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# A WFOT EXPERIENCE

*Our most amiable Nathalie talks of her adventure in Scotland as the first ever representative of our MAOT. And what an experience! As Neil Armstrong once said "This is one small step for - (Nathalie), but a giant step for - (the Maltese Occupational Therapy profession).*

Nathalie Magro,  
Occupational Therapist

It was around 6.00pm when the train slid to a stop at Edinburgh Station. After contemplating various awkward possibilities on how to pull down my luggage from a rack a good way above my head, a friendly Scot gave me a helping hand. After managing to drag my bag down from the train, I decided to draw out a letter sent to me by Clephane Hume - one of the organisers and a WFOT delegate who had patiently corresponded with me all along the preparations and who had sent me worthwhile instructions on where to meet a WFOT representative. It was a fretful realisation to remember that this important letter was not in my handbag but at the bottom of my luggage.

I stopped still in the midst of many travellers in the station trying to recall the contents of Clephane's letter and contemplating whether I should undertake the tedious task of opening my luggage and retrieving this valuable piece of paper or to just wait. I really felt like doing the latter, but realising that waiting was not the solution to arrive at Pollock Halls I decided to do the former. I was looking around trying to spot a vacant bench where I could rest my luggage when a lady with a welcoming smile came up to me. It was with a sigh of relief that I saw her wearing a WFOT badge, as she introduced herself as Lesley.

In fact Lesley was only the first of over 60 multicultural, diverse and

interesting, friendly people I came to know throughout the whole week between the 10 - 15th April 1994 spent at the 21st Council Meeting in Edinburgh.

Malta was for the first time represented at this council meeting and it was a great privilege for me to be the one to represent the local Association of Occupational Therapists.

Delegated from over 26 member countries were present and these included Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, Malaysia, Italy, Canada, China, Nigeria and others.

This meeting is held every two years, and different countries offer to host this event. During this week delegates have the opportunity to learn more about the profession in other countries as well as acquire a better understanding of cross-cultural aspects and implications such as O.T. education, research and other.

It was very interesting to note that despite cultural differences the problems O.T's face are common worldwide, yet each country has problems specific to its culture and politics.

The sharing of ideas between various delegates is an enriching process as one country can seek help from other countries having similar problems.

During the council meeting in fact, the delegates spend two days in full council - the first and the last. The other three days are spent partly in council and partly in sub committees. These sub committees are formed on the second day of council

and include education, legislation, congress, professional practice and publications committees. These function over a period of two years until the next council meeting. Different delegates choose a committee to work in and my contribution will be in the Education Committee for the next two years.

The 21st council meeting will always be one of note in the history of the MAOT, since it was during this gathering that the Malta association was accepted as a full member of the WFOT after almost 8 years of associate membership. This was realised after both the constitution and the curriculum were approved by WFOT.

It was a tremendous sensation when council voted unanimously for us to be accepted as full members (with increasing palpitations and adrenaline level!). Once a programme is approved, the School's administration must go through a self-monitoring process and turn in a detailed report to WFOT every five years. This approval is crucial to the profession as stated in O.T. Week April 14, 1994 vol. 8 No. 15 - "International standards for O.T. programmes should prove to be even more crucial in the coming years, as more and more therapists seek work outside their home countries."

On ending this article I would like to add that this was a very enriching experience though a tiring one. The personal and professional contacts made will definitely help me give a significant contribution in helping our association develop further and promote our profession both on a National and International level.