

Woman and Disability

A Message on Women`s Day in the European Year for Persons with Disability

The National Commission Persons with Disability believes that nobody should be denied the opportunities offered by society because of her mental or physical condition. This is also sustained and enforced by the Equal Opportunities Act (Persons with Disability).

The Commission also believes that every person`s fundamental human rights should be safeguarded. In particular, the rights of people who are more vulnerable than usual should be even more respected. Unfortunately, women with disability are very vulnerable and they suffer from discrimination for two main reasons: because they are disabled and because they are women.

The Commission believes that very often disability is a condition imposed by society on the individual due to lack of accessibility and solidarity. This leads to persons with disability, especially women, to suffer from a lack of economic and social integration.

In fact, studies show that women with disability:

- are less likely to marry than disabled men;
- are involved in divorce or separation cases almost twice as often as men with disability;
- are more vulnerable to violence and abuse.

This double discrimination can be clearly seen in the employment sector. Statistics issued by the National Statistics Office show that the rate of employment of women with or without a disability is lower than that of men. Moreover, women with a disability have the lowest rate of employment. On the other hand, women with disability have the highest rate of inactive people in the employment sector of our society:

	Employed	Inactive	Looking for employment
Men	67%	29%	4 %
Men with disability	44%	51%	5%
Women	28%	70%	2%
Women with disability	16%	81%	3%

Therefore, the National Commission Persons with Disability, on the occasion of Women`s Day 2003 (which is the European Year for Persons with Disability), wishes to remind the Maltese society not to forget women with disability while trying to increase the rate of participation of women in the work environment. This requires going beyond verbal declarations to implementing schemes that recognise and compensate for differences due to disability. Special structures supporting persons with disability, especially women, are needed in order to allow more women to enter the employment world and thus become productive citizens in our society.