

EMS Network

Euro-Med Seminars Newsletter



Malta

Autumn 2007

www.euromed-seminars.org.mt

The Euro-Med Cultural Partnership: An Arab Perspective

By Dr. Walid Mahmoud Abdelnasser

Cultural interaction is as old as human history. From a theoretical perspective, there are two models for the relationship among cultures. The first is one of dialogue, while the other is one of confrontation, clash and conflict. The model of dialogue reflects a historical event when two cultures meet, while the model of confrontation is characterized by a permanent state of war where one culture seeks by all means to impose both its value system and interests on other cultures.

According to the model of confrontation, only one culture has the right to live, dominate and expand, while other cultures are simply in the process of disappearing. Under this model, one culture is superior and universal, while other cultures are a part of history, parochial and local. One culture claims to be the centre and the producer of human civilization, while other cultures are simply characterized as the consumer and the periphery.

The latest manifestation of the model of confrontation was Professor Samuel Huntington's thesis that anticipated a confrontation between a Western Culture, presumably based on a Judeo-Christian heritage, and Eastern Cultures (Islamic and Confucian). However, Professor Huntington did not realize that in fact the path of human civilization has been one, enriched throughout human history by different cultures at different stages.

The model of dialogue

On the other hand, the model of dialogue is a model based on the assumption of ancient Greek philosophers that human beings are identical in some aspects, similar in other aspects and different in third aspects. People live in different families, tribes, communities; have different colours, races, languages, social customs, habits, modes of life and thinking. In other words, "unity with diversity" represents the ground for the model of dialogue among cultures.

Both geography and trade have historically created the ground for dialogue among cultures, particularly in cases of geographical proximity. But proximity also occasionally led to conflict and confrontation.

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Dr. Walid Mahmoud Abdelnasser,
Director, Institute for Diplomatic
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2 As far as the cultural relationship between the Arab World and Europe is concerned, Arab-Muslim culture took lead of human civilization for decades, and inherited the great achievements of ancient Greece. Arab and Muslim philosophers were not simple carriers of knowledge or commentators of Aristotle, but were the source of additional fields of knowledge, combining the exogenous with the endogenous, and actually completing what Aristotle started. Later, Europe inherited the achievements of Arab-Islamic culture when it became the centre of the world.

There is enough substantial evidence in the history of both Europe and the Arab World to prove the existence of respect

the other. Europeans regard themselves as rational, practical, developed and peaceful, while label Arabs as irrational, mythical, superstitious, mystical, dogmatic, underdeveloped, violent, oppressive, terrorist, and fanatical. On the other side, Arabs perceived Europeans as atheist, interventionist, materialistic, nihilistic, imperialistic, relativist and sceptical. These mutual stereotypes represent the ideological basis for conflicts.

Intercultural dialogue between the Arabs and Europeans can dissipate these images and serves to enhance intercultural communication and mutual understanding. It will also help not to allow conflict of interests be further exacerbated by cultural antagonism. The media, academic institutions, civil

the South, Americas in the West and Asia in the East. Historically, the Mediterranean was the birthplace of ancient cultures and civilizations—Greco-Roman, Judeo-Christian and Arab-Islamic. Interestingly enough, the three cultures converged in Andalusia.

Each shore of the Mediterranean (North and South) was victorious twice in history, and as such, each shore should not have any inferiority/superiority complex. With a historical consciousness, each shore has its due place in history. Therefore, the old dialectic of war and peace should be replaced by a new dialectic of intercultural dialogue: a two-way track. This new dialectic should constitute an integral part of a universe characterized by unity and diversity, as we mentioned earlier in this paper.

“ The model of dialogue is a model based on the assumption of ancient Greek philosophers that human beings are identical in some aspects, similar in other aspects and different in third aspects. People live in different families, tribes, communities; have different colours, races, languages, social customs, habits, modes of life and thinking. In other words, “unity with diversity” represents the ground for the model of dialogue among cultures.

for the other “culture”, although other periods witnessed protracted confrontation (the Crusades and modern colonialism on the European side, and early conquests by the Arab-Islamic caliphate in Europe and the Ottoman conquests in Europe and the Balkans on the Arab-Islamic side).

The role of media

One practical problem in the cultural relationship between Arabs and Europeans, related to the role of the media and educational institutions and curricula, is the stereotyping on each of both sides of the other, as a part of defining the self versus

society organizations, such as syndicates, youth and women organizations, other non-governmental organizations, business associations and scholars, in addition of course to Governments, politicians and parliamentarians, are all invited to contribute to such intercultural dialogue, on a regular and periodic basis and in a way that would touch on the life of the average citizen in both Europe and the Arab World.

The Mediterranean region represents one entity. It is the centre of the world and the cornerstone of four directions: Europe in the North, Africa in

In the intercultural dialogue between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean, each shore needs the other. No single culture can claim today the monopoly of the truth. The complexity of the challenges facing the Mediterranean region today necessitate a genuine cultural partnership, where there is mutual respect and understanding, there is an acknowledgement that each party has part of the truth and that each value system has its merits. This dialogue may be able to combine European naturalism with Arab moralism. The European unity in the north needs to be eventually extended to the south in some form of a new Mediterranean commonwealth. This would be symbolized in “the unity of the Mediterranean basin and the diversity of its shores”.

Editorial: The Euro-Med Cultural Partnership: An Arab Perspective

One should mention that no one can ignore what has been achieved in the context of Barcelona process on the cultural level. Even if there are comments or even criticism, they should be addressed while taking stock of what has been achieved. An institutional build up in this sphere has evolved. Egypt is proud of hosting two of these institutions: "Anna Lindh" Foundation, and the Swedish Cultural Institute, both located in the Mediterranean city of Alexandria.

Egypt's initiatives

I should also mention here that Egypt has been among the core countries in a number of initiatives for dialogue among cultures, both at the official and non-official levels. Egypt has been a party to the initiative of

dialogue of ancient civilizations, together with another two Mediterranean countries: Greece and Italy, along with Iran. This initiative included officials, parliamentarians and scholars. Egypt has been also among the members of the German initiative of dialogue between Islam and the West since 1998. This initiative covered officials and independent experts. Egypt has also regularly participated in rounds of the Davos World Economic Forum meetings on intercultural relations. These meetings have included officials, scholars and businessmen. Egypt actively participated in the EU/OIC Ministerial Forum in April 2002 at both official and scholarly levels.

Egyptian Non-Governmental Organizations have had their

share in the promotion of intercultural dialogue, starting with the international conference organized on this subject in 1997 by the Organization of Afro-Asian People Solidarity, and ending up with the conference on "Seeking the Common Cultural Ground" organized by Cairo University in December 2006.

Allow me at the end to express my thanks for Professor Stephen Calleya and the staff of the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies in Malta for inviting me to address XXII session of Euro-Med Seminars. This Academy enjoys a worldwide recognition as far as its role in promoting and enhancing mutual understanding is concerned. This in turn definitely helps foster Euro-Arab partnership. ❄



■ XXII Euro-Med Seminar group photo of participants. Front row (middle five, L to R) Amb. Alfred Zarb, MEDAC board member; Prof. Stephen Calleya, MEDAC Director; Amb. Renate Schimkoreit, Euro-Med Co-ordinator, Berlin; Dr. Michael Frendo, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malta; Mr. Rafael Dochoa Moreno, Administrator, European Commission, External Relations DG, Brussels.

EMS Alumni

Accounts of Participants of the XXII Euro-Med Information and Training Seminar for Diplomats

Hatem YOUSRI, Egypt

"Cartoon Crisis - Stereotypes - Perspectives" these words and others proved a huge gap between the ways things are being viewed "South" compared to "North" of the Mediterranean. The EU Countries handled the "cartoon crisis" from the "perspective" of freedom of expression, which resulted in proving the already existing "stereotype" idea about the southern countries who put a lot of restrictions on freedom of the press and even pushing for the idea that the whole situation was politically motivated by some "partners" from the South. The southern countries on the other hand looked at the situation from a totally different point of view: it was a matter of religious symbols, respect of others' beliefs and the code of conduct of the Media.

By all means the "cartoon crisis" showed again, in the aftermath of 9/11, the importance of Media in exchanging views and dialogue between civilizations let alone between "partners and neighbors"!

Countries like France and Germany started already broadcasting Arabic service news channels. The United Kingdom, through the BBC, is on the way to do the same thing. Egypt did its homework in this regard a long time ago when it started broadcasting a bilingual TV channel (English and French) called "Nile TV" in 1993 and added a new service to the channel in Hebrew since 2002. We hope that these channels play a role in enhancing cooperation between "us".

A lot of other ideas like training diplomats who are dealing at the moment, or are going at some point in their career to deal with the Media were raised during the Euro-Med Seminar. I believe such ideas need to be followed up to achieve tangible results in the process of narrowing the gap of understanding between the "partners".

We say in Arabic "Repetition of the same words in the ears of someone, can some times work better than magic" I can not think of a proverb more meaningful in this context to show the importance of messages created by the Media and the role Media can play in strengthening cooperation and understanding between the "partners" in the Barcelona process.

Rania LISWI, Jordan

To begin with, I would like to thank the Sponsors, Organizers and Speakers of the Euro-Med Seminar for giving diplomats such an opportunity to attend a very informative and interactive seminar, which brings together different parties that share common interests and challenges. Here I would also like to give a special thank to Prof. Stephen C. Calleya, for his constructive moderation and informative briefings.

What makes this forum special is, although participants attend in their official capacity as diplomats, that it has this informal friendly atmosphere that opens the way to personal interaction, which builds up future connections of colleagues and pave the way for better understanding.



● Mr. Hatem YOUSRI



● Ms. Rania LISWI



EURO

EMS Alumni: Accounts of Participants of the XXII Euro-Med Seminar

This seminar sheds light on the importance of dialogue and getting more and more people involved in the process of confidence building and moving small steps ahead to reach the ultimatum of common ground that serve the prosperity and stability for all parties concerned. The important question is how to get more people involved outside the Governmental bodies, officials and activists, in other words, how to reach normal people? The Euro-Med partnership offers such opportunities, however it is done mostly through NGOs, and as we know we still face the problem in some countries where the civil society is still creeping its first steps on the road. Media definitely plays a huge role, nevertheless, the abundance of media channels and mediums make delivering a message quite difficult. This is besides the rhetoric used to address the public, as the message has to be polished and drawn up in a more sophisticated and culture-sensitive tailored way. These issues need further studying and more work, since the success of the partnership in delivering its objective depends to a large extent on the people's ownership of this process.

I have to mention here that as a fresh diplomat, having this seminar as part of my training, it opened my eyes to the opportunities offered by the partnership, the importance of cultural interaction and opening up to others in order to know where from they come, and the appropriate way to address them to get your message through. Although people seem to be very similar, they are at the same time very different, as each one has reached a different level on the scale of evolution, if I might say so.

Finally, and since we cannot talk without mentioning peace and the importance of peace in achieving prosperity and stability, I would like to end with a sentence that impressed me the most, when Prof. Guido de Marco quoted Pope John Paul II *"There can be no peace without justice and no justice without forgiveness"*.

I reiterate my appreciation of being given such an opportunity to attend this seminar in such a beautiful country and hope that we will have more in the future. Best Wishes to All from Amman.

Ali DROUICHE, Algeria

J'ai été très agréablement surpris par la qualité et l'intensité des débats que nous avons eus durant les trois jours du séminaire. Le grand mérite revient, en premier lieu, au MEDAC à sa tête M. Stephen Calleya, qui nous a donné l'opportunité d'avoir cet échange intéressant sur le partenariat Euro-Méditerranéen et, par la même occasion, d'en faire le point. Le mérite revient, ensuite, aux conférenciers et à l'ensemble des participants qui ont su donner à cette rencontre un contenu substantiel. Par le Passé, dans le cadre de ma formation académique et des mes activités professionnelles, j'avais participé à plusieurs autres rencontres de même nature. Mais, j'avoue que celle de Malte m'a particulièrement marqué. Bravo les organisateurs !

Mohamed el Mahdi GAOUANE, Morocco

The EUROMED Seminar has expanded my knowledge on the EUROMED Partnership. I was fascinated by the numerous achievements made within the Barcelona process. Indeed, I have been able to understand the common challenges faced by the EUROMED partnership to which a common answer need to be addressed.

In my opinion, there is no doubt about the fact that such training helps diplomats to establish contact and links among each other and to create a spirit of trust and understandings between the Northern and Southern parts of the Mediterranean sea.

I owe special thanks to the MEDAC and the European Commission for their considerable efforts to make such a seminar and partnership successful for all. ❄️



● Mr. Ali DROUICHE



● Mr. Mohamed el Mahdi GAOUANE



The Euromed Partnership and the German Presidency

Dr. Renate Schimkoreit
Euro-Med Coordinator, Berlin

Presenting the Euromed-programme of the German EU-Presidency (January - June 2007) means to present a concept, slightly different to those in the years before. The reader might come up with two questions: What is new? and Why a new concept?

Since it is very often easier to say "what it is not" let me start by this, which is also helpful in avoiding misunderstandings. The "new or different" concept is not contradictory to former concepts - it is complementary. The „new or different“ concept does not ignore work that was so far done in the Barcelona Process; it builds on the achievements of past years and presidencies.

I am approaching my topic very cautiously - for at least one good reason: When we first circulated our program, we were confronted with suspicion by some of our Euromed-partners. There was a doubt whether Germany would attach enough importance to the Mediterranean region. Rumours had it that the German Presidency would turn its back to Euromed and focus on Eastern Europe.

We are obliged to succeed!

Against this background, the announcement of a program that looked already different at first glance, seemed to prove the most pessimistic expectations. Priority was given to so-called "soft topics", namely role of the media, democratic values and democracy development, social problems like unemployment, environmental issues, elections.

More precisely and as response to our question "What is new" allow me to elaborate: We developed our program at a time when tension in the Near and Middle East was running high and getting worse day by day. As we all know, conflict scenarios have doubled and tripled and the outlook was quite bleak at times.

As if the existence of several bloody conflicts was not enough, we had to notice that the readiness to approach one another, to do away with misunderstandings and prejudices of the other culture, was speedily decreasing. The media had its role in that development. And it was not always a constructive one. On the contrary: On both sides reporting went along dividing lines to the extent that it damaged the reputation of the partner country.

Our analysis of that development was, that a lack of knowledge about - and empathy for each other, paired with highly emotionalised and controversial topics would more and more widen the gap

between different cultures and end up in a situation when it became impossible to bridge it.

It is difficult to say where we stand at present. And in a way it wouldn't change much if we knew. We have no other option than to do our best to improve the prevailing situation in the interest of all of us. One of many impressive interlocutors, I had the honour to meet at the occasion of my "Presidency journey" to the Euromed countries, put it that way: "Nous sommes obligés à réussir" (We are obliged to succeed!).

German Presidency priorities - "soft topics"

Now, what can the contribution of "Euromed" be like on the road to success? How can the possibilities that are offered in the framework of the Barcelona Process best be used to achieve that goal? One answer to that question might be to increase the fields of practical cooperation beyond the political hostilities that overshadow the region since such long time.

As we see it - the Euromed partners should aim at building jointly more and more on the following elements:

- to extend cooperation to as many social layers as possible
- to include potentially influential groups - like journalists, parliamentarians, representatives of the Civil Society, scholars, writers - in their projects
- to prepare young people for their future responsibility as political and economic players
- to encourage them to meet with youngsters of different cultures
- to promote economic activities - in particular those of smaller enterprises
- to adapt education and vocational training to the needs of the labour market

Germany is convinced that the potential of the Barcelona Process is high. At the same time - we think - this potential has not been exploited accordingly. According to our assessment, we are at a crossroads with two options: Either we allow the political situation to continue to limit cooperation in many fields, or we take up the recommendations of Ministers in the Barcelona Declaration and try to implement them step by step. Even if these steps were small, they will still underline the character of a "process"! The Declaration puts it this way: "- considering that the Barcelona Conference provides the basis for a process, which is open and should develop".



XXII EMS Panel during the presentation of Dr. Renate Schimkoreit (L to R): Mr. Rafael Dochoa Moreno, Administrator, European Commission, External Relations DG, Brussels; Prof. Stephen Calleya, Director, Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, Malta; R.S.; Dr. Walid Mahmoud Abdelnasser, Director, Institute for Diplomatic Studies, Cairo

The Euromed Partnership and the German Presidency

Programme of Germany for its Euromed-presidency

Against this background, Germany, for its Euromed-presidency developed the following programme:

Germany wants to promote social dialogue and interaction with civil society. This is – according to our conviction – the only way to improve mutual understanding between the peoples of our two neighbouring regions. What we desperately need is mutual tolerance, be it in the context of religion, culture or history. The Barcelona Declaration gives a clear definition of the goal we should have in mind: “... breaking down prejudice, ignorance and fanaticism and fostering cooperation at grassroots level”. This is why Euromed cannot allow itself to exclude certain groups from our activities, since they all participate in shaping our society – whether we like it or not. Not in the least, social policy is always linked with other sector politics, like labour or economic policy. In this context, the German Presidency organised a “Conference on Employment and Social Dialogue”, which took place in Berlin in March and gathered 150 participants from trade unions and employers associations who discussed options of how employment and social dialogue in the Euromed region can be strengthened. Participant countries presented their types of social systems. The importance of dealing with these questions is underlined in the Barcelona Declaration: “The Euro-Mediterranean partnership must contribute to improving the living and working conditions and increasing the employment level of the population in the Mediterranean partner states, in particular of women and the neediest strata of the population”.

Also, the subject of Energy was treated under German Presidency. For obvious reasons, many “energy-related events” are organised these days. Yet, the importance of the subject was already mentioned in the Barcelona Declaration, which underlines the necessity of close energy-cooperation and refers even to “new and renewable sources of energy”, “energy efficiency” and to “energy-related environmental issues”. Berlin hosted a Ministerial Conference on this issue on 10th April. About 120 representatives of relevant Ministries, utilities, energy agencies and financing institutions took part. Discussions centred around the prospects for and benefits of an integrated energy network, options for achieving environmental goals and secure supply as well as options for energy storage. The Conference, settled in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy, had also representatives from Eastern Europe and thus did not appear in our “Euromed List”.

On 23rd April – a meeting of Euromed-investment experts took place in Brussels. It was a strong request by the Arab group to tackle this topic.

Youth of Mediterranean / Euromed and the Media

Events that were still to come (after the XXII Euro-Med Seminar, in May and June 2007 – *Ed. remark*) were the following:

About 200 young people between the age of 18 to 25 from all Euromed countries will hold “parliamentary sessions” in Berlin from 26th May – 3rd June. They will discuss a range of topics, learn about different dialogue-cultures and trying to find compromises amongst each other. In this respect, let me quote the Barcelona Declaration: “Youth exchanges should be the means to prepare future generations for a closer cooperation between the Euro Mediterranean partners”. The “Youth Parliament Session” is meant to boost the participants’ understanding of other cultures and values, raise awareness that problems can only be solved in cooperation, and provide a concrete experience of democratic practices. The impact of young generations on the future shape of political, economic, social and cultural life in all its aspects becomes evident if we look at the following statistical item (UNDP-report 2002): **the Mediterranean region includes the largest number of young people in the world.** More than half of the population are under the age of 25, with almost 38% under the age of 14!

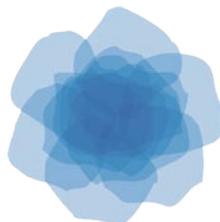
On 31st May, Berlin will welcome a Euromesco Seminar on “Governance, Reform and Human Rights in the Euromed Region”.

In the frame of the “Euromed and the Media” initiative, Germany will host a Media Conference in Berlin on 11th – 12th June. Around 100 participants from the media and non-governmental organisations, as well as scholars, students and experts are expected. Political audience and a number of high-ranking guests will also be present. Main topic will be the “Role and responsibility of the Media in the Euro Mediterranean Region”. The intention is to give participants the floor to find out about their perception of the role of media.

With reference to the role of the media, quite a number of events are taking place under German Presidency. We consider this issue of particular importance against the background of increasing terrorist activities and its media-coverage. The latter is quite often not helpful, becomes increasingly instrumental for terrorists. In particular, Internet appearances cannot be controlled. There is a big need for joint action against this threat. On 21st May, there will be a “Euromed Seminar on the Role of the Media in preventing incitement to terrorism” in Dublin.

Another milestone in the German Presidency Program is the “Ministerial Conference on Higher Education and Scientific Research”. The Conference will take place in Cairo in June. The interest in that subject is high on both sides of the Euromed partnership. The key role of education has been widely accepted also pertaining to the demographic pressure that was just mentioned in connection with the Youth Parliament. It is envisaged that Euromed partners jointly come up with “Final Conclusions” in which Ministers would agree on an intensified exchange in the fields of education and research that could open new roads for cooperation.

It will be a long and winding road to successfully work on all these issues, which are of a complex and difficult nature. As such, they might be well placed in the frame of a “process”, under the condition that they are treated continuously.



PORTUGAL 2007

This is why the German Presidency – together with Portugal and Slovenia (the EU’s current and upcoming presidency) – introduced the new concept of programming with 3 presidencies, which spans one and a half year. To give a practical example: Portugal has decided to organise a Euromed-Ministerial Conference on Migration. Preparations for it have already started under our presidency with meetings of migration experts. ✪

MEETINGS DURING PORTUGUESE PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF EU in the second half of 2007 related to Barcelona Process and Euro-Med

Date	Meeting	Venue
15/09	ECOFIN/EUROMED Ministerial Meeting	Oporto Alfândega
22/10	6 th EuroMed Trade Ministerial Conference (and Round Table on Trade and Investment in the Euromed Region)	Lisbon
5-6/11	9 th EuroMed Ministerial Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs	Lisbon
18 - 19/11	EuroMed Ministerial Meeting on Migration	Algarve, Albufeira

“A fresh approach to the Mediterranean region.

We also seek to develop a fresh approach towards the entire Mediterranean. Its strategic relevance to the EU is clear. The instruments already at our disposal need to properly applied, in particular those of a financial nature, but there is a need to think beyond them. It is necessary to intensify our political dialogue with partners on the Southern and Eastern borders to respond to challenges that require common solutions. Stability in both regions is interlinked.”
From the document: Priorities of the Portuguese Presidency.

Changes in Euro-Zone: Slovenia, Malta, Cyprus

8

The euro banknotes and coins are part of everyday life for over 315 million people in the Euro-zone. Euro banknotes and coins were introduced on 1st January 2002 in 12 of the then 15 Member States of the European Union (EU) (except UK, Denmark and Sweden). On 1st May 2004, a

the euro (EUR) will become legal tender in Malta, replacing the Maltese lira (MTL) at the irrevocably fixed exchange rate of €1 = MTL 0.429300, and legal tender in Cyprus, replacing the Cyprus pound (CYP) at the irrevocably fixed exchange rate of €1 = CYP 0.585274.

CHANGES IN EURO-ZONE SLOVENIA, MALTA, CYPRUS



■ The story of the Mediterranean in symbols of Euro coins (Slovenia up, Cyprus middle and Malta bottom)

The collage shows in the sky 3 Slovenian motifs: Triglav summit in Alps (50c), poet France Prešeren (2€), a symbolic image of a farmer sowing EU stars (5c) — on the sea horizon Cyprus: moufflon (1c) wild sheep representative of the island's wildlife, Kyrenia ship (20c), a trading vessel dating back to the 4th century BC and a symbol of Cyprus's seafaring history, the cruciform idol of Pomos (from the Chalcolithic period (3000 BC), and below on the shore Malta: another neolithic symbol and a symbol of Mediterranean as the cradle of ancient civilizations, Mnejdra temple — a calendar in stone (2c), famous Maltese Cross (2€), and the coat of arms of Malta (10c).

The key for a country to adopt Euro are so-called Convergence criteria (see Internet resources: Convergence criteria) that include the following major areas:

- Price developments
- Fiscal developments
- Exchange rate developments
- Long-term interest rate developments

further ten countries joined the EU, followed by Bulgaria and Romania on 1st January 2007. They were expected to participate in Economic and Monetary Union and introduce the euro as soon as they fulfil the convergence criteria.

On 11th July 2006, the Council of the EU approved Slovenia's application to join the euro area in 2007, making Slovenia the first of the 12 new member states to adopt the euro and the first to join Euro-zone after 5 years. On 1st January 2007, the euro became legal tender in Slovenia, replacing the Slovenian tolar (SIT) at the irrevocably fixed exchange rate of €1 = SIT 239.640. As for coins heads — national side, which display diversity among countries, Alpine-Mediterranean country Slovenia, opted for all eight motives (like Austria, Greece, Italy, and San Marino).

In addition to the 13 countries in the Euro-zone, the Principality of Monaco, the Republic of San Marino and the Vatican City also issue euro coins. All of these countries can issue a €2 commemorative coin, with a special national design, once a year. These coins have the same European side and the same properties as normal €2 coins. They are legal tender throughout the Euro-zone. Greece issued the first commemorative €2 coin: Olympic Games in Athens 2004, in March 2004.

On 10th July 2007, the Council of the EU approved applications of another two Mediterranean countries: Malta and Cyprus to join the euro area. On 1st January 2008,

The benefits of Euro for the country and consumers are numerous:

- Facilitates business and trade transactions
- Euro adoption makes economic sense
- Makes travelling easier
- Encourages investment
- Easier to compare prices

(See more at Internet Resources: Adopting the Euro)

All about Euro-zone and Euro, from Monetary Policy, Payments and Markets for professionals to press releases for journalists to Security features of banknotes or images of euro banknotes/coins for general public and even Children's corner can be found on European Central Bank website: www.ecb.int

(Sources: European Central Bank, Frankfurt am Main, Germany, NECC Malta, and other media resources.)

Internet resources

European Central Bank (ECB):

www.ecb.int

Convergence criteria:

www.ecb.int/ecb/orga/escb/html/convergence-criteria.en.html

Our money – the euro:

www.ecb.int/bc/euro/html/index.en.html

Maltese National Euro Changeover Committee (NECC):

<http://mfin.gov.mt/page.aspx?site=NECC&page=necc>

Adopting the Euro:

<http://mfin.gov.mt/page.aspx?site=NECC&page=euroadoption>

