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EXPO 2015 – RAPPORT TA' EVALWAZZJONI

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Overview of Malta's Participation at Expo Milan 2015

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INTRODUCTION

The scope of this brief report is to give an overview of Malta's participation at Expo Milan 2015, and to keep a record of these salient points which could be useful for the participation in future events.

BACKGROUND ON WORLD EXPOS

Since their inception in London in 1851, there have been many events held throughout the world using the names "world's fair," "international exposition," "universal exposition," "world expo," and just "expo." The proliferation of these events led to the formation of the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE) in 1928 to help control the quality and frequency of the events. From the 31 countries that created the BIE, the Organization has grown to 168 Member States. Malta is also a Member State of the BIE. The mission of the BIE is to guarantee the quality and the success of these world events, protect the rights of the organizers and participants, and preserve their core values of Education, Innovation and Cooperation. The headquarters of the BIE are located in Paris.

The first World Expo Museum dedicated to World Expos, and authorised by the BIE, will open in Shanghai in 2016. The museum will display collections of books and objects of the past Expos. It will also feature a documentation and research centre and is expected to serve as conservation for Expo archives as well as a training base for future Expo working staff. Some 200 participants from the Shanghai Expo 2010 have donated more than 30,000 exhibits to Shanghai's World Expo Museum, with many other participants at Expo Milan likewise pledging their exhibits to this museum. Malta donated some items from its 2015 participation so that it too will have its place in the museum.

Today, 4 main types of Expos are organized under the auspices of the BIE: World Expos, International Specialized Expos, Horticultural Exhibitions and the Design Triennale of Milan.

World Expos take place every 5 years and are held over a 6 month period. Participating countries are allowed to build their own Pavilions. The largest event held so far has been Expo 2010 in Shanghai (China) which covered an area of 5.28 square kms. The next Expo will be held in Dubai 2020 (UAE). This will be the first Expo held in the Middle East.

International Specialised Expos take place between 2 World Expos and last up to 3 months. These are dedicated to finding solutions to specific challenges of humanity, such as ocean protection (Expo Yeosu 2012, South Korea) or the future of energy (Expo Astana 2017, Kazakhstan). They are small in size and participant countries do not build their own pavilion but can customize a space provided by the host country organising the event.

Horticultural Exhibitions are held under the joint auspices of the BIE and the Association of International Horticultural Producers. Their duration could range from 3 to 6 months. At least 2 years have to separate two Horticultural Expos.

The Triennale di Milano is the only BIE-regulated Expo that is always organised in the same city: Milan. It is the global meeting place for the key players of the design industry and the general public. It takes place every 3 years.

The bidding process of Expos is dictated by the BIE. About six years previous to a proposed exposition, cities bid against each other for the right to host a world's fair and then the national government places the bid on behalf of the city. Once the first city places an official bid for a specific year, a 6-month clock begins in which all other cities must place competing bids for that slot. Typically, nations proposing a bid for a specific city are members of the BIE. On the day of the final decision, the various delegates of the BIE (one per member nation) vote for their preferred bids. If no city gets 50% of the vote, the lowest scoring city is removed from the ballot and the process is repeated until a city receives 50% of the vote.

Expos aim at being efficient instruments of progress in all areas linked to sustainable and human development such as the environment, energy, health or education. Hannover 2000 promoted sustainable development. Aichi 2005 aimed at demonstrating that there was a clear competitive advantage in designing technology in harmony with nature. Shanghai 2010 showcased solutions for sustainable urban development, in a world where half of the population lives in cities. The central topic of Milan 2015 was on nutrition with “Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life” as its guiding theme.

To date Malta has participated at 3 World Expos, namely Hannover 2000, Shanghai 2010, and Milan 2015, and at one specialised Expo, in 2008 in Zaragoza.

EXPO MILAN 2015

The theme selected for this Expo was **Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life** with related sub-themes in order to facilitate the participants’ engagement with the main theme of the Expo in a way that offers maximum freedom of interpretation. The focus of the sub-themes was to be on issues of a scientific nature as well as topics concerning the social and cultural relationships between humankind and food, in particular as related to cooperation, development, lifestyle and well-being.

Milan Expo was held from 1st May till 31st October 2015 and was open 7 days a week from 10.00 am till 11.00 pm. Pavilions which did not have a restaurant closed at 9.00 pm. The organisers had originally estimated that 29 million visitors worldwide will visit Expo during this period, although this was eventually revised down to 22 million. During the closing ceremony, it was reported that 21.5 million tickets had been sold. No other official statistics such as daily or monthly count of visitors were given by the Organisers.

There were 145 participating countries with 60 of these having their own self-build pavilions with the other countries being grouped in 9 thematic Clusters. Another 32 Pavilions housed international corporations or NGOs, with a number of these not directly related with the theme of Expo. The exhibition site covered an area of approximately 1.1 million square metres and was located north west of Milan. The layout design included streets and restaurants, places for concerts and events with a water canal surrounding the entire space. In 2014 it was reported on the media that over €1.6 billion have been dedicated by the Italian government to Expo 2015.

The launch of Expo Milan 2015 commenced with a concert at Piazza Duomo on the eve of the 30th April and followed by the official ceremony held on 1st May at noon within the Expo site in the presence of Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi. The Closing Ceremony was held on 31st October at 6.00 pm and was presided over by Italian President Sergio Mattarella. The ceremony also saw the handing over of the Expo flag to Dubai, as the next host for a World Expo.

MALTA AT EXPO MILAN 2015

The organisation of the Malta’s participation at Expo Milan 2015 was entrusted to Malta Enterprise. Many of the country pavilions were also organised by trade and investment agencies within their own respective country.

Although work leading to Malta’s participation had been ongoing since 2010, official confirmation was only announced in July 2013, with the Commissioner General appointed in February 2014. It was only then that discussions could be concluded with the organisers and a Pavilion allocated to Malta. This was the first time that Malta had its own stand-alone pavilion at an Expo.

The position of Commissioner General for the participating country is the highest post in the hierarchy within each national pavilion. Only the Commissioner General, as representative of the government, is recognised by the host country on issues relating to an Expo, and is the only recognised signatory for all official documentation, including the participation Agreement. The Commissioner General is assisted and represented in absentia by the Deputy Commissioner General.

In February 2014 Prof. John Mamo was officially appointed by the Malta Government as the Commissioner General of Malta for Expo Milan 2015. Antoinette Catania, as Project Leader for Malta's participation at Expo Milan since 2010, was the Deputy Commissioner and Pavilion Director.

Due to the late stage of confirmation, and moreover because of costs, Malta participated within the BioMediterranean Cluster which grouped together a number of other countries from (or with a connection to) the Mediterranean region. Notwithstanding, through this format, Malta still had its own stand-alone pavilion, which was a first since it has been participating in Expos.

The pavilions within the Cluster were built by the Expo Organisers and then rented to the participants for customised internal outfitting based on a theme which had been presented to and approved by Expo organisers. The standard format of the Pavilions as proposed and built by the organisers was an exhibition area at ground level of 125 sq mtrs and which was open to the public, while the same area on the first floor was reserved for private meeting rooms and storage space. Some pavilions could also be fitted with a small kitchen, which drastically reduced the exhibition area. Some countries also opted to take up two Pavilion lots, thereby have a larger area where to express their theme. Malta decided to keep to its allotted Pavilion with the ground floor dedicated entirely to an exhibition area (no kitchen).

Apart from participating within this Cluster, Malta was also visually represented within the EU Pavilion through images relevant to the theme of the Pavilion concentrating on the example of wheat and bread.

There were many organisational and logistical problems in the initial days, especially with signage, directions to the BioMediterranean Cluster, lack of knowledge and training by Volunteers engaged by Expo Organisers to manage the flow of people, lack of communication from Expo organisers, etc. Unfortunately some logistical problems still persisted till the end of Expo. Understandably these were not only experienced by Malta, but also by other countries. Notwithstanding, from the feedback that we get regarding Expo and our Pavilion, these problems went practically unnoticed by the general public visiting Expo, thus these are still leaving with a good overall impression.

MALTA PAVILION BUDGET

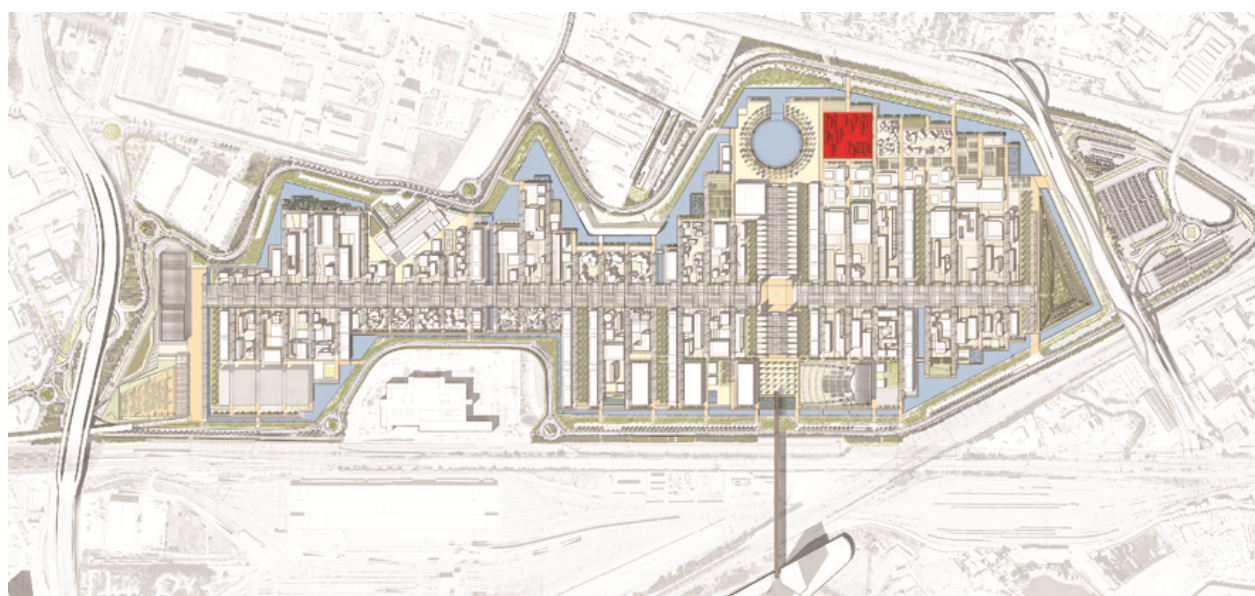
A budget of €3million was allocated for Malta's participation. This encompassed all costs including pavilion rental, pavilion fitting, operational costs, audio visual production, personnel fees, uniform, flights and transport, accommodation at Expo Village, marketing material, and Malta events organised during the 6-month period. This was reviewed to €2.2M in February 2015. Final cost as at end November 2015 came to approx. €1.8M

THE BIOMEDITERRANEAN CLUSTER

The BioMediterranean Cluster was located close to the Italian Pavilion, which was right next to the Lake Arena. The location of the Bio-Mediterranean Cluster within the Expo site is marked in red on the Plan overleaf. The Malta Pavilion was a stand-alone pavilion overlooking a common area which was managed by the Regione di Sicilia, with whom Expo Organisers entered into an agreement just a few months before the opening of Expo. The other country participants within the BioMed Cluster were Algeria, Serbia, San Marino, Albania, Tunisia, Montenegro, Greece, Egypt, and Lebanon.

The pavilions were grouped around an open piazza, which was a common area housing a stage and seating. However, since this area had been committed to be managed by the Regione di Sicilia, its use was limited, thus making it difficult to plan ahead properly. Notwithstanding, Malta still managed to organise a number of events during the six-months of Expo.

While the initial Cluster concept presented by the Expo organisers was very appealing since it saved on costs while still leaving countries with the flexibility to express their theme, the Cluster was not very well managed. This raised doubts among the participants on whether to participate under such a format in future Expos if this concept was presented once again.



MALTA PAVILION

The stand-alone Pavilions were constructed by the Expo Organisers as part of the Bio-Mediterranean Cluster, and were then rented out to the participants complete with water and electricity connections, and air conditioning system. The cost of the utilities, namely water and electricity were to be borne by the participants. The Malta Pavilion had two floors and measured a total of 250 sq metres (125 sqm on each floor). The ground floor was the exhibition area and was open to the public, while the first floor housed an office, meeting rooms, storage and bathroom.

In April 2014, a public call was published for the development of the internal artistic design, construction, fitting, equipping, finishing, as well as the dismantling and clearing at the end of the event. The proposed internal design was to reflect the Malta Pavilion Theme Statement and Concept. By the closing date 10 companies had submitted their proposal, with 9 being from overseas and 1 company from Malta.

Following an in-depth selection process, Allestitenti & Pubblicità Spa was adjudicated as the preferred bidder for a total of €662,390.98 (excluding VAT). Malta, as official participant, was exempt from payment of VAT on any works or services procured in Italy in connection with Expo Milan. Work on the internal structures commenced in February 2015 and were fully completed and compliant with Expo and Italian regulations by the last week of April 2015. The contractor met his obligations very professionally and promptly.

The Pavilion had an exhibition area at ground level of 125 sq mtrs and which was open to the public, while the same area on the first floor was reserved for private meeting rooms. Our focus was mainly on the audio visual and no commercial company was represented in the Pavilion since this was a country Pavilion, and moreover due to the restrictions that had been imposed on the participants with regards to the commercialisation of products.

The Pavilion contained electronic information kiosks, diverse images and information about Malta related to business, history, tourism, culture, traditions and the production of honey in order to keep with the theme, as well as a 360 degrees panoramic screen. The support of the MTA and Heritage Malta was obtained for the provision of display items and promotional literature, while other antique display items were also obtained on loan from a private collection.



MALTA PAVILION CONCEPT

The idea behind the beehive of the exhibition area was influenced by the story that the Greeks had called the island *Melite*, which originated from the Greek word *meli*, meaning honey. This name continued to be used by the ancient Romans and it was only in the 9th century that the Arab conquerors transformed it into *Malta*. Likewise, the Maltese Islands boast an endemic species of productive honey bees and these bees get their nectar from a different flower according to the season, eventually producing a different kind of honey each time with its own distinct flavour.

Secondly, the beehive is not only used for the storage of food, but it is also a secure and safe haven for the bees that live in a community, synonymous with the everyday life in Malta. A place to call 'home'

Thirdly, the bee is also symbolised as one of the most industrious species, thus figuratively representing the enterprising Maltese and business in Malta.

Inspired by this concept, the exhibition area of the Malta Pavilion offered a simple, modern but effective design structured like a large beehive into which visitors could enter to experience Malta through diverse audio/visual elements. The layout of the pavilion and the exhibition itself were representative of the theme statement which was titled *Derived from the Past, Preserved for the Future, Experienced at Expo Milan 2015*.

Derived from the Past

Malta is an island of flavours and traditions spanning thousands of years. It offers a colourful culinary diversity capturing the essence of cultures and civilizations from the three continents bordering the Mediterranean, many of whom had made Malta their home since the dawn of time. The Greeks, the Romans, the Phoenicians, the Arabs, the Sicilians, the Knights of St John, the French and also the British have left their culinary mark on Malta.

Preserved for the Future

Because of its unique composition and chemical properties, honey and objects immersed in honey, have been preserved for decades. This representation brings to mind the preservation of Maltese culture, traditions and cuisine that we have inherited. The preservation element was also enhanced in the concept of the beehive, where we wanted to bring into the forefront the importance of unity, of living together as a group, and most importantly working collectively for the production of honey.

Furthermore, the beehive is not only used for the storage of food, but it is also a secure and safe haven for the bees that live in a community, synonymous with the everyday life in Malta. However, time has not stopped on Malta. Today, it is a modern nation with a remarkable inheritance; it is a nation which offers a contemporary lifestyle based on strong traditions and a thriving economy. Thus, its past and present will continue to be preserved and enhanced for the future.

Experienced at Expo Milan 2015

Finally, visitors to the Malta Pavilion could enjoy an informative and educational experience through the exhibition display of Malta's past, present, and also the future. One wall of the exhibition area was dedicated to cooking utensils which were used in everyday life in the kitchens and streets of Malta. There were mixing bowls, olive press, wine and water jars, the weighting scales of the street vendors for small fruit, and the woven fruit baskets. This was also complemented by the silver cutlery and the lace which used to adorn the tables of the nobility. All these exhibits had a story to tell.

There were images of the food which have a link with the culinary inheritance from other cultures such as *bigilla* (a dip of Arabic influence), *imqaret* (a sweet pastry filled with dates which are of Arabic/Sicilian influence), and *bragjoli* (a meat stew said to have originated during the period of the Knights). One other wall was dedicated to the production of honey in Malta, which is influenced by the seasons and the three annual harvests of the Maltese honey: the Spring honey which crystallizes into a dense light coloured medium, the Summer honey which is light orange in colour and remains more liquid, and then there is the dark Autumn honey which bees collect from carob and eucalyptus blossoms.

Visitors to the Malta Pavilion had the opportunity to experience and taste traditional Maltese food, honey and drinks when a number of Cooking Shows by chefs from Malta were held in the BioMediterranean Cluster during these past months. Simonds Farsons Cisk also provided complementary soft drinks and beer during these Cooking Shows, which were supplied through its Italian agent.

One other wall featured a timeline of Malta's history, culture and how it is evolving into the future without losing sight of its past. Last but not least the spectacular video display which encompassed all that the Maltese islands stand for: history, culture, traditions, entrepreneurship, a modern nation, a Mediterranean lifestyle and a mix of culinary delights. Some photos are annexed this document.

The Pavilion logo brought into play the concept behind the Pavilion design and the Theme Statement, starting off from the hexagonal shape of the beehive, while the colours complemented the attraction of the Mediterranean lifestyle: the golden hue of the sun, the red of the earth, the blue of the sea, and the green of the ecosystem. The white and red of the Malta flag figured at the centre of the logo.



AUDIO VISUAL PRODUCTIONS

The audio visual productions projected on the Malta Pavilion were entrusted to PBS. A total of 6 features were produced, with each video lasting around 5 minutes. These focused on distinct topics namely:

- A taste of History and Culture
- The Industrious Bee
- A Feast of Tastes
- Life from the Sea
- Gozo: Gem of the Mediterranean
- Malta for all Seasons

These were then complemented with information kiosks covering diverse aspects of Maltese lifestyle, cuisine, culture, and business. These were programmed by MCAST IT tutors and students.

PROMOTION

The Malta Pavilion had a dedicated website, Facebook page and Twitter in order to reach out to a wide audience. Marketing material in diverse languages was sourced from the Malta Tourism Authority, with around 110,000 brochures and 50,000 maps being distributed during this period. Other material which was distributed included brochures provided by Heritage Malta, by Air Malta, and by CHOGM Task Force.

Specific merchandise was produced with the Malta Pavilion logo which included lapel pins, bags, luggage tags, Malta hand-held flags, and a selection of postcards specifically designed for the Malta Pavilion.



PERSONNEL

Due to the long working hours, duties on the Malta Pavilion were on a shift roster basis. There were two Maltese managers, working day-in, day-off with a one hour lunch break (9.00 am till 9.00 pm), while hosts worked on a morning, afternoon, day-off shift roster basis with a 30 minute break (9.15 am till 3.15 pm/ 3.00 pm till 9.00 pm).

There was a mix of personnel recruited from Malta together with personnel recruited from Italy through the Expo official service provider, Manpower. Maltese personnel were engaged on a contract of service for 3 or 6 months. Many of the applicants were either university students or teachers, looking for a summer job. However this was a problem since many could only be engaged for the last three months.

Notwithstanding, we still managed to put together a good team. For the first three months the ratio was 1 Maltese host with the support of 2 Italian hosts on every shift, while in the last three months, there were 2 Maltese hosts supported by 1 Italian host. Both Managers during the six-month period were Maltese.

Although the Pavilion was small, the personnel complement was nearly enough to meet the number of visitors. For future set-ups, it would be recommended to have another 2 persons as runners/general administration support since there had been many instances where our resources were over-stretched.

Uniforms were provided for the Maltese personnel consisting of, for female hosts, navy blue dress/trouser/skirts/jackets with white shirt and a patterned light blue/yellow scarf while the male managers were fitted with a light grey suit/white shirt and light blue/yellow tie matching the scarf. Following a public call for quotations, the female uniforms were sourced from Jon David from their ICONA range, the gents' clothing were sourced from Bortex while the scarves and ties were sourced from ID Limited.

ACCOMMODATION

Three apartments were rented out at Expo Village for 6 months, with another apartment rented from August until end October, when additional Maltese personnel joined the team. Expo Village was specifically built by Expo Organisers to host personnel from the participating countries. Around 1,200 persons from diverse nationalities were accommodated at Expo Village.

The Village was 10 minutes on foot to the entrance turnstiles, with another 15 minutes to reach the Malta Pavilion. The preference of Expo Village for accommodation was its proximity to Expo site, thus eliminating costs on transport and moreso delays to arrive punctually to work.

The main drawback that the Village had was its isolation from a number of commodities such as restaurants, shops and even the metro station. However a few cars were provided by Expo for use during the day by the Village residents, thus facilitating errands. The apartments, although small, were comfortably furnished and had the basic amenities including TV, Wifi, a microwave oven, and crockery. All costs related with utilities, namely water, electricity, A/C, twice weekly cleaning of the apartment and linen change were included in the rental package.

MALTA DAY

Throughout the term of Expo, each participating country had its National Day, thus giving it greater exposure on the selected day and likewise encouraging the public to visit its Pavilion.

The Malta Day at Expo Milan was held on the 16th July 2015 and was attended by Prime Minister Hon. Dr Joseph Muscat. The morning was dedicated to the official ceremony such as flag raising, national anthem and speeches by the Italian and Maltese sides. This was followed by a concert at the Expo Auditorium by the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO) under the direction of Maestro Brian Schembri. The MPO performed diverse works by Maltese composer Charles Camilleri, as well as one work specifically composed for the Malta Day by composer Karl Fiorini. The delegation then visited the Italian Pavilion and the Malta Pavilion, followed by an official luncheon organized by Expo Organisers.

Concurrently, from noon onwards, there were a number of activities for the public held within BioMediterranean Cluster, such as a cooking show by Maltese chefs and other musical activities. These same activities were then repeated throughout the afternoon and in evening.

Also on the 16th July in the late afternoon, other activities were held outside of Expo, namely a workshop for Consuls, followed by a business networking reception. Trade Malta was also active in Milan during the same period and organised B2B meetings on the 15th July. Likewise, the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) hosted a select group of its service partners/DMCs at Expo and who attended for the Malta Day activities.

OTHER EVENTS

Other events were organised by Malta during the 6-month term. These included a number of Cooking Shows focusing on Maltese cuisine, with each event having a team of 3 Maltese chefs led by Michael Diacono. The supporting chefs who attended were Andrew Farrugia, Daniel Vella McIntyre, Andrew Vella, Edward Diacono, Nicholas Diacono, and Sean Gravina.

These Cooking Shows were held in June, July, September and October. Karen Mugliett, a nutritionist and lecturer at the UOM was also present for one of the Cooking Shows where we had a discussion panel, as was Ray Sciberras, a honey producer. There was no payment for these services but those attending had their flight and accommodation covered. The Cooking Shows were held mainly at the BioMed Cluster with two shows being organised on the stage of the Qatari Pavilion.

Musical activities were organised in July and October. The bands which performed at Expo Milan were the Big Band Brothers, KazinzSka, and Red Electrick. These performances were also held at the BioMed Cluster and also on the international stage of the Poland Pavilion. The use of the stages of the other Pavilions was made possible through the cooperation and camaraderie that had developed between the participating countries.

Malta was also active in other events organised by the Regione di Sicilia within the BioMed Cluster, such as forming part of the Working Group of the ITINERAMED Itinerary represented by the Deputy Commissioner General, and the DE PRANDIO ET COENA two-day symposium with the participation of Prof. Carmel Cassar from the UOM.

VISITORS TO THE MALTA PAVILION

The opening of Expo was fraught with problems including bad publicity, anti-event riots in the centre of Milan, and bad weather. Likewise, the site was not completed when Expo opened, thus there was a lack of proper visitors management and moreover lack of signage.

This resulted in a very low turnout of visitors for the first three months, which eventually started picking up by early August. While from May till July we registered only 87,914 visitors, in August alone we had 67,815 visitors, and then 134,921 visitors and 281,651 visitors in September and October respectively, bringing the total count to 572,301. Visitors also peaked on those days when we had our Cooking Shows and musical activities in July, September and October.

From the information that we could gather from the social media (no official statistics are available), the Malta Pavilion registered the highest number of visitors within the BioMed Cluster followed by San Marino at 501,889 and Serbia at 500,000.

When compared with some of the much larger Pavilions which were situated on the main thoroughfare such as the EU Pavilion registering only 650,000 visitors, the Polish Pavilion and the Japan Pavilion (two of the largest at Expo) registering just 1.5M and 2M visitors respectively, the Malta Pavilion fared very well in terms of visitors, considering that the location of the BioMed Cluster was not as prominent as the Pavilions on the main thoroughfare of the Expo site.

What is encouraging is the interest shown in Malta by these visitors which come from all walks of life being school children, teens, families, young couples and also senior travellers. The visitors were mainly Italians. However we did have a good number of other nationals mainly from Germany, France, the USA, and also Asians. The visitors appreciated the direct contact with the personnel and the information that these obtained about Malta and the theme of the Pavilion. Daily presentations were also given to school children and tour groups. These were held in both English and in Italian.

CONCLUSION

Malta's participation at Expo Milan 2015 was certainly a positive one. Most of the feedback received was very encouraging and although it could be difficult to gauge any tangible return, the promotion and visibility that are generated by such a major event is very important, especially for small countries.

Some recommendations for future Expos include:

- (a) Early confirmation of participation. This could help immensely to plan and build up a better presence, both in terms of the physical participation and also for long-term promotion. In this way we could be able to make better use of resources and budget over a longer period of time.
- (b) More HR support on the ground. In this way we can be able to plan well in advance promotional campaigns, marketing material, events etc. For Expo Milan these were done piecemeal since we had confirmed our participation quite late, so a lot of effort was dedicated mainly to finishing off our Pavilion on time and on its general administration during the six-month period.
- (c) Consider participating with a stand-alone self built Pavilion. While the Cluster method worked, it had its limitations, moreover since it was not well managed by the Italian organisers. Although a self-built Pavilion would incur a higher cost, it would Malta give more individuality where to express its theme and manage its events, thereby resulting in better presence and exposure.

