

SAFEGUARDING COMMISSION

Annual Report 2017

[**www.safeguarding.mt**](http://www.safeguarding.mt)

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Foreword

The mission of the Safeguarding Commission is to create an environment where minors and vulnerable adults are safe. We aim to promote best practice by offering support to all Church entities across Malta and Gozo. Over the past three years we offered safeguarding-specific training to almost 2,000 Church personnel who work with minors or vulnerable adults.

This year, the training and prevention programmes were at the core of our work. A pilot project specifically targeted at personnel working with minors was completed with six Church entities to develop a holistic prevention programme. This was completed in December 2017 and a number of recommendations emerged which will serve to improve the pastoral work of the Church and will benefit all persons involved particularly minors and parents.

In the past few years the Church has made huge progress in creating safe spaces for minors through updated policies and holistic training. However, there is a lot more to be done. We recognise that the biggest enemy of safeguarding is complacency. In light of this, we are committed to keep safeguarding at the top of the agenda of the Church, both in Malta and Gozo.

Our next step is to develop specialised training for any person who works with vulnerable adults in their pastoral work, especially those working in residential care or treatment.

Andrew Azzopardi
Head of Safeguarding

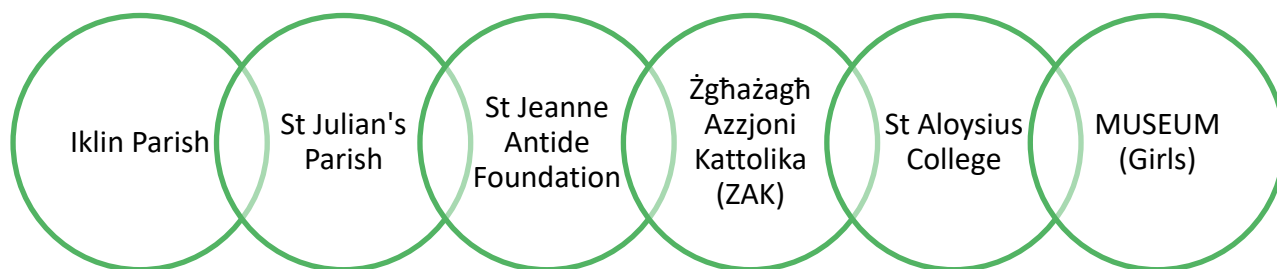
1. International Safeguarding Conferences

In 2017, the Safeguarding Commission co-hosted the International Anglophone Safeguarding Conference held at the Pontificia Università Gregoriana in Rome. This annual conference is open to safeguarding professionals working in the Catholic Church around the world. As representatives of the Maltese Episcopal Province, the Safeguarding Commission co-hosted the conference in collaboration with the Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Service and the Centre for Child Protection (Rome). The theme of the conference was **Celebrating Hope**. Over 110 people attended from 14 different countries.

At the end of 2017, the Head of Safeguarding Commission was one of the 150 delegates invited to the multi-disciplinary and inter-faith International Congress organised by the Centre for Child Protection on **Child Dignity in the Digital World**, in Rome. Leaders in the field of child protection, professionals and researchers, had the opportunity to discuss safeguarding in the digital world with politicians, policy makers and professionals in the I.T. industry. During the conference participants met His Holiness Pope Francis to present the Declaration of Rome (Appendix 1).

2. Pilot Project

Between the months of September and December 2017, the Safeguarding Commission completed a pilot project. Six church entities participated: two of which were parishes, a non-governmental organisation, a youth group, a Church school and the Girls' MUSEUM. The entities that participated in the pilot project were:



The aim of the pilot project was to assess the current safeguarding measures and to explore new ideas to improve safeguarding in the Church. All parties in the pilot project committed themselves to receive safeguarding-specific training and to appoint a designated representative to act as the point of reference for safeguarding in their entity. The designated safeguarding representative is responsible for the vetting process of employees, both paid and unpaid. The pilot project's main aim was to test the aforementioned proposal with the identified six entities before implementing the prevention model on a wider scale across the Church.

The pilot project was specifically designed to target individuals who work with minors. A total of seven persons were trained for the role of designated safeguarding representative. In total, 449 volunteers and staff completed the training over three months.

The pilot project focused on four main areas

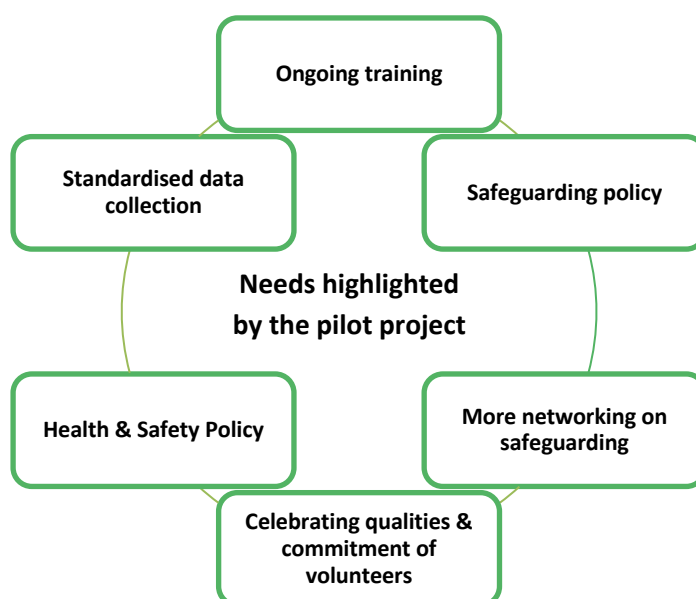
Policies and procedures

Training

Background checks for Church personnel

Responding to allegations

Throughout the pilot project, participants were given the opportunity to develop their knowledge through presentations, shared learning and networking with other Church entities, where they shared experiences as well as the different measures their entity had in place to safeguard minors. The Safeguarding Commission also met with the Head of Organisations to discuss the specific needs of each entity.



3. The Prevention Model

The Protection of Minors (Registration) Act (POMA) requires all employers to file a court application for any employee or volunteer who comes in contact with minors. This is done as a precautionary measure to verify whether there is any relevant information on the Offenders' Register, as regulated by the same Act. In this respect, the Safeguarding Commission filed a number of court applications for a total of 2,155 people who all received clearance to work with minors. Police conducts have also been collected for a number of individuals, specifically for those entities who formed part of the pilot project and those who benefitted from our support when applying for the School Leaving Certificate.

The Safeguarding Commission offered a number of training sessions to staff, volunteers, seminarians and members of religious orders as part of their ongoing formation. In 2017, 792 Church personnel (such as teachers, catechists, priests, religious, seminarians and volunteers) attended safeguarding-specific training led by the Safeguarding Commission in Malta. Fr Joseph Farrugia, a member of the Safeguarding Commission, delivered in-depth training on safeguarding minors to 48 members of the clergy in Gozo. This brings the total of people trained in 2017 to 840 Church personnel.

2017 Highlights

The Safeguarding Commission
trained **840** personnel

The Safeguarding Commission
filed a number of POMA
applications for a total of
2,155 personnel who were
all cleared to work with minors



Services offered by the Safeguarding Commission

In the coming months, the Safeguarding Commission aims to make the safeguarding-specific training compulsory for all persons working with minors in Church entities. We believe that ongoing training is an essential part of one's role in caring for minors. Thus, is recommending that all Church personnel complete the training course every two years.

The Safeguarding Commission also offered its services to non-Church organisations. The Commission was approached by a number of organisations to offer expertise and support. This service remains available to any organisation.

4. Statistics of Referrals

In 2017, the Safeguarding Commission found three allegations to be substantiated and the three personnel have been restricted from public ministry. All three allegations involved victims who were minors. These were referred by the Safeguarding Commission to the Police. There were no substantiated allegations involving adult victims.

The Safeguarding Commission concluded 19 assessments involving **minors**, out of which 3 were substantiated (as stated above), 3 were unfounded, 10 were unsubstantiated and 3 were referred to a third party since they were not a safeguarding matter.

*“There were **3** substantiated allegations and all were referred to the Police.”*

Unsubstantiated complaints include situations where the alleged perpetrator is not identified; contradictory or anonymous complaints; complaints in which the accused could not be identified or is now deceased; and social media posts which were not substantiated.

Between January and December 2017, 19 new complaints were received involving minors and 5 involving vulnerable adults.

The Commission concluded 12 assessments involving **adults** out of which none were substantiated, 3 were unfounded, 3 were unsubstantiated and 6 were referred to third parties since they were not a safeguarding matter. For further details, refer to Appendix 2 and Appendix 3.

Appendix 1: The Declaration of Rome



The Declaration of Rome

World Congress: Child Dignity in the Digital World

6 October 2017

Pope Francis -- “A society can be judged by the way it treats its minors.”

Every child’s life is unique, meaningful and precious and every child has a right to dignity and safety. Yet today, global society is failing its minors. Millions of minors are being abused and exploited in tragic and unspeakable ways, and on an unprecedented scale all over the world.

Technology’s exponential advancement and integration into our everyday lives is not only changing what we do and how we do it, but who we are. Much of the impact of these changes has been very positive. However, we face the dark side of this new-found world, a world which is enabling a host of social ills that are harming the most vulnerable members of society.

While undoubtedly the Internet creates numerous benefits and opportunities in terms of social inclusion and educational attainment, today, content that is increasingly extreme and dehumanizing is literally available at minors’ fingertips. The proliferation of social media means insidious acts, such as cyberbullying, harassment and sextortion, are becoming commonplace. Specifically, the range and scope of child sexual abuse and exploitation online is shocking. Vast numbers of sexual abuse images of minors and youth are available online and continue to grow unabated.

The detrimental impact of pornography on the malleable minds of young minors is another significant online harm. We embrace the vision of an internet accessible by all people. However, we believe the constitution of this vision must recognize the unwavering value of protecting all minors.

The challenges are enormous, but our response must not be gloom and dismay. We must work together to seek positive, empowering solutions for all. We must ensure that all minors have safe access to the internet to enhance their education, communications and connections.

Technology companies and government have shown leadership in this fight and must continue to innovate to better protect minors. We must also awaken families, neighbours, communities around the world and minors themselves to the reality of the internet's impact upon minors.

We already have potent global platforms in place and important global leaders making significant progress in fulfilling these aims. The Centre for Child Protection at the Pontifical Gregorian University conducts international safe-guarding work in 30 countries on four continents. The WePROTECT Global Alliance, launched by the United Kingdom, in partnership with the European Union and the United States, unites 70 nations, 23 technology companies and many international organizations in this fight. The United Nations is leading a global effort to achieve UN Sustainable Development Goal 16.2 to eradicate violence against minors by 2030, particularly through the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Minors.

This is a problem that cannot be solved by one nation or one company or one faith acting alone, it is a global problem that requires global solutions. It requires that we build awareness, and that we mobilize action from every government, every faith, every company and every institution.

This Declaration of Rome issues a call to action:

1. To world leaders to undertake a global awareness campaign to educate and inform the people of the world about the severity and extent of the abuse and exploitation of the world's minors, and to urge them to demand action from national leaders.

2. To leaders of the world's great religions to inform and mobilize members of every faith to join in a global movement to protect the world's minors.
3. To the parliaments of the world to improve their laws to better protect minors and hold those accountable who abuse and exploit minors.
4. To leaders of technology companies to commit to the development and implementation of new tools and technologies to attack the proliferation of sex abuse images on the Internet, and to interdict the redistribution of the images of identified child victims.
5. To world's ministries of public health and the leaders of non-governmental organizations to expand the rescue of child victims and improve treatment programs for victims of abuse and sexual exploitation.
6. To government agencies, civil society and law enforcement to work to improve the recognition and identification of child victims, and ensure help for the massive numbers of hidden victims of child abuse and sexual exploitation.
7. To the world's law enforcement organizations to expand regional and global cooperation in order to improve information sharing in investigations and increase collaborative efforts in addressing these crimes against minors which cross national boundaries.
8. To the world's medical institutions to enhance training for medical professionals in recognizing the indicators of abuse and sexual exploitation, and improve the reporting and treatment of such abuse and sexual exploitation.
9. To governments and private institutions to enhance resources available to psychiatric and other treatment professionals for expanded treatment and rehabilitation services for minors who have been abused or exploited.
10. To the leading authorities in public health to expand research into the health impacts resulting from the exposure of young minors and adolescents to graphic, extreme internet pornography.
11. To leaders of the world's governments, legislative bodies, private industry and religious institutions to advocate for and implement techniques to deny access by minors and youth to internet content suitable only for adults.
12. To governments, private industry and religious institutions to undertake a global awareness campaign directed at minors and youth to educate them and provide them with the tools necessary to use the internet safely and responsibly, and to avoid the harm being done to many of their peers.

13. To governments, private industry and religious institutions to undertake a global awareness initiative to make citizens in every country more alert and aware regarding the abuse and sexual exploitation of minors, and to encourage them to report such abuse or exploitation to appropriate authorities if they see it, know about it or suspect it.

In this era of the internet the world faces unprecedented challenges if it is to preserve the rights and dignity of minors and protect them from abuse and exploitation. These challenges require new thinking and approaches, heightened global awareness and inspired leadership. For this reason, this Declaration of Rome appeals to everyone to stand up for the protection of the dignity of minors.

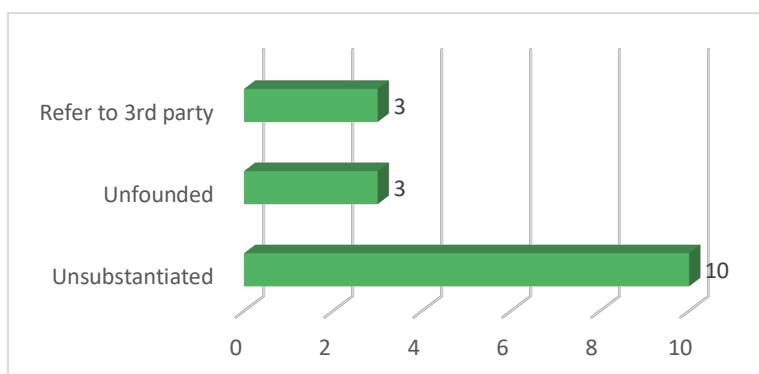
Appendix 2: 2017 Safeguarding Data for Minors

Concluded assessments

Substantiated complaints

Role	Allegation	Restricted from pastoral activity	Referred to civil authorities
Diocesan priest	Sexual abuse	Yes	Yes
Religious priest	Sexual abuse	Yes	Yes
Lay person	Sexual abuse	Yes	Yes

Non-substantiated complaints



Risk assessments

Concluded (including substantiated, Unsubstantiated, unfounded and referred to 3 rd party)	19
Ongoing	12

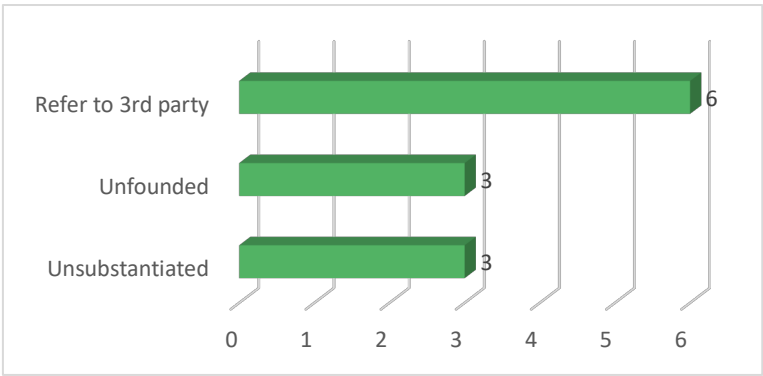
Appendix 3: 2017 Safeguarding Data for Vulnerable Adults

Concluded assessments

Substantiated complaints

None

Non-substantiated complaints



Risk assessments

Concluded (including substantiated, Unsubstantiated, unfounded and referred to 3 rd party)	12
Ongoing	3

Appendix 4: Glossary of terms

Term		Description
Church personnel		Refers to clergy (bishops, priests and deacons), consecrated persons, members of apostolic life and lay people (employed or volunteers) appointed to work in pastoral activity or in supporting the Church's mission.
Conclusion of a complaint	<i>Refer to 3rd Party</i>	Complaints which do not relate to safeguarding concerns but still need to be dealt with by other entities, both within and outside of the Church.
	<i>Substantiated</i>	Evidence was able to prove that the allegation did happen.
	<i>Unfounded</i>	Evidence was able to prove that the allegation was false.
	<i>Unsubstantiated</i>	It cannot be proven if the allegation did or did not happen
	<i>Pastoral activity</i>	Any activity that involves the Catholic Church or its mission.
Protection of Minors Act (POMA) Court Application		A request from the Voluntary Jurisdiction Section of the Civil Court (First Hall) for information which may be registered in the Register in respect of any applicant, or person who is employed, or holds any position with the same institution, establishment or organisation whether such employment or position is against payment or otherwise. This is regulated by the Protection of Minors (Registration) Act of the Laws of Malta.
Restriction from pastoral ministry		A temporary or permanent decision to suspend personnel from some or all pastoral activity.
Safeguarding-specific training		Training to raise awareness of the responsibility of Church personnel to identify signs of abuse and report concerns. The training also gives tools to personnel to create a safe environment for minors and vulnerable adults.
Types of abuse	<i>Bullying</i>	Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Kids who bully use their power such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity to control or harm others.
	<i>Emotional</i>	Minors who are emotionally abused are subjected or exposed to behaviour that may result in psychological trauma including anxiety, depression or post-traumatic stress disorder.
	<i>Exploitation</i>	The act of using a child for profit, labour, sexual gratification, or some other personal or financial advantage.
	<i>Neglect</i>	Neglect is the ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs. It's dangerous and minors can suffer serious and long-term harm.
	<i>Physical</i>	Physical abuse is deliberately or neglectfully hurting a child causing injuries such as bruises, broken bones, burns or cuts.
	<i>Poor practice</i>	Where the behaviour of Church personnel may be causing distress to a child or vulnerable adult or any behaviour that conflicts the standards of behaviour expected or which infringes an individual's rights.
	<i>Sexual</i>	A child is sexually abused when they are forced, persuaded or threatened to take part in sexual activities. There is usually a power difference between victim and perpetrator; as well as a significant disparity between their intellectual capacity or maturity.