

MEUSAC CORE GROUP DISCUSSES EUROPEAN MARITIME TRANSPORT

The Core Group of the Malta-EU Steering and Action Committee (MEUSAC) met again today under the chairmanship of the Hon. Dr. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information.

The main topic on the Agenda was the EU's Maritime Transport Policy in view of the Commission's recent proposals on:

1. Strategic goals and recommendations for the EU's maritime transport policy until 2018;
2. A Communication and action plan with a view to establishing a European maritime transport space without barriers; and
3. Reporting formalities for ships arriving in and/or departing from ports of the EU Member States.

Following presentations by Mr Julian Micallef, Acting Head Consultation at MEUSAC, and by Mr Charles Abela, Deputy Executive Director (Ports) at the Malta Maritime Authority (MMA), various members raised a number of points in relation to these proposals.

The Communication on the strategic goals and recommendations for the EU's maritime transport policy is intended to address pressures from globalisation and competition in particular with regard to quality shipping relocating overseas, as well as to address economic and energy-related crises.

In relation to the Communication and action plan with regard to establishing a European maritime transport space without frontiers, much of the discussion centred on the need to enhance the reputation of the Maltese flag. Among the issues raised by Core Group members were:

- the repercussions of the Commission's communication on EU seafarers and port workers;
- passenger rights for users of ferry and cruise services;
- better links between islands;
- the need to ensure a level playing field for Maltese manufacturers' competitiveness in particular with regard to maritime transport between Malta and the UK;
- the lack of border controls on merchandise imported on ferries; and
- a better synergy between local authorities with regard to imported goods.

Mr Charles Abela explained that the EU recognises the need for greater visibility within the International Maritime Organisation as well as the need to establish a maritime transport space without borders through simplified customs procedures. He re-assured Core Group members that consultations are currently being held in order to ascertain how port and pilot workers will be affected by the Communication, and that Malta Enterprise is conducting studies on transport between islands, including between Malta and the UK. Mr Abela said that the Communication is not pertinent to a discussion on flag registration issues.

Concluding the discussion, Parliamentary Secretary Dr. Said suggested that the maritime transport presentations delivered to the members of the Core Group should also be presented to members of the MCESD in view of the possible economic and social impact locally.

Civil Society Fund

Members of the Core Group discussed the Civil Society Fund which is aimed at offering financial support to constituted bodies and representative organisations for EU related activities. The discussion centred on whether the CSF should be retained in its present form or transformed into a co-financing fund for EU projects, or be modified to have elements of both.

As a result of the discussion, it was agreed that bilateral meetings between MEUSAC and Core Group member organisations would be held and that a proposal would be drawn up that would take into consideration the views expressed.

Sectoral Committees

The Parliamentary Secretary, the Hon. Chris Said, informed Core Group members that the Sectoral Committees' secretaries have been recruited and that the Committees will be meeting between the 12th March and the 9th April. He also noted that by the next meeting of the Core Group, three NGO representatives will have been elected to represent the voluntary sector organisations on the Core Group.

Members in attendance

Present for the meeting of the Core Group were: Parliamentary Secretary The Hon. Dr. Chris Said (*Chairperson*), Dr. Vanni Xuereb (Head MEUSAC), Dr. Godwin Grima (Principal Permanent Secretary), Mr. Richard Cachia Caruana (Permanent Representative to the EU), Mr. Julian Micallef (Acting Head of Consultation, MEUSAC and Secretary of the Core Group), Ms. Graziella Pullicino (Acting Head of the EU Secretariat - OPM), Dr. Gabriella Pace (Head of Information MEUSAC), Dr. Josette Grech, Mr. Carmel Cacopardo (Alternattiva Demokratika), Mr. Arthur Rossi (Confederation of Malta Trade Unions), Mr. Vince Farrugia (GRTU), Mr. Tony Zarb (General Workers' Union), Mr. Joe Grech (Gozo Business Chamber), Mr. Kevin Bonello and Eng. Ray Muscat (Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry), Dr. Paul De Battista (Malta Employers' Association), Mr. Alexander Bonello (Malta Hotel and Restaurants Association), The Hon. Dr. Luciano Busuttil (Partit Laburista), Dr. Paul Borg Olivier (Partit Nazzjonalista), Mr. Jesmond Bonello (Union Haddiema Magħqudin) as well as substitute members, MMA and Customs Department officials, members of staff of MEUSAC and of the EU Secretariat (OPM).

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IL-CORE GROUP TAL-MEUSAC JIDDISKUTI T-TRASPORT MARITTIMU EWROPEW

Illum, f'Dar il-Mediterran għall-Konferenzi, iltaqa' l-*Core Group* tal-Malta-EU *Steering and Action Committee* (MEUSAC) taħt il-presidenza tas-Segretarju Parlamentari għall-Konsultazzjoni Pubblika u Informazzjoni, Dott. Chris Said.

Fuq l-aġenda kien hemm għad-diskussjoni l-Politika għat-Trasport Marittimu tal-Unjoni Ewropea minhabba li fil-21 ta' Jannar il-Kummissjoni Ewropea f'arġet bi proposti dwar:

1. Miri strateġiċi u rakkomandazzjonijiet għall-politika tat-trasport marittimu tal-UE sal-2018
2. Komunikazzjoni u pjan ta'azzjoni bil-ħsieb li tiġi stabbilita zona Ewropea tat-trasport marittimu mingħajr fruntieri; u
3. Formalitajiet ta' rrapportar għal bastimenti li jaslju fi jew jitolqu minn portijiet tal-Istati Membri tal-Komunità.

Wara l-prezentazzjonijiet li taw is-Sur Julian Micallef, Agent Kap tal-Konsultazzjoni fi ħdan il-MEUSAC, u s-Sur Charles Abela, *Deputy Executive Director (Ports)* fi ħdan l-Awtorità Marittima ta' Malta, diversi membri qajmu punti għad-diskussjoni dwar dawn il-proposti.

Il-Komunikazzjoni fuq l-għanijiet strateġiċi u r-rakkomandazzjonijiet għall-politika tat-trasport marittimu tal-UE hija maħsuba li tindirizza sfidi marbuta mal-globalizzazzjoni u l-kompetizzjoni rigward il-kwalità ta' vjaġġar bil-vapuri rilokati barra, kif ukoll biex tindirizza kriżijiet marbuta mal-ekonomija u l-enerġija.

Dwar il-Komunikazzjoni u l-pjan ta' azzjoni bil-ħsieb li tiġi stabbilita zona Ewropea tat-trasport marittimu mingħajr fruntieri, il-membri tal-*Core Group* saħħqu dwar il-ħtieġa li tittejjeb ir-reputazzjoni tal-bandiera Maltija. Issem mew diversi punti, fosthom:

- ir-riperkussjonijiet tal-Komunikazzjoni tal-Kummissjoni fuq il-baħħara fl-UE u l-ħaddiema tal-portijiet;
- drittijiet tal-passiġġieri li jużaw il-vapur u l-*cruise liners*.
- titjib fil-mezzi ta' trasport bejn il-gzejjer;
- il-ħtieġa li jkun hemm assigurazzjoni ta' livell ekwu tal-kompetittività tal-manifatturi Maltin, partikolarment rigward it-trasport marittimu bejn Malta u r-Renju Unit;
- in-nuqqas ta' kontrolli mal-fruntieri fuq merkanzija impurtati fuq vapuri li ma jgorrux merkanzija; u
- sinerġija aħjar bejn l-awtoritajiet lokali dwar kontrolli tal-merkanzija

Is-Sur Charles Abela spjega li l-UE tirrikonoxxi l-bżonn ta' iktar viżibilità fi ħdan l-Organizzazzjoni Internazzjonali Marittima kif ukoll il-bżonn li tiġi stabbilita zona Ewropea tat-trasport marittimu mingħajr fruntieri permezz ta' proċeduri tad-dwana aktar simplifikati. Huwa assigura l-membri tal-*Core Group* li l-MMA qiegħda twestaq serje ta' konsultazzjonijiet biex tistabbilixxi kif jistgħu jintlaqtu l-ħaddiema tal-port u dawk li jsuqu l-*pilot boats*, u qal li l-*Malta Enterprise* qiegħda tagħmel studji dwar l-impatt tat-trasport bejn il-gzejjer, inkluż bejn Malta u r-Renju Unit. Is-Sur Abela qal li l-Komunikazzjoni għad-diskussjoni ma tirrelatax ma' kwistjonijiet dwar ir-registrazzjoni tal-vapuri.

Fi tmiem id-diskussjoni dwar il-Politika għat-Trasport Marittimu tal-UE, is-Segretarju Parlamentari, Dott. Said issuġġerixxa li l-prezentazzjonijiet li ngħataw lill-membri tal-*Core Group* għandhom ikunu pprezentati wkoll lill-membri tal-MCESD minhabba l-impatt ekonomiku u soċjali li din il-politika jista' jkollha f'pajjżna.

Fond għas-Socjetà Ċivili

Il-Membri tal-*Core Group* iddiskutew il-Fond għas-Socjetà Ċivili. Dan il-fond huwa mmirat biex jagħti sostenn finanzjarju lill-korpi kostitwiti u organizzazzjonijiet rappreżentattivi biex jorganizzaw

attivitajiet relatati mal-politika tal-Unjoni Ewropea. Id-diskussjoni ffukat fuq jekk il-Fond għandux iżomm l-istess format li ntuża għal dawn l-aħħar snin, jew jekk għandux jinbidel f'fond għal ko-finanzjament ta' proġetti tal-UE, jew inkella jiġi mmodifikat b'tali mod li jgawdi taħlita tat-tnejn.

Ġie deciż li għandhom isiru laqgħat bilaterali bejn il-MEUSAC u l-organizzazzjonijiet rappreżentati fil-*Core Group* u li tiffassal proposta li tiegħu in konsiderazzjoni l-opinjoni espressi.

Kumitati Settorjali

Is-Segretarju Parlamentari, l-Onor. Chris Said, informa l-membri tal-*Core Group* li s-segretarji tal-Kumitati Settorjali ġew reklutati u li l-Kumitati Settorjali se jiltaqgħu bejn it-12 ta' Marzu u 9 ta' April. Huwa tenna li sal-laqgħa li jmiss tal-*Core Group* għandhom jintgħazlu t-tliet rappreżentanti tal-għaqdiet mhux governattivi biex jirrapprezentaw lill-organizzazzjonijiet tas-settur volontarju fi ħdan il-*Core Group*.

Membri preżenti

Preżenti għal-laqgħa tal-*Core Group* kien hemm: Is-Segretarju Parlamentari, l-Onor. Dott. Chris Said (*Chairperson*), Dott. Vanni Xuereb (Kap, MEUSAC), Dott. Godwin Grima (Segretarju Permanenti Ewlieni), is-Sur Richard Cachia Caruana (Rappreżentant Permanenti għall-UE), is-Sur Julian Micallef (Agent Kap tal-Konsultazzjoni, MEUSAC u Segretarju tal-*Core Group*), Ms Graziella Pullicino (A/Kap, Segretarjat UE), Dott. Gabriella Pace (Kap tal-Infommazzjoni, MEUSAC), Dott. Josette Grech, is-Sur Carmel Cacopardo (Alternattiva Demokratika), is-Sur Arthur Rossi (Confederation of Malta Trade Unions), is-Sur Vince Farrugia (GRTU), is-Sur Tony Zarb (General Workers' Union), is-Sur Joe Grech (Gozo Business Chamber), Kevin Bonello u l-Ing. Ray Muscat (Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry), Dott. Paul De Battista (Malta Employers' Association), is-Sur Alexander Bonello (Malta Hotel and Restaurants Association), l-Onor. Dott. Luciano Busuttil (Partit Laburista), Dott. Paul Borg Olivier (Partit Nazzjonalista), is-Sur Jesmond Bonello (Union Haddiema Magħqudin) kif ukoll membri sostituti, uffiċjali mill-MMA u d-Dipartiment tad-Dwana, membri tal-*istaff* tal-MEUSAC u tas-Segretarjat UE (OPM).

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