

Annual Report 2015



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Introduction

Gabi Calleja
Coordinator

This was another year of extraordinary achievements with respect to LGBTIQ rights which followed on the Civil Union Act and Constitutional provisions of 2014 placing Malta in the number one spot on ILGA-Europe's Rainbow Map for the first time. As part of the LGBTIQ Consultative Council MGRM was involved in the drafting of the Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Act which was passed through parliament on the 1st of April 2015 with unanimous support from both sides of the house and signed into law by the president on the 14th of April. Although not accompanied with the public celebrations of the previous year, it is no less worthy of acclaim and is, in some ways, more noteworthy being the first legislation of its kind worldwide to provide legal protection to intersex persons. As part of the Consultative Council MGRM was also involved in developing the Government's LGBTIQ Action Plan for 2015-2017 launched in July by Prime Minister Joseph Muscat.

MGRM also stepped up its efforts to address LGBTIQ issues in education. The seminar organised as part of the QuPiD project and organised in collaboration with MSDC attracted around 150 participants most of whom were educators. MGRM formed part of the working group that drew up the Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex Students in School Policy launched in June 2015. This was followed up with an interagency project aimed at monitoring the implementation of the policy involving aditus Foundation, the MSDC and MEDE as partners. The project will come to an end in February of 2016. Other initiatives included the donation of a number of resources for teachers to MEDE which gave rise to widespread public debate as well as professional training provided to a number of schools and workshops held with various groups of students. In December 2015, Jenny Betz, Director for Education and Youth at GLSEN, provided training to Heads of School as well as students services staff and also provided a capacity building training to representatives of LGBTIQ NGO's.

July 2015 saw the closure of MGRM's capacity building project funded through the EEA/Norway NGO Grant. Initiatives under this project enabled the publication of the Grey Pride Booklet, telling the life stories of a number of older LGBTIQ individuals and couples. The booklet was presented in a seminar that also involved the participation of professionals in the field and which will hopefully lead to further work in ensuring that services for the elderly are inclusive of the LGBTIQ community.

Other initiatives involved the drafting of a policy for trans prison inmates and the outline of a training programme for the judiciary.

The MGRM was also able to secure funding through partnership with ILGA-Portugal and other organisations to conduct a project addressing hate crime. The project was launched in November 2015 and will be implemented over a two year period. Other funding through the Small Initiatives Scheme administered by the Council for Voluntary Organisations allowed for work to start on the revision of booklets first published in 2005 aimed at LGBTIQ youth and parents of LGBTIQ persons.

The request for the Rainbow Support Service continued to grow necessitating the recruiting of a new team member. The weekly youth drop-in has continued to flourish and for the first time a live-in was organised over the summer, held in collaboration with Agenzija Zghazagh. The Rainbow Support Service continued to offer social work services, counselling and psychological support, legal advice and training and consultation services. This was made possible through the MSDC NGO Fund, as well as the logistical support of Agenzija Zghazagh.

MGRM continued to participate in a number of International events including the hosting of a transnational event in February under the QuPiD (Queer Pathways into Diversity) project and participation in a training event organised by project partners in Germany. MGRM representatives also participated in a number of conferences and events such as the ILGA-Europe Annual Conference and IGLYO General Assembly, training sessions on Gay/Straight Alliances and intersex issues and IE Trainings and Roundtable discussions on Education and Health.

While much has been achieved over the past three years, this has not been without struggle and the monitoring of implementation of already existing legislation and policy and the LGBTIQ Action Plan will continue as one of MGRM's main tasks. The sustainability of the organisation is an ongoing concern and requires constant efforts to identify sources of funding and to ensure good governance. The increase in LGBTIQ organisations also requires enhanced networking and alliance building efforts. Work is also underway to revamp MGRM's website and to develop a new membership structure.

None of this would be possible without the commitment of the management committee and other volunteers. Their dedication and growing expertise enables MGRM to continue to fulfil its mission as it takes on new projects and initiatives.

Reports

Colette Farrugia Bennett

Social welfare

During the past year, the social welfare team has continued to offer support to individuals and families requesting face-to-face meetings to discuss issues around LGBTIQ identities, family relationships and dynamics, coming out and health matters, among others. The social welfare team has also continued to provide support services through the National Gay Helpline and the Rainbow Support Service. Three members of the team, Ms Colette Farrugia Bennett, Ms Beverley Abela and Mr Michael Farrugia, have been working in the Rainbow Support Service to meet the needs of these service users. A proposal for funding shall be submitted to the Voluntary Organisations Projects Scheme for service funding for 2016.

Rainbow Support Service

During 2015 the service was funded by the NGO Government Fund and Agenzija Zghazagh. This service incorporates the Social Work service, a Youth Group for LGBTIQ persons aged between 15 and 25, Psychological Support, and a Legal Consultancy Service. The project also allows for the provision of consultation, workshops or training to schools and professionals involved in the provision of education, care and social welfare services.

During 2015, the Social Work service was in contact with over 80 individuals who identify as LGBTIQ, and parents of LGBTIQ children and adults. Of these service users, some required regular one-to-one sessions, while others required short term work. The LGBTIQ Youth Drop-In has met with over 20 young people, some of whom are more regular than others, and a few of them required one-to-one support sessions. The Legal Consultancy Service assisted around 50 persons whose issues amongst others were mainly related to civil union or marriage registration, the registration of children, and the protection of asylum seekers identifying as LGBTIQ. The Psychological Support was offered to 5 persons who required financial support in accessing a psychologist in private practice.

In February 2015, the Malta LGBTIQ Rights Movement, as part of the Queer Pathways into Diversity (QuPiD) Learning Partnership, held a seminar on the "Inclusion of Trans and Intersex Persons through Legislation and Policy". The seminar was organised in collaboration with the Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs & Civil Liberties and it was held on the 26th February 2015 at the Victoria Hotel in Sliema. The seminar was highly attended by educators, helping

professionals, members of the LGBTIQ community, members of local NGOs working with LGBTIQ persons and the QuPiD project participants.

In July 2015, the Rainbow Support Service took part in a seminar regarding Elderly LGBTIQ persons following a research project conducted by Malta LGBTIQ Rights Movement. The research conducted and the seminar has initiated networking opportunities between the Rainbow Support Service and the Department for the Elderly, as well as initiated further awareness on the needs of elderly members of the LGBTIQ community.

Towards the end of 2015, various other developments were identified to continue to expand the services offered by the Rainbow Support Service, namely a support group for LGBTIQ persons aged 25+, a support group for LGBTIQ persons held within the Corradino Correctional Facility, and a LGBTIQ Youth Drop-In in Gozo. Another two professionals shall be engaged to develop and deliver these services in 2016.

The Rainbow Support Service met with over 15 students who were focusing their research on LGBTIQ issues in various area of study including Social Work, Social Policy, Tourism and Gender Issues, Education and Youth and Community Studies among others.

The Rainbow Support Service offered consultancy and training session delivery to over 25 organisations, services and agencies, namely in the field of education, social services and health.

MGRM also invested in increasing its understanding and capacity of HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment efforts in view of a concern expressed by the health authorities regarding an increase in infected persons. MGRM participated in a number of meetings of the working group set up by ARC to address this issue and MGRM held meetings with the GU clinic and Health Promotion. MGRM undertook to conduct a scoping exercise aimed at documenting current provision in this field and serving as a baseline document for future advocacy initiatives. The Rainbow Support Service conducted a number of interviews with professionals from the health sector in this regard.

Grundtvig - Learning Partnership

During 2015, Ms Colette Farrugia Bennett continued to coordinate the Grundtvig - Learning Partnership project on behalf of the Malta LGBTIQ Rights Movement. The project came to an end in July 2015 and was formed of six partners, with a German organisation, the VNB, in the role of coordinator. The other partners included the Akademie Waldschloesschen (Germany), GOBS (England), LGL (Lithuania) and KPH (Poland). The project title was "Queer Pathways into Diversity: 'being different' as a key factor in LGBT*Q European Adult Education (QuPiD)". It aimed at strengthening political LGBT*Q (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans*gender and Queer) adult education as an important strategy to combat anti-homosexual, -bisexual and -

trans*gender tendencies, policies and violence in European societies and to work for the respect of different ways of living without discrimination – enabling inclusion and active citizenship of marginalized groups.

The fourth mobility was hosted by MGRM in Malta and the topic under discussion was “LGBTIQ Adult Education with professionals and non-LGBTIQ persons”. This meeting was organised by Ms Colette Farrugia Bennett, as a staff member of this project, and was attended by other members of MGRM’s network, namely Ms Claire Calleja, Ms Beverley Abela and Ms Antonella Mizzi. Representatives of other local LGBTIQ NGOs were also invited, and Mr Kirk Brincau attended on behalf of aditus foundation, Ms Joseanne Peregine attended on behalf of Drachma Parents Group and Mr Mark Josef Rapa attended on behalf of We Are. This meeting ended with a reception hosted by the President of Malta, her Excellency Marie Louise Coleiro Preca at the Verdala Palace which brought together representatives of the local LGBTIQ NGOs and the project partners attending this mobility as well as various dignitaries and diplomats. The fifth mobility took place in Hannover, Germany in June 2015 and was organised by VNB. The topic under discussion was “The intersectional perspective on LGBT*I*Q issues”. This meeting was attended by Ms Colette Farrugia Bennett, as a staff member of this project, and Mr Pyt Farrugia as learner representing Gender Liberation. The learners chosen to attend the mobilities were always chosen on the basis of their area of expertise or work experience.

Two FAQ Leaflets were produced as part of this project. The first focused on procedures for Legal Gender Recognition and the second on the Civil Union Act. They provide practical information and advice to the LGBTIQ community who wish to access the provisions enshrined in these two laws.

National Gay Helpline

MGRM continues to operate the National Gay Helpline (NGH) through a call divert system. However, most calls for support are now diverted to the Rainbow Support Service.

Training

Training on LGBTIQ issues this past year included lectures provided to Social Work & Social Policy, Youth and Community Studies and Human Resources Management students.

Mark Grech

International Relations

MGRM continues to attach great importance to participating in the international arena, believing this improves and sustains our capacity and development building but increasingly provides opportunities for Malta to share and celebrate its achievements and good practices. As such, MGRM committee members were involved in a number of international conferences and meetings in 2015.

Building Safe and Inclusive Learning Environments for LGBTI students – The Role of Education Ministries Across the European Union.– Lisbon, Portugal

Gabi Calleja together with a representative of MEDE attended a round table discussion organised by ILGA-Europe in Lisbon between the 25th and 26th June which aimed to identify issues as well as strategies to address barriers and also served as an opportunity to highlight good practices in the educational field. During the meeting, Gabi Calleja and Mandy Farrugia presented the Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex Student Policy. The meeting also served as a networking opportunity with other activists involved in addressing LGBTIQ issues in schools.

ILGA-Europe Annual Conference – Athens, Greece

The annual conference of ILGA-Europe took place in Athens, Greece, between the 28th and 31st October 2015, with the theme ***Many voices, One movement - Together, mobilised for a just society***. The conference was attended by Gabi Calleja and Mark Grech who was part of the Chairing Pool of the Conference as well as representing MGRM at the Advocacy Network Meeting.

The conference celebrated the referendum success on marriage equality in Ireland but also the GIGESC Act in Malta. Gabi Calleja was asked to be part of two panel discussions, one highlighting good practices and the other Intersex rights. Gabi Calleja was also asked to moderate a panel discussion of Greek politicians including the Minister for Justice where the government made a commitment to introduce legislation on same-sex partnerships.

More information about the conference can be found on ILGA-Europe's website at <http://www.ilga-europe.org/conference/athens-2015> including the inspiring QueerEd talk by Grainne Healy, all conference videos and presentations and the report of the conference host Miguel Vale del Almeida.

Queer Pathways into Diversity (QuPiD) Final Mobility - Hannover, Germany

This learning partnership meeting held between the 3rd and 7th June 2015 brought to a close the QuPiD project which MGRM was a partner in. The focus of this meeting in which Colette Farrugia Bennett and Pyt Farrugia participated was the intersectionality dimension in LGBTIQ persons due to multiple identities which make part of the human person. This meeting also worked on a number of administrative tasks related to the final documentation of the project, including an e-brochure which was designed and edited by Colette Farrugia Bennett.

Capacity Building Seminar on LGBTIQ Activism and Intersex – Berlin, Germany

Michael Farrugia attended the capacity building seminar held between the 3rd and 5th July in Berlin and organized jointly by IGLYO and ILGA-Europe. The seminar aimed to create a safe space for participants to share and learn knowledge about Intersex issues. The seminars were facilitated mainly by two Intersex activists. As a participant from Malta, Michael gave a short presentation about the GIGESC Act passed in April as well as the change in education policy that had been introduced in June 2015. Other issues discussed were moving away from the gender binary, terms and pronouns that refer to intersex individuals and their preferred terminology, and testimonials of intersex individuals and their experience of coming to terms with their identity.

Capacity-Building Seminar on Supporting Youth to Start GSAs (Gay-Straight Alliances) In Schools – Amsterdam, Netherlands

Beverly Abela attended the capacity building training organised by ILGA-Europe and COC Netherlands between the 6th and 8th November on empowering youth to set up GSA's in schools. The aim of the seminar was to gain knowledge about what a GSA is and the different forms it can take, as well as gain further knowledge about how to support teens who want to establish a GSA. Participants learnt about good practices in schools and how these benefit students, especially in relation to activism. The training helped to identify the challenges related to creating a GSA in Malta and to gain insight into how to go about working with/against these challenges.

Making the Political Case for Education across Europe – the Role of LGBTI Rights Organisations – Brussels, Belgium

Gabi Calleja attended the capacity building training aimed at enabling participants to think about education in a more political and overarching manner. The training was facilitated by Eliza Byard, Executive Director and Joe Kosciw, Chief Research & Strategy Officer at the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education

Network (GLSEN), a US-based non-governmental organization that went through the same thinking in the past.

Participants were able to learn more about the work of GLSEN and the different strategies and approaches used as well as to discuss with European colleagues opportunities and threats faced in the National contexts and to discuss the role that LGBTIQ activists can play in the education field.

Improving the Mental Health of LGBTI people in Europe: Challenges and Good Practices, Dublin, Ireland

This roundtable was organised by ILGA-Europe with the assistance of the Irish Department of Health and of the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN) and took place on the 8th December. Twenty participants attended, representing governments and NGOs from six EU Member states: Ireland, Sweden, Finland, Poland, Malta, Belgium and Portugal, as well as the European Commission.

During the roundtable it was clarified that LGBTI people are not inherently more prone to mental health issues than anyone else, but their experiences of discrimination, stigma and exclusion may negatively impact their mental health. Minority stress was mentioned several times throughout the discussion. Different stakeholders stressed on the importance to improve on the mental health services in order to become more inclusive.

The training was also attended by psychiatrist Dr Axiak on behalf of the Ministry for Health. The roundtable discussion also addressed the continued need for specialised services to cater for LGBTI individuals until mainstreaming of services can be achieved. The importance to provide training to healthcare professionals as part of their academic curriculum was highlighted.

UNI-Form Partners Meeting – Lisbon, Portugal

Gabi Calleja attended the first partners meeting of the project UNI-FORM: bringing together NGOs and Security Forces to tackle hate crime and on-line hate speech against LGBT persons. The meeting took place between the 14th and 16th of December in Lisbon. The project is lead by ILGA-Portugal and MGRM is a partner together with GLEN (Ireland), LGL (Lithuania), Circolo di cultura omosessuale “Mario Mieli” (Italy), SA Eesti Inimõiguste Keskus (Slovenia), Háttér Society (Hungary), FELGTB (Spain), Galop (UK) and MOZAIKA (Latvia). Gabi Calleja presented the work of MGRM as well as provided information on another project addressing online hate crime involving the UOM and the People for Change Foundation. The partner’s meeting was aimed at consolidating the partnership and going through the different work packages of the project.

Gabi Calleja

Media

MGRM was present in the media throughout the year particularly in advocating for the Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Bill and in relation to LGBTIQ issues in education. MGRM continued to communicate its message in all types of media, ranging from television and printed news, to the internet and through the use of social networks such as Twitter & especially Facebook.

The most noted instances of MGRM's media presence occurred around several key events such as:

- The passing of the Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Act
- Pride Week
- The launch of the Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex Students in School Policy
- The donation of LGBTIQ Resources to MEDE for use in schools

Below are some of the articles or programmes in which MGRM featured throughout 2015.

	Article/Programme	Medium	Date
1	Gabi Calleja tiehu post Cyrus Engerer http://www.illum.com.mt/ahbarijiet/socjali/39978/gabi_calleja_tieu_post_cyrus_engerer#.VusMQ-IrLIU	Illum	14 th January 2015
2	Twegibiet ma Veronique Dalli – GIGESC Bill https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_GMh9hnXIs	One TV	4 th February 2015
3	'Gender identity law to break down walls of discrimination' - Helena Dalli http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/49208/gender_identity_law_to_break_down_walls_of_discrimination_helena_dalli#.VusDtOIrLIW	Malta Today	9 th February 2015
4	'The norm is changing': schools to address needs of transgender students http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/50093/watch_the_norm_is_changing_schools_to_address_needs_of_transgender_students#.VusEaOIrLIW	Malta Today	26 th February 2015
5	No objections expected in transexuals inclusion Bill - MGRM http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20150226/local/no-objections-expected-in-transexuals-inclusion-bill-mgrm.557728	Times of Malta	26 th February 2015
6	'Major policy overhaul needed after new transgender legislation comes into force' http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20150227/local/major-policy-overhaul-needed-after-new-transgender-legislation-comes.557769	Times of Malta	27 th February 2015
7	Zebra crossing gets a new look http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20150320/local/Zebra-crossing-gets-a-new-look.560610	Times of Malta	20 th March 2015
8	Gender Identity Bill approved unanimously http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20150401/local/gender-identity-bill-approved-unanimously.562316	Times of Malta	1st April 2015
9	IGLHRC hails landmark law in malta on gender identity, expression and protections for intersex children	Outright International	1 st April 2015

	10 https://www.outrightinternational.org/content/iglhrc-hails-landmark-law-malta-gender-identity-expression-and-protections-intersex-children		
10	Surgery and Sterilization Scrapped in Malta's Benchmark LGBTI Law	NY Times	1 st April 2015
11	TVPM – GIGESC Act	TVM	7 th April 2015
12	MGRM hopes Fr Montebello incident serves to improve 'inclusion' of gay couples within Church http://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2015-04-14/local-news/MGRM-hopes-Fr-Montebello-incident-serves-to-improve-inclusion-of-gay-couples-within-Church-6736133758	Malta Independent	14 th April 2015
13	Laqgħa Ta' Informazzjoni Fil-Jiem Li Gejjin http://www.kullhadd.com/201504257030/Ahbarijiet/laqgħa-ta-informazzjoni-fil-jiem-li-gejjin.html	Kulhadd	25 th April 2015
14	LGBTI report: Malta climbs to third place in ILGA-Europe's 2015 rainbow map http://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2015-05-10/local-news/LGBTI-report-Malta-climbs-to-third-place-in-ILGA-Europe-s-2015-rainbow-map-6736135286	Malta Independent on Sunday	10 th May 2015
15	Historic leap in equality as Malta rises to third place in ILGA ranking http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/52784/historic_leap_in_equality_as_malta_rises_to_third_place_in_ilga_ranking#.Vu7bGeIrlIX	Malta Today	10 th May 2015
16	Malta singled out for progress in LGBT issues http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20150511/local/malta-singled-out-for-progress-in-lgbt-issues.567727	Times of Malta	11 th May 2015
17	TVAM – Rainbow Europe Map Index	TVM	14 th May 2015
18	Education on LGBTIQ issues can be introduced as early as pre-school – Gabi Calleja http://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2015-05-19/local-news/Education-on-LGBTIQ-issues-can-be-introduced-as-early-as-pre-school-Gabi-Calleja-6736135779	Malta Independent	19 th May 2015
19	In Demand- -Jane Dennis and Judy Kerr - The Experience of Lesbian Women in Malta	One TV	27 th May 2015
20	TVM News – Pride March http://www.tvn.com.mt/mt/news/qed-niccelebraw-dak-li-ksibna-u-nuru-solidarjeta-ma-persuni-lgbti-fpajjizi-ohra/	TVM	30 th May 2015
21	Updated (2): Free to be me - Celebration of diversity and equality in Valletta http://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2015-05-30/local-news/Free-to-be-me-Gay-Pride-march-taking-place-in-Valletta-6736136455	Malta Independent on Sunday	30 th May 2015
22	Colour and humour in Gay Pride parade http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20150530/local/colour-and-humour-in-gay-pride-parade.570303	Times of Malta	30 th May 2015
23	Ban therapy to convert gays, says MGRM head - ministry looks at legislation http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20150615/local/ban-therapy-to-convert-gays-says-mgrm-head-ministry-looks-at.572578	Times of Malta	15 th June 2015
24	Policy on trans, gender variant and intersex students unveiled http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20150616/local/policy-on-trans-gender-variant-and-intersex-students-unveiled.572787	Times of Malta	16 th June 2015
25	"L-Orjentazzjoni Sesswali Ma Tikkostitwix Marda" - Gabi Calleja, Chairperson tal-MGRM http://www.kullhadd.com/201506207185/Ahbarijiet/l-orjentazzjoni-sesswali-ma-tikkostitwix-marda-gabi-calleja-chairperson-tal-mgrm.html	Kulhadd	20 th June 2015
26	Dak li Joghdd Teens- Claire Aguis Ordway - Coming Out, How Can Parents Support their Children	One TV	20 th June 2015

27	Pastor's wife tried to 'cure disgusting' homosexual http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20150621/local/pastors-wife-tried-to-cure-disgusting-homosexual.573325	Times of Malta	21 st June 2015
28	Kelmejn – Claudette Abela Baldacchino – Trans, Gender Variant & Intersex Students in School Policy	One TV	23 rd June 2015
29	TVM News - Launch of LGBTIQ Action Plan 2015-2017 http://www.tvn.com.mt/mt/news/il-kura-biex-l-omosesswali-jikkonvertu-se-ssir-reat-kriminali/	TVM	20 th July 2015
30	Books about diversity within families donated http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20150729/local/books-about-diversity-within-families-donated.578510	Times of Malta	29 th July 2015
31	Daddy, Papa and Me' among books to be distributed to primary school teachers, students on diversity http://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2015-07-29/growing-up/Daddy-Papa-and-Me-among-books-to-be-distributed-to-primary-school-teachers-students-on-diversity-6736139672	Malta Independent	29 th July 2015
32	Ippreżentat il-Pjan Strateġiku tal-MGRM lil Helena Dalli http://www.illum.com.mt/ahbarijiet/socjali/42779/ppreentat_ilpjan_stra_teiku_talmqrm_lil_helena_dalli#.VusL3-IrLIU	Illum	6 th August 2015
33	Celebrating difference http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20150810/opinion/Celebrating-difference.580043	Times of Malta	10 th August 2015
34	1980s ban on gay blood next taboo in line of fire http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/lifestyle/health/56424/1980s_ban_on_gay_blood_next_taboo_in_line_of_fire#.Vu7YzrLIV	Malta Today	29 th August 2015
35	Grey and proud http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20150906/books/grey-and-proud.583411	Times of Malta	6 th September 2015
36	Gay rights: Malta in top place in Rainbow Map for first time http://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2015-10-05/local-news/Gay-rights-Malta-in-top-place-in-Rainbow-Map-for-first-time-6736143104#.VhNTaqVGaj8.facebook	Malta Independent	5 th October 2015
37	Malta kklassifikata l-ewwel fost 49 pajjiż fil-qasam tad-drittijiet ta' persuni LGBTIQ http://www.inewsmalta.com/dart/20151005-malta-kklassifikata-ewwel-fost-49-pajji-fil-qasam-tad-drittijiet-ta-persuni-lgbtiq	iNews Malta	5 th October 2015
38	TEN01 - Discussion on LGBTQ Books on NET TV ten01 programme	Net TV	7 th October 2015
39	Newsfeed – Frank Psaila – LGBTIQ Resources in Schools https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vhJlvmhu2n4	Net TV	16 th October 2015
40	Gay books' will not be distributed in schools http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20151016/local/gay-books-will-not-be-distributed-in-schools.588391	Times of Malta	16 th October 2015
41	Lies and assumptions about MGRM and Planned Parenthood http://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2015-10-18/newspaper-letters/Lies-and-assumptions-about-MGRM-and-Planned-Parenthood-6736143716	Independent on Sunday	18 th October 2015
42	As gay as a banned book http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20151018/opinion/As-gay-as-a-banned-book.588601	Sunday Times of Malta	18 th October 2015
43	MGRM children's books may go to teachers http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20151019/local/mgrm-childrens-books-may-go-to-teachers.588775	Times of Malta	19 th October 2015
44	No indoctrination in our stories, say authors 'Gay books' protested in Malta have faced opposition elsewhere http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20151027/local/no-indoctrination-in-our-stories-say-authors.589938	Times of Malta	27 th October 2015

45	Skjetti - TVM - Quinton Scerri - LGBT Books in Schools	TVM	4 th November 2015
46	81% Tal-Maltin Jappoġġjaw Il-Liġi Tal-Identità Tal-Ġeneru http://www.kulhadd.com/201511147619/Ahbarijiet/81-tal-maltin-jappojaw-il-lii-tal-identita-tal-eneru.html	Kulhadd	14 th November 2015
47	Familja Wahda - - Lilian Mestre - LGBT issues	Radju Malta	4 th December 2015

Frederick Bartolo Parnis

Membership

MGRM has struggled to maintain its membership base over the years, despite a low enrolment fee. In 2015 MGRM decided on a three tiered system for membership which would include:

Associate Members which is free and entitles those registered to receive MGRM newsletters and mailings and to be kept up to date on news and events;

Full Members who would pay a membership fee determined by the MGRM committee and who aside from receiving MGRM newsletters and mailings would be entitled to vote at MGRM's AGM.

Gold Members who would pay a membership fee together with an additional donation which aside from all the rights of full members would also entitle them to receive a freebie and discounts on MGRM events.

Facilitation to Gender Identity Recognition

The Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Act was passed through parliament on the 1st April of 2015 with a unanimous vote and constitutes a major milestone in LGBTIQ rights in Malta and was hailed as an example of good practice around the world. MGRM was involved in campaigning for the bill in the months leading to its enactment and in awareness raising about its implications throughout the year. The Act:

- Introduces a right to gender identity for all persons
- Regulates the procedure for change of legal gender for minors and adults alike
- Bans any requirements for medical interventions, psychological tests, etc
- Recognises foreign decisions regarding gender identity by a competent court or responsible authority
- Allows for amendments of gendered characteristics on all official documents (e.g. ID card / passport) or certificates
- Provides for the privacy of the person whose gender has been rectified on official documents
- Introduces a positive obligation on government entities to ensure that their services meet the objectives of this Act
- Provides parents with the possibility to postpone the entry of a gender marker on their children's birth certificate until they reach the age of 14
- Introduces a right to bodily integrity and physical autonomy for all persons
- Makes non-medically necessary treatment on the sex characteristics of a person without informed consent unlawful
- Provides for psychosocial counselling, support and medical interventions related to sex and/or gender
- Provides for a revision of the protocol regulating sex assignment treatment and/or surgical interventions on the sex characteristics of a person

The MGRM together with aditus and MSDC continued to advocate for the rights of trans prison inmates. Assistance was provided to a number of inmates with accessing gender recognition procedures and a number of meetings were held with prison authorities and MHSA officials in order to ensure that the conditions of incarceration met the obligations set by the GIGESC Act. A draft policy was drawn up as part of MGRM's EEA/Norway NGO Grant Project. This was passed on to the MHSA and the prison authorities as a baseline document. Discussions with MHSA led to an agreement to set up a working group to work on the policy.

Education and Young People

Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex Students in Schools Policy

Adopted by the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) in June 2015, the 'Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex Students in Schools Policy' is the result of cooperation between the Ministry for Education and Employment, the Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties (MSDC) and MGRM. It is part of Malta's strategic education vision of working towards safe and empowering school environments that seek to form active and employable citizens. The three publications which constitute the policy, procedures and strategies provide guidelines to schools and ensure a uniform response as well a pro-active approach towards ensuring that schools are inclusive of trans, gender variant and intersex students.

Research-based Assessment of the National Education Policy on Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex Children

This is an inter-agency project implemented throughout 2015 by the Malta LGBTIQ Rights Movement (MGRM), aditus foundation, the Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties (MSDC) and the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE). In terms of the project's terms of reference, it is intended to conduct a qualitative research exercise assessing the immediate impact on schools of the 2015 policy.

The project is funded by the ILGA-Europe Documentation and Advocacy Fund (2014 funding cycle), which has the overall goal of promoting the "*documentation of cases of discrimination, hate crimes and other human rights violations against LGBTI people*". Furthermore, it's objectives include promoting LGBTI equality through evidence-based advocacy, building the capacity of LGBTI organisations to monitor and document human rights violations, developing transferable methodology and tools for data- and information-collection.

A number of working group meetings were held in 2015 by the project partners in order to implement the project objectives. aditus Foundation were commissioned to draw up the monitoring tool, conduct the research and draw up the report to be presented at a high level seminar in 2016.

LGBTIQ Resources in Schools

Through the EEA/Norway NGO Grant Project, MGRM was able to allocate some funding to purchase some LGTBIQ resources that could be used in educational settings to address and mainstream LGBTIQ issues. These included a number of story books for various age groups ranging from kindergarten to secondary school as well as two training videos for primary and secondary school educators. The resources were presented to the Minister for Education in July 2015.

A public debate around the introduction of such resources in schools took place in October and November of 2015 following some negative reactions on public media and the setting up of a Facebook group entitled 'Parents and Teachers Against Gender Indoctrination of our Children'. The issue was debated on a number of TV and radio programmes.

LGBTI Senior Citizens

As part of the EEA/Norway NGO Grant project, the MGRM sought to develop its capacity to address the issues faced by LGBTI senior citizens. In July 2015 the MGRM held a seminar entitled **Life Experiences of LGBTIQ Senior Citizens** where the publication *Grey Pride: A Look at the Lives of the Older LGBTIQ Community in Malta* was launched. This publication aimed to garner the lived experiences of older LGBTIQ persons and the experiences that have shaped their lives, their current realities as well as their expectations for the future. The seminar involved the participation of one of the contributors to the publication as well as various professionals from the Rainbow Support Service, the University of Malta's Gender Studies Department and the Department of the Elderly and Community Care.

Addressing Hate Crime and Hate Speech

For the first time since its inception MGRM held a meeting with the Police Commissioner where issues around the reporting of hate crime were discussed. These included under reporting, victim support, police training, and data collection among others.

MGRM was successful in obtaining funding in order to address hate crime under-reporting through the UNI-Form project which is being lead by ILGA-Portugal. The objectives of the project which started in November 2015 and will have a duration of two years include:

- combating discrimination and violence against LGBT persons and underreporting figures and increase knowledge on homophobic and transphobic hate crime
- implementing applicable EU legislation
- creating a uniform reporting mechanism
- promoting networking among all involved actors and
- raising the awareness of LGBT victims of hate crime and encouraging trust-building relationships among relevant stakeholders

The project envisages a number of activities:

- Consortium's initial workshop in Lisbon held in December 2015
- Data collection and analysis among stakeholders – interviews
- Collection of existing structures/procedures
- Workshop with consortium and CEPOL in Budapest
- Development of the website and mobile app
- System implementation and testing
- On-line campaign in all the participating countries
- Practical information brochure for victims
- European conference in Brussels

Local networking

In 2015, MGRM continued to work with a number of entities through the LGBTIQ Consultative Council as well as through its membership in PHROM, the Platform for

Human Rights Organisations in Malta and also took on a more active role in the Malta Confederation of Women's Organisations. It collaborated with other organisations for Pride Month and throughout the year met up with a number of entities including the newly set up Gender Liberation and LGBTI+ Gozo.

Below is a list of the most influential events and activities which MGRM organised and/or participated in during 2015:

Seminar: 'Inclusion of Trans and Intersex Persons through Legislation and Policy'

This seminar was organised as part of the QuPiD project in collaboration with the MSDC and was held on Thursday 26th February 2015 at The Victoria Hotel, Sliema. The seminar was well received and attracted around 150 participants many of whom from the educational field. The seminar provided an introduction by Ruth Baldacchino to sex and gender as well as trans and intersex issues, a presentation by Silvan Agius on the Scope and Implications of the Gender Identity, Gender Expression & Sex Characteristics Act and a presentation by Gabi Calleja on the Scope and Implications of the Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex Students in School draft policy. Participants were able to continue to discuss these themes in a number of workshops.

GIGESC Act Celebration, 1st April 2014

MGRM, together with other members of the LGBTIQ Consultative Council were present at the parliament for the third reading of the Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sexual Characteristics Act. To commemorate this event, the MGRM organised a celebratory gathering at Monaliza Lounge in Valletta which was attended by a number of politicians from the Labour Party, the National Party and AD, including the party leaders.

Information Meeting on the Procedures for Gender Identity Recognition

An information Meeting on the procedures that need to be undertaken by trans persons who wish to change their gender identity on official documents was held on the 27th April at the NGO Hub in Valletta. This involved the participation of a number of speakers including Silvan Agius, Policy Coordinator at MSDC, Clinton Bellizzi, president of the Notarial Council, Amanda Mifsud, Director of Passports and Public Registry and Felix Vella, Director of Identity Malta. The meeting was part-funded through the EEA/Norway NGO Grant. All the steps that needed to be undergone were discussed and a template of the contract to be drawn up by the notary was presented, as were timelines established by the legislation and costs of the procedures. The meeting was attended by members of the trans community as well as members of the notarial profession.

Pride Month 1st April to 30th May

Free to Be Me was the theme chosen for this year's **Pride** celebrations which this year spanned a period of two months. A working group bringing together representatives from a number of the LGBTIQ organizations was set up under the coordination of MGRM. Activities and events included the LGBTIQ Film Festival held at St James Cavalier throughout April, the launch of Gender Liberation and LGBTI+ Gozo, a number of public talks by James Alison organized by Drachma and Drachma Parents, a Socio Cultural evening organized by FOIPN, a theatrical performance by MADC of The Pride and an Exhibition organized by We Are at UOM.

This year's Pride March event took place on Saturday 30th May, gathering at 3pm at City Gate, Valletta. The March included the participation of a marching band and two floats commissioned by AXM and ARC. Around 250 people attended the pride march including a number of politicians from the major political parties including the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition as well as a number of diplomats including the US Ambassador.

This year's PRIDE organised around the theme Free To Be Me, recognised the important legal milestones that have been achieved with the introduction of the Civil Union Act and the Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Act putting Malta at the forefront of LGBTIQ equality in Europe and the World. The march was followed by an afterparty organised by AXM in Gianpula.

GLSEN Training on Addressing LGBTIQ Issues in Education

This training was held on the 7th, 8th and 9th of December and was organised in collaboration with MEDE and MSDC. Following the contact made with Eliza Byard Executive Director of GLSEN at the 2014 ILGA-Europe Conference, GLSEN were invited to provide training to Maltese educators and NGO activists. Jenny Betz, Director of Education and Youth Services at GLSEN delivered two training sessions with 12 Heads of School and a further two training sessions with around 100 Student Services Professionals. A half-day training was also organised for 10 representatives from LGBTIQ organisations.

Frederick Bartolo Parnis

Accounts

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

For the year ended 31st December

	2015		
	€	€	€
Income:			
ILGA HRVDF			-
Rausing Trust Fund			-
Support Groups Trust Fund			-
Youth Programme Funds			-
Civil Society Grant			-
Voices Foundation Grant			-
IE Capacity Building Grant			-
Marriage Equality			-
US Embassy Grant			-
Civil Society Grant 2			-
Grundtvig Preparatory Mtg Grant			-
Ministry for Civil Liberties Pride 2014			1,000
US Embassy Grant It Gets Better			-
US Embassy Grant Rainbow Support Service			-
Dutch Embassy Grant Pride Week			-
Grundtvig Mobility Grant			5,397
EEA/Norway Grant			13,608
NGO Grant 2014			6,174
NGO Grant 2015			12,000
Small Initiatives Scheme			-
IE Advocacy and Documentation Fund			-
Civil Society Organisations Fund			280
Donations & Fund-Raising			1,638
Membership Fees			<u>82</u>
			40,180
Administration Expenses:			
P.R. Literature & Brochures	1,136		
Salaries	5,673		
NI Contributions	1,174		
Rent	1,050		
Water & Electricity	214		
Printing	1,905		
Postage	17		
Telephone	526		
Internet & Web-based Subscriptions	320		
Office Stationery	416		
Books	2,563		
Legal Fees	2,305		
Audit & Accountancy Fees	466		
Professional Fees - Researchers	15,406		

Office Machine Maintenance	-		
Refreshments	1,477		
Premises Expenses	365		
Bank Charges	169		
Depreciation - Office Furniture & Equipment	<u>738</u>	35,919	
Event Expenses:			
Travelling	3,628		
Conferences	2,212		
Entertainment	1,197		
Permits	-		
Equipment Hire	687		
Training Costs	-		
Miscellaneous Expenses	<u>145</u>	<u>7,869</u>	<u>43,788</u>
NET SURPLUS / (DEFICIT)			<u>(3,608)</u>

BALANCE SHEET**As at 31st December 2014**

	2015	
	€	€
Fixed Assets:		
Office Furniture & Equipment		2,372
Current Assets:		
Sundry Debtors	11,460	
Bank Current A/c #1	5,820	
Bank Current A/c #2	5,090	
Bank Savings	1	
Bank Current A/c #3 - EEA	1,000	
Bank Current A/c #4 - SIS	2,100	
Petty Cash	<u>60</u>	<u>25,531</u>
		27,903
Current Liabilities:		
Sundry Creditors		2,000
TOTAL NET ASSETS		<u>25,903</u>
Represented by:		
ILGA HRVDF Reserve		-
Rausing Trust Fund Reserve		-
Youth Programme Funds Reserve		-
Civil Society Grant Reserve		-
Voices Foundation Grant Reserve		-
IE Capacity Building Grant Reserve		-
Marriage Equality Reserve		-
US Embassy Grant Reserve		-
Civil Society Grant 2 Reserve		-
Grundtvig Preparatory Mtg Grant Reserve		-
Ministry for Civil Liberties Pride Reserve		-
US Embassy Grant It Gets Better Reserve		-
US Embassy Grant Rainbow Support Service Reserve		7,315
Dutch Embassy Grant Pride Week Reserve		-
Grundtvig Mobility Grant Reserve		-
EEA/Norway Grant Reserve		-
NGO Grant 2014 Reserve		7,312
NGO Grant 2015 Reserve		-
Small Initiatives Scheme Reserve		2,100
IE Advocacy and Documentation Fund Reserve		5,600
Civil Society Organisations Fund Reserve		-
Accumulated Surplus		<u>3,577</u>
		<u>25,903</u>

Workplan 2016

		Objectives	Actions
Goal 1: GOAL: To achieve legal equality of LGBTIQ individuals	1a	The facilitation to the right to Gender Identity, Gender Expression, Bodily Integrity & Physical Autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for depathologisation provisions Work with prison authorities and police with regard to recognition of Gender Identity of Trans Prisoners/Detainees
	1b	The provision of anti-discrimination legislation in the provision of goods and services to LGBTIQ people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaise with MSDC and LGBTIQ Consultative Council on implementation of Equality Act
	1c	Marriage equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Campaign for inclusion of marriage equality in electoral manifestos;
	1d	The enjoyment of sexual and reproductive health and rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in national debates on review of Embryo Protection Act; Communicate with LGBTIQ community on need for review and position of MGRM; Meet with Police Commissioner
	1e	Constitutional amendment to include sex characteristics (Intersex) in grounds of non-discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaise with MSDC and LGBTIQ Consultative Council on putting forward constitutional amendment
	1f	Equal treatment in cohabitation legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor consultation and legislative process to ensure equal treatment of LGBTIQ persons
	1g	Monitoring of effective implementation of civil union legislation with respect to mutual recognition; parenting rights; social security; housing; etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with MFSS re. access to adoption;
Goal 2: To have policies that refer to and are inclusive of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics	2a	Mainstreaming of LGBTIQ issues in policy and service provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor implementation of LGBTIQ Action Plan 2015-2017
	2b	Professional Bodies to issue policies that address LGBTIQ issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set meeting with Malta Chamber of Professional Psychologists Set meeting with Institute of Maltese Journalists regarding reporting standards on LGBTIQ issues
	2c	Health-care policies that are inclusive of LGBTIQ, including LGBTIQ segregated data in mainstream research and surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with Parliamentary Secretary for Health regarding lifetime ban for MSM; Finalise scoping report on HIV/AIDS services and treatment and put forward recommendations
	2d	Policies on the treatment of trans and intersex persons by government institutions and public entities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work on prison policy with MHAS; Training of prison staff

		Safe and Inclusive school climates for LGBTIQ students and educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor implementation of LGBTIQ Action Plan measures Concluding seminar on Monitoring of trans, gender variant and intersex students policy project Provision of training and consultancy services to schools on request Liaising with schools to advocate for LGBTIQ students
	2f	Social Security and Housing provision that is inclusive of LGBTIQ individuals and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor implementation of Civil Union and GIGESC legislation To check that forms with respect to applications for housing and social security now include same-sex couples and X provision
	2g	National Action Plan on Equality to be adopted by Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor implementation of Action Plan
	2h	The effective implementation of hate crime legislation and monitoring of hate crimes; support to victims; etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collection and analysis among stakeholders on current reporting mechanisms; Attend Workshop with consortium and CEPOL in Budapest Development of the website and mobile reporting app
Goal 3: To bring about positive societal attitudes towards and the social inclusion of LGBTIQ people	3a	Raise awareness and visibility of LGBTIQ people and the issues which affect them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation in TV and Radio programmes Participation in LGBTIQ Consultative Council
	3b	Promote a norm critical approach to gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training provided to Professionals
	3c	Obtain endorsement from professional bodies with the view of gaining and increasing public support statements from them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaise with MSDC to gain support from professional bodies on Act for the Affirmation of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression
	3d	Raise the visibility and acceptance of LGBTIQ families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply for funding through Malta Arts Council for book in Maltese on LGBTIQ families
	3e	Raise the visibility and awareness of LGBTIQ Elderly and advocate for inclusive policies and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Webpage on new website Organise 2 social events aimed at this target group Meet with Department of the Elderly and Community Care
	3d	Raise awareness of how intersectionality can compound difficulties faced by LGBTIQ persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with KNPD to discuss issues around LGBTIQ issues and disability

Goal 4: To empower the LGBTIQ community to engage in social and political issues that are of direct	4a	Engage the LGBTIQ community in MGRM's work with MGRM being clearer in communicating its goals, purpose and direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MGRM membership drive linked to facebook and new website ▪ Launch new website to be kept updated by respective committee members
	4b	Increase MGRM's visibility among the LGBTIQ community and strive for greater participation and representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Quarterly newsletter to increase awareness of MGRM's work ▪ Leaflet on MGRM
	4c	Increase participation in MGRM's events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One social event every quarter
	4d	Encourage the emergence of positive LGBTIQ role models from within the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Page on website highlighting LGBTIQ Role Models
	4e	Promote respect for diversity within the LGBTIQ community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Presentation during Women's Day seminar organised by NCPE ▪ Incorporate and highlight intersectional issues in any publications and media tools
	4f	Build the capacity of the LGBTIQ community to advocate on its own behalf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pilot hate crime reporting tool ▪ Disseminate findings of Scoping exercise on HIV/AIDS
Goal 5: Provide support, assistance and information on LGBTIQ issues to LGBTIQ	5a	Continue to develop the Rainbow Support Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure sustainability of services provision ▪ Launch support group for 25+ ▪ Provide support to Trans Prison Inmates ▪ Provide Support to Drachma ▪ Provide Support to LGBTI+ Gozo Youth
	5b	Develop leaflets, booklets and other resources for LGBTIQ individuals and their families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Publish revised version of booklet for LGBTIQ youth and parents ▪ Print Rainbow Support Service Leaflet ▪ Publish Leaflet on Intersex
	5c	Training of a broad range of professionals and service providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide training on request
	5d	Build our capacity and identify strategies to address the specific needs of bisexuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organise an in-house training aimed at better understanding of issues faced by bisexual persons
	5e	Develop support services and raise awareness regarding LGBTIQ health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Capacity building training for RSS staff and MGRM committee on HIV/AIDS

Goal 6: To network with other organisations in achieving common goals	6a	Liaise with other LGBTIQ and non-LGBTIQ groups as well as individuals working on LGBTIQ and human rights issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Participate in platforms such as PRIDE and HIV/AIDS working groups; PHROM and MCWO; ▪ Participation in Mozaika's (Latvia) 10th Anniversary Celebrations
	6b	Make use of opportunities presented by CHOGM, EU Presidency and V18 in order to raise visibility of LGBTIQ issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Set meeting with V18 in order to explore possibilities
	6c	Sharing of good practices and seeking opportunities for partnership with national as well as foreign entities	Respond to relevant requests for project partnerships when they arise
Goal 7: To make MGRM a sustainable organisation	7a	Increase the capacity of MGRM to achieve its mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seek secondment of one full-timer from public service ▪ Attend training and events organised by ILGA-Europe
	7b	Establish funding streams and continue building on its human resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seek service agreement with MFSS re provision of Rainbow Support Service ▪ Apply for project funding ▪ Use crowd funding for specific initiatives ▪ Develop own merchandise as income generation
	7c	Maintain and seek new international links and networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Membership in IE; TGEU and IGLYO
	7d	Improve the administrative capacity and efficiency of MGRM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seek secondment of one full-timer from public service
	7e	Develop a communication strategy for the organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Draw up priority communication targets for 2016 ▪ Develop and launch new website
	7f	Clarify MGRM's position on major socio-political issues	