

The Office of the Commissioner for Children welcomes the setting up of the Human Rights and Equality Commission (HREC) in order to protect and promote human rights in Malta, as well as serve as a complaints mechanism and monitor compliance with Maltese equality and equal treatment laws.

As outlined in the White Paper, it is important to ensure that collaboration is made with existing institutions which safeguard and promote specific rights, such as the Office of the Commissioner for Children.

To this end, this Office is to remain the central mechanism regarding children's rights and recommends an open channel of communication together with regular discussions/meetings to strengthen cooperation between both institutions, to meet the needs and promote the rights of children. The duplication of resources should be avoided.

In the White Paper it is held that the HREC will be responsible for establishing the highest human rights standards in Malta and creating spaces for different stakeholders, within and outside government and other institutions, and civil society organisations.

This Office completely supports the HREC to be entrusted with complete autonomy and independence, not falling under any Ministry, and operating using its own separate financial budget. It can only be effective in its work and maintaining the highest standards, particularly when receiving and investigating complaints from the public.

The Office of the Commissioner for Children looks forward to the next stages when the draft Bill establishing the Human Rights and Equality Commission is presented to stakeholders for consultation, and subsequently presented in Parliament and launched for public consultation where we will put forward our feedback once again.