

Do you think that human rights and equality are sufficiently protected and promoted in Malta?

If not:

a. Which human rights do you believe need further protection and promotion?

I believe that at the moment on our islands the most pressing issue is that equal and non-discriminatory rights are not respected. Foreigners whether they are regular or irregular migrants are still paid very low wages in comparison with their Maltese fellow workers who do the exact same job. The opportunities that come their way are fewer in relation to job and training. The Media blows up on the front pages any news that involves migrants making discrimination subtly promoted. I applaud the campaigns which recently have made people think further about racism especially the no hate speech campaign and the video which is being shown on local stations. It makes us think twice before we say 'we are not racists'...most of us say it and then add a '...but...I would not want an arab as my neighbour.' etc etc. It pains me to see how much we think we have moved forward only to find that few people actually act on equal and non-discriminatory principles.

b. How can Malta better protect and promote human rights and equality overall?

Education is always the key. As a professional I am happy to see books and lessons at school which promote not just tolerating diversity but actually being curious and loving how colourful the world is. The next step should be positive and rather than asking people to accept and tolerate others, we should escalate their wonder about the world. The love and learning of diversity has to start from a young age at school and at home.

c. Are there any models that you would propose that government should consider looking at in terms of legislation, institutional frameworks or both? If yes, what is especially good about such models?

Migrants who are at detention centres should be provided with training and education so that they are not left idle and can function better in society once they are released. Education is important no matter where you come from. Keeping people in detention and making their paperwork difficult to obtain do not deter future migrants from our shores. Our reality will always be perceived as better in their eyes because the struggle with paperwork in Europe is nothing compared with the struggle they endure in their own country. Let us stop seeing them as a number or a colour and start seeing them as people. We are after all in the year 2014. What better time to start then now?

Thank you!
Deborah Attard