



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

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PRESS RELEASE

“WORKERS ON THE MOVE”: Malta marks its 6th Anniversary in the EU

Parliamentary Secretary for Consumers, Fair Competition, Local Councils and Public Dialogue Dr. Chris Said today stated that while the European Union has been working to remove legal and administrative hurdles to the free movement of workers, more still has to be done to increase worker mobility. The Parliamentary Secretary, who was delivering the closing address at today’s business breakfast entitled *Workers on the Move*, organised by MEUSAC to mark the 6th anniversary of Malta’s accession to the EU, said that the younger generation should be made aware of the many opportunities the EU offers including working in other EU Member States. He also stated that internships could be the direction to be undertaken in order to secure greater worker mobility, more and better jobs, and enhanced social cohesion and better integration across Europe.

The business breakfast, which also coincided with Workers’ Day, focused on the rights and protection of workers in the European Union and how Maltese workers are faring in the European market as a result of Malta’s accession.

Three keynote speakers, Mr William Martin, Acting Head of the European Commission Representation in Malta, Mr Joseph Farrugia, Director General of the Malta Employers’ Association (MEA) and Ms Anna Borg from the Centre for Labour Studies of the University of Malta and a member of MEUSAC’s Core Group, presented the European and the local dimension on employment.

Mr Martin gave an overview of the rights and protection of workers in the EU. He stated that the EU requires a good social policy so as to ensure that workers are not at risk when moving from one Member State to another. Mr Martin also mentioned challenges which the new Commission will be facing. These include the creation of a European skills competencies and occupational classification, amending the Workers’ Directive and the Working Time Directive, and furthering gender equality.

Mr Farrugia explained how Maltese workers have gained more rights and better protection in the EU. Whilst reiterating that the MEA is in favour of retaining the opt-out clause in the Working Time Directive, Mr Farrugia stated that retaining the clause would imply that



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employees should still have a right to withdraw from working beyond 48 hours. Employees have gained ground within the EU as local companies opt to invest in other EU Member States. “Most important is, however, the fact that through EU accession, employers and workers alike can participate actively in social dialogue,” concluded Mr Farrugia.

Ms Borg spoke about women in employment in Malta, stating that most women give up work on the birth of their children in view of the lack of childcare services, limited after school schemes, and unpaid parental leave and urgent family leave. Ms Borg stated that although the EU has helped improve issues related to gender equality in Malta, both Government and the EU have a major role to play in ensuring that dual earner families have supporting structures at work as well as the harmonisation of services across Europe so as to ensure mobility.

The three presentations were followed by a comments and questions by participants at the breakfast event, and by presentations by beneficiaries of EU funded projects related to employment:

- ESF funded project *Employability Programme* whereby ETC was entrusted with €5.25 million to provide training to enhance the employability and productivity of job seekers as well as inactive workers.
- *Inclusive ICT Training and Development Programme* which promoted access to information technology (IT) to persons having physical and intellectual disabilities.
- *Promoting Equal Opportunities through Empowerment*, an project funded by the EU’s Equal Initiative Community Programme 2004-2006 which aimed at reaching out to the inactive segment of the Maltese population, particularly women, and encouraging them to join the labour market as well as encouraging unemployed or inactive individuals working in the informal economy, to participate in the formal labour market.
- The Malta Tourism Authority’s ESF funded project *Merħba*.
- *STEPS* project through which a significant number of students were assisted to further their academic studies at higher levels of education.

The Business Breakfast was chaired by MEUSAC Head Dr Vanni Xuereb who spoke about the coincidence of Workers’ Day and the 6th anniversary of Malta’s accession to the EU in the context of the EU’s Europe 2020 Strategy. The new strategy, that will replace the 2000-2010 Lisbon Strategy, sets out a vision of how the EU can come out stronger from the current economic crisis and secure jobs, competitiveness and social cohesion.

MEUSAC 03.05.2010