



PRESS RELEASE

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Statement from Minister for Equality on International Women's Day 2019

This year's general theme for International Women's Day is 'Balance for Better' and there can be no doubt that a more gender balanced world is the way forward.

Although we are celebrating this today, I have to stress that, my team at the Ministry of Equality works and leads on equality matters all year long. They work resolutely and very often behind the scenes but their work is instrumental in effecting positive change.

The Ministry for Equality has an ambitious gender equality strategy, the aim of which is to deal with issues that will place barriers in the way of women progressing. One of its key focuses is addressing the Gender Pay Gap as well as ensuring that women are suitably represented in the workplace. We have a number of initiatives to achieve this.

Last year we launched the Women's Mentorship Programme. We were breaking new ground with this initiative – a cross sector and cross gender programme. Gibraltar had seen nothing like it before.

Ample research shows that women are often under-represented in the workplace, particularly in positions of leadership and management. This is a clear example of an inequality, which women face in the workplace, and, therefore, one of the aims of the Women's Mentorship Programme is to change this.

Our aim should not be misconstrued or misinterpreted. Our aim is not "to advance women over men". The aim is to redress the current imbalances that exist and to create fairer and equal workplaces. Workplaces where all can aspire to be their best and where all enjoy equal opportunities, regardless of their gender.

We must not forget either that a more equitable representation of women in the workplace makes sound business sense. It has been well established that more diverse teams and organisations fare better financially than their less diverse counterparts do. This is a crucial message for all businesses and organisations.



Ensuring that women are equitably represented in the workplace, which is a key aim of the Gender Equality Strategy and of the Women's Mentorship Programme, will also have a positive impact on the Gender Pay Gap.

A Gender Pay Gap exists in all countries and Gibraltar, is no different. Last year, using data that was available we were able to distil the gender overall earnings gap which is the difference in the average annual earnings between men and women. This gave us a broad overview but more detailed statistics were necessary to produce a more insightful and comprehensive analysis of the situation locally and to establish the Gender Pay Gap which is the percentage difference between the average hourly earnings for men and women.

Therefore, for the first time in the history of Gibraltar, the Department of Equality commissioned a Gender Pay Gap Survey. The Gender Pay Gap Survey accompanied the Employment Survey in October 2018 and will allow us to establish what the Gender Pay Gap is in Gibraltar.

We commissioned the Gender Pay Gap survey since it goes without saying that it is not fair that over the course of a lifetime, women should earn considerably less than their male counterparts and, therefore, the aims of the initiatives which form part of the Gender Equality Strategy are to target this inequality.

The gender pay gap must not be confused with Equal Pay. Whilst both equal pay and the gender gap deal with the difference or disparity in the pay women receive in the workplace they are two different issues.

Equal pay deals with the pay differences between men and women who carry out the same work, similar work or work of equal value. I am happy to say and I would like to emphasize that in Gibraltar it is unlawful to pay men and women unequally because they are a man or woman and that it has been unlawful for quite some time. Equal pay is covered in Gibraltar by the Employment Act and by the Equal Opportunities Act.

The causes of the gender pay gap are complex and can be overlapping. These include stereotyping, the effect of part-time work (mostly carried out by women), and the fact that women often tend to end up concentrated in employment sectors that offer narrower scope for financial reward. Many of the highest paying sectors are disproportionately made up of male employees.

Another key initiative of the Gender Equality Strategy is to challenge gender stereotypes and the unconscious biases that can prevent the full development of women's potential in the workplace and their contribution to the local economy.

To this end, we delivered bespoke training on 'Gender Diversity and Inclusion: Unconscious Bias' for the private sector in October last year. A hundred representatives from a wide cross-section of the local business community attended the training, which identified the barriers that prevent women from accessing employment in the private sector, from securing promotion and from returning to work after a career break, and focused on strategies that enable women to take up leadership positions. The training was also delivered to close to two hundred top and middle management public sector officials.



We are mindful also of sectors where women are underrepresented, particularly in STEM subjects. On this basis, we work closely with organisations such as Girls In Tech to help promote this and the Department of Education also takes a strategic role in ensuring that girls and women are encouraged to take up these subjects.

In addition to substantive work on policies, legislation and strategies, those that I have mentioned and others which we are developing, one of the most key issues is the continued awareness of gender equality issues, that is something that we can all participate in, and is evidenced by the number of awareness raising events that can be seen this week.

Raising awareness in schools is also an integral part of our strategy. Representation matters and it matters enormously. This is why the Department of Equality organises an annual art competition for secondary school students as part of the International Women's Day events. Allowing young people to express themselves through art on gender equality issues is fundamental to effecting positive change. Additionally, this year, the winning art work will feature in a set of stamps which is being launched today. The students' art work and more importantly their messages about gender equality will most literally travel the world.

Developing the idea of representation, today I am delighted to announce a new initiative. The Department of Equality will be launching a street art competition for a mural which will specifically feature the achievements of women.

The work at the Department of Equality is, therefore, without any doubt, substantive and sustained.

Changing social and cultural attitudes is clearly an important consideration of the gender equality strategy at the Department of Equality. However, a government department alone cannot effect change of this nature and of this scale. It requires a whole community effort where we all measure our words and actions carefully and where we embrace diversity and inclusion.

Working towards gender equality is a win - win situation for all. We **all** do better when men and women do better - not better than each other but better than their current respective positions. We often hear the term 'the opposite sex' but gender equality is neither a battle, nor a competition. It is a journey where everyone stands to benefit. Let us all work together for a better, more inclusive Gibraltar.