

## **European Parliament Elections, June 2004.**

### ***Manifesto of the Malta Labour Party***

Approved by the National Executive, Thursday, May 6, 2004.

## **WORK, WELFARE, DIGNITY**

### ***For the well being of all Maltese and Gozitans***

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## **1. Introduction**

Ever since its birth, the Malta Labour Party has stood for national freedom, social justice, the creation of new opportunities and democracy.

We have just passed through a decisive moment in our history when our people had to decide what sort of relationship they wanted our country to have with the European Union. The majority of the people decided that our country should become a member of the European Union.

The Labour Party's biggest challenge now, is to ensure that its political ideals for a better Malta are safeguarded, applied and developed in the new political circumstances which our country will face as an EU member state.

In order to be more effective in the objective it wants to reach, the Malta Labour Party is affiliated to the Party of European Socialists which shares the same political ideology and beliefs as the Malta Labour Party and also, like Labour, has, since its inception, formed part of the international socialist family.

## **2. Participation in the European Parliament**

In the European Parliament, the Malta Labour Party will work unstintingly for the common good of all Maltese and Gozitans. Labour will achieve this by:

- Ensuring that our country maximises all the advantages while minimising the disadvantages of membership in the European Union;
- Doing its utmost to remove all the negative aspects that the package negotiated for Malta's membership in the EU may have, and ensuring that the accession agreement with the EU is not disadvantageous for the Maltese and Gozitan people, especially the workers;
- Ensuring that everybody benefits from membership while the hardship that membership brings is shouldered mainly by those most able to carry it;
- Ensuring that membership leads, as promised, to a better quality of life for all Maltese and Gozitan families;
- Ensuring that in all its initiatives with foreign countries, Malta adheres to its constitutional neutrality so that our friendship with all countries translates into a common good;
- Ensuring the promotion of our Mediterranean character and that Malta becomes a place of dialogue between the European Union and the rest of the world.

### **3. Jobs, Jobs, Jobs**

Work for everybody.

For us the fight against unemployment is not enough. Like the European socialists we believe that everybody must have work. We must create work while integrating the most disadvantaged groups in our society into the labour market. Everybody must have the opportunity to work: young people, men and women in the prime of their life, disabled people, and people coming from minority groups in society.

We intend to participate in the ongoing initiatives of the European socialists in order to reach an agreement on a Europe-wide level on basic working conditions and we will work so that large enterprises will recognise their social responsibilities. We will join the European socialists in the on going initiatives they take to introduce more measures which increase health and safety at the place of work.

We will address the problems of Maltese and Gozitan families by ensuring their full participation in the labour market. Special attention must be given to regions which have particular needs such as Gozo and the south of Malta.

Our economic priorities within the Socialist Group in the European Parliament will be the following:

- Promoting economic growth, the creation of work and economic stability;
- Increasing public and private investment by means of public-private partnerships in the fields of education and training, lifelong education, research, the environment, information technology, telecommunications, energy and transport;
- Removing wrongly conceived and badly implemented taxes which distort the rules of the common market and hinder private initiative;
- Increasing the social responsibility of the private sector;
- By means of enhanced co-ordination with the European Parliament, involving the national parliaments and giving them a greater say in economic decision-making in Europe;
- Guaranteeing that:
  - pensions schemes remain sustainable and universal;
  - state pensions are retained;
  - supplementary pension schemes of a high quality which will be secure and agreed to by the social partners, are given support.

Labour's commitment to Malta in the European Parliament will be that of doing our utmost to obtain the best deal for all Maltese and Gozitans:

- We shall strive to ensure that the economy develops in the best way possible by attracting new investment towards Malta in the manufacturing and financial sectors;
- We shall strive to ensure that our tourist product is more competitive;
- We shall strive to see that the shipyards and factories have a future in which the necessary changes are made without, however, having the livelihood of the workers threatened as is happening now;
- We will support farmers and fishermen who will be facing a critical situation;
- Gozo will be given the utmost importance to enable the island to develop in a sustainable manner according to its realities.

#### **4. Maltese, European, Mediterranean**

##### ***Constitutional Neutrality***

Neutrality is a very strong principle for the Malta Labour Party. We cannot say that EU membership will strengthen neutrality as it is understood in Malta's Constitution up to now. Moreover, there are already different interpretations as to whether Malta's neutrality will be breached in the light of the developments there have been in the EU treaties and what is proposed in the draft constitutional treaty finalised by the Convention on the Future of Europe. The Malta Labour Party is obliged, and wants to, ensure that Malta's neutrality is not undermined as a result of the country's EU membership.

Accordingly, the Malta Labour Party will do everything possible so that our country will not be constrained to adopt policies which in any way breach, diminish or threaten Malta's vocation in favour of neutrality.

From inside the European Parliament, we will project ourselves as a neutral and non-aligned country within the European Union, providing a meeting place where countries in conflict come together to resolve their differences. Today more than ever, neutrality means absolute security for the Maltese people and a guarantee of peace. It is, therefore, in our country's best interest, that its neutrality is strengthened. Labour will not allow anything to undermine our neutrality. This also makes good economic sense for Malta.

Within the PES we will work closely with those parties which come from neutral countries, namely Austria, Ireland, Finland and Sweden.

### ***Security and Human Rights***

Together with the European socialists, we commit ourselves to combat clear security threats such as terrorism, cross border crime, drug trafficking and military threats.

In the same manner, we will combat the root causes of this threat to the security of nations: namely poverty, violations of human rights, environmental degradation, and ethnic and religious conflicts.

We maintain that the most important priority is to prevent these threats from happening in the first place. This can be achieved by economic co-operation, humanitarian aid, and aid to rebuild what has been destroyed.

We consider the promotion of human rights and democracy as part of the main political initiatives we want to take in the European Parliament.

We support every initiative in favour of disarmament since this will lead to the end of the nuclear threat.

### ***Europeans***

We intend to play a major role in contributing to reforms which will make the EU more flexible and less hegemonic. We do not want the EU to continue to adopt a one size fits all policy imposed on its member states regardless of their different social, economic and geographical realities.

We will support reforms which strengthen the role of the national parliaments with the EU institutions, especially in the decision making process.

Our commitment is that member states will continue to maintain their central role. The European Union should not move towards becoming a federal state which replaces diversity amongst its members with uniformity. The unanimity rule must be maintained in certain areas so that small countries like Malta are not sidelined.

We will work with those who have a similar interest to ours, so that the voice, aspirations and proposals of the small member states are not stifled or hindered in any way.

We know that the EU's rules and bureaucratic structures are very strict. In spite of everything, we believe that there will be still room to discuss afresh with the EU the situations which will arise when our country is applying the Union's rules. We will insist,

in the European Parliament, for a change in the negotiated accession agreement when the economic, social or environmental impact of the application EU's rules results in a negative effect on a particular sector or on Malta as a whole.

### ***Mediterranean***

We will work with political and social forces to strengthen in a concrete manner our and the European Union's Mediterranean dimension. We will do this in order to strengthen peace and security in the Mediterranean region.

With the same aim in mind, and also to contribute towards increasing wealth, we will insist on a strong commitment for more EU development aid to be channelled towards the Mediterranean.

We will insist that the EU gives more attention to the social, economic and political problems of this region and we will offer to take a leading role in this work.

## **5. A Healthy Environment: The Right Of Every Citizen**

Every citizen has the right to live in a healthy environment.

Sustainable development and respect for the environment can, and should, go hand in hand with economic development and the creation of employment opportunities. Together with our European socialist partners, we will insist that any development which takes place will be sustainable not only in economic terms but also in environmental terms. In this manner the needs of the present generations are met without compromising the interests of future generations. The track record of European socialists attests to this commitment.

Our targets are, therefore:

- Improved public health: decreasing environmental pollution should diminish respiratory illnesses, and early death caused by cancer.
- Decreasing the harm to the countryside, fish stocks and buildings resulting from chemical pollution and environmental degradation.
- Better waste management, better management of landfills and sewage treatment.
- Increasing the number of historical heritage sites and areas of outstanding natural beauty which can be enjoyed by the general public.

We are also going to work to introduce stricter regulations to govern the management of fish farms.

More over we will ensure that hunting and trapping are practised in a regulated manner in full respect of environmental considerations.

## **6. Equal opportunities mean equality!**

The European Union must take action at its level to fight discrimination on the basis of gender, race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

The European socialists were the protagonists in the initiatives to achieve this. The Maltese socialists have done the same in Malta over the years. We pledge to continue to do so, together with our European partners, in the coming years.

Equality between men and women is a fundamental principle of democracy.

All women should have every opportunity to a professional career. Every woman should have every right to choose whatever type of job she wants and to have any type of training she chooses.

In spite of this, discrimination on the basis of gender still exists. Women, much more than men still risk:

- Having no job
- Earning less
- In temporary employment
- Doing part time work

Female participation in every sector of society guarantees a democracy which works and functions well. Female participation in politics is not only a right but also a means of achieving social progress.

## **7. Welfare**

Our work in the European Parliament cannot be separated from the work we will be carrying out at home to ensure the social welfare of Maltese and Gozitan families.

### ***Gozo***

Our commitment is for Gozo to be fully and truly recognised, in deed and not just in word, as a region with its own special needs within the governing structures of the European Union.

While safeguarding Gozo from the disadvantages caused by EU rules designed for large territories, we insist that Gozo benefits from the advantages of the EU rules, especially those which apply to very small islands.

We will continue to insist on the necessity that:

- jobs are created for the Gozitans in Gozo in order to decrease the level of unemployment in Gozo itself;
- there will be subsidised transport for Gozitans between Malta and Gozo;
- industrial investment and tourism directed towards Gozo are promoted in the best possible manner.

### ***Welfare State***

We will work, according to prevailing circumstances, to strengthen the welfare state which was put on a sound footing by successive Labour governments which has been undermined by the Nationalist government. There must be value for money in public spending. Waste and the squandering of public resources must be stopped; this benefits cronies of the party in government, while constituting an unsustainable burden for the majority.

### ***Public Health***

Medical care provided by the state must remain accessible to all. We are not ready to accept a situation where the care given to the people, or health care itself, depends on how much one can afford to pay.

### ***Senior Citizens***

We want more initiatives to improve the quality of life of senior citizens. The proportion of old age persons is increasing both in Malta and in Europe. There must be continuous support for policies which safeguard a decent quality of life for senior citizens. Statistical tools measuring the impact of the cost of living on the elderly must, therefore, continue to be developed.

### ***Young People***

Apart from creating the best opportunities and the best future for our young people, our work in the European Parliament will be directed towards securing a fuller participation for youth in international projects such as exchanges of Maltese students, young workers, sportspersons and artists. We will encourage the participation of young Maltese people in conferences and international activities.

### ***Local Councils***

We will support all measures which assists Maltese and Gozitan local councils to benefit from EU programmes and projects. We will encourage exchanges of citizens and civic organisations between local councils from our country and European local and regional authorities.

## **8. Ready For The Challenge**

The Malta Labour Party will be proactive in the European Parliament. It will do its utmost in the interests of all Maltese and Gozitans. Like other democratic socialist parties, we will discuss and insist that measures which adversely affect the welfare of the Maltese and Gozitan people are changed.

The Malta Labour Party will ensure that neither the sluggish approach of the Nationalist government nor the Brussels bureaucracy will hinder our country from getting the funds which are due to it. We will see to it that every cent that is due to our country is spent well, and without being frittered away, on projects that our country really needs and which are enjoyed by the entire population.

We are convinced that the Malta Labour Party will face up to this challenge by always remaining loyal to its primary aim, namely, that of safeguarding the interests of all working people: those on a low income, as well as those who enjoy a good income because of their skills and effort.