



Questions for political parties and their candidates to the 2019-2024 European Parliament European Parliament Elections 25th May 2019

On Saturday 25th May 2019, Maltese citizens will be joining their counterparts in the other EU Member States and vote to elect a new European Parliament.

It is now beyond any reasonable doubt that the global economy is leading to massive climate change that poses an existential threat to humanity. It is also beyond any reasonable doubt that human activities are causing a collapse of biodiversity and an impoverishment of ecosystems on a massive scale.

So in view of the important EU elections this May, we've drafted a set of 5 priority issues which we are calling on political parties in Malta and their candidates for the MEP elections to consider, promote and endorse. These include global issues but also local environmental activities that might not fall in line with the spirit of conservation.

From ODZ development to climate change, from hunting and trapping derogations to the need of better enforcement, from the transport challenges to clean air, from biodiversity loss to unsustainable fisheries and bycatch...we shall be sharing this manifesto with all of Malta's European Parliament candidates and requesting their responses to each of the 10 questions below.

Before it is too late, we need the citizens of Europe to stand up and be counted. The next European elections are a perfect opportunity to put environment on the agenda!

1. Protecting nature and biodiversity

Despite world-class legislation and good intentions, the EU is about to miss its 2020 target of halting biodiversity loss. We are not only losing unique species and our natural heritage, but we are also eroding the living systems that sustain our societies and human beings. Biodiversity continues to vanish, mainly due to intensive farming, damaging infrastructure development and serious underfinancing of effective conservation action.

Q1: According to an evaluation led by the European Commission¹, the EU budget co-finances only a fraction (9-19%) of what is needed to implement Natura 2000 – the EU's network of protected areas. Do you agree that next EU budget must significantly increase and is protection of biodiversity and natural ecosystems amongst your priorities? What will you do to ensure that Malta and the EU stop losing their biodiversity and get on the path of recovery of nature?

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/fitness_check/docs/nature_fitness_check.pdf

I believe that next EU budget must significantly increase and is protection of biodiversity and natural ecosystems.

I believe that:

- EU budget should enhance sustainability, innovation, social justice
- There should be more flexibility for the needs of small islands
- Funds directed to Malta should be used wisely to meet local specifications

I also believe that in effective implementation of the EBUS: Main policies need to be integrated to sectoral policies and be taken into account in wider policy concerns. The EUBS lays down six major targets each with actions to be taken: 1. A full and swift implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives.; 2. Establishing green infrastructure and restore degraded ecosystems; 3. to reform the Common Agricultural Policy so that it increases its contribution to biodiversity conservation on farmland and to improve forest management; 4. To reform the Common Fisheries Policy so that it reduces its ecological impacts, including its impacts on marine ecosystems. 5. To combat invasive alien species including through preventing the establishment of these species and through control and eradication.; 6. to step up its contribution to combating global biodiversity loss

Q2: If there is one piece of legislation that all the EU agrees that it is healthy and relevant, these are the Nature Directives (Birds and Habitats). Are you comfortable with Malta derogating from these Directives solely for the enjoyment of a small part of the population such as for hunting in spring and trapping? Especially when hunting is done during the spring migration when birds are heading to their breeding grounds, and even more importantly when many of these, like the Turtle Dove, are in decline and declared as vulnerable by the EU and IUCN?

I do not agree with spring hunting. Malta should adhere to EU policy and national legislation to protect nature.

Q3: How do you feel about the fact that a few politicians remain adamant to find further loopholes even within ECJ rulings such as that which stopped Malta from continuing with finch trapping? What message does this send to our community when laws, and now even court rulings, are bent backwards with no justification?

Politicians should adhere to national and EU legislation and to scientific evidence to be taken seriously.



Q4: In its latest country report on environmental implementation for Malta the European Commission asks the Government to pull its socks up with regards to the Natura 2000 sites designation process and the implementation of management plans for these protected sites. How will you, if elected, make sure that Malta comes in line not only with its obligations on Natura 2000 sites but also in regard to protecting the ever-decreasing Outside Development Zones (ODZs)?

I have a 25-year track record for speaking and acting on such matters within politics and civil society and will act accordingly in the European Parliament in full consultation with experts and civil society.

I also believe that:

- Small islands should have special clauses to protect environment. For example Environment Impact Assessments should also be applicable to small-scale development with cumulative impacts on localities.
- Monitoring of environmental standards should ensure better application of directives
- EU-wide standards for the protection of trees should be introduced.
- EU-wide standards for the protection of public spaces should be introduced.

2. Bringing oceans back from the brink

The reformed Common Fisheries Policy and Marine Spatial Planning Directive brought some hope that years of fisheries mismanagement and damage to ecosystems would end. However, due to inadequate implementation and wrong targeting of funds, oceans continue degrading because of human activities, resulting in seabird bycatch, pollution, uncoordinated offshore development and climate change. Furthermore EU institutions have repeatedly put the short-term interests of powerful fishing lobbies before scientific advice.

Q5: Mapping and protection of sensitive species and habitats should precede determination of human activities in the marine environment. Do you agree? What steps will you take to ensure that spatial planning and management plans truly ensure sustainable use of the seas, especially with regards to our Maltese Coastal and Marine Protected Areas?

Yes.

- The marine environment should benefit from spatial planning and management plans which are based on scientific evidence and expertise.
- Coastal and Marine protected areas should have proper enforcement.

Q6: Would you support taking fishing quotas and authorisations out of the direct control of EU member states (Ministers) and base them on binding scientific advice and first principles such as ensuring stock recovery and preservation of threatened species?

EU-wide Policy should be based on scientific evidence to support sustainable fishing and protection of species. Sectors such as small-scale fishermen in small islands should not be made to pay for the unsustainable practices of big business.

3. Giving Europe healthy food and a living farmland

The EU spends almost €60 billion a year for an obsolete and unfair Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) – the policy that supports the intensive model of agriculture that is damaging nature and climate. Furthermore, the CAP fails farmers both at the social and economic level, so that many smaller farms disappear, and generational renewal is at risk.

Q7: The loss of biodiversity (birds, butterflies, pollinators) in the farmland, pollution of water, loss of soil, driven to a large extent by unsustainable farming, is alarming. Do you agree that the future CAP must seriously invest into rectifying this problem by allocating at least 50% of its budget to environmental and climate measures?

Yes, agriculture cannot be seen in isolation from environment and climate policy.

I believe that:

- Farmers in small islands should have special opportunities to qualify for funding opportunities
- Less bureaucratic opportunity structures should be introduced for small-scale farmers
- Micro-farms should have special access to EU funds.
 - Support measures should be introduced to farmers to reduce pesticides (potentially to compensate from lower yields) possibly starting from Gozo.
- Farmers should be supported to be guardians of the rural environment: e.g. encourage diversification in return for protection of rubble walls

- Farmers should be supported in rural investment e.g. tools, advisory services, better allocation of EU funds, reduction of administrative costs (e.g. at Planning Authority)

4. Preventing dangerous climate change

The fight against climate change is one of the biggest challenges facing our society. Current trends of dangerous increases in temperatures pose an existential threat to society and will push a huge number of species to extinction within the next few decades. There is a need for a new, long-term climate protection strategy with the goal to reach climate neutrality, including a transition to a clean, properly sited, sustainable renewables-based energy system that works in harmony with nature.

Q8: Do you agree that to be in line with the 1.5°C goal of the Paris Agreement, the EU needs to step up its climate change ambition, namely greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced by at least 55%, energy efficiency has to be increased by 40% and the share of renewable energies needs to be increased to at least 45% by the year 2030?

Yes I agree. The EU should be the climate change leader around the world, creating green jobs and sustainable energy. Small islands have a special role in this regard due to impacts of climate change. Malta happens to be a member state that can speak up for 2,600 small islands in the EU.

Q9: With rather alarming pollution readings which are also contributing to climate change, how do you see Malta solving this health issue? Only 1.5% of our cars are electric while our ever-growing cruise liner industry contributes to high air pollution levels mainly in the Grand Harbour area and the southern localities. Would you support the drive to designate the Mediterranean Sea as an Emission Control Area (ECA)?

Yes I agree. I believe that:

- Transport funds should take into account the realities of small islands
- There should be increased efforts for EU funding that encourages modal shift to cleaner transport
- There should be increased efforts for EU funding that increases accessibility for cyclists and pedestrians.

- Transport management should be based on the principle of rewarding (through easier access, safety, ease of transportation) collective transportation methods.
- Bicycle networks through urban corridors should be introduced, where certain roads give priority to bicycles and alternative transport.
- Introduction of circular buses in localities and hubs.
- Full and complete adoption of all of the clauses of the Luxembourg cycling charter to which Malta is a signatory in promoting active transport options.
- No new petrol stations should be approved on ODZ land.
- Safety in roads for pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists should be prioritized.
- There should be a national investment strategy for accessible pavements and pedestrianization.
- Vehicles that pollute heavily should be disincentivised. Government should provide incentives to economic operators with old fleets.

5. Waste and plastics

With the increase in populations across Europe and visibly also in Malta, together with the increased consumption rate both from citizens and tourists, today waste has become a daunting challenge to manage. The biggest concerns are mainly plastics, which end up in the sea. However Malta also has a problem with waste resulting from massive development projects.

Q10: Do you support the removal of all single-use plastics across the EU Member States? Do you see a future problem for our country with regards to the waste generated from major infrastructural projects and what are the solutions you envisage for this, without impacting the natural habitat, both marine and on land?

Yes I do. I believe that:

- Monitoring of environmental standards should ensure better application of directives
- There should be increased efforts for EU funds to reduce pollution
- There should be increased efforts for EU funds to finance clean-ups and waste management.
- Single-use plastics should be banned.
- There should be provision of proper data construction waste.
- A strategy for sustainable usage of construction waste should be introduced.
- There should be new schemes to incentivise the conservation and restoration of existing buildings.
- Restoring decrepit buildings using construction waste
- Reusing construction waste material in new developments

- Building a national facility where the best offcuts of construction waste can be chosen to be resold
- Producing reconstituted stone (gelled fragments of concrete using acrylic resin) for exportation
- Allocating more EU funds to the processing of construction waste
- Paper, plastic, tin waste should be kept of incineration, and there is no guarantee that they will, so incineration should be excluded.
- Operations in electronic, hazardous and sewage waste should keep being refined.
- New technologies which are being used instead of incineration should be considered.
- Business responsibility for waste separation should be mainstreamed as households are taking most of the burden.
- All single-use plastics should be banned through a realistic timeframe.
- Trees should be planted to replace paper being used.