

## SOCIAL POLICY COMMISSION 17/18

Meeting #2

University of Malta, the KSU Common Room

9th August 2017, 18.30

### MINUTES

1. Approval of agenda  
Agenda approved
2. Approval of minutes  
Minutes approved
3. Update on the functioning of the Social Policy  
Gabriella Sutton (KPS Commissioner): Table a motion is a good communication tool that is being already being used by some of you. Make sure to put forward any topics you'd like to discuss in KPS through it. With regards to the poll for meeting dates we got a good response and we'll continue using it.
4. Update on the secularisation of state subcommittee  
Sean Ellul (Subcommittee member | KNZ): It was a very fruitful discussion, especially since there was a variety in beliefs. It was agreed that the article in the constitution is ultimately extra as it does not have much influence on parliamentary discussions or legislation being enacted. According to statistics, the majority of the Maltese are Roman Catholic. The constitution should indeed be a representation of the ideals of the people which it represents thus it makes sense to keep it. Removing it does not take away or add any rights.
5. Update on guidelines for the recognition of student societies.  
Robert Napier (KSU president): A report is being compiled that will be passed on to senate. In the coming months, a consultation session will be organised between you and the senate where queries may be addressed and points for clarification may be brought up. Nothing is going to be done without the approval of KPS.
6. The University of Malta Act  
Gabriella Sutton (KPS Commissioner): a University of Malta Act has been drafted that puts forward new frameworks and structures. A KE/KPS working group has been set up to go through it thoroughly and draft a feedback document. The recommendations will then be discussed in a joint KE/KPS meeting. Those of you who are interested in taking part can send an email on [socialpolicy@ksu.org.mt](mailto:socialpolicy@ksu.org.mt).
7. Legalisation of marijuana  
Gabriella Sutton: Many discussions are currently centered round the legalisation of marijuana. We would like to know what you think.

Jake Camilleri (ELSA): Legalising recreational use of marijuana has several benefits, namely that it allows safer drugs on the street, creates jobs and it may be a huge tax incentive. The island is already known as a second Ibiza and this will surely boost tourism. However, strict legislation has to be in place to ensure that it doesn't end up in the wrong hands. Studies have to be carried out which clearly determine pros and cons. One cannot ignore the fact that at the same time, a medical debate is going on where one side is heavily against it and the other is very much in favour.

Jake Boyle (CSA): It's also important to keep in mind that legalisation will lift a burden from the Malta Police Force. If you take the UK as an example, last year 11 000 were arrested for possession.

Luca Arrigo (laeste): In our law, there is a regulation that stipulates that medical use of marijuana can be prescribed by a doctor, upon which the written permission of a superintendent needs to be acquired in order to buy it. Getting access to it is difficult and very few people are aware of this possibility. In fact, during the one year it has been available for, it's never been resorted to. It is a fact of life that people smoke weed. It is also a fact that the biggest crime locally concerns drugs. Legalisation would diminish black market abuse. It would also properly regulate personal use and this should be done in a manner that prevents recreational drug use as much as possible. In fact, all drugs should be decriminalised to diminish public nuisance and potentiality of harm due to not knowing what the ingredients you're buying actually are. It is crucial that this is backed up with an educational campaign that informs the public on the harm that it may cause to users.

Katrina Farrugia (Betapsi): Most research shows that Marijuana triggers schizophrenia.

Luca Arrigo (laeste): And alcohol can lead to dementia, yet it's legal. We should be able to identify people who are smoking too much and take action from there rather than not legalise it.

Mathias Mallia (Insite): There is no correlation between recreational use of marijuana and schizophrenia. It may actually have medical benefits for people who are schizophrenic. Marijuana can be an aid for drug users. Legalization in certain countries has decreased heroin addiction. Most of the people being arrested in connection with marijuana are under 18. Decriminalisation can bring with it strict regulations and educational efforts that diminish underage abuse.

Sean Ellul (KNZ): We shouldn't be advocating recreational use only. It can be taken for any reason.

Hanien Alouzi (SHS): One should discuss the perception of drugs. The word is equated to shame and fear. Without speaking in favour or against it, I must point out

that making it a villain will only postpone the debate on an issue that is becoming part of society. More research needs to be carried out.

Luca Arrigo (laeste): Currently, opioids are prescribed to treat symptoms that can be treated by medical marijuana. Pharmacies make a bigger mark-up from this therefore one also needs to bear in mind that behind laws there are economic markets. Some people are suffering and there are means to stop the suffering. Freedom of decision in choice of medication is something that should be given importance.

Jake Camilleri (ELSA): The truth is that certain drugs such as sleeping pills and pain relievers are legal and people are addicted to them. These clearly can be beneficial but may also crop up addiction. It ultimately all boils down to the person. What is necessary is a strong educational campaign that presents pros and cons and promotes moderation.

Cynthia Chircop (We Are): a lot of good points have been made but let's keep in mind that university students are a micro-society, so even if we give our opinion via KSU, the general attitude will be that university students shouldn't interfere as it is not their expertise. What we need to focus on is how legalisation of marijuana impacts students, even at secondary and post-secondary levels. What happens to student life if it's legal?

Jean Gove (GhST): We shouldn't present marijuana as magic. Education and research are very important and this should all be carried out in the local context as this might affect if and how we legalise it. We cannot forget that Malta has a particular setting. Primarily, in all our discussions we should prioritise the common good of society. The law needs to cater for everyone. The possibility of recreational use within certain limits and restrictions needs to be analysed from this perspective.

Stefan Galea (ESO): What tends to happen is that we shift focus from the legal aspect to a moral aspect. By legalising it, you're controlling it and that always has benefits.

Naomi Baldacchino (TSA): Marijuana and Cannabis are part of Cannabis tourism; an effective way of getting mass tourism and inject money into the economy.

Sean Ellul (KNZ): Research does exist. One should consider the effect of drugs. Adolescents have less motor reception. It's unethical to put humans in a situation where they're going to be exposed to damage. Education is fundamental if we're going to take a stand like this.

Mathias Mallia (Insite): Education needs to be accessible to everyone.

JC Fenech (Siera): While keeping in mind that education is important, we cannot generalise it and put under the same capping as alcohol and cigarettes. The perception behind it is different. In the context of drugs there's a lot of stigma, therefore education as to be catered for the specific problem. We must understand better the reason for the stigma. a focus group would be better equipped to tackle such issues.

Gabriella Sutton (Commissioner): The way forward seems to be to carry out more research that serves as a platform for effective research. We'll set up a working group where we can work on an educational campaign that incorporates everything. Subsequently, we can collect research that culminates in a position paper.

#### 8. Upcoming events - Domestic Violence campaign and blood drive

Gabriella Sutton (Commissioner): *Domestic violence campaign*: This campaign will have 2 main focal points: informal training sessions and a debate. The aspect of domestic violence we'll be focusing on is the non-visible: emotional and verbal abuse in youth relationships. The campaign will be part of a 16-day of activism campaign being organised by the Commission for domestic violence.

*Blood drive*: We would like student organisations to collaborate with us on this to promote the event and help out on the day. Send us an email if you're interested in participating.

*KPS workshops*: We only got four responses so far as to what topics the workshops should tackle. We need your input therefore discuss this with your execs and see what would be most useful. Should these workshops be held in one day or over the span of 2 days, like a live-in?

JC Fenech (Siera): If it's in the form of a live-in, how many people can attend?

Gabriella Sutton: There might be the possibility of incurring a charge.

JC Fenech (Siera): In October many organisations hold live-ins for their faculties. Clashes are inevitable. For certain faculties, the live-in is fundamental. Maybe it's better if it's held in summer.

Marquita Vella (Siera): It could be split into sessions over several days so it's much easier to fit into people's schedule.

Mathias Mallia (Insite): It would be more difficult to attend short seminars. The best solution si a day seminar.

Gabriella Sutton (Commissioner): We'll set up a poll to establish a date.

#### 9. Arising matters - Pembroke school building on ODZ



Gabriella Sutton (Commissioner): Many opinions have already been divulged on a national level. It would be great if KSU releases an opinion piece on the matter.

JC Fenech (Siera): First and foremost, one must consult students and locals of the region. There should be a bottom up approach towards the issue. Maybe we could do something like what was organised last year in qui si sana.

Gabriella Sutton (Commissioner): We'll look into the possibility of drafting an informed opinion which we'll send out to all organisations. Kindly email us back with any further suggestions or points that you would like to bring forward.

Meeting adjourned: 19:50