

Sunday, 25th January 2009

Salvino Busuttil elected vice-chairman of Eurocean

Malcolm Naudi

Salvino Busuttil has been elected vice-president of Eurocean, the focal point for information on marine science and technology in Europe. During the same meeting, held in Portugal, Prof. Busuttil was also appointed treasurer of the Eurocean Foundation, which was set up to take care of the funding of Eurocean.

Prof. Busuttil succeeded Eurocean's founder president, Mario Ruivo, who stood down at the end of his term. Dr Ruivo is a former Portuguese foreign minister and a previous executive secretary of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, which forms part of Unesco.

Eurocean (www.eurocean.org) is a French-Portuguese initiative which aims to facilitate access to information on marine science and technology. Organisations from nine countries including Malta, constitute the 12 full members of Eurocean. Its primary objective is to put together, collect, analyse and disseminate information throughout Europe, and its Mediterranean region, on all aspects of marine science and technology.

Its three primary tasks are to set up an electronic information centre; to encourage communication and co-operation between the European organisations in charge of marine research and technology; and to enlarge Eurocean's membership to relevant national and European organisations.

"There are quite a number of research institutes in Europe dealing with marine affairs," Prof. Busuttil pointed out, "but so far they have been working very much on their own. Eurocean aims to create synergies between the various institutes and to create a common platform on which they can all work together in a number of areas."

He mentioned as an example that one of the first tasks Eurocean accomplished since it was set up in Lisbon in 2001, was to carry out an inventory of all the research vessels in Europe and the Mediterranean, including their location, size, how they operate and what they do.

Eurocean has also sought European Union funding through the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) and Structural Funds to promote research in underwater marine technology.

Malta, through the Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST) is one of the members of Eurocean. Along with Prof. Busuttil, technical input is provided through the Malta operations centre of the International Ocean Institute (IOI) and its director, Aldo Drago.

This centre provides Eurocean with information, including important data on currents in the Mediterranean, wave formation and related aspects. "Our hope is that Malta, and the IOI's Malta centre, will take the lead in the establishment of a Mediterranean marine information and dissemination network," Prof. Busuttil said.

"For that purpose, Eurocean is having a meeting in Malta, which will be a base-forming exercise in the hope that we can all agree to set it up in Malta."

One of the benefits of the MCST's membership in Eurocean is enabling the local scientific community to keep abreast of new developments in marine science and to share relevant data with the European scientific community.

Prof. Busuttil last month proposed that Eurocean conduct an inventory of cruise liners operating in the Mediterranean and another on tankers that could be a potential source of pollution since heavy maritime traffic of this nature passes in the vicinity of Malta and is a potential hazard.

He looks forward to the exchange of data with such locally-based institutions as the International Maritime Law Institute (Imli) and the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre (Rempec) for the Mediterranean Sea. "The two-way exchanges of data will enable synergies to be created, with these institutions contributing to and receiving information from Eurocean." Prof. Busuttil said.

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Comments

albert leone ganado (on 26/1/09)

What I cannot understand is why the country continues to give our medical students a free education together with a stipend without expecting some service in return when they become doctors.

Some of the medical graduates do feel a moral obligation to give a couple of years of internship as payback, but others just leave to work abroad leaving the taxpayer and community who financed their education medically high and dry.

I believe some Norwegian students were paying over 30000 euros per annum to study medicine in Malta. The same fees should be imposed on Maltese students to be waived if they give back some years of service to the maltese medical services.

May I point out that Canada faced with a similar situation of emigration of doctors to the more lucrative US medical system imposes tighter conditions on their medical graduates than what I am proposing