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Press Handout

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OPPORTUNITIES FOR MALTA IN THE SIXTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME SPELLED OUT

Six Information Societies Technologies (IST) related proposals put forward by European Consortia which have Maltese partners included with them stand excellent chances for substantial funding by the European Union under the Sixth Framework Programme.

This was revealed today by Education Minister Louis Galea during the opening of an information event organized by the Malta Council for Science and Technology MCST in which details about the second call for proposals of the I.S.T. Programme, the CRAFT programme, the Innovation Relay Centre and the fourth call for proposals in eContent were given. Today's event was sponsored by the EU Delegation in Malta.

Minister Galea described the Sixth Framework Programme as one of Malta's main tools in establishing a stronger research and innovation area in Malta that is at a par to EU standards. He said that our performance in the Fifth Framework Programme which ended last year was remarkable. Maltese partners took part in no less than 43 EU-funded projects, most of which are still underway. However only 5 of these projects were ICT-related. This is in sharp contrast to the results we have obtained from just the first IST call of

the Sixth Framework Programme out just now. Twenty six Maltese partners were included in European consortia, of which 6 stand excellent chances for substantial funding and added-value. Dr Galea said that the results indicate clearly that research is a direction the private, public and higher education is willing to undertake.

The Sixth Framework Programme (FP6) is the vehicle through which the EU Commission channels research funding. During the events organized by MCST the participants were informed how this funding mechanism operates in practice. Practical help will also be given for those who wish to join consortia or find partners for their own proposal.

European research activities are structures around consecutive five-year programmes, or so-called framework programmes. The Sixth Framework Programme (FP6) sets out the priorities – including the Information Society Technologies (IST) priority – for the period 2002 –2006. The IST Programme is the largest of the European research, development and demonstration programmes and is open until 2006. 3.6 Billion Euros are available under this programme. The IST programme aims to realize the benefits of the information society for Europe through developing new technologies and services for individuals and businesses.

The benefits of taking part in the IST and eContent programmes include the sharing of project risks and costs shared between successful participants and the European Commission, the commercial exploitation of results and other Intellectual Property Rights accruing from project collaboration; the opportunities to influence the Commission's policy and development of

standards and making contacts with partners in Europe that can facilitate access to new markets through a better understanding of European business in the Single Market.

Large companies as well as small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) are eligible to participation. Research and educational organisations, public sector bodies, and non-profit making and charity organisations are also eligible.

Today's meeting was also addressed by Prof Ronald Gallimore, Head of the EU delegation in Malta.

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**Speech by the Minister of Education Dr. Louis Galea
on "ICT, Research and Education"
At Villa Bigli, MCST 01 July 2002**

It is a pleasure to be here with you and I particularly welcome this opportunity to speak about the role that Research in Information and Communication Technologies has in local and regional development, and the Government's strategy to stimulate its impact in Malta.

There is no doubt that ICT plays a fundamental role for the development of the economy. In general, the ICT sector and the information society remain a fundamental source of productivity gains, competitiveness, and of improvements in living standards. Technology stimulates - but to achieve productivity gains, it also requires new organisational models for businesses and public organisations alike.

Indeed, technology by itself is not a solution to growth. It is only an opportunity. It is the adoption of technological, organisational and managerial innovations that enhance productivity. By improving quality and by providing new niche opportunities, ICT is an important enabler of this adoption process. Also, the adoption of ICT intensively requires knowledge-intensive skills. It is important not to lose sight of this complementarity. So we need investments in ICT, organisation and skills. This creates productivity growth and there is empirical evidence which confirms this.

Recent data suggests that national and regional decision makers are increasingly committed to information society development. However, the last reports on social and economic cohesion confirm that some regions are progressing much faster than others are and that the gap is widening considerably. The adoption of a regional approach to Information Society policy is one key factor in trying to avoid the danger of digital divide.

It is our goal therefore to make Malta a global player in the ICT arena and the driving forces in this development are surely education and research. Never before have there been more challenging problems for education and research. We demand that scientists develop key technologies and that researchers provide fresh impetus. And we expect our education systems to enable young people to solve these problems.

What we expect from education and research is therefore nothing less than to shape our future. Being serious about shaping our future means being committed to improving conditions, to working productively on the problems of our time, opening doors and developing sustainable concepts for the 21st century.

These challenges can be met only by joining forces at a European level.

In my view, the two fields of education and research show how we can succeed in meeting the challenge of competing and co-operating internationally while adhering to the principles of openness and solidarity. We can master this challenge if we work constructively together, building upon our common strengths, our common values as humanity, freedom or democracy, if we are aware that cultural diversity is an asset.

The Sixth Framework Programme is one of our main tools in establishing a stronger research and innovation area in Malta that is at par to EU standards. Our performance in the Fifth Framework Programme which ended last year was remarkable. Maltese partners took part in no less than 43 EU-funded projects, most of which are still underway. However only 5 of these projects were ICT-related. This is in sharp contrast to the results we have obtained from just the first IST call of the Sixth Framework Programme out just now. Twenty six Maltese partners were included in European consortia, of which 6 stand excellent chances for substantial funding and added-value. The results indicate clearly that research is a direction the private, public and higher education is willing to undertake.

These examples convey a clear message:

Malta can be a driving force in Europe if we present ourselves as a team – a team whose members play well together while remaining individualists who retain their specific features and contribute their special capabilities.

At its meeting in Lisbon in March 2000, the European Council formulated a new strategic goal for the European Union. The Union is to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world by the end of this decade. For achieving this goal we need better policies for the information society in Malta, a stepping up of the process of structural reform and modernization of the Maltese social model.

Education and research are major elements in this process of reorganization and modernization. What we need is not only measures at European level but also national measures taken by Government and the private industry.

In Malta, through the Malta Council for Science and Technology, we have launched numerous reform projects:

- We have been steadily promoting and fostering a culture for research and innovation within our higher education institutions, the SME community and the public sector.
- We are proposing to establish a national research strategy wherein we sharpen the focus, provide the right resources and a tangible channel for the flow of knowledge from our research departments and industry
- We are supporting cooperation between science and industry, and small and medium-sized enterprises in particular.
- We are resolutely pursuing the goal of establishing equal opportunities for women at all levels
- We are supporting increasing mobility and we are promoting international exchanges of young people, of university students and of scientists.
- We have provided another service to the local SMEs who want to source new technologies through our Innovation Relay Centre.

These changes will take place with or without us. We can chose either to drive the change or be driven by change, with all the social and economic consequences this implies.

Building a strong and united Malta within the European Union is our goal and I am happy to be able to work together with you in the fields of education and research to achieve this goal. Never before as now, change is in our hands.

Let's work together in bringing this about.