

GOZO YOUTH CONGRESS - voicing your perspectives -

Summary:

The Gozo Youth Congress which aimed at voicing youth perspectives was held on the 13th and 14th December (2002). The speakers tackled three main themes, namely: *Youth and Work*, *Youth and the EU*, and *Gozo as a Region*. Delegates coming from various organisations such as GUG, Local Councils, KDZ, Sixth Form, UHM, KSU and MUT were present.

Emerging from the discussion on *Youth and Work*, the need for today's youth to practice flexibility at his/her workplace became clear. Moreover, the educational system has to be linked more closely to one's position at work. Regarding the issue of *Gozo as a Region*, the need for a regional government or a regional council for Gozo, under the format of an elected assembly was made abundantly clear.

Mention was made of the negotiations between Malta and the European Union. The significance that Gozo was given throughout these negotiations was appreciated, and the news that Gozo was to be considered under NUTS 3 was met with satisfaction. Dr. Josann Cutajar emphasised that Gozitans should strive and unite in order to achieve their goals.

Mr Azzopardi expressed the group's wish that the final document would have an impact on those who are responsible for taking decisions in our country. In addition to this, he hoped that regarding the proposed Assembly, history would not repeat itself, as in the case of the Ministry for Gozo, which came into being 40 years after being proposed in 1947. Expounding on what was previously discussed during the workshops, he emphasised that a project that has succeeded perfectly, i.e. the Ministry for Gozo, should not be replaced by this Assembly.

A Gozo Youth Forum was proposed and voted upon by the delegates present. This shall incorporate various youth organisations established in Gozo. Samuel Azzopardi said that all delegates present should push this issue within their organisations, just as GUG is doing. A unanimous vote was taken upon the final document, which concluded the last plenary of the Gozo Youth Congress. The final document is to be presented to National authorities and the European Commission.

This Congress was supported by the Ministry for Gozo, the Parliamentary Secretariat for Youth and Sports, Magro Group and MIC.

PLENARY SESSION

The Parliamentary Secretary for Youth and Sport, the Hon Jesmond Mugliet

In his speech, The Parliamentary Secretary for Youth and Sport, the Hon. Jesmond Mugliet, said that there is a need for lay voluntary work, apart from that carried out by the Church. He insisted that the Gozo Youth Congress was useful because of the opportunity it creates for debate. Maltese youth have for the first time made their voice heard at the Nice Summit. He maintained that partnership with EU without participation is meaningless.

The EU promotes mobility and is a recognised value for the EU, celebrated in various ways. It is important so that we learn about the cultures of others. Another aim of the EU is for young people, students, workers and researchers to go to other countries to study or carry on their work, to come to know the structures and become aware of how far their own capacities can reach when they compare them with those of youths from other countries. Thus, mobility is a value and a way of preparation for youth.

The EU is creating strategic projects also in the field of education where we find life-long learning, e-learning and vocational education. Up to the year 2010, the EU wants to create a dynamic society based on the wisdom of e-learning. The EU offers better work opportunities as seen in the new White paper: *A new impetus for European Youth*.

Mr Mugliet insisted that we are living in an exciting world where the aim is one - to conserve our identity. This is a big challenge because culture is made by individuals and the choices they make.

Mr Mugliet made a special point about the availability of interesting challenges because Maltese youth are capable of dealing with them

Mr. Noel Grech: Competition in an increasingly globalised world

Rapporteur: MARGOT ANN BAJADA

Today we see a considerable improvement in the infrastructure, both that relating to transport, as well as that which relates to telecommunications services. The multimedia services offered in the Maltese Islands are of considerable help for those companies which would like to become involved in the field of electronic commerce. Information technology in our islands has made gigantic steps forward because it has made it possible for people to work in the comfort of their homes.

This workshop raised the point that in Gozo we do not have clustering in the field of informatics, compared with Malta where we find the Tecno Park in Mosta. But the view was expressed that for work relating to informatics, there is no need for clustering, because this is the sort of work that could be performed at home. Mention was also made of the advantage that a country has when it used the system of video conferencing for this type of work. In Malta this system has been in the process of being introduced since 1994, but this has not succeeded because of lack of funds.

Discussion also took place relating to the fact that although Malta is one of the ten candidate countries that has a high level of technology, this fact is not being utilised sufficiently. The possibility was mentioned that Gozitan students would have the opportunity of sitting examinations in Gozo itself, with examination papers being e-mailed to the University Gozo Centre a few minutes prior to the examination.

One of the imbalances that our country suffers from is the number of cars on our streets. The use of electric

buses may be considered as a global approach to reduce the number of cars, the problem of parking, and above all, the contamination of the atmosphere.

One disadvantage associated with technology is that it has taken the jobs of many skilled workers, for instance in factories where work is now performed by computerised programmes. Today, with the help of the internet, businessmen have the opportunity of advertising their business. One can therefore use this way of making contact with such a business without the help of third persons.

Mention was also made that in Switzerland a new plan is being studied relating to working on a grid system. The grid system is a new system that makes use of developments in technology of artificial intelligence. The main aim of the grid is to give a human aspect to the internet. This occurs in the filtration of information to avoid information overload. The grid system is different from the internet because it gives one not only whatever is registered by the search machine, but it searches also every website on the planet.

Through the project *e-government*, the government is giving the opportunity so that every individual would have his or her own personal e-mail address. Moreover, schools will be opening in the evening so that informatics will be brought closer to the citizen.

Gozo cannot be considered any more as an island if this technology is utilised. Technology facilitates globalisation.

PROSPECTS FOR WORK IN GOZO

Rapporteur: MR. ANTOINE VASSALLO

Our characteristics as Gozitans distinguish us from Maltese people because we make a special effort in our work. There is a need for improving education in Gozo. Statistics show that illiteracy in Gozo is higher than that of the rest of Islands. Unfortunately, schools teach us to focus our curriculum vitae too much on academic aspects and forget other abilities, particularly technical ones.

We need to have a change in mentality, especially the need to emphasise the concept of life-long education. One can mention also other aspects, including cultural tourism which opens new horizons, as well as eco-

tourism which in an indirect way encourages youth to take up farming. One must also mention small- and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) on which the Gozitan economy is based to a large extent. These are given a special impetus within the EU context.

Other measures can also be taken to make life easier for Gozitans. Among these can be mentioned video-conferencing which was proposed for the first time several years ago, as well as the centre for MCAST in Gozo which should create better relationships with Gozitan industry. One must keep in mind that education does not stop with graduation, but continues.

FR. GIOVANNI CURMI - KDZ:

The Impact of European Culture on the traditional Maltese and Gozitan Values

Rapporteur: MS. JOSETTE BUTTIGIEG

To start with, discussion began relating to the fact that the Church in our country has not taken a position on the EU, though this has occurred in certain countries in Europe like Poland and Ireland (where it declared openly that it was in favour of Irish people voting for the Treaty of Nice). In our country, however, the Church cannot do this because a statement like this could be interpreted as partisanship. In spite of the lack of a particular stand, the Archbishop of Malta has a special EU delegate who has the job of an observer.

However, although the Church in Malta has not made her choice, it has made the universal choice by approving unity among people, that is, those share common values, among which we include values relating to peace, stability, justice and solidarity on which the EU is based.

And it is on this that the Church puts emphasis, i.e. that the EU must make a radical choice: to put man in the centre of everything, to respect the dignity of the human person. This principle can only be assured if these values are respected.

This is happening automatically because the laws of the EU as based on these values. Thus for example we can consider the principle of mobility between nations, which helps to ensure equality of wealth, rights of access to opportunities by those nations which were previously deprived of all this. The EU demands that justice be made, not only in each nation, but also that every nation must help others without any hindrance or unnecessary bureaucracy or discrepancies in the legislation.

It is because of the resemblance between the principles embraced by the EU and Christian values that the Pope has shown clearly his faith in the institutions of the EU. In fact he has called the consequences of the iron curtain as "the unnatural divisions of Europe". Fr Curmi in fact, in his paper quoted the Pope's speech where he said:

"Ho pure reso visita, a Strasburgo, alle Istituzioni europee, volendo anche in questo modo manifestare il mio sostegno agli sforzi in atto verso l'unificazione del continente."

And on another occasion:

"Oggi constato con soddisfazione che parecchi Paesi dell'Europa centrale e orientale chiedono di poter entrare nell'Unione Europea per svolgere in essa un loro ruolo creativo. Mi auguro che i responsabili di tale Unione sappiano assecondare questo desiderio."

The conclusion we have reached is that the conflicts of values does not result from being in or out of the EU. Religious and social life in Malta has changed over the years and will continue to change - this is in the nature of every society that evolves in time. Only those communities that have closed themselves off from the rest of the world (such as some primitive tribes in the Amazon) that today live the same way as they did hundreds of years ago.

To grow means to open up to others. Values must needs face the challenge of change. In the final analysis, it is us who must make the choice.

Ms. Claudia Cassar: YOUTH AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

Rapporteur: MAX ZAMMIT

In this workshop the role of youth within the EU was discussed, and especially in relation to the White Paper about youth which has just been published by the European Commission with the title: *A new impetus for European Youth*. A number of items that arose from the White Paper were discussed, namely, education, vocational training, work, health, security at the place of work, decision taking, citizenship, discrimination, mobility, free

time, consumer rights, and the environment. The most significant conclusion that came out of this workshop was that the institutions of the EU are still very bureaucratic, and these should be revised so that the mechanisms of the Union would become more accessible to youth. As an example of this one could mention the mechanisms to resolve the problem of high unemployment among young persons in Europe at the moment.

GOZO AS A REGION - Plenary Session

The point was emphasised that the European Union offers new challenges which we must face. As an example, mention was made of the time in the 1980s when there were fears about introducing computers at the workplace, but today everybody appreciates the benefits which these have brought particularly in the technology area. It is important to look at the European Union from the point of view of national unity and solidarity. The point of departure in the Community of Regions (COR) within the EU is the dignity of the human being which unites all nations and helps them to move together, particularly in difficult situations

Another point raised was that secondary schools focus only on theory in the field of information technology. Skills involving design of website and commerce on the internet should also be taught. It was also mentioned that the European Union insists that decisions should be taken at the lowest level possible, and therefore Gozo should benefit from these.

It was said that funds for Gozo administered by the central government will be in the regional directory for Malta.

Plenary Session

The "Grupp Universitarji Ghawdxin" (GUG) (Gozitan University Students Group) needs to be in the forefront to ensure that the media emphasise the fact that Gozitan students suffer from disadvantages.

If the GDP in Gozo does not reach the levels reached in Malta, there will be a subsidy from the European Union according to the negotiations reached. There will be a special committee in the Ministry for Gozo where funds will be administered by the Gozitan Committee.

The decision that there would be a total distinction between Malta and Gozo was taken from two perspectives: that relating to direct autonomy, and that

relating to subsidy for Gozitans. Mention was also made about the European Union and the Church, in view of the latter's reluctance to put forward its opinion. The reason for this is to ensure that it does not become involved in party politics. It was mentioned that, in the past, the Church had an army and other means, and used to use force to support its message. Today all this has changed.

Finally, the point was raised whether Gozo was a Region or not, based on the debate on values, since it was mentioned that Gozo had values which were different from those in Malta. It was said that although Gozo cannot compete in terms of quantity, this, however, could be the case in terms of quality.

H.L. Mons. NIKOL CAUCHI Bishop of Gozo

HL Mons. Cauchi referred to Article 158 of the Treaty of Amsterdam which states that the aim of those responsible should be to reduce disparity between regions - between rich and poor. He mentioned also Article 159 which deals with available funds. Some of the questions that need be asked are: Should Gozo be considered as a region? Should it be a region on its own or as part of Malta? If Malta and Gozo are financed as a single package, would Gozo be considered as a separate region?

He emphasised the fact that Gozo has special needs, such as for instance the problem of transport. He mentioned the structural difficulties that the Farmers' Co-operative used to face regarding transportation and export of products. This results from additional expenses involved in transport.

H.L. was one of the founders of the Civic Council which was subdivided into three different committees - the cultural committee, the committee for roads, and the

finance committee. The bishop urged all young Gozitans to discuss more frequently the particular needs that affect them. These were also mentioned 140 years ago in relation to the polemic about the removal of the diocese of Gozo. However, Rome understood that Gozo needs to be a separate diocese, with a bishop to direct it. Before the second world war, the bishop was "immediate subjectis" - subject to Malta, an auxiliary bishop.

Gozitan students suffer from a disadvantage compared to their Maltese colleagues. He suggested that it would not be a bad idea if hostels were made available for Gozitan students. In the past there were two hostels, one in Birkirkara and another in Valletta, but these had to close because the increased boat services. Gozitan students need to have at least the minimum necessary to deal with the exigencies of life.

He encouraged all Gozitans to make sure that their voice and their opinions are heard.

FRANCO MASINI

Mr Masini referred to documents relating to the history of Gozo researched by himself. He mentioned first of all the pre-historic period when the first people came to Gozo, and to remind us of this we have places like the temples of Ggantija. Then came the Punic period when the first commerce started in Gozo. The next period was the Roman one, when Gozo passed from Carthaginian to Roman domination after the Second Punic War. From this period the oldest document in the Maltese Islands was found which mentions specifically the 'People of Gozo'

About the Arab rule that followed, we have very little information. After various other rulers, Gozo passed into the hands of the Knights of St John where it enjoyed considerable autonomy. There existed the *Universitas Gaudisii* which had responsibility for police, taxation and diverse other areas specific for the island of Gozo. The French who spent a short period in these island, left the same structure with minimal modifications.

During the time of the British, this institution lasted only until 1819, when it was abolished by Governor Sir Thomas Maitland. This was followed by the so-called "Commissioner for Gozo" who used to be British, or more often, Maltese. When the Maltese Constitution was established, the powers of these Commissioners increased or decreased. Finally, in the 1950s, the Civic Council for Gozo was established which was responsible for culture and roads in a more or less autonomous fashion. This lasted until 1973 when it was removed by a referendum

In the 1980s the Parliamentary Committee for Gozo was established, made up of Gozitan parliamentary representatives as well as Gozitans employed in the civil service. In 1987 the Ministry for Gozo was established which gave Gozo a stronger voice within the cabinet. The Labour Government (1996-1998) had drafted a White Paper about the regional government of Gozo, but this did not materialise.

One can thus see the history that Gozo has experienced during the ages which formed the Gozo that we know today.

DR. JOSANN CUTAJAR

Dr Cutajar started by mentioning a number of letters written to the local journals with the theme of 'Gozo as a Region'. The fact that Gozo was in the periphery, meant that it had the problem of double insularity - it depends too much on the primary and secondary sector for employment. In the year 2000, the GDP of Gozo was 71-72 % of the national mean. There are various factors that limit the economic and social development of the island. Gozo would be entitled to financial assistance if the rate of development of Malta exceeded that of Gozo.

She continued by referring to relevant statistics. Among these we find a demographic imbalance in Gozo compared with Malta, resulting from services such as pensions, the way they are distributed to persons with disability, the composition of the family in Malta and Gozo, practices relating to home-ownership, the different evolution of the education system as well as that of employment.

After looking at the NUTS system adopted by the European Union for the classification of regions, she explained the directorate for regional policy and the way this impinges on the regional development in Gozo. The Directorate will be within the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), and will co-ordinate the programming and managing of funds according to

the special needs of Gozo. In this way the Maltese authorities would be able to see how funds given by the EU are allocated.

She also dealt with regions that fall under the classification of NUTS2, giving as an example the United Kingdom. These regions would have an elected assembly, would develop and implement their own policy, and reproduce a regional strategy in fields like economic development. They would collect their own taxes and receive funds from the central government which they need to distribute.

In order to overcome the disadvantages of regional government, there must be regional solutions for regional problems, and that the democratic power to take decisions which affect the local population must increase so that there would be better co-ordination of decision-making and accountability for regional services, as well as regional input in the drawing up of national policy. Apart from this, resources and prioritisation should be determined for the particular region.

Finally, the four points of Orm and Gramlich relating to civic capital were mentioned, namely: vision, determination, alliances, bridges.

Workshop - Dr. Josann Cutajar: GOZO AS AN ANTONOMOUS

Rapporteur: JOSETTE BUTTIGIEG

It would be a good thing if the plan for a regional government would eventuate. However, there are great difficulties for this to happen, especially relating to the mentality of both Maltese and Gozitans. We do not feel that the central government, within its current structure, is giving sufficient importance to Gozo. We believe that Gozitans have enough potential to have their own assembly.

In her comments Dr Cutajar highlighted the needs for Gozo to be given special attention. She gave a number of reasons why Gozo should have its own regional government.

During the discussion of this document, everybody was in favour that Gozo should have its own regional government as explained in the plan of the European Union (NUTS 3). This would allow for elected members of the assembly for Gozo, who would be able to develop tailor-made policies for Gozo and implement them. Important sectors which these elected members should concentrate on are: trades and employment, use of land and regional planning, transport and the environment.

This, however, requires vision from the assembly, as well as a strong commitment for Gozo, both from the residents themselves, as well as from their leaders. Alliances should form between the citizens, the NGOs (grassroots) and the elected assembly.

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Dr. Joseph Grech: Workshop: Gozo: FROM WORDS TO FACTS

Rapporteur: ANDREW SULTANA

In spite of the closeness and dependence on Malta, Gozo has always kept its distinct character, unique characteristics, as well as a history which though linked intrinsically with that of Malta, is also slightly different. As an example of this, he mentioned the Siege of Gozo, the removal of the French from the Island, as well as the Civic Council for Gozo. However, for a long time Gozo was considered a region in the periphery, and for this reason did not benefit from the same attention and development as Malta. During the last few years, new investments and initiatives in Gozo have strengthened its infrastructure, as well its voice within the highest institutions of the nation. However, this does not mean that there nothing else to be done. One asks: Where do we go from here?

Gozo should be placed in a good position in regard to international relationships, especially in respect to the European Union, because the latter can make available specific funds for projects essential for Gozo. This however entails more education and a

civic conscience by the people of Gozo. This same civic sense needs to be fostered further, though it is encouraging to see the large number of Gozitan graduates. As an example of what can be done, one may mention quality tourism and investment by Gozitans in Gozo. However, one may consider ironic the fact that when one tries to do this, the Gozitans themselves who are to benefit, might decide put a stop to it, as happened recently in Qala, in the case of the airstrip, or in the case of the transfer of the proposed transfer station for refuse.

There was a suggestion that the regional councils for Gozo, should be made up from elected Gozitan representatives within the Maltese Parliament, as well as from mayors of local councils in Gozo. In this way a wider opinion is ensured, both from the parliamentary point of view as well as the local one, so that as wide a range of different opinions is catered for as possible. The aim of this council would be to give advice, as well as having important functions, such as for example to supervise the finances in Gozo.

Mr. Kevin Mizzi: Workshop: Gozo and the European Union... THE FUTURE

Rapporteur: KEVIN MIZZI

The document discussed during this workshop was basically divided into three parts.

The first part emphasised the regional concept for Gozo that existed since the times of the Knights of Malta, and which evolved continuously over the years. The principle of solidarity on which is based the European Union was the principal reason why structural funds are in fact directed to those regions which are less developed, with the aim of bringing them closer to the richer ones.

Gozo which fits in the definition of an island region, approved by the European Parliament in 1998, suffers from double insularity which puts it in a disadvantageous position within the European economic market. For this reason, the European Union will help financially so that the island will not remain disadvantaged. The legal basis for this understanding is precisely Article 158 of the Treaty of Amsterdam.

The second part, summarised the projects and exchanges which Gozo already benefits from, even though not yet a member, among which, there are exchanges of students

and teachers, twinning, and projects which concern environment management and culture.

The third section summarised in a technical way the agreements reached by the negotiators from Malta regarding Gozo within the chapter on Regionality. Gozo will be considered as a separate region (NUTS3). The European Union will consider separate statistics for Gozo so that in case Malta will cease to qualify for maximum funding, and income in Gozo remains below the established threshold, Gozo will continue to qualify as before. Emphasis was made within the *Single programming document* that Gozo must be given due importance in the allocation of funds for projects in the Regional Directorate within the Office of the Prime Minister. This was strengthened by the financial Protocol specific for the island.

Finally, the workshop insisted that the voice of the Gozitan people should be more organised and strengthened. Delegates declared also that the structural funds should come directly for informatics, eco-tourism, agriculture and mobility so as to ensure development and progress for Gozo and the Gozitans.

Plenary Session

The need was emphasised that Gozitans should get out of their shell and endeavour to influence the media, so as to have a greater impact. Regarding the transfer station, the point was again made that this project was not as negative as was being painted, but should be considered again in the future. With regards to funds from the European Union for Gozo, the concept of a committee of the Directorate for Gozo within the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) to take responsibility for the organisation of distribution of funds, as well as to deal with the root problems relating to distribution of these funds in the Gozitan society.

This committee would have the competence of administering the funds through a regional directorate, to pass on proposals to the European union, to ensure that before doing so, that they are adequate, as far as creation of jobs is concerned, and to ensure that these proposals are acceptable to the European Union. In this respect, there should be consultation not only with the Ministry for Gozo and the local Councils, but also with all the NGOs concerned so that the real needs of Gozo would be determined.

Motions

The first motion proposed the establishment of a Youth Forum for Gozo.

The second motion stated that the delegates to the Congress agree to express their satisfaction for the way in which the negotiations with the European Union relating to regionality of Gozo were negotiated, particularly, the recognition of Gozo as NUTS 3.

The third motion asked that the GUG discusses and takes a position about joining the European Union in the next Annual General Meeting.

The fourth motion said that relating to the European Union policy about youth and about regions, the Congress agrees that full membership of Malta and Gozo with the European Union would be of benefit to Gozitan youth.

All these four proposals were voted on and passed unanimously.

CLOSING SPEECH

SAMUEL AZZOPARDI
President GUG

The president began by expressing his satisfaction for the way that the congress developed in a general way. He observed that a final document should emerge from the congress that reflected the useful and mature contributions that occurred at the plenary sessions, seminars and workshops. This document will also be presented to the Bishop of Gozo, the national authorities as well as to the European Commission through the Convention of Youth and the Future of Europe.

Relating to youth and jobs, he mentioned that the need has become apparent for greater flexibility. Education needs to link up with the place of work, and this may occur through the programme *Youth of the European Union*. Regarding the theme *Gozo as a Region*, the most important point to come out was the need for government or regional council for Gozo in the form of an elected assembly.

He expressed the wish that the final document that comes out of the Congress would leave an impact on

those who take decisions for the nation, in the same way that happened with regards to the Ministry for Gozo, that was proposed in 1947 by the government of the day, even if this proposal became effective 40 years later! Appreciation was also shown regarding negotiations with the European Union in relation to Gozo, and recognition under the rubric of NUTS 3.

He emphasised also the fact that if there was no effort and unity among the Gozitans, nothing will happen, as was mentioned the previous day by Dr Josann Cutajar. He referred also with satisfaction to the motion to set up a youth forum to incorporate within it different organisations of youth in Gozo, and said that the GUG would insist on this point, while at the same time he asked the delegates present to do the same with their own organisations.

At the end of his speech, he asked for a vote about the final document, which was approved unanimously by the delegates at the Congress



GOZO UNIVERSITY GROUP (GUG)

The executive members of GUG for the year 2003 are:

President:	Samuel Azzopardi
Vici-President:	Jean Paul Grech
General Secretary:	Margot Ann Bajada
Treasurer:	Max Zammit
PRO:	Charmaine Attard
International Secretary:	Ramona Marie Cassar
Member:	Christian Saliba