Introduction
The Chapel of Bones in Valletta (Figure 1) is Malta’s historical biobank, one of the oldest tissue collections in Malta founded by the monk Knight of the Order of St John, Fra Giorgio Nibbia, at the Sacred Infirmary of the Order’s hospital.

The Malta BioBank
The Malta BioBank is 25 years young and the first collections were from the Thalassaemia project and the haemoglobin neonatal screening programme of the Department of Health which now form part of the Globin Bank. Over the years various European and Government funding made it possible to setup specific biological collections such as the Geo-Parkinson project collection, the Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus collection and the rare disease collections which now form part of the Clinical Bank (Refer to Poster 46).

The business model of the Clinical Bank is based on a collaboration between the University of Malta, the Department of Health and Mater Dei Hospital’s departments including Pathology, Paediatrics, Neurology and Oncology whereby a molecular genetics diagnostic service is part of the National Health system. A partner charter is being setup between the Department of Histopathology, Clinical Imaging, Clinical Bioinformatics and the Malta BioBank.

The Population Bank is a discovery tool for biobanking / population-led research and includes a random collection of Maltese citizens and a cohort of healthy Maltese senior citizens. New funding for the Maltese Genome Project will further develop the Population Bank. The business model for the Population Bank is being developed in the form of a research co-operative whereby the donor of a sample is not only a participant of the study but an owner of the research (MiData project).

Biobanking in the Mediterranean
As can be seen from the BBMRI-ERIC partner geographical map (Figure 3), biobanking is strong in Northern Europe and erratic in the Mediterranean basin and Eastern Europe. One of the roles of BBMRI.mt in BBMRI-ERIC is to engage Euro-Mediterranean countries in biobanking through a specific BBMRI-ERIC working group (WG3). It is foreseen to setup a Co-operation for Science and Technology (COST) Action in Euro-Mediterranean biobanking.

Outreach / Impact
A series of rare disease activities were organised in collaboration with the voluntary organisation “The Marigold Foundation” to raise public awareness of rare disease day which included a fund raising dinner and a colloquium. The Malta BioBank / BBMRI.mt was presented to the general public and Members of Parliament at the event “Science in the House”, an annual scientific event organised in Valletta.

Conclusion
The Malta BioBank / BBMRI.mt is strategically positioned to engage neighbouring Mediterranean countries in biobanking. On a local level it is continually expanding its sample catalogue. It is improving its existing IT infrastructure and is setting up a Quality Management System.