



THE CHURCH IN MALTA

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
Archdiocese of Malta

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THE SAFEGUARDING COMMISSION EXTENDS ITS SERVICES IN THE COMMUNITY

PRESENTATION OF THE 2016 ANNUAL REPORT

The Commission for the Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults (Safeguarding Commission) will be offering its services outside the Church, to groups and organizations that work with minors. The aim of this initiative is to create more awareness about the prevention of abuse and the importance of a safe environment in the community. The services offered include the development of a safeguarding policy based on the specific needs of the entity, training of personnel and volunteers, risk assessments of individuals that are facing allegations of abuse or have been found guilty of abuse, together with any professional advice related to abuse prevention.

During the presentation of the Safeguarding Commission's annual report for 2016, Andrew Azzopardi, the Head of Safeguarding, said that these services are already being offered by the Commission to Church entities. He explained that last year, the Commission trained more than 600 individuals that work in Church structures. These include teachers, care workers, catechists, priests, members of religious orders, seminarians, and volunteers. The Church continued to invest in the Safeguarding Commission by employing another professional in the role of safeguarding officer, with the aim of offering these services both within and outside the Church.

Andrew Azzopardi said that in spite of the decline in complaints received by the Commission in 2016, the Safeguarding Commission intends to widen its services in the Church and in society at large because it strongly believes in the importance of ensuring a safe environment for vulnerable persons. Nevertheless he insisted that the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults is everyone's responsibility.

During 2016, out of the 12 complaints involving minors received by the Commission, two allegations were substantiated and the necessary steps were taken in all cases. The other concluded cases were either not proven or were referred to the relevant entities as they did not fall under the Commission's remit. Up to December 2016 assessments were being carried out on 12 complaints, of which 6 had a restriction imposed on the pastoral activity as a precaution.

In the case of vulnerable adults, the assessment on the concluded cases was carried out in less than 6 months. Out of the 12 complaints received by the Commission in 2016, 4 allegations were substantiated and the necessary steps were taken in all cases. The other concluded cases were either not proven or were referred to the relevant entities as they did not fall under the Commission's remit. Until the end of the year, the assessments of 10 complaints were underway, and while in each case the necessary action was taken, in one particular case a restriction on the pastoral activity was imposed as a precaution.

Andrew Azzopardi said that the Church's Commission will continue to offer its contribution on a national level, as it did last year when it recommended that the State creates an authority for the protection of minors and vulnerable adults. This authority would, in the best interest of minors, establish a structure for information sharing between organisations that work with children and vulnerable adults.

On an international level, during the past year, the Commission collaborated with the Catholic Safeguarding Service in Scotland and with the Centre for Child Protection of the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, to organise an international conference on the prevention of abuse. One of the main speakers during this conference was Archbishop Charles J. Scicluna.

The Church's Safeguarding Commission appeals to the public to contact the police with regards to any concerns related to abuse. Besides contacting the police, one can also contact the Commission on info@safeguarding.org.mt or www.safeguarding.org.mt.