

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION

EUROPEAN STUDIES

MAY 2013

EXAMINERS' REPORT

**MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE
EXAMINATIONS' BOARD**

**SEC EUROPEAN STUDIES
MAY 2013 SESSION
EXAMINERS' REPORT**

1.0 Summary of Results

Grade	Paper 1 + 2A		Paper 1 + 2B		Total	
	No. of Candidates	% of Total	No. of Candidates	% of Total	No. of Candidates	% of Total
1	12	17.4			12	13.0
2	15	21.7			15	16.3
3	19	27.5			19	20.7
4	13	18.8	4	17.4	17	18.5
5	4	5.8	5	21.7	9	9.8
6			3	13.0	3	3.3
7			6	26.1	6	6.5
U	6	8.7	3	13.0	9	9.8
Absent	-		2	8.7	2	2.2

2.0 General Comments

92 candidates sat for SEC European Studies. Of these 69 candidates (75%) chose Paper 2A while 23 candidates (25%) chose Paper 2B. The general attainment by candidates was good with 72 candidates (78.3%) obtaining passes at grades 1-5 and 81 candidates (88%) obtaining passes at grades 1-7.

The main observations of the examiners were:

- Some candidates tended to reproduce by heart previously prepared material on a given topic irrespective of what the question actually entailed. Thus, at times, their answers were partly out of point.
- A few candidates wrote very short answers when tackling essay questions tending to show vague or shallow knowledge of the subject. Others answered some questions without clearly understanding what they were being asked to write about or discuss.
- Candidates tended not to give enough attention to marks allotted to different sections of the question, with the result that at times sections which carried the highest number of marks were often tackled in a rather superficial manner.
- A positive point was that candidates correctly applied information acquired from other subjects.
- Some candidates displayed unfamiliarity with the technical jargon used in the subject.
- Some candidates sitting for Paper 2B betrayed limited skills in expressing themselves properly in the extended writing exercises. Thus their work lacked clarity and sequential logic, and the ideas expressed were at times rather confusing.
- The handwriting of some of the candidates left much to be desired.
- Four candidates failed to hand in their project and thus lost valuable marks.

3.0 Paper 1

3.1 Section I - Power and People

1. Most candidates answered this question correctly, giving the right meaning of the term 'minority rights' and mentioning such instances as respect for human rights for ethnic, religious and racial minorities. They also managed to identify three examples of minority rights in Europe. Generally they

mentioned the right to shelter, food, education, work, social and medical services, legal equality and respect for beliefs, language and culture. The most common pitfall was the mixing up 'minority rights' with the 'rights of minors or children'. In such cases wrong examples were given.

2. Candidates generally did well in this question. Most of them mentioned social protection in the form of unemployment benefit, sick leave allowance, parental leave, collective agreements, gender equality and equal pay between workers, equal opportunities for further education and training, safety at work and workers' participation. A few, however, gave irrelevant answers like the right to vote and freedom of worship and expression which are not specifically 'workers' rights'.

3. A substantial minority of candidates did not demonstrate a clear distinction between subsidiarity and decentralization in the European context and gave local council governance as an example for both. The other candidates managed to explain that subsidiarity is the idea that a central authority should have a sharing function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a more immediate or local level while decentralization is the process of dispersing decision-making closer to the people and empowers as many citizens as possible.

4. The vast majority of candidates demonstrated a clear awareness of problems caused by racism mentioning examples such as some racial groups believing to be superior to others, discrimination, violence, exploitation, and fear or hatred of others in times of conflict, war and economic downturns. They also explained how, in its extreme form, racism can lead to ethnic cleansing and genocide.

5. Most candidates answered this question correctly giving examples of different forms of peace-making processes, namely compromise, bargaining, negotiation, dialogue and mediation. Nearly all candidates, however, failed to mention instances where these peace-making mechanisms are frequently used by the various EU institutions.

6. Many candidates did well in this question referring to how literacy and computer skills are more important than ever before since literacy empowers one to reflect, criticize, analyze and empathize. They also explained how literacy skills are crucial to parenting, employability, active citizenship, consumer education, lifelong learning and personal health management, and that people with low literacy are likely to finish school early, end up unemployed, rely more on social benefits and suffer more from poor health.

3.2 Section II - Economic Development and Changes in Europe

7. Most candidates did very well in this question. However, there were several candidates who wrongly indicated 'computer software' as an activity belonging to the tertiary sector.

8. Generally, many answers were correct but some candidates clearly had no knowledge of the term 'cartel' and attempted to guess an answer by associating the term with oil production.

9. When dealing with traditional shopping and the negative effects on retail outlets by e-commerce, the majority of candidates gave correct answers though some candidates found it difficult to express themselves in acceptable English.

10. Many of the candidates knew the meaning of the abbreviation E.E.A (The European Economic Area). Some candidates, however, were inexact, putting 'association' instead of 'area'. The majority were able to mention member countries in this 'area'. Some candidates mentioned Switzerland as a member of EEA, when it is not, since this country has a similar but separate agreement with the EU.

11. Many candidates provided correct and detailed answers on workers' participation in the employment sector but some stopped short of mentioning the key point that this entails namely that workers are given a degree of participation in decision-making in management at their place of work.

3.3 Section III - Demographic and Social Realities

12. Most candidates did well when discussing what contributes to an increase in life expectancy. The points generally mentioned were improved medical services, a healthier lifestyle, nutritional awareness, better home-care services, a better pension system, residential home-care, media campaigns by government agencies and NGOs, better conditions of work and a greater variety of leisure pursuits.

13. The majority of candidates dealt quite well with the trends in pension schemes mentioning how the constant increase in the number of elderly people is forcing governments in many European countries to re-think their pension system since the increasing costs are being covered by a smaller number of workers in many European societies. Many mentioned the dilemma which governments are facing between increasing the retirement age and reducing unemployment among youths.

14. Most candidates answered this question on SMEs partially correctly. Candidates were expected to explain that the Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) fall under three main categories, *i.e.* self-employed individuals, micro-sized firms employing less than 10 people and SMEs proper, employing between 10 to 499 persons. Most candidates failed to make a distinction between SMEs on a European level and ones on a local level; in Malta, due to its small size, SMEs tend to include all firms employing less than 50 persons. Most candidates mentioned incentives offered by the EU and the national governments to encourage SMEs to invest further in their businesses to be able to compete with multinational companies.

15. The majority of candidates mentioned that lifelong learning is an intrinsic asset that helps the individual improve one's lifestyle, increase one's job opportunities and level of education, acquire more skills and competencies and gain opportunities for upward social mobility. Few candidates recognized the positive effects of lifelong learning for retired persons in the form of part-time educational courses. In the second part of the question, candidates discussed various ways of enhancing lifelong learning in Europe such as through training programmes in literacy, numeracy and social skills for adults, the organization of evening courses for post-compulsory school age youths and adults, vocational and professional development courses, the re-training of unemployed people, university courses by correspondence and financial aid given to NGOs that run adult education courses.

16. Most candidates answered this question on socio-economic burdens caused by migration well. They focused their arguments on social and racial discrimination, the rise in unemployment, the bad working conditions for immigrant workers, the low level of education and skills and the substandard quarters inhabited by immigrants. They explained how these tend to put strains on the national governments to provide welfare benefits without increasing taxation, minimize incidents of ethnic conflicts, run detention centres, cope with the rise in crime and finance multicultural programmes.

17. Almost all candidates gave a correct answer and explained that the term 'xenophobia' is the people's fear of foreigners, usually originating from biases and prejudices based on race, ethnicity and lifestyles not in accordance with one's own culture. They also pointed out that in extreme cases, xenophobia could lead to racial persecution, exclusion and violence fostered mainly by ultra-nationalist groups or political parties. Candidates also demonstrated a sound knowledge of the meaning of the term 'multiculturalism' implying the peaceful co-existence of peoples having a diversity of language, religion and culture. Some candidates went further and gave specific examples of multicultural societies such as the UK and the United States.

3.4 Section IV - Europeans and their Environment

18. The great majority of candidates did very well and even went beyond what was requested by the question. They went into some detail about the rehabilitation scheme of the Rhine Action Programme after the Santoz chemical plant fire in Switzerland which led to a huge ecological disaster. Some candidates, however, were very hesitant and incorrectly mentioned air pollution as the main culprit of the pollution of the Rhine.

19. Many candidates filled in the matrix dealing with islands, rivers and bordering European countries well but still there were some who made gross mistakes of location.

20. Many candidates just explained the phrases 'disease prevention', 'healthy lifestyle' and 'major death cause' correctly but ignored the relationship of these with health standards in Europe. Practically no candidates mentioned differences in health standards between some EU member states and some non-member states.

21. Candidates displayed a weak knowledge of the Mediterranean climate with only a few being correct as to why most of the rain over the Mediterranean falls in winter. In the second part of the question they did better since most of them had experienced activities related to water storage and production.

3.5 Section V - The Cultural Heritage

22. Candidates generally gave a good definition of the term 'extreme nationalism' and showed how this often lead to conflicts, with most of them citing the German example during World War Two, the religious conflicts in Northern Ireland and the separatist movements in the Basque provinces of Spain.

23. The vast majority of candidates answered this question well.

24. Most candidates were able to identify the major effects of the invention of printing, namely a greater diffusion of books and interest in reading and the fast spread of ideas. Candidates had some difficulties in the second part of the question dealing with the invention of gunpowder. However, some candidates did very well, mentioning how national armies became more powerful to suppress rebellion or attack by a foreign power, how powerful states used gunpowder to conquer new lands and set up empires, how this resulted in distant warfare and in more casualties in pitched battles, and how it resulted in the building of stronger and more complex defensive fortifications around cities and strategic positions.

25. Most candidates answered well though there were a small number of candidates who failed to mention a major linguistic group found in Spain.

26. Candidates generally gave a good explanation of communism, explaining that it is a revolutionary socialist movement aimed at creating a classless society based on common ownership as well as a political ideology that aims at an egalitarian social order. They surprisingly found more difficulties in adequately defining democracy, concentrating mainly on the right of all people to vote.

27. Most candidates explained that the Reformation was a revolt against the Catholic Church due to the many prevailing abuses among the clergy and managed to name two reformist leaders. However, when dealing with the results of the Reformation, they just dwelled on the division of Europe between Catholics and Protestants.

4.0 Paper 2A

4.1 Section I - Power and People

1. Most candidates answered this question on the major EU institutions successfully and obtained good marks. They demonstrated some clear and sound knowledge of the composition, function and interdependence between the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament and the European Commission. Some candidates went into a comparative study among these institutions and referred to how Malta is represented in each one. Most candidates dedicated most of their answer to discussing the European Parliament, one reason for this being the fact that Maltese citizens are closely and directly involved with this institution because Malta participates in the election of MEPs.

2. The first part of the question was answered correctly by the majority of the candidates. Most candidates mentioned more than five reasons that cause poverty and social exclusion in Europe. Candidates who gave brief answers were given half the marks allocated. The most common examples mentioned were low self-esteem, difficulties in finding and keeping a job, a low level of education, teenage delinquency, the welfare gap and cultural differences. In the second part of this question, where candidates were asked to identify and explain five European initiatives aimed at preventing poverty and social exclusion in Europe, most candidates showed shallow knowledge. Very few candidates mentioned concrete EU initiatives. Candidates failed to mention programmes in social and technical skills, self-help, digital literacy, inclusion, teenage delinquency, the welfare gap, health care, healthy living, adult education, vocational training, career guidance and social accommodation and unemployment assistance. Some candidates just repeated ideas and arguments discussed in the first part of the question.

4.2 Section II - Economic Development and Changes in Europe

3. This question dealing with the positive and negative aspects of the trade gap between Europe and the developing countries in the world was chosen by only four candidates. The definition given was generally correct but the aspects dealt with were practically limited to one or two basic points, as, for example, the exchange of raw materials from developing countries with products sent by EU countries.

4. Most of the candidates who chose this question did well in the first two parts but then failed to satisfactorily explain the state of CAP in the EU today. It seems that candidates hardly consulted fresh information from EU websites linked to the Common Agricultural Policy. However, some candidates were able to provide this updated information about the latest approaches and changes of CAP.

4.3 Section III - Demographic and Social Realities

5. Most candidates demonstrated a sound knowledge of what is causing the decline of the manufacturing industry in contemporary Europe. Causes mentioned included the rise in the cost of raw materials, trade union claims for better wages and salaries, taxation on profits and utility charges, competition by larger industries abroad, the removal of subsidies by governments, directives on international trade by the WTO and EU, and more sophisticated automation and new technologies. Other candidates just dealt with this problem from a historical point of view, starting from the Industrial Revolution and ending with globalization and the recent world recession. In the second part of the question, candidates were expected to mention some initiatives adopted by European countries aimed at boosting the manufacturing industry and reducing unemployment in that sector. The measures mostly mentioned were the giving of subsidies to manufacturing industries, tax relief incentives, attracting foreign investment, ensuring political stability, upgrading the infrastructure, investing in new technologies, upgrading the environment and entering into agreements with international trade organizations and transnational companies.

6. Most candidates did well when answering this question on trends that are contributing to the growth of

tourism in Europe. Some candidates discussed the question in such depth that they obtained full marks. The most common trends mentioned were more income and leisure time, cheaper package holidays, low cost airlines, mass tourism, a greater tourist market, frequent short weekend breaks, cruises on luxurious liners, globalization, and specialized tourism such as eco-tourism, children's parks, sports competitions and cultural tourism.

4.4 Section IV - Europeans and their Environment

7. A good number of candidates chose to attempt this question. The great majority of these candidates did very well and provided excellent details about what constitutes a healthy nutritional lifestyle, giving examples of negative aspects and how these can be prevented. Many candidates, however, tended to give the opposite of the factors having a negative impact on maintaining a healthy nutritional lifestyle to denote the factors which contribute to a healthy lifestyle; for instance for 'immobility', walking and running were given.

8. Most candidates were aware of the pollution in the Mediterranean Sea and thus knew how to answer the first part of the question quite correctly but then knew very little about the Blue Flag programme. Many thought that this is an EU-funded project which monitors and acts against those who pollute the Mediterranean Sea in general, and so wrote about actions against sewage outflows, oil-spills and other threats. Few candidates, however, knew correctly that the Blue Flag Programme is not an EU-funded project but an international one, active in over 60 countries and one which empowers coastal authorities to develop a programme of quality action to restore or defend the coastal environment.

4.5 Section V - The Cultural Heritage

9. Most candidates managed to define the Industrial Revolution as a series of changes by which hand craftsmanship in the home or small workshop gave place to machine-work in factories. However, most of them were rather superficial in dealing with the reasons why this revolution started in Great Britain, just mentioning its richness in natural resources and the ready market offered by its empire. Few candidates mentioned its good geographical position for world-wide trade, its already considerable commerce such as the slave trade, its lack of internal customs barriers that restricted trade, its developed systems of banking and insurance, its good merchant marine and powerful navy to protect her trade routes and its comparatively stable government and the long years of internal peace. When dealing with the results of the revolution, candidates tended to concentrate on the social results, namely long hours of work, child labour, overcrowding, slum areas, smoke pollution and squalid conditions. The increase in population and the boost to inventions were also mentioned. Few candidates, however, referred to other results, such as better infrastructure, the general exploitation of mineral resources, a considerable increase in commerce, the further development of systems of banking and insurance, rapid urbanisation, the boost to capitalism, the rise in liberal movements, the birth of socialism, the rise of trade unions and workers' organisations and the introduction of social legislation.

10. The vast majority of candidates did well in this question and managed to explain how media networks contribute to influence public opinion on the issues of the day. They explained how these media forms have transformed the world into one whole global village. Candidates also explained how these are free and accessible to everyone, irrespective of race, culture, ethnicity or religion, and how they contribute to the strengthening of democracy by creating a more open and free society. Candidates maintained that, if used wisely, the media can help to lessen cultural barriers and xenophobic behaviour among Europeans.

5.0 Paper 2B

5.1 Section I - Power and People

1. In the first part of the question, most candidates tended to concentrate more on the European Parliament than on the Council of Ministers. Generally they mentioned that the Council of Ministers is composed of national ministers from each member state, though few of them mentioned that the Presidency of the Council rotates every six months among the governments of EU member states. Most candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the European Parliament and pointed out the direct elections by EU citizens. They explained how this parliament is composed, that is by political party affiliations rather than by nationality. Candidates were less informed about the role of the European Commission as the main executive body of the European Union responsible for proposing legislation, implementing decisions, upholding the Union's treaties and the day-to-day running of the EU. Most candidates did, however, mention that the EC is made up of 27 Commissioners. In the second part of the question, some candidates mentioned how Malta is represented in each EU institution, but only a few mentioned the names of the Maltese MEPs and the Maltese EU Commissioner. In the final part of the question, some candidates erred when giving examples of member-states, such as Brussels in place of Belgium and Strasbourg instead of France.

2. Most candidates were able to distinguish between poverty and social exclusion and gave concrete examples of both. They defined poverty as a low standard of living due to certain social and financial deprivations and explained that social exclusion is often a direct consequence of poverty. In the second part of the question, most candidates gave three examples but then failed to expand on them. They generally mentioned immigrants with poor social and technical skills, unemployable people, people having poor educational qualifications, single parent families and retired citizens living on low pensions. Candidates did not fare well in the final part of the question since they tended to repeat the same ideas and arguments mentioned in the previous parts of the question. Some just focused their arguments on respect for human rights in general and the need for education and training.

5.2 Section II - Economic Development and Changes in Europe

3. Seven candidates attempted this question. Generally these did well, listing the right raw materials exported and indicating some negative and positive aspects of this trade. Some examples, however, were not backed by a description, as required by the question.

4. Only four candidates chose this question dealing with the meaning of CAP, how it works, problems CAP creates for small farmers and advantages brought about by CAP. The answers, though too superficial, were quite correct with candidates putting an emphasis mostly on subsidies to small farmers in crisis.

5.3 Section III - Demographic and Social Realities

5. Most candidates did well in the first two parts of the question, explaining how the Industrial Revolution was a period when raw materials started to be transformed into manufactured goods and how the service industry employs people who offer services instead of end products. Many candidates managed to identify some valid reasons for the decline of the manufacturing industry in Europe, mentioning the increasing costs of raw materials and wages, the rise in taxation and energy charges, the competition by larger and multinational industries, trade regulations by the WTO and EU and better wages and conditions of work in the service and high tech industries. In the final part of the question, the majority of candidates demonstrated shallow knowledge of EU measures. Apart from lifelong learning and emphasis on economic investment, very few candidates mentioned any specific training and incentive programmes for SMEs. A number of candidates failed to mention concrete examples of measures taken by European countries to try to decrease unemployment in the manufacturing industry, such as giving state

subsidies to manufacturing industries, tax relief systems and incentives by the state, negotiations for foreign direct investment, political stability, improved infrastructural facilities and technological communication systems.

6. Most candidates answered this question successfully by linking the tourism industry with economic development, especially the expansion of the services industry. They explained how tourism gives a boost to a country's economy since it offers opportunities for employment and brings in money from other countries. They also managed to identify four tourist destinations correctly. Most candidates recognised the attraction of the Black Forest due to its scenic beauty and the recent trend in ecological tourism. Nearly all candidates answered the last part of this question well and obtained relatively high marks. They mentioned at least four reasons for the growth of tourism in Europe, such as more disposable income and leisure time, package holidays and weekend breaks, low cost airlines, increased tourism from developing countries, international sporting competitions and business and cultural conferences.

5.4 Section IV - Europeans and their Environment

7. Excellent answers were provided though many of them tended to mention the opposite of the factors having a negative impact on maintaining a healthy diet to denote the factors which contribute to a healthy diet.

8. Most candidates knew how to answer the first part of the question correctly but then knew little about the Blue Flag programme. They thought that this is an EU project which monitors and acts against those who pollute the Mediterranean Sea in general and so wrote superficially about the actions against sewage outflows, oil-spills and other threats. Few, however, knew correctly that the Blue Flag Programme is not an EU-funded project but an international one, active in over 60 countries, and one which empowers coastal authorities to develop a programme of quality action to restore or defend the coastal environment.

5.5 Section V - The Cultural Heritage

9. Candidates generally explained the influence of the various media on citizens in forming public opinion on the issues of the day. They also dealt with their use by political parties to convey their messages, and the transformation of the world into one whole global village. However, few candidates mentioned their use by business enterprises to advertise their products, and their coverage of various spheres of knowledge, events and issues. Candidates generally explained how the mass media in a democracy is free and accessible to everyone, irrespective of race, culture, ethnicity or religion.

10. The most common themes chosen by candidates attempting this question were the Renaissance, the Second World War, communism and the European Union. Most of the candidates managed to adequately explain the effects these had on the history of Europe and the various changes they brought about in the daily life of Europeans.

6.0 Project

The main comments of the examiners on the projects presented were:

- The overall level of work presented was good.
- Some of the projects were not focused on a specific topic and were too general in nature. In several instances, the reference to Europe or the EU was absent.
- Some projects showed a significant imbalance between sections; in other words, one aspect of the research had too much content while another had too little. Some aspects of the projects were superficially tackled.
- The methodology adopted was rather limited, based mainly on the collection of information from library sources or from Internet websites. Examples of research skills, such as the use of

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questionnaires and interviews could be observed, but these research skills need to be more developed. Often there was no analytical insight into the data. When the topic under review was a local one, candidates failed to produce original photographs. Illustrations used were often Google pictures.

- Projects were rarely based on primary sources and some candidates resorted to copying whole chunks from secondary sources. Candidates' work should be more integrated in approach and should include practical solutions and recommendations based on findings.
- Though there were many projects which were just excellent in presentation, there were others which were done rather haphazardly, for instance lacking a table of contents, captions to pictures, consistency in font size and making no distinction between subtitle headings and normal content text. At times the effectiveness of certain illustrations was reduced because they were either reproduced in greyscale or were very small.
- Many candidates failed to express their own ideas, suggestions and feelings about the topic investigated. Projects were mainly descriptive in nature and lacking in personal conclusions and suggestions.
- In most cases, the conclusion and the research references were very brief. References were mostly limited to a few websites. In such instances, no precise website references were indicated.

*Chairperson
2013 Examination Panel*