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PRESS RELEASE

Public Consultation on EU Labour Law Green Paper

Forum Malta fl-Ewropa today held a well-attended Information and Consultation seminar for stakeholders and interested parties on the European Commission's Green Paper *Modernising Labour Law to Meet the Challenges of the 21st Century* with the aim of stimulating public debate. *Forum*, which acts as the bridge between the European Union and civil society organised this seminar as part of the European Commission's four-month public consultation process launched last November via on the issue of this Green Paper.

In his welcome address, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Michael Frendo, said that the European Commission's initiative to modernise labour law shows that the European Union is open to challenges which it is facing due to globalisation. Minister Frendo reiterated that the European Union is prepared to move ahead in an ever changing world and that globalisation is a reality which we have to live with. It is because of this, Minister Frendo sustained, that the European Union has to welcome challenges brought by globalisation in particular through the free movement of persons as well as ever increasing travel abroad, whilst sustaining competitiveness and supporting the targets set by the Lisbon Agenda. Minister Frendo stressed that Malta also has to welcome these challenges by being viable yet respecting social processes.

In his concluding remarks, Minister Frendo commended *Forum Malta fl-Ewropa* for having organized yet another successful session with a view to linking developments taking place in the European Union to Maltese civil society and stakeholders.

Minister Frendo's address was followed by that of Dr Gabriella Pace, *Forum's* Chief Executive. Dr Pace explained the *raison d'etre* of the Green Paper and outlined the main issues which led to its issue by the European Commission. She reiterated that flexibility and security, have become two of the most commonly used buzzwords as a result of various developments which have led to businesses organising themselves on a more flexi basis while ensuring a level of security to their employees. In his intervention Dr Noel Vella, Director of Employment and Industrial Relations explained that an increase in atypical contracts, including fixed-term, part-time and on-call arrangements, zero-hour contracts and contracts for temporary hired workers, are now an established feature of the EU-25 labour market.

These three interventions were followed by an interactive panel discussion with the participation of Tony Zarb (General Workers Union), Gejtu Vella (Union Ħaddiema Magħqudin), William Portelli (Confederation of Malta Trade Unions), Joe Farrugia (Malta Employers Association), John Scicluna (Malta Federation of Industry) and Maria Pia Chircop (Foundation for Human Resources Development). In her intervention, the FHRD representative underlined the importance of lifelong learning and training of staff. Tony Zarb explained that collective agreements constitute a partnership between the employer and the trade union and insisted that the Green Paper should not alienate the Member States' attention from the focus on the Lisbon agenda. Joe Farrugia, MEA's Director General underlined the importance of subsidiarity and emphasised that collective bargaining is one of Malta's strengths. This point was reiterated by both William Portelli and John Scicluna who also added that the Green Paper must also be seen in the wider context of other problems that need to be tackled, such as the high EU unemployment rate.

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STQARRIJA GĦALL-ISTAMPA

Konsultazzjoni Pubblika dwar il-*Green Paper* rigward il-Liġi tax-Xogħol

Forum Malta fl-Ewropa illum organizza seminar informattiv u ta' konsultazzjoni dwar il-Green Paper *L-Immodernizzar tal-Liġi tax-Xogħol Sabiex Nilqgħu għall-Isfidi tas-Seklu 21* bil-għan li jitkompla l-proċess ta' konsultazzjoni li f' Novembru 2006, inbeda mill-Kummissjoni Ewropea. Dan il-proċess konsultattiv huwa mistenni li jintemm fl-a]]ar ta' Marzu.

Is-*seminar* li għalih attendiet udjenza numeruża, infetaħ b'indirizz mill-Ministru ta' l-Affarijiet Barranin Michael Frendo. Huwa saħaq li din l-inizzjattiva tal-Kummissjoni Ewropea sabiex timmodernizza il-liġi tax-xogħol, turi li l-Unjoni Ewropea qed tilqa' l-isfidi li qed taffaċja minħabba l-globalizzazzjoni. Il-Ministru Frendo kompla jgħid li dan juri li l-Unjoni Ewropea lesta timxi maż-żminijiet li kull ma jmur dejjem qed jinbidlu u qal li l-globalizzazzjoni hija realta` li rridu ngħixu magħha u ma nistgħux naharbu minna. Proprju għalhekk, il-Ministru Frendo zied jgħid, l-Unjoni Ewropea trid tilqa' l-isfidi li l-globalizzazzjoni qed toħloq minħabba iktar ċaqliq ħieles ta' persuni u vjaġġar waqt li nibqgħu kompettittivi u nsostnu l-miri elenkati fl-Istrategija ta' Lisbona. Malta wkoll trid tilqa' din l-isfida billi nkunu vijabli filwaqt li nirrispettaw l-aspett soċjali. Huwa fa]]ar lill-*Forum*

Malta fl-Ewropa ta' l-inizjattiva u rringrazzjah g]all-hidma tieg]u sabiex iressaq l-i\viluppi li jkunu qed ise]]u fl-Unjoni Ewropea eqreb lejn is-socjeta ċivili Maltija.

Il-Ministru Frendo ġie segwit minn preżentazzjoni minn Dr Gabriella Pace, il-Kap Eżekuttiv tal-*Forum Malta fl-Ewropa.* Dr Gabriella Pace spjegat il-proċess li wassal biex il-Kummisjoni Ewropea tniedi din il-*Green Paper*. Hija saħqet illi l-aġenda ta' l-Unjoni Ewropea bħal kollox, ikollha impatt fuq pajjiżna, għalhekk, kompliet ittenni Dr Pace, għandna niġġeneraw diskussjoni ma' l-imsieħba soċjali sabiex anke pajjiżna jkollu rwol attiv fit-tfassil tal-liġijiet Ewropej. Il-kliem 'flessibilità' u 'sigurtà', qalet Dr Pace, saru tnejn mill-aktar kelmiet li jintużaw fis-suq tax-xogħol minħabba diversi żviluppi li qed iwasslu sabiex in-negozji jibdew jorganizzaw irwieħhom fuq bażi aktar flessibli, izda li fl-istess ħin għandhom jagħtu xorta waħda sens ta' sigurtà lill-impjegati tagħhom.

Dr Noel Vella, id-Direttur fid-Dipartiment għar-Relazzjonijiet Industrijali u Impjieg, spjega l-punti ewlenin tal-Green Paper. Huwa qal li l-kuntratti għal żmien definit, dawk tal-*part-time*, arranġamenti għall-*on-call*, kuntratti msejħa *zero-hour* u kuntratti għal ħaddiema temporanji, kollha saru xi ħaġa komuni fis-suq tax-xogħol Ewropew. Huwa qal li minħabba din il-bidla, kif ukoll minħabba d-Direttiva tax-Xogħol, pajjiżna wkoll għandu jilqa' din l-isfida.

Segwiet imbagħad diskussjoni tajba minn panel magħmul minn numru ta' uffiċjali ewlenin mill-General Workers Union, il-Union Ħaddiema Magħqudin, il-Confederation of Malta Trade Unions, il-Malta Employers Association, il-Federation of Industry u l-Foundation for Human Resources Development (FHRD) li qajmu diversi punti interessanti. Fl-intervent tag]ha, Maria Pia Chircop mill-FHRD sahqet l-importanza tat-ta]rig kontinwu g]all-]addiema. Tony Zarb, Segretarju {enerali tal-GWU spjega illi l-ftehim kollettiv jikkostitwixxi *partnership* bejn min i]addem u r-rappre\entanti tal-]addiema. Huwa insista illi l-Green Paper m'g]andhiex taljena l-attenzjoni ta' l-Istati Membri mill-miri ta' l-Istrate[ija ta' Lisbona. Joe farrugia, id-Direttur {enerali ta' l-MEA issottolinea l-importanza tas-sussidjarjetà u emfasizza illi Malta hija b'sa]]itha f'dak li g]andu x'jaqsam ma' ftehim kollettiv. Dan il-punt sar ukoll minn William Portelli u min John Scicluna. Dan ta' l-a]]ar emfasizza ukoll illi l-Green Paper g]andha ti[i diskussa fil-kuntest usa' ta' problemi o]ra li jridu ji[u affrontati, b]ar-rata g]olja ta' qag]ad fl-UE.

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