



Press Release

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“An EU more for the people, close to the people, for the people”– Minister Abela

The Minister responsible for Social Dialogue within the Office of the Prime Minister Carmelo Abela participated in an online discussion themed ‘Fejn Sejrin?’, held together with representatives of social partners and civil society in an event organised by MEUSAC on the occasion of the 16th anniversary of Malta’s EU accession, and Europe Day celebrated each year on May 9, and MEUSAC. Minister Carmelo Abela highlighted that the EU should be more of the people, close to the people, for the people, meaning that leaders of countries that form part of the Union don’t necessarily take decisions that the people want just to be popular, emphasising that the said leaders always are ready to hear out citizens. He also referred to the EU’s role globally, that it should be felt more, most especially in the regions surrounding the EU.

When asked how he views Europe’s future, he said that the most important thing is that citizens play a central role in a bid to address the aspirations of the people. He also referred to youth, that they should play more of an integral part in the decision-making process, where the EU needs to be most effective. The minister said that sustainable development should be at the core of decisions that are taken because the future depends on how the decisions taken today are based on how we will best use our resources. The discussion revolved around various themes and based on the EU’s successes and failures, that is measured according to the impact of actions, be it positive or negative, on people’s lives.

The economic situation before and during Covid-19, how sectors represented by participants of the debate were impacted, and how MEUSAC can strengthen its work so that every corner of society benefits more from Malta’s EU membership, were some of the themes discussed. Participants also shared their views on the EU’s future. Reacting to MEUSAC Head Mandy Falzon’s questions and those of the participants, Minister Abela said that the pandemic showed that it has no borders and therefore such a saga is an opportunity for Member States to work together in different ways, according to the competencies of the EU or ones of a national level, or a mix of both, in the economic, job creation and health sectors. On criticism that the EU is not doing enough, he said that this pandemic has shown we need to be better prepared to tackle such issues and that as the Member States we should oversee each other as an act of solidarity.

Ms Falzon asked the participants how they benefit from MEUSAC’s work where information and consultation on initiatives, policies and laws, and the agency’s assistance in terms of EU funding opportunities. Ms Falzon said that in the 12 years MEUSAC has been operating, MEUSAC assisted some 470 organisations to benefit from 60 million euros in EU funds. On their part, civil society

Attachments: photos

Page: 1 of 2

representatives lauded MEUSAC's sterling work in the area of funding-related support for research and personalised assistance in applications for EU funds for their projects, the valuable information given by MEUSAC on Malta's stand on various proposals of policies and legislation; along with the opportunities organisations are given to partner up with their EU counterparts. The need to increase the dissemination of correct information on the EU and its roles was also mentioned.

Minister Abela said that MEUSAC should continue to strengthen its services so that more organisations turn to MEUSAC for assistance to tap into EU funding opportunities, even for small projects. He added that MEUSAC needs to continue to serve as the go-between of the EU and citizens as it is vital people know that the EU is and does, however it is important to see what we all can do, as this is the way how the EU can continue to go down the right path. Apart from this, "we need to continue the social dialogue by means of MESUAC's services so that as a country we will continue to contribute in a more tangible manner, the drafting of EU policies and legislation", Minister Abela said.

During the discussion, led by Head of MEUSAC Fabian Demicoli (Malta Chamber of SMEs); Kendrick Bondin (General Workers Union), Jesmond Bonello (UHM – Voice of the Workers), Daniel Borg (Gozo Business Chamber), Gertrude Buttigieg (Malta Health Network), Faith Spearing (student) and Stephanie Fenech – Żejtun Local Council, also took part.