

PRESS RELEASE

Date	28 th January 2011
From	Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector
To	All Media
No.	PR/MCVS/01/2011

TITLE

"VOLUNTEERING! YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE" – Malta launched the European Year of Volunteering 2011.

"VOLUNTEERING! YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE" is the theme chosen for the European year of Volunteering which was launched yesterday at the Centre for Creativity at St. James Cavalier. A year to celebrate volunteering which puts into practice the values of solidarity and subsidiarity. Through volunteering one becomes an active citizen through his service to his organisation.

During the launch, the Commissioner for Voluntary Organization, Kenneth Wain said that in Malta only 14% of the population is involved in voluntary organization but the Maltese are in the forefront when donating money to different causes. He said that the European Union recognises the importance of the voluntary sector in the civil society because they form part of the values of solidarity and the educational aspects. In Europe there are about 100,000 involved in the voluntary sector.

The Ministry of Education, Work and Family, Dolores Cristina said volunteering is one of the biggest treasures in our country. She said that hundreds of students at primary and secondary school are involved in different voluntary organisations but till now their work has not been recognised. She said that the government believes in the great value of volunteering in building one's character and so in the school leaving certificate the work of each individual will be included. The Minister praised those involved in volunteering but encouraged more people to become involved.

Robert Farrugia, the Chairperson of the Council said that the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector was appointed to coordinate the activities taking place this year. He began his speech by saying that through volunteering one gains knowledge but also various skills including leadership, creativity and entrepreneurship. This year the

Council obtained funds from the European Union amounting to €55,000 and €13,750 from the government to carry out a number of projects and activities. These include an interactive website, to become a reference and information for voluntary organisation but also to help those interested in joining a voluntary organisation, a directory of voluntary organisation and seminars between organisations. He claimed that the Council will start discussing with the Malta Qualifications Council to issue accreditation to those involved in volunteering.

Robert said that the European Union will be focusing on four objectives during this year: to create an environment that helps volunteering and reduces barriers within the European countries, to encourage the voluntary organisations to improve the quality of volunteering, to appreciate and recognise the success that comes from volunteering and to raise awareness about the values and importance of volunteering. He spoke about the importance of networking between organisations which leads to a better service. At European level the Council will be taking part in the EYV 2011 Bus Tour and the EYV Relay. The EYV 2011 Bus Tour, will be held at Valletta in December , is a showcase of various aspects of volunteering in the European countries and for the voluntary organisations in Malta. The EYV relay is a project where 27 journalists from the European countries will follow the work of 52 voluntary organisations and will produce audio-visual reports and articles for the media.

On behalf of the Council he urged the voluntary organizations to organize activities at a national and local level to promote and celebrate volunteering. He said that all those organising an activity or have any ideas should contact the Council to include them in the national calendar.

During the activity six people from different voluntary organisations spoke about their personal experience and also about what volunteering meant to them.

For more information one can contact the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector by email on mcvs.meef@gov.mt or by phone (number).

Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector
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