seminar for the members of the judiciary. The seminar was held at the Mediterranean Conference Centre, Valletta, and focused on the dynamics of domestic violence, understanding and working with perpetrators of domestic violence, how children experience domestic violence and legal issues related to female genital mutilation and child marriage.

The Commission engaged the following experts on these topics to deliver the training: Ms Maria Mangion, professionals working within the perpetrator programmes offered by the Foundation for Social Welfare Services, Dr Clarissa Sammut Scerri, Dr Jeanise Dalli and Dr Ruth Farrugia.

### **7.4 COPE sessions with educators**

The Commission was invited to deliver two COPE sessions for educators entitled 'Self-Awareness for Educators on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence'. The session on 10 May was held at Pembroke Primary School and a total of 20 professionals participated. Another session was held on 10 November with 40 educators from Tarxien Primary School. Both sessions were led by representatives from Victim Support Malta.

### **7.5 Information sessions for Heads of Schools**

The Commission delivered an information talk to the Heads of Schools of St Benedict's College during a Council of Heads meeting on 20 April. The Commission engaged professionals from the GBDV Unit within the Malta Police Force and Domestic Violence Services within Aġenzija Appoġġ to provide an overview of their services.



*Commissioner Friggieri at the Heads of Schools' information session*



*PS Cuschieri at the Heads of Schools' information session*



*Ms Agius Mercieca & Ms Block at the Heads of Schools' information session*

### **7.6 Information session with MCAST media students**

On 26 April, the Commission delivered an information session for creative media production and journalism students within the Institute for the Creative Arts at MCAST Mosta Campus.

During this presentation, the students were informed about the essential role of the media in informing and influencing the public about gender-based violence and domestic violence. Reference was also made to recommended practices for journalists reporting cases of gender-based violence and domestic violence. For this reason, the reporting guidelines published by the Commission in 2018 were presented during this session to address common misconceptions about coverage related to domestic violence and gender-based violence cases.



*Information session with creative media production and journalism students at MCAST*

### **7.7 Information session with FSWS Gozo Branch**

On 9 March, the Commission was invited by Mons Joe Vella Gauci, the Operations Director for FSWS Gozo Branch, to deliver an information session with professionals working in the field of social work. This session delved into the dynamics of domestic violence and gender-based violence and informed professionals about the works and initiatives of the Commission.



*Information session with professionals from FSWS Gozo Branch*



*Information session with professionals from FSWS Gozo Branch*

### **7.8 Information session with Prisms Malta**

Commissioner Pace Gasan presented an information session for Prisms Malta, an NGO working with youths, on 5 October. This session was conducted as part of ASSETT, an EU-funded project by Prisms Malta. In this discussion, Commissioner Pace Gasan informed young adults from countries such as Spain and Portugal about the functions of the Commission and explored the topics of domestic violence and gender-based violence.



*Information session with Prisms Malta*

### **7.9 Information session with Men Against Violence**

On 1 December, Commissioner Pace Gasan was invited to deliver a presentation with Men Against Violence as part of an Erasmus+ project titled, 'Gender Equality Learning & Capacity Building'. In this session, attendees learned more about domestic violence and gender-based violence and the Commissioner also presented information on the third National Strategy on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (2023 – 2028) to generate a discussion on prioritising action to combat domestic violence and gender-based violence.

## 8. Community awareness

### 8.1 Award ceremony for creative writing and drawing competition 2022-2023

During the 16 Days of Activism campaign of 2022, the Commission implemented a creative competition for students in primary and secondary state and church schools across Malta and Gozo. To celebrate the students' achievement, the Parliamentary Secretariat for Reforms and Equality and the Commission organised an award ceremony at Saint James Cavalier, Valletta to congratulate the winners and runners-up of the creative writing and drawing competition. The event was held on 15 May 2023.

This initiative provided an opportunity for students to showcase their creative skills through their own drawings, poetry and compositions by expressing their ideas, emotions and thoughts on respectful relationships in line with the themes selected for the competition, which were: 'Love is...' (L-imħabba hija...'), 'True friends have each other's back' (Il-ħbieb ta' veru jkunu hemm għal xulxin')

and 'Treat others the way you want to be treated!' (Ġib ruħek ma' ħaddieħor kif tixtieq li ħaddieħor iġib ruħu miegħek!').

A booklet commemorating the students' work was launched and disseminated during the award ceremony amongst the students, the students' guardians and caregivers, and representatives from the students' schools.

### 8.2 Awareness-raising with MCAST students

The Institute for the Creative Arts within MCAST invited Commissioner Audrey Friggieri to sit with creative media production and journalism students to conduct and record a live podcast titled, 'In Conversation with: Audrey Friggieri'. In this discussion, the students asked questions relating to domestic violence and gender-based violence, mainly concerning the various forms of abuse and the process of reporting and seeking assistance following experiences of domestic violence and gender-based violence.



Booklet containing the students' entries



*Podcast with creative media production and journalism students*

### 8.3 'Aqla' Kjass'

On 8 May, the Parliamentary Secretary for Reforms and Equality, Hon. Rebecca Buttigieg and Commissioner Audrey Friggieri met with Ms Clare Azzopardi and Mr Chris Gruppeta who published a book titled, 'Aqla' Kjass', a Maltese adapted version of the Italian graphic novel 'Fai Rumore'. Designed primarily for adolescents, this comic book entails nine short stories with different illustrations depicting the realities and experiences of teenagers with gender-based violence. In this meeting, the discussion centred on how the stories in this book could contribute to foster a collective understanding of gender-based violence, particularly among young adults, and to break down the stigma associated with experiences of gender-based violence. 'Aqla' Kjass' was endorsed by the Commission and it was disseminated among students during the KSU Freshers' Week 2023 at the University of Malta.



Hon. Rebecca Buttigieg, Commissioner Audrey Friggieri discussing 'Aqla' Kjass' with Ms Claire Azzopardi and Mr Chris Gruppeta

### 8.4 Awareness-raising for EuroPride Valletta 2023

#### 8.4.1 Awareness-raising stand

To promote awareness on gender-based violence and domestic violence during EuroPride Valletta 2023, the Commission participated in an awareness-raising stand, set up by the Parliamentary Secretariat for Reforms and Equality, at The Pride Village in Pjazza Tritoni, Valletta.

The main objective was to disseminate informational material particularly, leaflets about gender-based violence and domestic violence and business cards containing the support services' contact details. Through this initiative, many individuals stepped forward to share their experiences and learn more about gender stereotypes, gender-based violence, domestic violence and support services.



'Aqla' Kjass' comic book



Awareness-raising stand at The Pride Village, Valletta

#### 8.4.2 'Family violence against persons from the LGBTIQ+ community' panel discussion

On 12 September, the Commission hosted a community discussion at The Pride Village in Pjazza Tritoni, Valletta, titled, 'Family violence against persons from the LGBTIQ+ community'.

The focus of this discussion revolved around abusive experiences that persons within the LGBTIQ+ community may encounter with their family members due to their gender identity and/or sexual orientation. The discussion also addressed experiences related to same-sex intimate partner violence and the support services available for victims experiencing these forms of violence. Throughout this discussion, the intersectional elements of gender-

based and domestic violence experiences were explored to address and grasp the realities of such experiences whilst formulating recommendations for policy development.

Commissioner Samantha Pace Gasan moderated the panel which consisted of Ms Renee Laiviera, Commissioner for the Promotion of Equality; Dr Claire Azzopardi Lane, Deputy Dean and academic from the Faculty for Social Wellbeing within the University of Malta; Dr Denise Frendo from the Victim Support Agency, Ms Beverly Abela Gatt from Rainbow Support Services, MGRM and Ms Colette Farrugia Bennett from the Domestic Violence Services within Aġenzija Appoġġ.



Panel discussion on family violence and intimate partner violence experienced by LGBTIQ+ individuals

### 8.4.3 'The fear of coming out and same-sex intimate partner violence' article

Following the community discussion on family violence due to gender-identity and/or sexual orientation and same-sex intimate partner violence, the Commission published an article to delve deeper into these forms of violence and to encourage LGBTIQ+ persons experiencing maltreatment and abuse from their family members and/or partners to seek professional support. This article was published in 'FIRST Magazine' published with the Malta Independent Sunday newspaper.

## PRIDE AWARENESS

One of the myths surrounding the LGBTIQ+ community is that intimate partner violence is not a common issue for LGBTIQ+ couples, however, the prevalence rate of abuse in same-sex relationships is as high as the rates experienced by heterosexual couples. This in fact reflects on the individuals' experiences of reporting, as they fear that they would not be believed or ridiculed.

## THE FEAR OF COMING OUT & SAME-SEX INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

*LGBTIQ+ people are at a great risk of experiencing gender-based violence and domestic violence especially when considering that binary gender stereotypes and norms are still prevalent in our society writes Samantha Pace Gasan, Commissioner for Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence. To address these issues, the Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence hosted a community discussion during Euro Pride Valletta 2023. The discussion was moderated by the Commissioner on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence, Ms Samantha Pace Gasan; and the panel involved professionals who are experts in the field: Ms Renee Laiviera, Commissioner for the Promotion of Equality; Dr Claire Azzopardi Lane, Deputy Dean within the Department for Gender Studies & Sexuality at the Faculty for Social Wellbeing at the University of Malta; Ms Colette Farrugia Bennett, Service Manager at the Domestic Violence Services Unit within Aġenzija Appoġġ; Ms Beverley Abela Gatt, Social worker within the Rainbow Support Services; and Dr Denise Frendo, Lawyer at Victim Support Agency.*

One of the myths surrounding the LGBTIQ+ community is that intimate partner violence is not a common issue for LGBTIQ+ couples, however, the prevalence rate of abuse in same-sex relationships is as high as the rates experienced by heterosexual couples. This in fact reflects on the individuals' experiences of reporting, as they fear that they would not be believed or ridiculed.

Understanding that violence and abuse within any domestic environment manifests itself due to dynamics of power and control, where one individual exerts their power over another to be able to control them, is essential. There are different forms of abuse, including emotional and psychological violence through intimidation and insults, or in the form of economic violence where one person controls the earnings of the other person. Rape, sexual harassment, or forcing someone to watch pornography are also abusive acts which can take place in any relationship.

LGBTIQ+ individuals, especially youths, may encounter neglect and hostility in their families when coming out. Such non-acceptance may result in abusive behaviours such as threats, blackmail, insults, physical violence, or forcing the person to leave the family house because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or sex characteristics.

Recently, a survey with LGBTIQ+ individuals in the UK conducted by Galop in 2022, showcased that 29% of LGBTIQ+ respondents experienced abuse from their family members. 60% of these respondents felt that their LGBTIQ+ identity was the main reason or part of the reason for the abuse they had experienced in their families. 63% of the respondents were under the age of 18 when they first experienced family violence.

Challenges brought about because of one's intersecting identities, such as having a disability and being a member of the LGBTIQ+ community were raised during the discussion. Primarily, there is a widespread misconception that persons with a disability are asexual. While this is not the case, there are also persons with disability who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans, intersex or queer. Dependence on family members for personal care may also hinder one's opportunities to live freely, possibly enduring more denial of their sexuality.

Additionally, a survey conducted by LGBTI+ Gozo also found that 64% of Gozitans find it difficult to be open in Gozo, mainly due to a lack of societal and family support. This also highlights the importance of working within different communities, especially those where one struggles to express themselves freely.

Addressing the core issues of an underlying fear of the unknown both from the LGBTIQ+ community and their loved ones, having more mainstream visibility and educational efforts that address the shame surrounding diversity in sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression; as well as shame surrounding violence and abuse are few of the approaches that need to continue to be undertaken by different stakeholders and society at large.

The provision of support services, and their outreach is also necessary. Drachma helps and support parents of LGBTIQ+ individuals in this process of understanding their children's gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics and sexual orientation. Aġenzija Appoġġ and Rainbow Support Services provide social work services, whereas Victim Support Agency provides legal and psychological support. Other NGOs, such as those providing shelter in cases of emergency are also fundamental to addressing imminent situations of violence. ■

To reach out for support, please contact 179 or 116006.



Article on First Magazine on family violence and intimate-partner violence experienced by LGBTIQ+ individuals



## 8.5 Awareness-raising at the KSU Freshers' Week 2023

During the KSU Freshers' Week 2023, the Commission set up an awareness-raising stand at the University of Malta to raise awareness on domestic violence and gender-based violence with new and continuing students at the University of Malta.

In the first week of the scholastic year, the Commission distributed informative leaflets on gender-stereotypes, domestic violence and gender-based violence, business cards with contact details of support services together with promotional material related to gender-based violence and domestic violence. Throughout the week, the Commission team shared information about the roles and functions of the Commission, the different forms of violence and the support services available for victims of gender-based violence and domestic violence.



Informational and promotional material for students



The awareness-raising stand for the KSU Freshers' Week 2023

## 8.6 Social media

### 8.6.1 Women's Day

In order to inaugurate the International Women's Day, the Commission designed and published a set of posters on social media to convey information related to Women's Day throughout the week leading up to Women's Day on 8 March.

# DID YOU KNOW?



International Women's Day was born on March 8, 1908 when 15,000 women marched through the streets of New York City to demand shorter hours, better pay, and the right to vote.

INTERNATIONAL  
Women's Day  
8th March



# DID YOU KNOW?



Every year an estimated 12 million girls are married before the age of 18

Source: United Nations

INTERNATIONAL  
Women's Day  
8th March



# DID YOU KNOW?



There are only 26 women serving as heads of state or government out of Earth's 195 countries, as of September 2021.

INTERNATIONAL  
Women's Day  
8th March



# DID YOU KNOW?

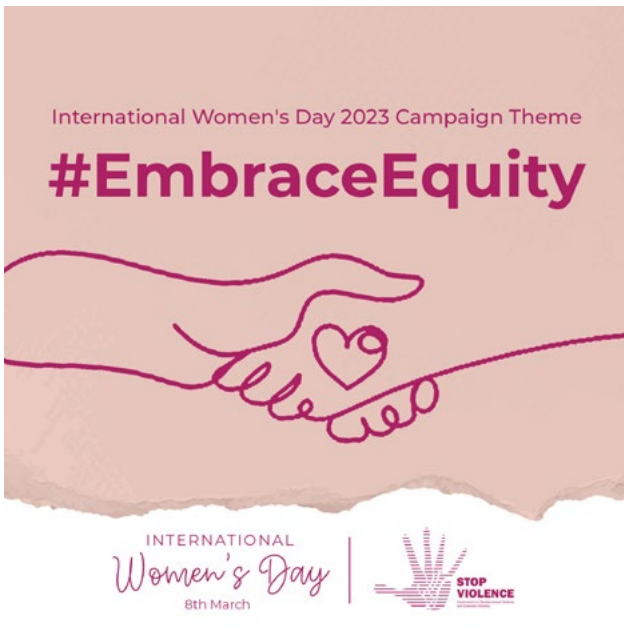


Ada Lovelace was the first person to recognize the full potential of a computing machine, i.e., a computer. She was one of the first computer programmers in the world.

INTERNATIONAL  
Women's Day  
8th March

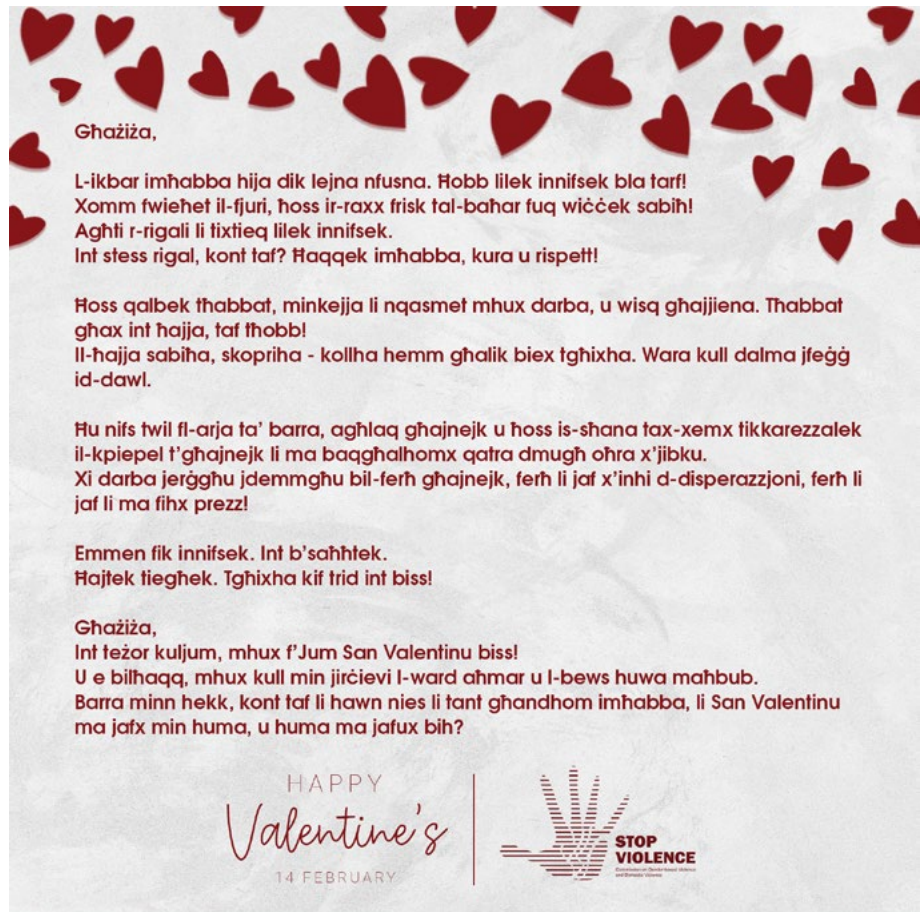


Posters for Women's Day



Posters for Women's Day

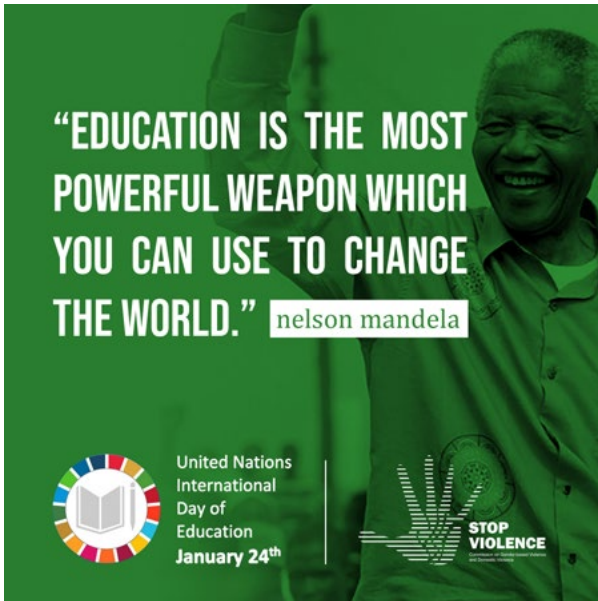
**8.6.2 Valentine's Day**  
 For Valentine's Day, the Commission took the opportunity to encourage persons in abusive relationships to seek professional assistance through an empowering poem dedicated to victims of gender-based violence and domestic violence. This poem was shared on the Commission's social media platforms.



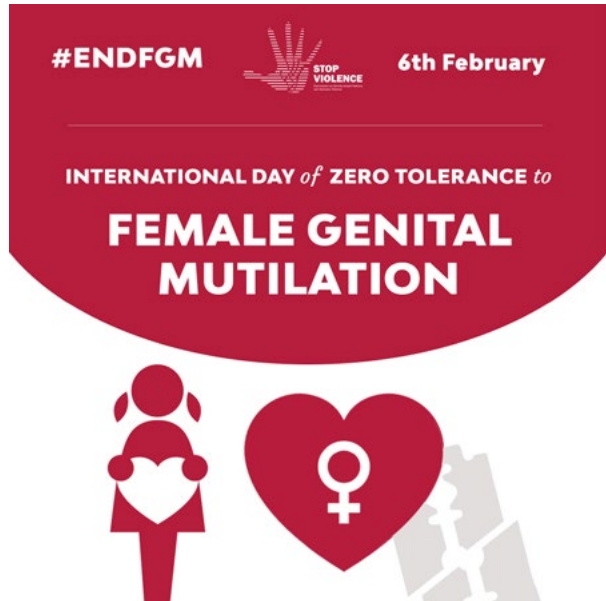
Poem for Valentine's Day

### 8.6.3 International Days

Throughout the year, the Commission shared numerous posters on its social media platforms to commemorate various international days designated by the United Nations.



24th January 2023: World Education Day



6th February 2023: International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation



14th February 2023: Valentine's Day



8th March 2023: International Women's Day

# International Day Against **Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia**



17th May 2023: International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia



INTERNATIONAL DAY  
OF INNOCENT CHILDREN VICTIMS  
OF AGGRESSION



4th June 2023: International Day of  
Innocent Children Victims of Aggression



UNITED NATIONS  
International Observance



15th June 2023: International  
Day for Elder Abuse



19th June 2023: International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict



30th July 2023: International Day against Human Trafficking



11th October 2023: International Day of the Girl Child

# 8.7 News articles

In 2023, the Commission penned and published several articles in local newspapers and online news portals. These articles reflected the role of the Commission in informing the public about several forms of gender-based violence and domestic violence and the Commission's ongoing initiatives throughout the year.

**Which victim, which survivor? Why the difference matters**  
Audrey Friggieri

...ence in the perceived meanings of the labels 'victim' and 'survivor'. Research findings indicate that women who were portrayed as survivors of domestic violence tended to be blamed less than those described as 'victims'.

**TALKING POINT**  
Labels are reduction because they are intended to improve order so that which is severe or deadly, and being generic, they serve to deflect attention from people's complex realities. The themes of domestic violence and gender-based violence very often implicate the use of the words 'victim' and 'survivor'. The subsequent arguments and discourses tend to ignore the fact that these women are 'victims' or 'survivors', although sharing experiences that may seem similar in different situations and circumstances. The term 'victim' evokes the abused person as trapped, whereas 'survivors' choose to see as agents. One of the central advantages of using the victim concept is the quality of innocence, and the fact that 'real' victims are completely annihilated in their victimhood. On the other hand, victimhood implies weakness, vulnerability and lack of agency. These meanings may impact the self-perception of individuals who have experienced domestic violence. For example, for a woman who realises herself from the victim perspective, the experience of sexual violence becomes the one arching episode in her life and can influence and control her self-esteem.

On the contrary, the term 'survivor' evokes the image of strength and resilience, but may also serve to diminish and ignore the suffering and hardship that may be going through perhaps a bit like calling someone...

Article on Times of Malta, 7 February 2023

**Il-vjolenza domestika, l-abbuzz abbaži tal-ġeneru, u r-rwol tal-edukazzjoni għall-bidla kulturali**  
Audrey Friggieri

Il-vjolenza domestika u l-abbuzz abbaži tal-ġeneru jidheru b'forma ta' abbuż u vjolenza domestika, u jidheru b'forma ta' abbuż u vjolenza domestika, u jidheru b'forma ta' abbuż u vjolenza domestika...

Article on Illum, 5 March 2023

**The devil is in the details: Microaggressions and their impact**  
Audrey Friggieri

...are there staring us in the face. In practice they are ignored until an outburst was a reference to the Energy Taxation Directive which aims tomorrow. This keeps piling up the negative environmental impacts. It will undoubtedly be painful. This is inevitable as it has been de-

...fect historical male dominance in society. Its uncritical usage routinely by all genders in daily life has in turn naturalized male dominance and associated sexist inequalities (Spender, 1998). Similar other examples are racist (Reisigl & Wodak, 2005) and ageist (Ryan et al., 1995) language styles. The same may be said of Maltese (Farrugia, 2020), and many other languages. A charismatic wielder of language may, by the sheer force of oratory, buoy up people's hopes, convert their hearts from hatred to forgiveness, or embolden them to rise up against injustice. One may recall Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream', for example. In general, people may know about the meaning of empathy and respect. These 'social skills' are taught in schools, specifically via the subject of PSKD, a subject that is not considered 'core', and for which there is no formal exam in our system that holds high performance in examinations as the marker for 'achievement' and 'success'. Empathy and interpersonal skills may be intangible, but they play a vital role in ensuring that we thrive in all aspects of our life. At the workplace, even the...

Article on The Malta Independent, 9 April 2023

"Tibzghux tersqu 'l quddiem"



Minn Nibrayl Grech November 28, 2023



"Inheggu sabiex l-individwi jersqu 'l quddiem meta jkunu qeghdin jesperjenz vjolenza, imma wkoll sabiex l-persuni ta' madwarhom joholqu spazju sigur u il-konverzazzjoni xierqa meta jissuspettaw li xi hadd qrib taghhom qed jespe vjolenza. Bhala soċjetà wkoll irridu nkissru s-silenzju billi niddiskutu b'mod lil matur l-impatt li jhalla l-inugwaljanzi u l-vjolenza domestika fuq l-individwi, l-familji u fuq is-soċjetà b'mod generall".

Dan kien il-kumment li tat lil dan is-sit il-Kummissarju dwar il-Vjolenza Abba. Generu u l-vjolenza domestika Samantha Pace Gasan, b'rabta mal-kampanji tnediet fit tal-jem ilu dwar is-16-il jum ta' attivizmu b'kuxjenza dwar il-vjolenti domestika bit-tema 'Beat the Silence'.

Pace Gasan sahqet li dawn is-sittax-il jum ta' attivizmu kontra l-vjolenza aba generu u l-vjolenza domestika huma avveniment annwali fuq livell internazzj sabiex fis-soċjetà titqajjem iktar l-għarfien dwar din l-ifsida soċjali u ekonom

Article on Talk.mt, 28 November 2023

# 'I know why women don't walk out': violence commissioner opens up

Samantha Pace Gasan shares her own experience of abuse

National Domestic Violence Disability Health

14 December 2023 | Claudia Calleja | 18

5 min read



Article on Times of Malta, 14 December 2023

## 'UNITE. ENGAGE. ELEVATE.' Malta's Third National Strategy on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (2023 – 2028)

The Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence, within the Ministry for Home Affairs, Security, Reforms and Equality, and the Parliamentary Secretariat for Reforms and Equality, has launched Malta's third National Strategy on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (2023 – 2028), entitled 'UNITE. ENGAGE. ELEVATE.'. It includes 23 measures and 81 action plans which are based on the four pillars of the Istanbul Convention; prevention, protection and support, prosecution and integrated policies.

The Strategy aims to strengthen the continuous and collective commitments among all stakeholders, to implement and carry out coordinated efforts both on a national level and an international level. Some of these include; reforms in legislation on the definitions of the Domestic and Family Unit, the analysis of legal proceedings and systems to address the various barriers people encounter when reporting domestic violence and gender-based violence, particularly those experienced by minority groups, such as LGBTQ+ persons, migrant communities and people with disabilities.

Each of us has heard a story or lived a reality where alimony is not paid without threats or inconveniences. This leaves the victim and their children at a greater risk-of-poverty. It is therefore a priority laid in this strategy to explore good practices of measures to protect



Domestic Violence Commissioner Samantha Pace Gasan (left) and Rebecca Buttigieg, Parliamentary Secretary for Reforms and Equality.

victims and children with regards to alimony and parental alienation; and eliminate the added stresses on victims as well as their children.

Actions of abuse and violence are unacceptable but concluding that all perpetrators are bad people is not the solution to this social issue. The cycle of violence can also lead to the development of children into perpetrators. Highlighting the impact of childhood experiences with violence and the importance of working with perpetrators, the Strategy targets rehabilitative perpetrator programmes for further prevention and support to these individuals, while protecting victims and survivors through monitoring of perpetrators from working with sup-

port and protection services for gender-based violence.

Training, access to information, awareness-raising and strengthening of protection and support are also priority areas. Awareness-raising will be conducted through a more targeted approach when it comes to specific information that addresses the realities and risks of these specific minority groups and their intersecting identities. Posters with access to information on services to continue onto Beat the Silence will be distributed throughout Malta and Gozo in the coming weeks. Additionally, the Commission will revise and widen the scope of its Multi-Agency Training in order to reach more

professions and equip them with more skills to prevent re-victimisation.

Protection and prosecution will be strengthened. Whether through the St. Lucia Hub, electronic tagging, panic alarms or through better legislation and enforcement mechanisms, the Commission through its coordinative and monitoring role will be the driving force to see that through this newly introduced Strategy, individuals and families feel safer and more protected in cases of gender-based violence and domestic violence. The Third National Strategy on Gender-Based Violence & Domestic Violence (2023-2028) is available online on <https://www.stopviolence.gov.mt/publications/>.

Article on Times of Malta, 3 December 2023



## 8.8 Discussions on television and radio

Throughout 2023, the Commission was invited on various television and radio programmes to spread awareness and information about the remits and initiatives of the Commission and gender-based violence and domestic violence. Amongst other appearances and interventions on television and radio programmes, the Commission was invited to:



One TV, 20 February 2023



One TV, 28 April 2023



Campus FM, 17 May 2023



Radju Malta, 27 November 2023

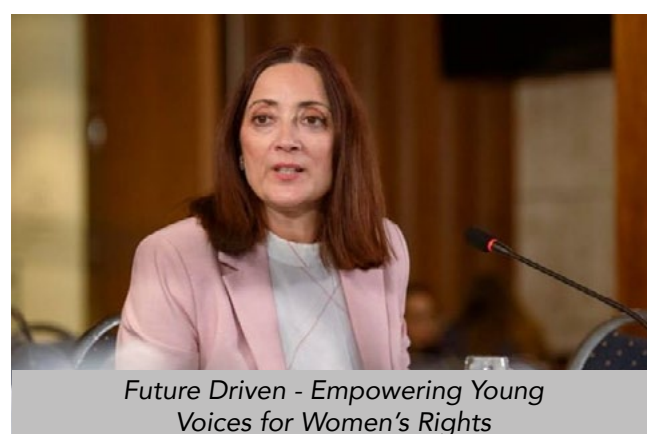
## 8.9 Participation in local and international conferences

In 2023, the Commission participated in numerous conferences organised at both local and international levels.

**Table 5. Participation in local and international conferences**

Name	Date	Organisation
<b>Economic Perspectives on Gender-Based Violence - Paving Paths to Prevention</b>	1 February	Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union
<b>A gender equality economy in a society free from gender-based violence</b>	23 February	Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union
<b>High Level Political Meeting for Gender Equality: 'A Gender Equal Economy in a Society Free from Gender-Based Violence'</b>	27-28 February	Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union
<b>Future Driven - Empowering Young Voices for Women's Rights</b>	5 March	Consultative Council for Women's Rights
<b>Mutual Learning Seminar on Combatting Domestic Violence</b>	26-27 April	OBS Consulting o.b.o Romania
<b>Combating Violence against Women - The Role of Men and Boys</b>	5 May	Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade, the Permanent Representation of Malta to the Council of Europe in collaboration with the House of Representatives
<b>14th Meeting of the Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention</b>	1 June	Council of Europe
<b>40th Management Board Meeting and the Management Board Strategic Foresight Planning Session</b>	14-16 June	European Institute for Gender Equality

<b>National Expert Group on Sustainable Development Indicators: TF on the Indicators for SDG 5</b>	18 September	National Statistics Office
<b>International Conference on the Prostitution System: 'Listening to Survivors and Understanding the Legislative Approaches'</b>	20 September	Coalition for the Abolition of Prostitution
<b>Experts' Consultation Meeting on Research and Development of Indicators on Cyber Violence against Women and Girls</b>	27 September	European Institute for Gender Equality
<b>Training on Danger Assessment Risk Assessment Tool</b>	11 October	Foundation for Social Welfare Services
<b>JHA Counsellors (+experts) (COPEN – Proposal Violence against Women) Meeting</b>	13 October	Council of the European Union
<b>Empowering Change – Investing in Prevention</b>	29 November	Equity Office within the University of Malta
<b>Break the Cycle, Be the Change</b>	30 November	Foundation for Social Welfare Services
<b>Jien mill-Ġdid</b>	30 November	Victim Support Agency
<b>Violence and Gender-Based Violence as a Social Problem: A View from Spain</b>	1 December	Department of Gender and Sexualities within the University of Malta, sponsored by the Embassy of Spain in Malta





*Combating Violence against Women - The Role of Men and Boys*



*Empowering Change – Investing in Prevention*

## 9. 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

### 9.1 'Beat the Silence'

The Commission actively participates in the annual international 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign, which is conducted on a national scale. This campaign commences on 25 November, recognized as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and concludes on 10 December, observed as the International Human Rights Day. It serves as a call to action to prevent and eliminate violence targeting women and girls.

Throughout this campaign, the Commission extends invitations to government stakeholders, non-governmental organizations, and community groups, among others, to collaborate in raising awareness about gender-based violence and domestic abuse through joint initiatives and activities. In the year 2023, the Commission's selected theme for the 16 Days of Activism campaign was 'Beat The Silence / Negħlbu s-Silenzju'.



*16 Days of Activism campaign branding*

### 9.1.1 Press launch

The commencement of the 16 Days of Activism campaign was initiated by Hon. Rebecca Buttigieg, Commissioner Samantha Pace Gasan, and Dr Lydia Abela on 24 November during a press launch which was streamed live as well as open to the media journalists.

Within this press launch, Dr Abela stressed the importance of continuous awareness and support for victims whereas the Parliamentary Secretary Hon. Rebecca Buttigieg highlighted the campaign's

broader scope, aiming to involve family, friends, and colleagues in combatting violence. They emphasised ongoing government and societal efforts, including a five-year strategy plan. Commissioner Pace Gasan additionally outlined diverse initiatives targeting different social groups to raise awareness. The campaign encourages victims to seek help and aims to dismantle the silence surrounding gender-based and domestic violence through collective activism and support.



*Press launch of 16 Days of Activism - Commissioner Samantha Pace Gasan*



*Press launch of 16 Days of Activism - Dr Lydia Abela*



*Press launch of 16 Days of Activism - Hon. Rebecca Buttigieg*

## 9.2 Awareness-raising initiatives

### 9.2.1 Social media campaign

The Commission conducted a dynamic social media campaign featuring videos from a previous EuroPride event, discussions on disability, and a healthy relationship campaign with stakeholders. Regular updates were posted on Facebook and Instagram, showcasing the Commission's latest activities aimed at raising awareness. The campaign aimed to engage audiences by sharing informative and thought-provoking content on important topics such as LGBTQ+ rights, disability inclusion, and promoting healthy relationships. Through these efforts, the Commission sought to foster dialogue, educate, and advocate for social change within the community.

#### 9.2.1.1 EuroPride discussion videos

Brief excerpts from a panel discussion conducted during EuroPride 2023 were disseminated across our social media channels with the aim of increasing awareness regarding family violence and intimate partner violence encountered by individuals within the LGBTIQ+ community, often stemming from entrenched gender stereotypes and norms.



*EuroPride discussion videos*

#### 9.2.1.2 Disability videos

The 'My Disability Does Not Mean Consent for Abuse' campaign was undertaken in partnership with the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability in 2021. For the 16 Days of Activism 2023, the Commission re-shared four videos focusing on candid conversations regarding the experiences of individuals with disabilities

in relation to domestic and gender-based violence. Such initiative also shed light on the heightened vulnerability of people with disabilities to such forms of violence.



*One of the videos from the 'My Disability does not Mean Consent for Abuse' campaign*

#### 9.2.1.3 Healthy relationships campaign

A collaborative healthy relationships campaign was developed in partnership with the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality and the Commission for Children. The campaign aims to illustrate the essence of healthy relationships within various contexts including home, workplace, and educational settings. This initiative underscores the collective commitment among diverse social institutions to combat all forms of abuse prevalent in our society.

Healthy relationships  
thrive in homes  
**FREE**  
from  
violence.







### 9.3 Activities

#### 9.3.1 Launch of the third National Strategy on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (2023-2028)

The Commission launched Malta's Third National Strategy on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (2023-2028): 'UNITE. ENGAGE. ELEVATE.'. This five-year strategy includes measures around awareness campaigns, education enhancement, and professional training,

aiming to address complexities, safeguard rights, and reduce revictimisation. It builds on previous efforts of the Commission and also aligns with the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). It emphasises prevention, protection, prosecution, and policy coordination, involving various stakeholders and social partners.



### 9.3.2 Ambassador's conference

The Commission, in collaboration with the Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade, convened the 'Beat the Silence' conference on 4 December. This gathering united Honorary Consuls and Ambassadors from diverse nations for an insightful discourse on the professional support services available for individuals within migrant and expatriate communities affected by violence. The conference

prioritised the exploration of outreach strategies aimed at engaging hard-to-reach social groups, emphasising the critical role of empowering victims' support networks to speak out against abuse. Distinguished attendees included Dr Lydia Abela, Hon. Helena Dalli, and Hon. Rebecca Buttigieg, with a video message from Hon. Ian Borg. Additionally, a panel discussion addressed the challenges faced by various services and organisations in addressing the topic.



Ambassador's conference

### 9.3.3 Sports campaign

A sports campaign was launched with the aim of raising awareness among sports supporters to join the fight against gender-based violence and domestic violence. Through an awareness-raising video and in matches, male and female

athletes promoted this year's 16 Days of Activism campaign with a 'Beat the Silence' banner. This campaign was carried out in collaboration with the Malta Football Association, the Aquatic Sports Association, and the Regatta clubs of Bormla and Birgu.



Footballers promoting the 'Beat the Silence' banner

### 9.3.4 Collection of services

The Commission's website<sup>4</sup> now includes a comprehensive collection of support services. This enhancement provides the public with easy access to information regarding resources available for addressing gender-based violence and

domestic violence. Furthermore, the Commission developed a set of posters featuring a QR code for people to scan and access the collection of services on the Commission's website. These posters were shared online and in supermarkets, clinics, restaurants, bars, local councils, etc.



<sup>4</sup>Located at <https://www.stopviolence.gov.mt/directory/>.

### 9.3.5 Lighting of public buildings

The lights of Castille, the Triton Fountain, and the Malta National Park were illuminated in orange over the weekend of 24 November as part of an initiative to raise awareness for the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence. The purpose was to encourage

individuals experiencing violence to seek professional assistance and to advocate for the prevention of abuse. This campaign was conducted in partnership with the Ministry for Public Works and Planning and the Office of the Prime Minister.



Lighting of public buildings - the Malta National Park



Lighting of public buildings - Castille



Lighting of public buildings - the Triton Fountain

## 9.4 Information talks

### 9.4.1 Sessions with the elderly

The Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence, in collaboration with Active Ageing and Community Care, organised two informative sessions specifically tailored to elderly individuals, addressing the pervasive issues of domestic abuse and gender-based violence. These talks encompassed a broad discussion on the nature and prevalence of abuse, emphasising that it can occur within any relationship and that abuse is abuse, regardless of the perpetrator's relationship

to the victim. One significant aspect highlighted during these sessions was the difficulty of reporting abuse perpetrated by a loved one, underscoring the complex emotions and dynamics involved in such situations. By acknowledging these challenges and providing a supportive space for discussion, the Commission aimed to empower elderly individuals to recognise and address abuse while emphasising the importance of seeking help and support when needed. These informative sessions were held at Marsaskala's Active Ageing Centre and Dingli's Active Ageing Centre.



*Information talks - sessions with the elderly*



#### 9.4.2 Sessions with the Ministry for Public Works and Planning

An insightful information session was delivered to employees at the Ministry for Public Works and Planning, delving into crucial themes surrounding abuse and domestic violence. The session comprehensively covered various forms of abuse, highlighting the importance of recognizing not only physical but also psychological and emotional abuse.

Attendees gained a deeper understanding of the cycle of violence, the complex dynamics of consent, and the victim-perpetrator cycle. Exploring the intricate relationship between anger and fear in both perpetrators and victims shed light on the underlying factors driving abusive behaviours. Emphasis was placed on establishing

and respecting boundaries to prevent abusive situations and combat victim shaming. Colleagues were equipped with the knowledge to identify red flags in relationships and understand psychological and emotional abuse strategies, enabling them to offer support to those in need.

Importantly, the session provided valuable insights into recognising symptoms of domestic violence in colleagues and fostering a supportive workplace environment. Attendees were informed about available support services, emphasising the importance of seeking help and offering assistance to those affected by domestic violence. Overall, the information session served as a crucial step in raising awareness and fostering a culture of support and understanding within the Ministry for Public Works and Planning.



*Session with the Ministry for Public Works and Planning*

## **9.5 Participation in the media**

### **9.5.1 Television and radio**

During the 16 Days of Activism campaign, Commissioner Samantha Pace Gasan actively participated in media engagements aimed at raising awareness about gender-based violence and domestic violence. Her involvement encompassed appearances on various television and radio programmes, strategically disseminating the campaign's message across diverse platforms.

Notably, Commissioner Pace Gasan featured prominently on programmes such as *Realtà*<sup>5</sup>. Additionally, her contributions extended to discussions on various segments on *Campus Brunch*, wherein she provided insightful perspectives intended to foster a discussion around this societal issue. Moreover, Commissioner Pace Gasan lent her expertise to radio programmes such as *Polz iċ-Ċittadin*, hosted by Tonio Bonello on *Radju Malta*, where she offered valuable insights on topics pertinent to the campaign's objectives. Her presence on shows like *Popolin* further bolstered the campaign's visibility and resonance, effectively reaching diverse audiences and stimulating substantive dialogues regarding

the mitigation of societal challenges. Through her adept utilisation of media platforms, Commissioner Pace Gasan effectively facilitated dialogue and increased awareness.

### **9.5.2 Newspaper articles**

The 16 Days of Activism campaign spearheaded by the Commission has generated significant media coverage, as can be seen by the numerous headlines in various newspaper articles.

These articles serve as platforms for discussing a range of initiatives and campaigns aimed at raising awareness about domestic violence and advocating for activism to tackle this pressing issue. Within these discussions, key topics were explored, including the impact of domestic violence on individuals and communities, ongoing efforts to support survivors, targeted campaigns focused on prevention and education, and the crucial role of community engagement in the fight against domestic violence.

Overall, the extensive coverage of the 16 Days of Activism campaign in newspaper articles serves to amplify the message, foster dialogue, and mobilise action within society.

**Table 6. List of published articles related to the campaign activities**

Article title	Date of publication	News portal
<b>Jibdew 16-il jum ta' attivizmu b'kuxjenza dwar il-vjolenza domestika</b>	November 24, 2023	One
<b>Lydia Abela spearheads 'Beat the Silence' domestic violence campaign</b>	November 24, 2023	Times of Malta
<b>16 days of domestic abuse awareness activism</b>	November 24, 2023	MaltaDaily
<b>BEAT THE SILENCE: Jibdew 16-il jum ta' attivizmu b'kuxjenza dwar il-vjolenza domestika</b>	November 24, 2023	Newsbook
<b>16 days of activism to raise awareness on domestic violence</b>	November 24, 2023	Malta Independent
<b>16 days of activism to raise awareness on domestic violence</b>	November 24, 2023	TVM news
<b>"Irridu negħlbu s-silenzju" – Lydia Abela</b>	November 26, 2023	One
<b>"Tibzghux tersqu 'l quddiem"</b>	November 28, 2023	Talk.mt
<b>'Unite. Engage. Elevate.' Malta's third national strategy on gender-based violence and domestic violence (2023 – 2028)</b>	December 3, 2023	Times of Malta

<sup>5</sup>Can be viewed via the link <https://tvmti.mt/episode/63110>



## 10. Financial overview

**Table 7. Commission's expenses in 2023 from Vote 6038, Vote 5246 and other line items**

<b>The table below indicates the Commission's expenses in 2023 from Vote 6038, Vote 5246 and other line items</b>	
<b>Capital Expenditure</b>	
Communication	€9,902.15
Office furniture and equipment	€6,267.30
<b>Total amount</b>	<b>€16,169.45</b>
<b>Corporate Running Costs</b>	
Rent and maintenance fees	€61,859.31
Salaries, allowances and social security contributions	€171,520.08
Local transport	€1,202.54
Travel abroad	€6,200.49
Annual subscriptions	€200.00
General expenses	€39,133.31
Recruitment expenses	€1,949.39
<b>Total amount</b>	<b>€282,065.12</b>
<b>Professional Services</b>	
Contracts for service	€12,518.66
IT development service	€4,206.70
<b>Total amount</b>	<b>€16,725.36</b>
<b>Awareness Raising Expenses</b>	
Education and training	€3,884.55
Awareness raising activities and promotional material	€62,668.09
<b>Total amount</b>	<b>€66,552.64</b>
<b>Other Expenses</b>	<b>€32,171.70</b>
<b>Total annual expenditure for 2023</b>	<b>€413,684.27</b>





