




The EU Mutual Learning Programme in Gender Equality

**The role of men and boys
in advancing gender
equality and breaking
gender stereotypes**
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Comments paper – Malta



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Challenging Gender Norms in Malta

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Abstract

Work with men and boys on achieving gender equality and/or prevention of sexual and gender based violence in Malta is patchy, without concentrated effort by the authorities. Most of the work consists of occasional project based campaigns and or standalone conferences/events. There is only one NGO dedicated to the issue and working in this particular field. Data gathering on gender inequality exists in some areas/fields but data for gender perceptions in the population at large does not exist, at least to our knowledge. There is plenty of policy debate and Maltese authorities have been very productive in producing laws and legislations in this direction, but the success and effect it had so far cannot be gauged.

1. Current situation in Malta regarding engaging men and boys

Currently, there is no structured, planned, state-wide prevention programme about male violence on women that is tackling it by engaging the male perspective, that is implemented in a cohesive and controlled manner. Most of the work is done on project basis, implemented by NGOs and/or by one of the governmental agencies.

For instance, the National Commission for Promotion of Equality ran a two-year long project 2016-2017 called *Equality Beyond Genders*, targeting boys post-secondary school students. It engaged over 900 boys in commenting and participating in the campaign¹. Similarly, the Commission for Gender Based and Domestic Violence ran two large scale EU funded projects (after the implementation of the Istanbul Convention) that included large scale training of professionals, police and social workers and also had an element of attempting to engage men and boys.²

Most recently, in March of 2022, The Commission for Gender Based and Domestic in collaboration with Men Against Violence NGO, violence held a conference for all the people working in the field locally, titled Engaging Men & Boys in Violence Prevention, which included intervention by foreign experts and debate on the topic.³

¹ National Commission For Promotion of Equality, [Annual Report 2017](#), p.40

² [Zero Tolerance: Full Cooperation](#)

³ [Engaging Men & Boys in Violence Prevention](#)

Apart from this, there was a pilot project on “[Safe Dates](#)” implemented in 4 schools in Malta, and the same commission organises annual training, on voluntary basis, for police, civil servants and medical professionals, where part of the sessions deals specifically with understanding gender norms (although it does not necessarily include engagement of men and boys).

Men Against Violence, a local NGO that is specifically created to tackle the issue, runs projects in schools and places of work, emphasising men’s and boys’ role in prevention and elimination of domestic and gender based violence and role of men in breaking and challenging traditional gender norms.

Overall, although there is awareness about the need to engage men and boys in breaking socially constructed gender norms and prejudices, there is no structured, comprehensive and holistic approach, nor a firm strategy in plan to implement anything similar at any level.

2. Data collection on Gender Norms in Malta

Malta relies, predominantly, on Eurobarometer and other international statistical agencies for data on Gender norms. To my knowledge, there is no data on gender perceptions in the wider population.

Last (2021) Eurobarometer data shows that:

- 49% of the Maltese women, compared to less than a third (31%) of Europeans want their representatives at the European parliament to prioritise the heightened work-life balance difficulties faced by women.
- 48% of the Maltese, compared to the European average of 41%, want MEPs to address the pay gap between men and women and its impact on career development.

The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality is tasked with researching the issues related to equality in the country and they sporadically publish their reports and findings.⁴

3. Policy and legislation

Malta fares well in terms of implementing various gender equality and Gender based violence laws. The Istanbul convention was transposed into Maltese [laws](#) in 2019. The [Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Act](#), protecting the rights of LGBTIQ community, was enacted in 2018.

⁴ Full list available on the [website](#)

Most recently, in 2022, Malta enacted the [Femicide law](#), the first country in EU to recognise Femicide as a distinct act in the EU.

Yet, in terms of implementation of policies and making these laws work, there is still a lot to be desired and NGOs and independent observers are still unsatisfied with patchy implementation and ineffective policies in place.⁵

4. Transferability

Practically all of the measures/projects described in Austria's Discussion paper could be easily transferable into Maltese settings, bare for few adjustments for the local cultural and historical settings. The Austrian approach seems to be multifaceted and trying to reach various settings where men could be reached and effective intervention applied, which is similar to what we, as an NGO, advocate too. As we notice in our recommendations, we believe that the educational system can be used as a vessel to target younger generations in a more comprehensive and holistic manner.

Similarly, we would like to see a tool like the Irish Spotlight exercised in Malta too and it could help create data driven policy on the issues that is sorely needed. That kind of data, to the extent that it exists, is fragmented and partial, not only in Malta but also elsewhere in Europe. So, furthermore, an argument could be made that similar type of research could be beneficial if implemented across the EU, because we can see the scope of having Member States gathering the data based on the same indicators for easier comparison purposes and sharing of best practices. A good example of how useful this could be can be seen in EIGE's effort to get Member States to collect [data on femicide](#) in similar and or/uniformed manner.

5. Recommendations

The long term solution, in our view lies in applying a more standardised approach to working with men and boys in primary prevention field. That long term effort, concentrated, planned, financed and properly executed across can create a drop in the rates of violence on women and create healthier, more gender equal and violence free societies.

This could be achieved by the following:

- Finance creation of a core group of experts from NGOs that have knowledge and experience in working with men and boys on gender equality and violence prevention together with experts from education ministries from EU countries.

⁵ <https://newsbook.com.mt/en/maltas-laws-do-not-fully-protect-women-report-finds/>

- The work of this group would result in a proposal of a general primary prevention programme that should/could be implemented in the educational systems across the EU.
- Experts would be made available to countries in order to adopt and adjust the programmes to suit countries' cultural and other settings and/or to train teachers and other professionals in implementing these programmes.
- Parallel to the above three points, encourage Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Budgeting policies at every level, and engaging men and boys in other fields.
- Research performed on regular basis and in a uniformed manner across EU Member States could help support countries efforts and advise on best practices to be implemented.