
Speech by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta at the launch of the Rainbow Families Project by the President's Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society, 27th August 2018

Members of the media,
Dear friends.

Let me begin by commending the important collaboration which has been made possible, through the Rainbow Families Network initiatives, among my Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society, the Malta Gay Rights Movement (MGRM), and the Rainbow Support Service within the Social Welfare Services.

In particular, let me take this opportunity to thank Ms Elaine Micallef, a member of my Foundation, and all her work as a tireless champion for the rights and the dignity of LGBTIQ families.

This important initiative is providing an opportunity for support, encouragement, and celebration, on the occasion of Malta Pride Week 2018.

The Rainbow Families Network will reach out to the diverse families of our Maltese Islands, in particular members of the LGBTIQ community, to provide solidarity and empowerment.

When my Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society reached out to families of gay parents last year, during the "Our Children Are Alright" documentary, it became clear to us that there are particular challenges which are still being faced by such families, in Maltese society.

Many LGBTIQ parents said that they felt unable to reach out for effective support, due to their fears of exposing their children to stigma, bullying, discrimination, and exclusion.

According to recent indicators from MGRM, there are a growing number of LGBTIQ parents who are parenting children. These families have become the most prominent group, reaching out to MGRM for assistance.

In this context, requests were made to create a safe and respectful space, in which these families could feel welcome and free to share their concerns.

Strategies for long-term support and empowerment are essential, because they represent our ongoing commitment, as a people of goodwill, to promote solidarity with all the members of our society, especially our children.

For this reason, the Rainbow Families Network will also welcome parents with children who are transgender. These children often face added challenges to their effective inclusion, within their school communities and in society at large.

The participation of these families in the Rainbow Families Network is based on the urgent need to support the parents of transgender children, and to provide a source of empowerment for the children themselves.

I believe that we can only make a sustainable and positive change in our mentalities and our attitudes when we listen to the real concerns of vulnerable individuals, and respond with prompt action.

This is why I am proud to invite LGBTIQ families and children to come together in a safe and respectful space, by making the private garden of Sant Anton Palace available.

My Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society, alongside its collaborators, will provide a context in which LGBTIQ families can share their experiences, and meet the relevant professionals who will facilitate informative and supportive sessions.

I am confident that the first meeting of the Rainbow Families Network, which will take place on 14th September, will be an important opportunity for sharing and connection.

I augur that this year's upcoming celebrations of Pride Week will be a reminder of the importance of respecting the dignity of each and every human being, not only during Pride Week but throughout our lives.

In this way, we will be effectively safeguarding the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of all the people who call our Maltese islands their home.

Thank you for your attention.