



L-Għażla Tiegħek

Gunju hu xahar importanti hafna għall-Ewropa bl-Elezzjonijiet tal-Parlament Ewropew (PE) ischħu propju fl-cwewel granet tiegħu. Sal-harġa li jmiss ta' din in-*newsletter* inkunu nafu kemm harġu ċittadini Maltin u Ewropej jivvutaw, kif ukoll l-ismijiet tal-hames (jew sitt) kandidati eletti biex jirrappreżentawna fil-PE għall-hames snin li għejjin.

S'issa jidher li l-ammont ta' ċittadini li se jivvutaw se jkun inqas minn dak li kien hames snin ilu: haġa li tħassibna hafna, għax tista' turi li m'ahniex nifhmu biżżejjed l-importanza ta' din l-istituzzjoni Ewropea u kemm dak li tagħmel hu relevanti għalina. Fl-ahħar mill-ahħar, id-deputati li neleggju fil-PE huma l-lehen tagħna fl-Ewropa iktar minn kull istituzzjoni oħra. Il-hidma tal-membri tal-PE tissarraf f'affarijiet bħal ambjent aktar nadif, servizzi u impjigi ahjar, harsien aqwa għall-konsumatur, u iktar ugwaljanza fl-opportunitajiet.

Irridu nifhmu li llum hafna mill-igijiet li jirrigwardaw il-hajja tagħna ta' kuljum isiru mill-Parlament Ewropew flimkien mal-Kunsill tal-Ministri filwaqt li l-PE jiddeciedi affarijiet bħal fejn jiġu allokati l-fondi tal-UE.

Importanti li nżommu f'moħħna li jekk, kif probabbli ha jsehh, jiġi rratifikat it-Trattat ta' Liżbona mill-Istati Membri kollha, il-poteri tal-PE se jiżdedu, mhux biss dawk legiżlattivi iżda anke f'dak li għandu x'jaqsam ma' kontroll ikbar fuq il-Kummissjoni Ewropea.

Is-*slogan* magħżul mill-PE biex ihajjar iċ-ċittadini Ewropej biex jivvutaw hu "l-għażla tiegħek". Bil-vot tagħna, ahna nagħzlu s-soluzzjonijiet għal kwistjonijiet li jolqtuna foqasma bħas-sigurta', l-enerġija, *fuel* u bidla fil-klima, ikel u agrikoltura, migrazzjoni, standardizzazzjoni, harsien tal-konsumatur, baġit, opportunitajiet ugwali u swieq finanzjarji.

Għalhekk, inhegġeg lil kull ċittadin Ewropew li għandu l-jedd li jivvota fis-6 ta' Gunju biex dak-inhar jeżerċita dan id-dritt mill-iktar fundamentali u b'hekk jagħzel lil min jixtieq li jirrappreżentah fil-PE għall-hames snin li għejjin.

Vanni Xuereb

Core Group meets EC President's Head of Cabinet

Following a request from Mr Joao Vale de Almeida, Head of Cabinet of the President of the European Commission (EC) Jose Manoel Durao Barroso, a meeting with the members of the Core Group of MEUSAC was held on 15 May.

Mr Vale de Almeida said that Malta's accession to the European Union proved to be a big success for the country. He stated that the enlargement of the Union represented a historical achievement for both political and economical reasons as this enhanced democracy and freedom and boosted the European Union's competitiveness and economy, enabling the EU to better face the challenges of the financial crisis.

He reiterated that the Commission understands the challenges being faced by Malta in particular with respect to illegal immigration and assured members of the Core Group that the EC's approach towards this problem is positive and that the EC is very willing to try to find solutions together with all the countries. Mr Vale de Almeida stated that immigration is not a Maltese problem but a European problem which calls for the need for European solidarity. He also stated that the EU is part of the solution and not of the problem.

- Discussion focused on, amongst other matters:
- ▶ the efforts by the Commission to create new and/or sustain existing jobs;
 - ▶ whether burden sharing by Member States should be made obligatory;
 - ▶ ratification of the Lisbon Treaty before 2010;
 - ▶ the priorities that the new Commission should focus on in terms of external relations and the internal market;
 - ▶ the role of Research, Development and Innovation;
 - ▶ the role of women in view of targets set by the Lisbon Agenda;
 - ▶ whether the Commission is conscious enough of the needs of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SME).



Membri tal-Core Group tal-MEUSAC immexxija miċ-Chairperson, is-Segretarju Parlamentari Chris Said, fiż-żjara ta' korteżija lill-President ta' Malta, Dott. Goġ Abela fis-26 ta' Mejju li għadda. Il-President serva għal żewġ perjodi bħala membru tal-Core Group: qabel is-shubija ta' Malta fl-2004 kif ukoll bħala rappreżentant tal-Partit Laburista wara li l-MEUSAC twaqqaf mill-ġdid f'Lulju 2008.



Parliamentary Secretary Chris Said delivering the opening address. Interventions were also delivered by Alan Camilleri and Josef Formosa Gauci (first and second from right)



Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi delivering the closing address

MEUSAC National Conference on Five Years of EU Membership

On 20 May, the Malta-EU Steering and Action Committee organised a national conference to mark the 5th anniversary of Malta's accession to the European Union. This full-day event was well attended and participants included representatives of constituted bodies, government officials, members of the diplomatic corps, NGOs as well as the general public. A number of audiovisual clips featuring Maltese projects which have benefited from EU funding were also shown in the course of the day.

While welcoming participants, Dr Vanni Xuereb explained MEUSAC's structure and role and explained the work carried out in terms of the three principal functions of the organisation. An audiovisual production was also shown. In his opening address, Parliamentary Secretary Dr Chris Said, highlighted some of the benefits EU membership has brought to Malta, including funds for education, environmental projects and local councils, as well as challenges such as illegal immigration and climate change. Reference was also made to the assistance being provided by MEUSAC staff to local councils and NGOs in the preparation of applications for EU funding.

The impact of EU membership on the tourism sector was analysed by MTA Chief Executive Mr Josef Formosa Gauci, Mr Formosa Gauci referred to the increase in the number of incoming tourists from other Member States during these last five years and to the benefits that resulted for the tourism sector following the introduction of the euro. Over €13 million from the 2004-2006 structural funds allocation has been invested in the financing of tourism-related projects - tourism infrastructure, cultural heritage, assistance to tourism enterprises as well as human resources, to mention but a few. For the 2007-2013 financial period, €120 million have been earmarked specifically for this sector.

Mr Alan Camilleri, Malta Enterprise's Executive Chairman tackled the opportunities and challenges for the private sector with regard to trade, foreign direct investment and internationalisation. Prof. Joe Bannister, Chairman of the Malta Financial Services Authority, spoke about the first five years of EU membership as very exciting times for the financial services sector, also referring to the fact that Commissioner McCreevy recently congratulated Malta for topping the list of Member States, together with Denmark, with regard to the timely implementation of internal market rules.

Ms Marlene Bonnici, Director General of the Planning and Priorities Coordination Division (PPCD) within the Office of the Prime Minister, provided participants with a detailed overview of the results achieved and projects implemented with the assistance of the 2004-2006 structural and cohesion funds allocation. 87 projects were co-financed by the structural funds and three projects were implemented through the Cohesion Fund; furthermore Malta was a



Panel discussion (from left) Michael Cohen, David Casa MEP, Natalino Fenech, Louis Grech MEP and Anna Maria Darmanin



Participants in the national conference included representatives of constituted bodies, government officials, members of the diplomatic corps, NGOs as well as the general public

partner in 58 Interreg projects and also implemented seven EQUAL projects. Ms Bonnici described the 2004-2006 experience as a very positive one and stated that prospects for the 2007-2013 looked very good. She proudly added that Malta had a 0 per cent error rate on the funds received, compared to an EU average of 12 per cent error rate.

The conference also included two panel discussions. The first, led by PBS Head of News Dr Natalino Fenech, focused on the role of Maltese representatives in the various EU institutions and how these bridge the gap between these institutions and Maltese citizens and stakeholders. The participants were MEPs Louis Grech and David Casa, Michael Cohen (Head of the Maltese Delegation in the Committee of the Regions) and EESC member Anna Maria Darmanin. A point put across by all the speakers was that in the European Union, it is not the size of the Member State one hails from that matters, but the quality of the idea and the ability to convince through dialogue.

The second panel discussion was led by dive editor Vanessa Macdonald. Participating in this discussion were Dr Joanna Drake (Head of the EC Representation), Dr Gabriella Pace (Head - Information Unit, MEUSAC), Dr Julian Vassallo (Head - EP Valletta Office), Dr Michael Frenedo (Chairman of the House of Representatives' Foreign and European Affairs Committee), Dr Romina Bartolo (Europe Direct), and Jimmy Magro (Executive Secretary - Local Councils Association). The discussion tackled the



Panel discussion (from left) Jimmy Magro, Gabriella Pace, Joanna Drake, Vanessa Macdonald, Julian Vassallo, Michael Frenedo and Romina Bartolo

implications of EU membership for Maltese citizens and also discussed the importance of the European Parliament election and voter participation.

The closing address was delivered by Prime Minister Dr Lawrence Gonzi, who reiterated that EU membership was not just a matter of EU funds, adoption of the euro, or tackling environmental issues. He underlined the importance of Malta's active participation and contribution to a decision-making process affecting 500 million EU citizens. He referred to Malta's instrumental role in averting the wrong decisions being taken on ship registration which would have had negative repercussions for the EU's Mediterranean members, as well as to Malta's success in keeping 0 per cent VAT on medicines and food.

New publication on Grant Scheme for tourism enterprises

Yesterday morning, a publication featuring a selection of projects funded by the Grant Scheme for Tourism Enterprises (2004-2006) was launched in Gozo, as part of the programme of activities marking the fifth anniversary of Malta's accession to the European Union. The 32-page booklet, compiled by MEUSAC in collaboration with the Tourism and Sustainable Development Unit within the Office of the Prime Minister, is the third in the series entitled *L-Unjoni Ewropea Ghalija*, originally launched in 2008.

Tourism is one of the main bulwarks of the Maltese economy and a substantial proportion of funds have been invested in tourism infrastructure. EU funds have been used to improve tourism training facilities, enhance the tourism product, promote niche tourism in Gozo, help small and medium-sized enterprises to develop products and services, as well as to offer tailor-made training for employees in the tourism industry. A number of these projects have in fact already been showcased in the first two issues of this series of publications, as well as during various seminars or audiovisual productions.

The Grant Scheme for Tourism Enterprises (2004-2006) which is the focus of this new publication targeted serviced tourist accommodation establishments, farmhouses, catering establishments, English language schools, diving operations, private museums and tourism attrac-

tions, travel operators (incoming) and private tourism training centres or institutes. Interventions eligible for co-funding under the Scheme included upgrading interventions related to environmental management systems of enterprises, upgrading interventions related to the accessibility of enterprises, upgrading interventions on the physical product (infrastructural upgrading), upgrading interventions on privately-owned immovable heritage resources, upgrading and innovative interventions related to information and communications technologies (ICT), as well as marketing interventions through participation in international tourism fairs and workshops. This publication will in fact provide information and first-hand experiences on fourteen projects identified as best practices.

Following the success of this first Scheme, the new Grant Scheme for Sustainable Tourism Projects by Enterprises (2007-2013) was launched in December 2008, with a total budget allocation of approximately €10 million. The first call closed on 30 March 2009 and another two calls are scheduled for February 2010 and October 2010 respectively.

The Grant Scheme for Tourism Enterprises (2004-2006): Best Practices will be made available to operators in the tourism sector as well as to the general public in the coming weeks. Copies will also be available for collection from our offices. I trust readers will find it interesting and informative.

Gabriella Pace



An Integrated Maritime Policy involves everyone

Commissioner Joe Borg, responsible for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, was a distinguished participant at the Core Group's meeting held yesterday. Matters discussed included the Integrated Maritime Policy for the EU.

This ties in well with the Commission's initiative encouraging an integrated approach to maritime policy that involves policy-makers (at various levels) and stakeholders. In recent weeks Commissioner Borg has indeed said that it is stakeholders who can carry out this policy to reap the benefits it is intended to achieve.

The path that leads towards such an integrated policy has developed along the years. Starting out with an extensive consultation exercise through a Green Paper, in 2007 the European Commission adopted a Communication on this very matter. It included a number of suggested actions covering various areas in a bid to exploit opportunities and address related challenges.

Among the initiatives it included the creation of a European Maritime Transport Space with-

out barriers on which much emphasis has been placed since January of this year; the establishment of a Strategy for Marine Research, a roadmap on maritime spatial planning; efforts to curb destructive fishing practices; the promotion of a European network of maritime clusters; a review of labour law exemptions for the shipping and fishing sectors; and addressing issues related to climate change.

Besides noting the progress on various fronts, the Council, during its General Affairs and External Relations Council meeting of December 2008, also stressed on the importance of utilising offshore renewable energy solutions, such as tidal power.

A good number of initiatives have already been launched in these past years. More is yet to come. By October 2009 the Commission is expected to prepare a progress report including future actions which could be taken up. The challenges and opportunities remain substantial. The will, it seems, is also keeping pace.

Julian Micallef

All economic operators to have a Customs number as from 1 July

In order to facilitate customs transactions throughout the EU and at the same time support security measures introduced by Council Regulation 648/2005, every economic operator within the EU will, for Customs purposes from 1 July 2009, be identified by means of a unique number. Traders will be required to quote this number in all their dealings with Customs authorities in any Member State.

In practice the Economic Operator Registration and Identification (EORI) number will function as an ID number for traders based in the EU in their dealing with Customs authorities. It will allow them to derive maximum benefit from the

various facilitations available through Customs without having to register afresh with Customs administrations in other Member States.

All economic operators having the status of legal entities will be issued with an EORI number, which will be identical to traders' existing VAT number. EORI numbers will be displayed on a publicly-accessible website, and traders will also be able to decide whether they want visitors to the website to view other information about their operations.

For more information, enquiries should be directed to coricustoms.mfei@gov.mt or call 2568 5290.

The European Union - saying it through culture

FRANCIS ZAMMIT DIMECH



The European Union is all about Unity in Diversity. This value is most significant in the cultural sphere. Malta's choice for membership of the European Union five years ago was not merely in favour of joining an economic block through which we can benefit, but a choice to affirm our own history and cultural identity, in favour of a way of life, a set of values, as to anchor our future securely.

As with membership of any Union, it is not merely about joining. It is also what to make of it now and in the future. It is an ongoing and dynamic process.

A Communication from the Commission on a European agenda for culture in a globalising world (2007) quoted with approval Dario Fo: "even before Europe was united in an economic level or was conceived at the level of economic interests and trade, it was culture that united all the countries of Europe. The arts, literature, music are the connecting link of Europe".

When we secured that Maltese becomes one of the official languages of the EU, we were affirming an important element of our cultural identity kit. It is up to us to identify countless opportunities that support that identity, contributing towards the European cultural mosaic of which we are an integral part.

European initiatives and programmes to promote the different art forms, citizen participation, European Cities of Culture (Valletta - in 2018), cinema - including what we can produce locally - and the media are among the opportunities that Malta can tap through EU membership.

The EU's Culture programme (2007 - 2013) has a €400 million budget for projects and initiatives that celebrate Europe's cultural diversity through the development of cross-border cooperation between cultural operators and institutions.

Joining EU in 2004 meant home coming - asserting where we belong in terms of our own history and cultural identity. As of that day, we need to know the way about our own home, enriching further our own identity.

There is no better way to do it than through culture.



Francis Zammit Dimech has been elected uninterruptedly as Member of Parliament since 1987 and occupied various Ministerial portfolios including Transport and Communications, Environment, Resources and Infrastructure, Capital Projects and Tourism and Culture.

By profession Dr Zammit Dimech is a lawyer who is specialised in financial services. He received his education at St Aloysius' College and the University of Malta. He was president of the Students' Representative Council at the University and later president of the Nationalist Party Youth Movement. He has travelled widely, and for a number of years formed part of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe as well as of the Malta - European Union Joint Parliamentary Committee. He contributes features regularly to different papers and has authored a number of publications.

E-mail: zammit@maltanet.net

The above article does not necessarily reflect MEUSAC's point of view



Zooming on Sustainability Conference held in Malta

A three-day European conference having as its theme “Zooming on Sustainability” was organised by MEUSAC on the 13, 14 and 15 May. Around 150 participants from local councils in Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, France, United Kingdom, Spain and Malta, met to exchange ideas, research and best practices on key issues in the area of sustainability.

The conference was part-financed by the European Commission (DG Education & Culture) under the Europe for Citizens Programme and also received the support of the Parliamentary Secretariat for Public Dialogue and Information, the Malta International Airport and the Malta Tourism Authority.

In his opening address, Parliamentary Secretary Dr Chris Said said that at present, localities are facing challenges arising from size, demographic, economic, environmental and social realities such as issues related to suitable and affordable housing, social exclusion, structural and demographic change, ageing and mobility.

“As local councils we need to be the key players in the process of changing lifestyles, production, consumption and spatial patterns. Local councils play a vital role in educating, mobilising and responding to the public to promote sustainable development and ensure that the actions taken today and in the future do not compromise the collective well being of future generations”, continued the Parliamentary Secretary.

A keynote speech was delivered, among others, by Mr Robert Vella, Senior Planning Officer at MEPA who spoke about pro-

moting sustainable development in local authorities. A number of workshops were held and discussed issues relating to environmental sustainability, cultural sustainability and socio-economic sustainability respectively. Keynote speeches on the different themes were delivered by Ms M’Louise Mangion (Head - Tourism & Sustainable Development Unit, OPM), Ms Henriette Pizzuto Camilleri (Technical Consultant to the CEO - WasteServ Malta Ltd.), Mr Toni Attard (EU Projects Coordinator - St James Cavalier), Ms Davinia Galea (Chief Executive - Malta Council for Culture and the Arts), Dr Philip von Brockdorff (Chief Executive - Centre for Policy Research, OPM), and Dr Andrew Azzopardi (Lecturer in Community & Youth Studies - University of Malta).

The Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs, Mr George Pullicino delivered the closing address on the second day of the conference and spoke about the need to zoom on and act for sustainability, mentioning initiatives being taken by the Government to encourage greater synergies between the central and local governments.

The final day was devoted to a presentation of the various EU funding programmes and networking opportunities. Mr Mauro Pace Parascandolo (National Coordinator - European Union Programmes Agency) spoke about the Education & Training Programmes whereas Mr Donald Aquilina (Senior Agriculture Officer - MRRA) outlined the Leader Programme. The Intelligent Energy Europe Programme was presented by Ms AnaMaria Pantea (Manager CIP National Contact Point), while the Life+ Programme was presented by Ms Maria Elena Attard (National Focal Point).



Unsung heroes in the labs

Xjenza TV is an EU-funded project that aims at making children as comfortable as possible with science by making science more appealing to kids, showing them how science can be fun, provides good career prospects and contribute to the well-being of the people around you and society in general. In fact, there are Maltese scientists who are working in some of the best foreign scientific institutions and are playing an important role in the world’s finest scientific institutions.

This project is funded by the 6th Framework Programme (FP6). There are four partners - the University of Malta (as lead partner), Education 22 TV, the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation, and e-ISOTIS (Information Society Open to Impairments), a Greek NGO supporting e-learning for persons with disabilities and the elderly.

“X-Lab” is the name of the TV programme being aired on Maltese TV. The 30-minute programme promotes a kitchen science experience where kids are encouraged to carry out experiments at home with non-hazardous or dangerous materials, under the supervision of their guardians.

The 26-part series tackles topics such as renewable energy, DNA, nanotechnology, artificial intelligence, robotics, micro-organisms, light and sound, lasers and fibre optics, and preventing disasters. The target audience is students in the 11-16-year old age bracket, especially the 11-13-year old segment which coincides with the period when secondary school students decide whether to pursue science subjects. The programmes are being produced both in Malta and Cyprus. All programmes will be made available on the website www.xjenza-tv.eu.

The Xjenza TV experience is proof that persistence pays and that Malta can ultimately benefit from EU funds for research purposes.

For more info on the funding opportunities for research and innovation, contact the Malta Council for Science and Technology; karen.fiorini@gov.mt or call 2360 2134.

Kif nistgħu nsibu bilanċ bejn il-familja u x-xogħol?

Uża l-vot tiegħek fl-Elezzjoni tal-Parlament Ewropew tas-6 ta' Ġunju.

www.elezzjonijiet2009.eu

VACANCY

Funding Support Executives

The Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee (**MEUSAC**) is seeking to employ Funding Support Executives to assist local councils and non-governmental organisations in applying for EU funds.

Prospective candidates should submit their application together with a detailed curriculum vitae addressed to **The Head, MEUSAC, 280 Republic Street, Valletta VLT 1112** by not later than **noon of Friday 5th June 2009**.

The engagement criteria may be downloaded from the MEUSAC website: www.meusac.gov.mt

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