



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?

Yes, our environment is a shared EU heritage and should be sustained through EU budget. We need to do proactive to leverage private and other national financing to push through these objectives on the example of Garnija project and others to extend to protection to unique habitats and species including the buzaqq. I would take a personal and direct interest in

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



promoting such projects, including through the amendment of specific legislation to ensure criteria allow Maltese projects. I will also endorse and promote such projects at implementation stage to raise awareness. Moreover, we can push an argument of intensity of human settlement in Malta and consequent impact on habitat and biodiversity to ask for additional investment from the relevant EU funds chapters including Life+ and beyond.

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?

Yes. We can find a way forward for sustainable hunting and trapping. This is the word we gave in 2004. I will strive to respect it while promoting dialogue between different organizations and sustainability, mutual respect and legality as overriding criteria.

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?

The birds directive was not amended since 1979 and became heavily reliant on case-law. This does not take away its character that it is a Directive, hence allowing for differentiated implementation to adapt to different traditions and contexts.

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)?

With scrutiny of government implementation, also assisting environmental organizations in piling pressure, using also if required all the tools at the MEPs disposal but also through more



direct means including meetings with relevant authorities.

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?

We need to eliminate abuse in these areas and the recreational fishermen and the professional fishermen need to be part of that process.

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?

No. EU quotas are already based on scientific input. On implementation, I prefer national competence on this, and we need to see much more subsidiarity on fisheries, including to allow older fishermen to comply with EU rules.

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?

Will not commit on percentage, however the point is very valid. We must invest more in environment friendly pest reduction methods encouraging importers for instance through lifting licencing fees & investing heavily in farmer education which at present is in an abysmal state in Malta with virtually no expertise passing through from ministry to farmer.

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?

I will commit to the established percentages in implementing legislation. We need to see Malta step up with implementation which so far is falling behind.

The EU needs to continue to be a leader on climate change and act as a guiding light to the world to lead notwithstanding the pullout of the US.

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)?

New EU rules on sulphate in marine transport should help address part of the shipping emissions. On land we should invest in much more frequent and publicly available scientific readings plus up the momentum on electric cars. Malta is the ideal place for electric cars with new models giving up to 240 km with one charge, no one in his senses should be buying diesel. We must facilitate this transition by quadrupling the public charging stations as a starter. The transition will happen, we just need to

make it faster.

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?

I support the elimination and replacement of the 10 items identified in the new EU directives and the efforts to put this same standard at the global level. I do support the elimination of all single use plastics from our economy in a gradual process integrating industry and with a regular eye on available replacements, especially on their impact in a smaller economy like Malta.

I would also support a plastics tax juxtaposed at the international level, as the problem cannot be addressed but internationally.

On landfilling and reclamation I believe that we need to strictly adhere to EU rules on impact assessment and scientific backing for any move before it is decided and not using EU rules to fit into an already decided political objective.