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Issue Date

14 January 2006

Subject

Government announces public consultation process on the Malta euro coin set

"Within two years, Malta will be undergoing a change of its national currency, the first one in 35 years and one which will probably last for a significant period of years. This is a unique change, since this time round we shall be joining a successful monetary integration project, the euro. Government feels that Maltese citizens should have a say in the design of the national side of its euro coins and today we are launching a public consultation process. This is, therefore, an unprecedented opportunity for the Maltese to give a face to our new money and we are urging the public to have a say in this historical decision." Parliamentary Secretary Tonio Fenech said during a press conference held at the Central Bank of Malta.

The Central Bank of Malta and the National Euro Changeover Committee (NECC) are today launching a public consultation process for the selection of the designs of the Maltese euro coin set. The public is being presented with 12 options divided into four themes and asked to choose the preferred option to appear on the national side of the euro coins.

Addressing a press conference, the Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Finance Tonio Fenech, together with the Governor of the Central Bank of Malta, Michael C. Bonello, and the Chairman of the NECC Joseph F. X. Zahra announced that the public consultation process starts today and will come to a conclusion on Sunday 29th January 2006. During this period the public is being encouraged to send an SMS or to call the number attached to the preferred option. Participants in this consultation process will be taking part in a prize draw to win one of 20 Air Malta tickets to any of its destinations, or one among a number of mobile phones offered by Go Mobile. The charge for the SMSs and calls are at the normal standard rate.

Parliamentary Secretary Fenech, who is the chairman of the Euro Changeover Steering Committee, said that this is the first phase of the public consultation process: "The second phase, which will take place later on in 2006, will be a similar national consultation process during which the public will be asked to choose the actual designs for the euro coin set." In common with several other EU Member States, the Maltese euro coins will have three different designs: one for the one and two euro coins, one for the fifty, twenty and ten cent coins and one for the five, two and one cent coins.

He explained that four themes have been chosen, each theme capturing a specific aspect of our national fabric, that is prehistoric Malta, renaissance Malta, a theme with options representing the Maltese identity and a theme with images of the Maltese archipelago. For each one three different options are being presented: "The public is being asked to choose their favourite option by sending a blank SMS or simply by dialling the number linked to that option. They are also being given the opportunity to suggest other options by sending an SMS to a separate number. The three options from three different themes that receive the highest number of votes will form the basis for the final design options. These final options will later on this year be presented again to the public to have the final say on the images on our euro coin set."

Mr Fenech said that the government, through a joint committee set up between the Central Bank of Malta and the NECC has been working on a process aimed at involving the public: "We want the people to own this process. We believe that it is significant that Malta will have its own euro coin set which will be used throughout Europe. In a sense, we have an opportunity to brand Malta through our euro coin set since the images on the coins will circulate in other European Union Member States. A group of numismatic and heraldic experts commissioned by the Central

Bank of Malta were careful to choose themes and options that are not controversial and neither partisan. For this reason we have decided to go for themes associated with Malta's rich patrimony rather than personalities or images which might evoke controversy."

Mr Fenech urged the public to participate in this process: "This is a unique opportunity to give a face to our own money. We are urging the public to have a say in this major decision. The change to a different currency is an historical national event and the changeover to the euro is particularly significant because we have an opportunity to leave a mark through our national identity on a strong international currency. This is also evidence in itself that through EU membership we are indeed strengthening our identity."

Further information on the national consultation process can be obtained from the websites of the Central Bank of Malta www.centralbankmalta.org or the NECC website: www.euro.gov.mt. The public will also be informed through TV and newspapers adverts for the duration of the consultation period.

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