



News Article

A new Council for the Malta Chamber of Scientists

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It is with pride and pleasure that I pen this article as the new President of Malta Chamber of Scientists, whilst extending a warm welcome to my new fellow Council members. The Malta Chamber of Scientists was set up in 1992 at the offices of the Malta Council for Science and Technology, and is an autonomous and professional organization with the specific goals of working towards enhancing the highest levels of education, the public engagement of citizens with science and research, and to foster collaborative networks and promote science and scientists in Malta. It is registered as a Voluntary Organisation with the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector.

I was initially elected to the Council in 2016 and served in the role of treasurer. My experience in the previous Council allowed me to witness first-hand and support the vast amount of science communication activities that the Chamber is undertaking and supporting, in collaboration with a number of other entities. These include events such as Science in the City, Science in the House, Kids Dig Science, CineXjenza and Malta Café Scientifique. The impact of these activities deserves further study to develop best practices which can be spread both locally and internationally. For example, Science in the City and Malta Cafe Scientifique has inspired the Gozitan counterparts, namely Science in the Citadel and Gozo Café Scientifique, whose setting up was supported by the Chamber. The Chamber will continue to support such initiatives but also policies to encourage more effective science communication and public engagement with research in Malta.

The new youthful Council will inject a boost of much-needed energy and drive to work towards the rest of the Chamber's mission. Following a rebranding exercise, we intend to put a series of new membership benefits in place, including scientific networking events and grants for members.

We will revisit the Chamber's science policy docu-

ment written a couple of years ago in view of the on-going changes to the National Research and Innovation Strategy spearheaded by the Malta Council for Science and Technology. In particular, we will embark on a data gathering exercise to better understand the local landscape in terms of public/private spending on R&D, career paths and progression of scientists in Malta (in particular PhD holders and post-docs) and local funding schemes for post-graduate and post-doctoral studies. This will enable us to be in a position to recommend and lobby for evidence-based policies and measures to increase R&D spending from the currently dismal levels of approximately 0.5% of the Gross Domestic Product, and a more balanced approach between fundamental research and close-to-market innovation activities.

The Chamber will continue to support its flagship scientific publication, Xjenza Online. I would like to thank the Editor-in-Chief, Prof. Cristiana Sebu, the Associate Editors, and support staff for their continued effort in maintaining and improving the standard of the journal.

We look forward to working closely with our collaborators and stakeholders, such as the University of Malta and other higher education institutions in the country, the Research, Innovation and Development Trust, other Chambers, STEM student organisations, other scientific associations, government entities, and private industry.

Finally, I would like to close by sincerely thanking outgoing President, Prof. Alex Felice, on behalf of the Council for his vision, the commitment that he has shown to science in Malta, and for his service in the Chamber for the past 28 years.

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