

# Government dragging its feet on energy efficiency – Brincat

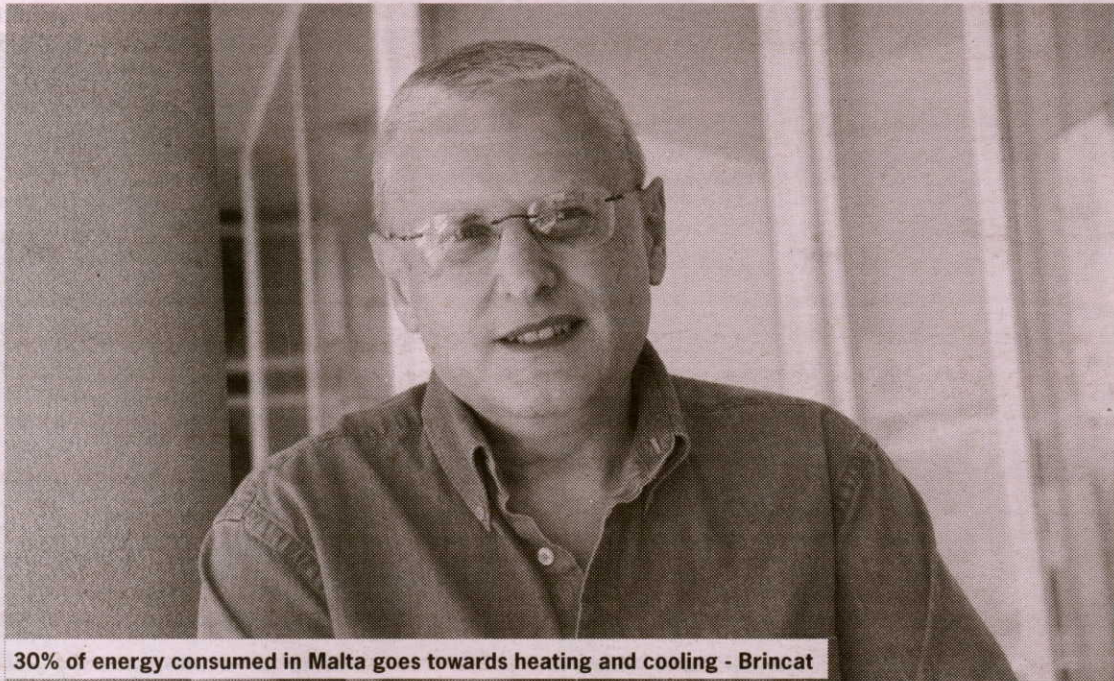
LABOUR'S environment spokesperson Leo Brincat has accused Lawrence Gonzi of dragging his feet on the implementation of the Energy Efficiency Directive, which lays down efficiency standards for new buildings.

"This procrastination should not only concern Maltese citizens, but it also goes against government's declared policy to introduce measures that are 'energy efficient' in the country, while increasing the risk of fines from the EU for breaching such an important environmental law."

Brincat said 30% of energy consumed in our country and the EU goes towards heating and cooling.

"Although the government has adopted this directive as part of its laws for last year, in a bid to implement it by the start of this year, it is believed that no preparations are yet in place for the introduction of this environmental directive," Brincat said.

The Labour MP pointed out that Article 5 of this directive was never transposed into Maltese law, which allowed mega projects like Smart City to abscond from obligations to



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introduce elements of alternative energy and CHP (combined heat and power).

"This is a long saga that goes back three years since the matter was raised in the Cabinet for the first time, to decide who was responsible for the enforcement of these rules. It's a matter that has stayed in limbo for all these

years," Brincat said.

The Labour also pointed out that although the legal notice for the transposition of the directive was issued back in October 2008, no subsequent legal notice was issued to actually enact the law.

"Legal notice 238 of 2004, which came into force on 1 Jan-

uary 2007 already stipulate that every building in our country had to conform to minimum energy efficiency standards.

"This means that every application received by the Malta Environment and Planning Authority after the 2 January 2007, should have conformed to these standards."

Brincat said it was in the public interest to know how many of these applications actually conformed to these standards.

"Today we are supposed to have a certificate of energy efficiency issued for every building that is sold or rented, attached to the contract of sale or rent," Brincat said.

"The longer government justifies this irresponsible behaviour and drags its feet, shows us how we don't have a government that believes in the need for us to be energy efficient. Today's administration is breaching EU directives while boasting of its EU and green credentials, with serious consequences to Maltese and Gozitan citizens and taxpayers."

Brincat said that government could not justify its procrastination over the directive by pointing out the added expenses this would bring on the construction industry.

"We've been an EU member state for the past four years and a half and there is no derogation from this law. If this justification is invoked, it would not justify government's delays or the arguments of those who want things to stay the same in the construction industry."

## EU civil society funds presented to 27 NGOs

THE Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information, Chris Said yesterday presented cheques to beneficiaries of the Civil Society Fund (CSF).

The fund, which is administered by the Malta-EU Steering and Action Committee (MEUSAC), is aimed at assisting constituted bodies and representative organisations to keep abreast of developments in the European Union, and enabling them to better educate their

members about EU matters related to their respective fields of competence and to participate effectively in the decision-making process at European level. For 2008, the financial assistance provided by Government through the CSF consisted in a refund covering part of the expenses actually incurred by these organisations throughout 2008 in relation to the above-mentioned objectives.

Addressing participants at today's CSF distribution ceremony,

MEUSAC Head Dr Vanni Xuereb explained MEUSAC's objectives following its reactivation and the subsequent absorption of Forum Malta fl-Ewropa in July 2008.

The CSF had previously been administered by the FME and following the reactivation of MEUSAC it was decided to utilise the outstanding balance of the CSF. Dr Xuereb said that MEUSAC aims at empowering civil society organisations to make the best of the many and

various opportunities provided by EU membership.

Said said that the process to financially assist constituted bodies and civil society organi-

have this year benefited from the 2008 Civil Society Fund. Said encouraged CSF beneficiaries to tap EU funding, saying MEUSAC was gearing itself



MEUSAC head Vanni Xuereb (left) and parliamentary secretary Chris Said

sations prior to Malta's EU accession will continue in a different format this year. In fact, the CSF which initially provided assistance to the constituted bodies and civil society organisations to familiarise themselves with the EU's institutions and policies prior to Malta's accession to the Union, will as from this year be re-designed as a co-financing Fund for non-governmental organisations, in parallel with the fund provided for in the 2009 Budget for EU Funded Projects in localities.

Both funds will assist NGOs and local councils respectively in terms of the co-financing element of EU funded projects.

Twenty-seven organisations

to assist organisations in the preparation of project proposals under the various EU Funding Programmes.

Said encouraged participants to be pro-active not only on EU funding but also with regard to their active involvement in the consultation process which Government has embarked on, both through MEUSAC and MCESD.

As of this year both MEUSAC and MCESD will be housed in the same centrally-located building in Valletta to maximise accessibility to the public and to CSOs as well as to further synergise the consultation processes on EU related issues and on domestic issues respectively.

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