

# **Annual Report for the Gender Equality and Sexual Diversity Committee (GESDC) - 2024**

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## **Introduction**

The Gender Equality and Sexual Diversity Committee (GESDC) at the University of Malta has had a productive year in advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion across the institution. This report outlines the key activities, initiatives, and developments undertaken in 2024. Attempts were made to hold meetings regularly to ensure progress on various initiatives. This was not always possible due to some board members' busy schedules. The GESDC meetings were conducted on the following dates: **18 January, 15 February, and 30 May 2024, 6 November 2024**

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## **Key Initiatives and Highlights**

### **1. Policy Development and Implementation**

- **Gender Identity and Expression Policy and SOP:**
  - The policy and SOP were given the go ahead by UM Legal Services.
  - The finalized updates to the policy and SOP were presented to the Equity Committee.
- **Equity Policy:**
  - GESDC gave feedback on this policy, ensuring that it successfully aligned with the broader university policies. This policy was eventually endorsed by GESDC, Senate and Council to foster inclusivity and equity at UM.

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### **2. Events and Campaigns**

- **International Women's Day:**
  - Collaborated with student associations to host discussions and events that addressed gender and equity issues on campus.
- **SEA-EU:**
  - Chair forms part of the SEA-EU Inclusion group.
  - Chair contributed significantly to the organisation of the SEA-EU conference which took place in Malta on 10-12 June 2024 held at the Valletta Campus.

- The SEA-EU Inclusion group met in Malta during the SEA-EU Conference.
- **Teach-In: Masculinities in Maltese Contemporary Society – Ragel fuq l-irrgiel**
  - GESDC was involved in the organization of this event which took place on the 20 November 2024. Teach-In: Masculinities in Maltese Contemporary Society. <https://www.um.edu.mt/newspoint/news/2024/11/international-mens-day-teach-in-masculinities>
- **Informal meeting with Parliamentary Secretary, Parliamentary Secretary for Equality and Reforms – 24 July 2024**
  - This meeting took place in July 2024. The discussion focused on the issues relating to the promotion of gender equality at UM, namely the need of finances to ensure that we have the trained personnel to implement the Gender Equality Plan. A funding breakthrough for the Diploma in Gender, Society, and Work was achieved following this visit. Suggestions were made to collaborate with the Public Policy department to broaden student outreach.
- **Women's Repository**
  - The Chair of GESDC is part of a committee in charge of setting up a UM Women's Repository, spearheaded by Pro Rector Student and Staff Affairs and Outreach. Potential funding sources are being explored, and infrastructure needs, such as shelving and climate control, are under consideration.
- **Equality Mark – 24 July 2024**
  - The University has been awarded the Equality Mark, valid for two years. Future assessments will ensure continued adherence to the required standards. GESDC took part in the audit conducted by NCPE which led to the award of this award.
- **Equity Committee**
  - Chair and Co-Chair participated in Equity Committee meetings chaired by Pro-Rector Prof Carmen Sammut.

### **3. Training and Capacity Building**

- Developed and piloted a comprehensive **EDI training syllabus**, collaborating with HRMD represented by Ms Amanda Borg Ciantar, Dr James Cilia and Dr. Maria Brown. Plans include scaling the programme to all university departments and creating tailored modules.

#### 4. Research and Academic Contributions

- **GEPARD-Gender Equality Programme in Academia- Raising Diversity.**
  - Chair, Co-Chair and Prof Mifsud took part in this Erasmus project. The project was finalised in March 2024. They were involved in the production of a number of deliverables, namely:
    - I. Practice in gender equality plans – assumptions, models, inspirations (report)
    - II. Modelling of diagnostic, monitoring and evaluation activities in the context of gender equality in the university space (methodological guide)
    - III. Paths to equality (a set of information and educational materials)
    - IV. Gender equality in academic teaching – an interdisciplinary perspective (teaching materials)

These deliverables are found on the following website:

<https://us.edu.pl/en/uczelnia/rowne-traktowanie/gepard/>

The chair and co-chair were also invited to present papers in the concluding conference, entitled ‘Community of diversity, equity and inclusion. Towards supporting well-being and sustainability’, which took place at the University of Silesia, Poland, on the 21-22 March 2024. Prof Cutajar’s keynote speech was entitled: Diversity and Wellbeing at the Workplace. Mr Vassallo’s keynote speech was entitled: The Value of Diversity.

- **Women's and Gender Symposium and Conference :**
  - The Gender and Sexualities Department together with the Gender Mainstreaming unit, Human Rights organised this Symposium and Conference which took place on the 19-20 September 2024. Key contributions from Prof. Anna Borg and Prof. JosAnn Cutajar.
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- **Publication of paper on Sexual Harassment:**
  - Prof Cutajar and Mr Vassallo were asked to write a paper on the data they collected for the sexual harassment study. The paper entitled ‘You kind of expect it - it's not necessarily ok, but at the same time I've gotten used to it’. Tackling sexual harassment in higher educational institutions” appeared on the peer reviewed journal Postcolonial Directions in Education, <https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/handle/123456789/125021>
- **SEA-EU Inclusion Group: Workshop on Inclusive Language**
  - A workshop on inclusive language took place in Brest, France, on the 15-18 October 2024. Prof. JosAnn Cutajar was invited to present a paper on UM’s Good practice in Inclusive Language. SEA-EU Inclusion executive committee chose to fashion their Guidelines for Inclusive Language on the UM one.
- **Gender Audit on Women in Decision-Making**
  - This was conducted by Prof Cutajar (for the Gender and Sexualities Department) with the help of Ms Borg Ciantar and HRMD. Data was discussed with GESDC,

- **WikiNisa Initiative:**

- Collaborated with WikiMalta to launch WikiNisa, aimed at increasing the visibility of female researchers and LGBTIQ advocates through digital storytelling.

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## **Conclusion**

GESDC remains committed to fostering a more inclusive and equitable university environment. Through strategic policy implementation, impactful events, and robust training programs, the committee has made significant strides in promoting gender equality and sexual diversity. The collaborative efforts with other university bodies, external organizations, and student representatives have been central to this year's success.