



**LGBTIQ
EQUALITY STRATEGY
& ACTION PLAN**

2018-2022

ANNUAL REPORT
SEPTEMBER 2021 - SEPTEMBER 2022



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EQUALITY STRATEGY
& ACTION PLAN**

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A N N U A L R E P O R T

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Marriage Equality Celebration
Source: DOI

FOREWORD

SOGIGESC UNIT ANNUAL REPORT 2022



Traditionally, this report provides us with an opportunity to look back and determine what has been achieved in the past year, more so now, as we approach the latter stages of the implementation period for the current strategy.

Although I have only taken on the Equality portfolio this year, I cannot but recognise the important strides forward in the continued efforts to mainstream LGBTIQ equality across government with initiatives by a range of actors addressing important sectors such as education, health, the elderly, disability, asylum, policing, the public sector, the media as well as efforts to promote LGBTIQ equality around the world.

Next year Malta will host EUROPRIDE 2023, a unique opportunity to welcome to our country members of the LGBTIQ community and allies from around the world and for Maltese society to showcase its acceptance of LGBTIQ persons. As a government, we aim to support civil society in ensuring that this event is a memorable one for all those who choose to participate in it.

Next year will also be important as we seek to develop the third National LGBTIQ Equality Strategy and Action Plan for Malta, a process which will involve engaging with all stakeholders from government, civil society, and the private sector and which will lead to determining the next milestones towards the attainment of LGBTIQ equality. I invite you all to take part in this process to ensure an efficient and inclusive consultation, that will lead to a more prosperous and equal society.

HON REBECCA BUTTIGIEG

Parliamentary Secretary for Reforms & Equality

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**LGBTIQ
Equality Strategy
and Action Plan**
2018-2022



Annual Report
Sept 2018 – Sept 2019



Annual Report
Sept 2019 – Sept 2020



Annual Report
Sept 2020 – Sept 2021

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ARC	Allied Rainbow Communities	MDH	Mater Dei Hospital
ART	Assisted Reproductive Technology	MEYR	Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation
AWAS	Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers	MGOZ	Ministry for Gozo
CoPE	Community of Professional Educators	MGRM	Malta LGBTIQ Rights Movement
DAACC	Department for Active Ageing and Community Care	MHSR	Ministry for Home Affairs, Security, Reforms and Equality
EOs	Education Officers	MMSA	Malta Medical Students Association
EPA	European Parliamentary Association	MOC	Malta Olympic Committee
EPATH	European Professional Association for Transgender Health	MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
ERC	Equal Rights Coalition	MPF	Malta Police Force
EU	European Union	MSM	men who have sex with men
FSWS	Foundation for Social Welfare Services	MSPC	Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights
GU	Genitourinary	MTA	Malta Tourism Authority
GWC	Gender Wellbeing Clinic	NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus	NSO	National Statistics Office
HLG	High Level Group	ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Ministry for Health
HRC	Human Rights Council	OII	Organisation Intersex International
HRD	Human Rights Directorate	PE	Physical Education
IDAHOBIT	International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexphobia and Transphobia	PEP	Post-Exposure Prophylaxis
IPRWG	Intersex Protocol Review Working Group	PrEP	Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis
IPS	Institute for the Public Service	PSCD	Personal, Social and Career Development
ILGA-Europe	The European Region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association	PSMC	The Public Service Management Code
IVF	In Vitro Fertilisation	REC	Rights, Equality and Citizenship
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex and Queer	SOGIGESC	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics
MCAST	Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology	SVPR	Saint Vincent de Paule Residence
		UM	University of Malta
		UN	United Nations

BACKGROUND

The Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics (SOGIGESC) Unit within the Human Rights Directorate (HRD) was set up in June 2018 with its mission being to assist the government in reaching its goals in the fields of civil liberties, equality and antidiscrimination with regards to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ) persons. As of March 2022, the HRD reports to the Ministry for Home Affairs, Security, Reforms and Equality (MHSR) and continues to operate from its offices in Paola.

The LGBTIQ Equality Strategy and Action Plan 2018-2022 follows and builds on its predecessor, the LGBTIQ Action Plan 2015-2017, which set out Malta's development in LGBTIQ equality and contributed towards Malta's top ranking on the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA Europe) Rainbow Index since 2015.

The strategy incorporates within it various measures, which tackle several thematic areas, these being:

- right to equality and freedom from discrimination
- right to education
- right to health
- equality in sport
- right to private and family life
- freedom from hatred
- LGBTIQ civil society
- right to seek asylum
- promotion of LGBTIQ equality on an international level
- other LGBTIQ measures

The SOGIGESC Unit publishes its Annual Report during its Annual Conference which takes place every September during Malta Pride Week. The Unit has published a total of three reports in previous years, with this publication being the fourth.

This report builds on both the strategy and the previous annual reports and must be read alongside this document. All publications can be accessed through the HRD's website – www.humanrights.gov.mt or directly through the Unit's web portal www.lgbtiq.gov.mt.

All work highlighted throughout this document is conducted in collaboration with other Ministries, entities, departments and agencies and compliments efforts conducted by LGBTIQ civil society and the private sector.

AREA 1: RIGHT TO EQUALITY AND FREEDOM FROM DISCRIMINATION

- 1.1 Following the General Election in March of 2022, both the Equality Bill and the Human Rights and Equality Commission Bill need to be tabled in Parliament again.
- 1.2 The SOGIGESC Unit did not experience any termination or recruitment of personnel during this period. The Project Coordinator tasked with the administration of the Transform project, co-funded by the European Union's (EU) Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) programme saw the termination of her definite contract upon completion of the said project in February 2022.



Launch of Guidelines

Source: DOI



Signing of MOU between HRD and FSWS

Source: DOI

In December 2021, the HRD signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS) for the setting up of an LGBTIQ Unit providing psycho-social services and community outreach. Recruitment of the personnel who will be assigned to this Unit is currently underway and it is envisaged that service delivery will commence by the end of the year.

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- 1.3 The Maltese Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex, Sexuality and Gender were launched with both a Maltese and English version on the 3rd of November 2021 in collaboration with the Institute for the Public Service (IPS). The Guidelines provide guidance to Government departments and agencies on the collection, use and amendment of name and/or gender information or gendered terminology in individual personal records or when communicating with service users and aim to streamline approaches across all government services.

Since the launch, the SOGIGESC Unit has referred to the guidelines on multiple occasions including through training sessions with public entities. The guidelines were also made available to trainees from the private sector. The Unit has also piloted training sessions specifically on the guidelines with staff working at the HRD, and plan on extending this to all public service employees through collaboration with the IPS.

- 1.4 A Roundtable discussion is to be hosted by the Directorate focusing on measures aimed at extending the X marker beyond ID cards and passports which would also include the possibility of a legal name change for non-binary persons.

- 1.5 As things stand, men who have sex with men (MSM) can donate blood following a one-year deferral period. As per current government's electoral manifesto, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Ministry for Health (ODPM) is to review the current policy in order to ensure that the parameters regulating blood donation are non-discriminatory.

- 1.6 For the first time, the National Census conducted in the last quarter of 2021, featured questions related to sexual orientation and gender identity for individuals aged 16 and over allowing for desegregated data on the areas covered by the census, primarily being: household composition; educational level; chronic health conditions; employment; and housing. The preliminary results of the census were published on the 1st of August and specific data relating to a range of characteristics including sexual orientation, race, nationality, religion and family composition are expected to be included in follow-up reports.

The SOGIGESC Unit on behalf of the HRD, partnered up with the National Statistics Office (NSO), the University of Malta (UM) and the Malta LGBTIQ Rights Movement (MGRM) to submit an application to tap into EU funds under the Citizenship, Equality, Rights and

Values Programme. The project aims at conducting research on LGBTIQ persons' wellbeing within the local context. The results will contribute together with stakeholder consultations in shaping the next LGBTIQ Equality Strategy and Action Plan to better cater for the needs of the community. The project proposal was evaluated by the EU Commission and has been put on the reserve list.

- 1.7 Malta has continued to advocate and support the adoption of the EU Council Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment outside the labour market, discussions around which are ongoing within the EU's Social Questions Working Party.
- 1.8 Malta continued to support the implementation of the EU Strategy for LGBTIQ Equality. The SOGIGESC Unit actively participates in the EU's High-Level Group (HLG) on non-discrimination, equality and diversity as well as the HLG's LGBTIQ Equality sub-group, created with the aim to support the adoption of National Action Plans and facilitate the sharing of good practices. The Unit contributed to the work of the sub-group in the drawing up of Guidelines for Strategies and Action Plans to Enhance LGBTIQ Equality published in May 2022.



Launch of Qawsalla Hub

Source: DOI

- 1.9 The Government of Malta, through the Ministry for Gozo (MGOZ) supported LGBTI+ Gozo, a regional organisation which focuses on LGBTIQ mainstreaming and equality to set up a new premises for their operations. Qawsalla Hub, now serves as a point of contact for the LGBTIQ community in Gozo.
- 1.10 Ongoing efforts have been carried out throughout the year, to ensure that the public service is a model employer which promotes equality and diversity. These were implemented through mainstreaming efforts with different public entities, training with public servants and the publishing of internal guidelines as highlighted in Measure 1.3.

HRD published a number of social media banners on its online portals to commemorate relevant calendar dates. The SOGIGESC Unit and other public service employees working at HRD, updated their email signatures to include their pronouns.

Amendments to make the Public Service Management Code (PSMC) and the Work-Life Balance Manual more inclusive were proposed and are in the process of being effected.

- 1.11 The leaflet launched as part of the “Trans Worker – Same Work” campaign, which was reported on in the previous Annual Report, continued to be referred to and disseminated by the SOGIGESC Unit in multiple training sessions that they facilitate with the public and private sector alike.

The Leaflet was also used by the SOGIGESC Unit while delivering two training sessions at the UM as part of the module on mainstreaming diversity. The sessions specifically focused on the inclusion of LGBTIQ persons in employment.

- 1.12 The anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policy adopted by the Malta Police Force (MPF) in 2021, is in place and being enforced. The MPF launched its new gender-neutral uniforms in the first quarter of 2022 and are expected to be transitioned in throughout this year.



New MPF Gender Neutral Uniforms

Source: TVM

- 1.13 In February 2022, the Malta Police Force adopted internal Standard Operating Procedures on the Wellbeing of Detainees & Police Bail which also mainstream gender identity related concerns and ensure the respectful treatment of trans detainees.

- 1.14 Throughout the year, the SOGIGESC Unit has been in continuous discussion with different stakeholders to ensure that the needs of LGBTIQ persons are addressed in all spheres of life.

- The SOGIGESC Unit in partnership with CareMalta, a local private company which operates multiple care homes for the elderly has provided sensitisation training to staff members working in all of their facilities. Following completion, CareMalta indicated their willingness to undertake another round of training, reaching new employees and those who could not attend the previous sessions. Training in different CareMalta facilities takes place on a monthly basis.

The same company, also wished to collaborate further, providing space in its facilities to host LGBTIQ related events, and explore initiatives with civil society to bridge the gap between LGBTIQ youth and the elderly, while also promoting the inclusion of LGBTIQ residents through workshops. A pilot programme is currently being prepared in collaboration and in consultation with civil society organisations.

The SOGIGESC Unit is also looking at exploring similar initiatives with the Department for Active Ageing and Community Care (DAACC) and Saint Vincent de Paule Residence (SVPR).



Training with CareMalta Staff

Source: HRD

- The SOGIGESC Unit in partnership with the Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers (AWAS) has facilitated training sessions targeting all employees working in facilities run by the agency. More information on this is provided in Measure 8.1.

These sessions helped in shedding a light on the experiences of LGBTIQ asylum seekers when residing at an open centre or within the community and to build the capacity of AWAS to identify and meet the specific needs of LGBTIQ migrants.

- The Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability commissioned a research study titled Intersectionality: Disability and Sexuality conducted by the Faculty of Social Wellbeing.

A roundtable discussion with stakeholders to present and discuss the findings is planned to take place during Pride Week 2022.

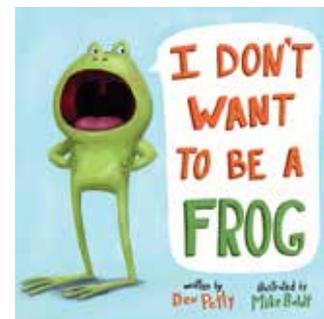
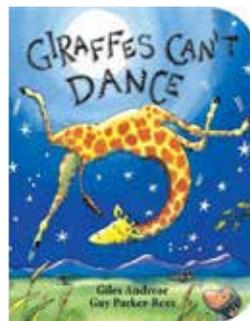
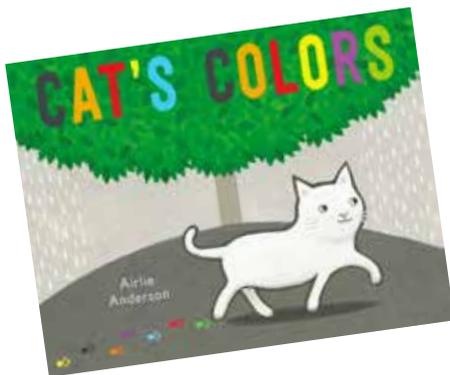
The SOGIGESC Unit sought to keep persons with disability in mind across all initiatives undertaken such as in awareness raising materials. The SOGIGESC Unit also started its collaboration with 'Hila' which is a branch within Vassallo Group that provides support and residential services to people with physical and intellectual disabilities and persons with mental health conditions. Training sessions with staff already took place in some of the facilities and others are already scheduled for the next working year. These sessions follow a similar format to that delivered to CareMalta staff.

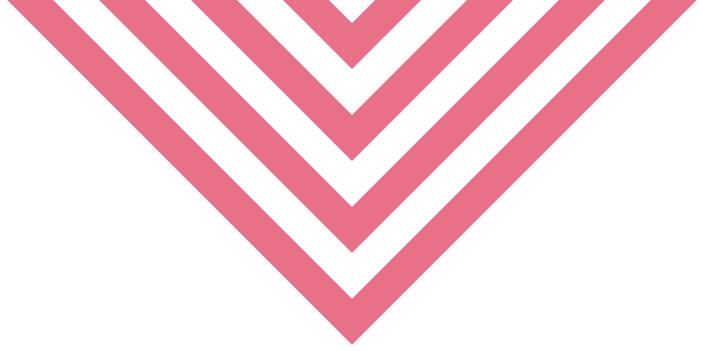
AREA 2: RIGHT TO EDUCATION

2.1 The SOGIGESC Unit continued its dialogue with the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (MEYR) in order to assure a good relationship and to explore different possibilities to better equip personnel of educational institutions in providing LGBTIQ learners with an inclusive and safe environment. Six Community of Professional Educators (CoPE) training sessions with secondary school teachers were hosted online and attended by over 200 educators. These included educators from three subject areas, these being Personal, Social and Career Development (PSCD); Ethics; and Social Studies. Participants included teachers coming from state, independent and church schools.

CoPE training sessions with primary school Physical Education (PE) teachers took place during the second quarter of 2022 and were attended by around 30 educators. These sessions only included teachers coming from state schools and attendance was mandatory.

2.2 The SOGIGESC Unit kept close ties with MEYR and Education Officers (EOs) in order to ensure that whenever any issues related to an LGBTIQ student or staff were raised, a suitable resolution ensued.

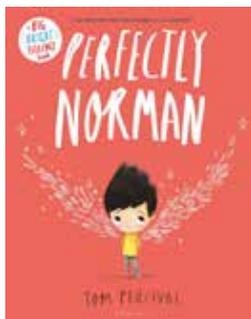
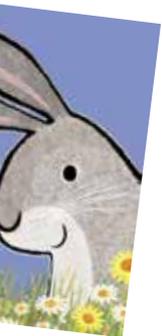




- 2.4 Through the Aqra Kemm Tiflaħ programme, the National Literacy Agency procured various books in both Maltese and English, intended for different academic levels. The books that promote respect for diversity and LGBTIQ inclusion were disseminated in classroom libraries. Books included:
- Cat's Colours by Airlie Anderson;
 - I Don't Want to be a Frog by Dev Petty;
 - Kull Orsinu hu Speċjali by Ruth Frendo;
 - Love... by Emma Dodd;
 - Giraffes can't Dance by Giles Andreae;
 - Perfectly Norman by Tom Percival;
 - Mhux Widnejn Kulhadd huma Xorta by Ruth Frendo; and
 - Mamà, allura din Imħabba by Moira Scicluna Zahra.

It is estimated that these books reached a total of 1,600 kindergarten and primary school children.

- 2.5 EOs responsible for inclusion within the MEYR are currently organising diversity days in schools, which touch on an array of topics, one of which is LGBTIQ inclusion. Over a number of meetings between the SOGIGESC Unit and the National Students Support Services, the possibility of joint initiatives including training and the development of resources were explored and concrete opportunities for collaboration identified.



Books disseminated in classroom libraries
Source: Merlin Publishers/Amazon Books/Ruth Frendo

AREA 3: RIGHT TO HEALTH

- 3.1 The range of services provided by the Gender Wellbeing Clinic (GWC) continues to be reviewed and expanded. In 2022, breast surgery for transgender and gender variant persons have been included in the services provided by the Clinic.

Following the General Election of 2022, the Labour Party elected to Government has committed to review the current list of services provided through the National Health Services (NHS), which also includes trans-specific health care and to expand on them where necessary.

- 3.2 The GWC has continued to secure its operation, also scheduling additional clinic dates to better address the needs of its users. As of June 2022, the Clinic has been relocated to a more central location in Paola and will eventually form part of the wider compendium of services to be offered through the LGBTIQ Hub. Around 325 referrals were received since the opening of the GWC in November 2018 till the end of June 2022, 81 of which since last year's report. The clinic currently employs a Nurse Coordinator and a counsellor on a full-time basis, and several professionals who offer their services as part of the GWC multi-disciplinary team on a part-time basis.

The website www.transhealth.gov.mt remained active and updated according to emerging research. The website provides information on the specific health needs of trans persons as well as information on Malta's legal framework, the services of the GWC and its referral form that enables access to the services provided. This website was one of the work packages of the Transform project co-founded by the EU's REC programme.

Four members of the GWC Team participated in the EPATH Summer School held in Ghent, Belgium in June 2022, keeping abreast with the latest research in the field and providing the opportunity to share experiences and practices and establish new networks with professionals from various countries working in the same field.

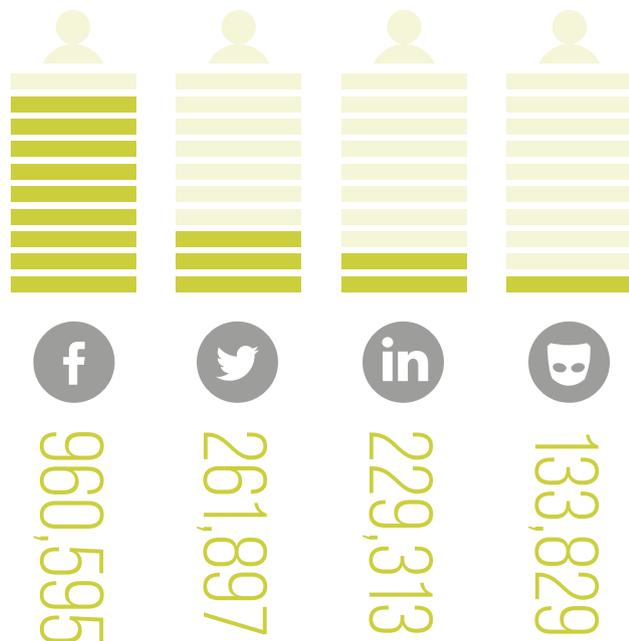
- 3.3 Dr Alexia Bezzina remains chair of the Intersex Protocol Review Working Group (IPRWG) which brings together experts coming from academia, human rights and medical fields. Various meetings were conducted with the drafting of the new protocol well underway and expected to be concluded and adopted by the end of the year.

- 3.4 Health care providers and front-office staff can include a note on a patient's file to indicate that the person's gender identity does not match their documents. This note can include name and pronouns used by the patient.

Through the Transform project, 240 front-office staff (receptionists, security and clerks) were provided with sensitisation training facilitated by the SOGIGESC Unit.

3.5 An extensive awareness raising campaign was conducted through the Transform project over the months of December 2021 and January/ February 2022. This included social media banners boosted on Facebook, Instagram and Grindr; animated videos incorporated within an article on TVM and boosted on social media; and posters, leaflets and stickers disseminated in health care facilities and school psycho-social service providers. The social media campaign touched on three main themes, being sexual health, mental health and the services of the GWC.

Following the conclusion of the social media campaign, boosted posts had the below online reach:



The animated videos incorporated within an article on TVM online news portal were also boosted on social media.

Posters, leaflets, and stickers were all disseminated in health care facilities, including hospital wards, clinics, and pharmacies as well as to the National Student Support Services

3.6 Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) remains available in pharmacies at a fixed price of €56.70. Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) is available at Mater Dei Hospital (MDH) at a cost and following a consultation with the Genitourinary (GU) Clinic. It is available for free to victims of an alleged sexual assault upon presentation of a police report. Following the General Election this year, the Labour Party which got elected to Government pledged to make both PrEP and PEP available for free.

A modern treatment regimen for Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) has been rolled out and mainstreamed throughout last year. It is accessible in both Malta and Gozo.

The Health Promotion Directorate has been involved in multiple social media awareness campaigns which touched on a number of topics related to sexual health. Through funds made available by the Transform project, they have also hosted a webinar discussing safer sex practices and also procured a number of HIV self-testing kits, which are available for free upon request.



TRANSFORM Final Conference

Source: DOI

On the occasion of Valentine's Day, the ODPM also engaged in an outreach campaign in partnership with the Malta Medical Students Association (MMSA) at the Malta College of Arts, Sciences and Technology (MCAST), Junior College and the UM, providing students with information on sexual health.

The Health Promotion Unit is collaborating with LGBTIQ NGO's in the dissemination of information relating to the Monkeypox Virus.

More information related to the Transform project, may be accessed through the project's Final Report, published by the Unit in February, 2022.



AREA 4: EQUALITY IN SPORT

- 4.1 CoPE training sessions with primary school PE teachers were held in 2022. Please refer to Measure 2.1.

The SOGIGESC Unit has initiated discussions with the Malta Olympic Committee (MOC), which gathers within it 42 local sport associations. Different initiatives were discussed, and the possibility to collaborate further in the next year were explored. Discussions were also held with the MCAST Institute for Community Services and the possibility of a seminar for students and staff discussed.

- 4.2 Together with the MOC, the Unit discussed the possibility of having a national campaign, where different LGBTIQ athletes talk of their experiences in sport on national fora. This initiative is still in a premature phase and further discussions are expected in the coming year.

AREA 5:

RIGHT TO PRIVATE AND FAMILY LIFE

5.1 The Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) Clinic at MDH has continued to offer In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) treatment to everyone, including lesbian couples, trans persons who can give birth and single persons who can give birth. In 2021, around 8 lesbian couples accessed IVF services at the ART Clinic.

The Directorate for Alternative Care collaborated with the MGRM for the hosting of two online meetings looking at Pathways to Parenthood for LGBTIQ persons. The first focused on adoption and the second on fostering.

5.2 Trans persons who wish to access the services of the ART Clinic for the preservation of their gametes, may do so through a referral by the GWC. The staff working at the ART Clinic were also provided with sensitisation training and information of the services provided by the GWC. This training was facilitated by the Nurse Coordinator of the GWC.

5.3 Inter-country adoptions by same-sex couples and LGB individuals in Malta is for now only available from Portugal and Colombia.

234

registered marriages between same-sex couples

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	TOTAL
♂♂	5	5	5	5	34	44	22	24	129
♀♀	1	2	4	2	28	34	16	25	105

Source: Public Registry

AREA 6: FREEDOM FROM HATRED

- 6.1 Amendments to hate crime legislation that would ensure that the legal provisions are applicable to individuals and groups alike have been proposed in conjunction with the Equality Bill, which following the General Election of March 2022 need to be tabled in Parliament again.
- 6.2 Training for police officers to respond to cases of hate crime and hate speech, including LGBTIQ victims is being offered through the academy for the disciplined forces. Between July 2021 and June 2022, a total of 297 police sergeants and constables were trained. This brings the total of officers trained since the launch of the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy and Action Plan 2018-2022 to 1,466.
- 6.3 As can be seen on the table in page 19, the number of hate crime incidents on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity reported to the police over the past 3 years has remained relatively stable, with 6 incidents reported in 2019, 5 in 2020, 5 in 2021. 2022 is set to record a higher rate of reporting of such incidents, with 11 incidents already reported in the first half of 2022. As of January 2022, the e-courts website is also publishing statistics on the number of criminal cases relating to hate speech that are filed, decided and pending.

The SOGIGESC Unit was also involved in delivering training on policing and LGBTIQ legislation and policy with multiple groups of MPF recruits and other training aimed at police officers.



	Hate crime reports on the basis of Sexual Orientation	Hate Crime reports on the basis of Gender Identity
January to March 2019	1	0
April to June 2019	0	0
July to September 2019	4	0
October to December 2019	1	0
Total number in 2019: 6 incidents of hate crime reported to the police		

January to March 2020	0	1
April to June 2020	1	0
July to September 2020	0	0
October to December 2020	2	1
Total number in 2020: 5 incidents of hate crime reported to the police		

January to March 2021	1	1
April to June 2021	0	0
July to September 2021	3	0
October to December 2021	0	0
Total number in 2021: 5 incidents of hate crime reported to the police		

January to March 2022	3	2
April to June 2022	5	1
Total number in 2022 until June: 11 incidents of hate crime reported to the police		

AREA 7: LGBTIQ CIVIL SOCIETY

7.1 The LGBTIQ Consultative Council met on a quarterly basis until March 2022, discussing a range of initiatives and processes. All official meetings of the Council were hosted on a virtual platform. The Head of the SOGIGESC Unit provided continuous updates on the implementation of the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy & Action Plan.

The Council continued to serve its purpose as a platform for Civil Society and as a means to advise the government on present and future plans.

7.2 The Government of Malta, through the Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights (MSPC) continued its funding of the Rainbow Support Services (RSS), administered by the MGRM.

The Government of Malta committed itself to allocate funds, over a span of three years to aid in the hosting of Europride 2023, which will take place in Malta. Funds in instalments have been issued in favour of Allied Rainbow Communities (ARC), the organisers of Pride in Malta.

Malta continued in supporting and helping to finance the Organisation Intersex International (OII) – Europe until December of 2021.

7.3 The sub-site, www.lgbtiq.gov.mt has remained updated with new projects undertaken by the SOGIGESC Unit. The Unit often promotes new initiatives, develops various promotional material and commemorates important calendar dates on HRD's Facebook Page.



IDAHOBIT Event 2022

Source: DOI

- 7.4 The SOGIGESC Unit maintains a relationship with all civil society organisations working on LGBTIQ equality and mainstreaming efforts. It has consulted with multiple Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) for the Transform project campaigns and to devise initiatives that target the elderly sector.

On the occasion of IDAHOBIT 2022, Hon Rebecca Buttigieg, Parliamentary Secretary for Reforms and Equality, invited multiple stake holders for a business breakfast discussing achievements in the field, challenges still faced by the LGBTIQ community and the way forward.

The Unit has also participated in a number of public consultations to ensure that LGBTIQ inclusion is mainstreamed throughout government.

- 7.5 The SOGIGESC Unit maintains links with international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) such as ILGA-Europe, Transgender-Europe and OII-Europe on a regular basis. The first two were involved in a number of initiatives undertaken by the Transform project. Speakers from both ILGA-Europe and Transgender-Europe participated in the project's final conference held in February 2022.

AREA 8: RIGHT TO SEEK ASYLUM

- 8.1 The SOGIGESC Unit in partnership with the AWAS, devised two training sessions, one targeted at professional and managerial staff and the other at security and administrative personnel. Three half-day training sessions reaching around 30 professionals were organised with the first cohort while six 2-hour sensitisation sessions reaching around 120 workers were held with the second. All sessions were mandatory for AWAS staff.

All sessions were held at the Family Centre in Hal Far. Signposting material and information leaflets were also distributed to facilitate the work of AWAS in this field.

AREA 9: PROMOTION OF LGBTIQ EQUALITY ON AN INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

9.1 The SOGIGESC Unit participated in the World Pride Human Rights Conference that was held in Copenhagen, Denmark. The Unit also provided its input in various conferences and webinars

around the world, including a conference organised by the South African Government, and a webinar organised by the Equal Rights Coalition (ERC) on gender identity and sex characteristics legislation and policy.



Hate Crime Conference in Madrid

Source: Commune of Madrid

Malta hosted a peer-to-peer study visit by an Argentinian Delegation from the Ministry for Women, Equality and Diversity, organised under the EUROsocial programme to exchange good practices on the inclusion of Trans persons in education and employment.

Following an invite received from the British High Commission, Hon. Evarist Bartolo, then Minister for Foreign Affairs met with LGBT Rights Envoy Lord Nicholas Herbert. Prior to this meeting, Maltese Government officials and representatives from LGBTIQ Civil Society participated in an LGBTIQ round table also organised by the British High Commission.

The Head of the SOGIGESC Unit participated in a conference organised by the Spanish Government in Madrid on law enforcement and hate crime together with the Ambassador to Spain.

Feedback on various requests for information on Malta's legal and policy framework around legal gender recognition, provisions banning normalising treatments on intersex persons and conversion practices was provided to both activist groups and governments alike.

- 9.2 Malta continued to participate in the United Nations (UN) LGBTI Core Group meeting and supported statements issued and coordinated by the Group. On 27 June, the Permanent Mission of Malta to the UN in New York participated in a briefing to the UN LGBTI Core Group entitled "Strengthening the promotion of LGBTI+ rights in multilateral fora: An Exchange

from the Global South and Global North Perspective".

- 9.3 Malta continued to participate in the monthly ERC International Diplomacy Working Group meetings, which brings together like-minded countries, promoting equality for LGBTIQ persons internationally. Malta also participated in events organised by the Coalition, including one on the progress of the ERC strategy and another on LGBTI refugees.

Malta supported the ERC Statement on the Nexus Between Democracy and the Human Rights of LGBTI Persons and another statement which strongly supported the renewal of the mandate of the UN Independent Expert for the Protection Against Violence Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity.

- 9.4 Malta participated in the Human Rights Council's (HRC) side event entitled 'Fighting for Equality – Working together to combat violence and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. In the 50th session of the same council, Malta reiterated its position in the ERC, and supported the renewal of the mandate of the UN Independent Expert for the Protection Against Violence Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity.

- 9.5 In May 2022, the Embassy of Malta in Brussels joined a statement which called for the decriminalisation of consensual same-sex relations and for the introduction or amendment of legislation that protects LGBTI+ people from all forms of discrimination: tackling hate

speech, violence and harassment, both online and offline; promoting inclusive access to public services; strengthening the economic case for inclusion; and increasing the participation of LGBTI+ persons in all aspects of our societies.

Also in May, the Permanent Mission of Malta in Vienna supported a statement supporting the rights of people to freely express their sexual orientation and gender identities and to make their own choices concerning their bodies, without harassment, violence, discrimination, or reprisal. It also supported efforts aimed at decriminalising same sex relations and persons based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

In June 2022, the High Commission of Malta in London supported a statement which urged countries to decriminalise consensual same-sex relations and to introduce or amend legislation to protect LGBTI+ persons from all forms of discrimination: tackling hate speech, violence and harassment, both online and offline; promoting inclusive access to public services; strengthening the economic case for inclusion; banning so-called conversion therapies; and increasing the participation of LGBTI+ persons in all spheres of life.

9.6 In commemoration of the annual International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia, Biphobia and Intersexphobia (IDAHOBIT), the Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade hoisted the rainbow flag, together with its Embassies, High Commissions and Permanent Representations in Beijing, New York, Rome, Canberra, Dublin, Lisbon, Brussels, Madrid, Berlin, Vienna, Warsaw, Tel Aviv, Athens and Geneva. Various missions also supported statements and/or took part in online or offline initiatives supporting the rights of LGBTIQ persons.

On 7th June 2022, the Permanent Representation of Malta to Strasbourg, together with the European Parliamentary Association (EPA), the EU Delegation to the Council of Europe, as well as the Permanent Representation of Luxembourg to the Council of Europe, co-organised a conference at the EPA's premises, entitled 'Over the rainbow? LGBTI rights in Europe: Between reality and ambition'.



IDAHOBIT 2022

Source: MFET

AREA 10: OTHER LGBTIQ MEASURES

10.1 In the build up towards Malta hosting Europride 2023, the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) organised a business breakfast, attended by the SOGIGESC Unit, and various businesses that work in the tourism sector. The session provided information on why it is beneficial for businesses to promote themselves as LGBTIQ inclusive and employ active strategies to support diversity.

Europride 2023 is expected to shine a spotlight on Malta as an LGBTIQ-friendly tourist destination with a robust legal and policy framework which would attract visitors both during and after Pride Week.



PRIDE 2021

Source: ARC



Launch of Mapping the Rainbow II Publication

Source: DOI



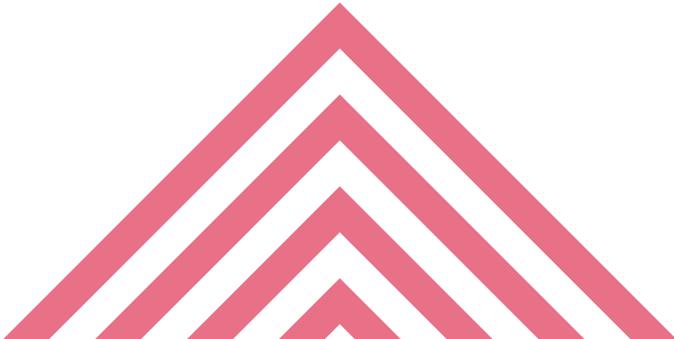
Media Guidelines Roundtable

Source: DOI

10.3 In commemoration of Pride Week, which could not be hosted in 2021, the Government supported an initiative aimed at promoting visibility in key locations around Malta, including Gozo, Mdina and Auberge de Castille. This initiative saw the participation of various members of Parliament and members of Cabinet. These included Hon Robert Abela, Prime Minister of Malta and Hon Owen Bonnici, then Minister for Equality, Research and Innovation with the participation of Hon Helena Dalli, European Commissioner for Equality.

HRD in collaboration with the Department of Gender and Sexualities and Europe Direct from the UM and the MGRM launched the second volume of the publication series Mapping the Rainbow. This research publication captures the proceedings of the second LGBTIQ Research Symposium. Hard copies can be accessed from any of the partners, while a soft copy can be accessed on the Unit's web portal – www.lgbtiq.gov.mt.

In July 2022 the SOGIGESC Unit together with the Office of the Parliamentary Secretary for Reforms and Equality hosted a Roundtable discussion between representatives of the media and LGBTIQ Civil Society focusing on the portrayal and representation of LGBTIQ persons in the media. During the conference a draft media reference guide was presented and feedback requested.



CONCLUSION

The HRD through the SOGIGESC Unit remains committed in reaching the targets set out in the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy and Action Plan, such that equality reaches even those at the margins of Maltese society. The Directorate also hopes that through the sharing of good practices, Malta's journey towards LGBTIQ equality can also instigate other countries to follow and implement change that benefits the community globally.

Through its continuous reporting on the implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan, the HRD can keep track of the progress achieved and where more effort is needed. Gaps which remain following the completion of the current strategy, shall be addressed together with other measures in the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy and Action Plan to follow.

As such, the SOGIGESC Unit, would like you to provide it with any feedback and voice your opinion on where mainstreaming is further required, to truly achieve an equal and just society. It encourages you to take part in the stakeholder consultations that will take place over the coming year in preparation for the drawing up and adoption of the new strategy. The HRD hopes that through its online presence it is accessible to the general public, allowing space for information to be more easily acquired and enable direct contact with it.



PRIDE 2021

Source: ARC



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FOR REFORMS AND EQUALITY