[MT] New Guidelines on Gender Equality and Portrayal in the Broadcasting Media

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The Broadcasting Authority has recently approved Guidelines on Gender Equality and Gender Portrayal in the Broadcasting Media. These Guidelines apply to all programmes, including news and advertisements, broadcast on radio and television stations in Malta and are intended to sensitise the broadcasting media to gender equality and portrayal. They are directed towards the people in production, decision-makers at broadcasting stations and producers of advertisements.

These Guidelines direct producers to use gender inclusive vocabulary and images. They deal with gender role portrayal in television and radio programming and address the issue of stereotyping in the broadcast media. The Broadcasting Authority's Guidelines focus on the equal representation of men and women in the broadcasting media. The portrayal of men and women in the broadcasting media should reflect their actual social and professional achievement, career, interests and roles. These media should, moreover, reflect the continuous change in Maltese society with regard to the professional roles of men and women.

The Gender Equality and Portrayal Guidelines further provide that men and women should be portrayed in a wide range of roles, both traditional and non-traditional, in paid work, social, family and leisure activities. Men and women should both be seen as taking decisions to support the family and with regard to household tasks and home management. Television and radio programming should portray diversity in family structures, that is, not only marriages between woman and man but also the portrayal of single parenting and adopted children. Indeed, the portrayal of different family structures should be done in such a manner as to avoid "victimisation" of atypical structures. It is imperative that these are not depicted in a pitiful state.

Broadcasters should promote the recognition of tasks usually associated with women and portray them as being equally important to that of traditional male tasks, and which should be carried out by both genders. Certain subjects like family planning, welfare, health of the mother and the child, education and upbringing of children, should be directed at both men and women. In addition, broadcasters should eliminate negative gender role portrayal, that is, the representation that associates particular roles, types of behaviour and

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characteristics to people on the basis of gender without considering the characteristics of each individual.

Programmes should not reinforce the patriarchal power relation of society where men are seen to be more powerful. The broadcasting media should not overemphasise certain roles of women, mainly the domestic and sexual roles, and portray them as submissive. Men and women should be portrayed in both public and private spheres.

Women should appear more on the screen and should not be seen in limited roles. Women's thinking abilities and men's caring abilities should also appear on the screen as well. Women should not be segregated in one type of programme known as "women's programmes". Such programmes should also target men. Subjects of interest to women are also interesting for the fathers of children. Such programmes are to be categorised as "family programmes" rather than "women's" programmes.

These guidelines ensure that non-sexist language, that is the exclusion of one sex on the basis of gender, is not used in radio and television programming. Sexist language reflects the idea that one sex is superior to the other. Such language contributes, promotes or results in the oppression of one of the sexes to the detriment of the other and exploits an unfair distinction between sexes. Sexist language imposes stereotypes. Again, radio and television productions should not use language that can be offensive, misrepresents or excludes women or men. Generic terms that include both sexes should be used with regard to the question of language in the media. Panels in all discussion programmes should be constituted of representatives of both genders.

Television and radio stations are advised to increase the participation and involvement of both sexes in broadcasting as producers or decision makers in the industry. Men and women should have equal responsibilities in the broadcasting industry. Broadcasters should ensure both sexes equal access to all areas and levels of the broadcasting media. Finally, broadcasting stations are encouraged to recruit a gender-balanced staff, to adopt an equality policy and a structure for the employment of both sexes in key sectors and at managerial level and to involve both sexes in the decision-making process with regard to promoting an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in the broadcasting media.

Guidelines on gender equality and gender portrayal in the broadcasting media, 3 July 2007

http://www.ba-malta.org/GUIDELINES/6.07-Gender%20Portrayal.pdf

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