

Brussels, 13 April 2011

PRESS RELEASE

40 European island politicians signed on 12 April 2011, the **Pact of Islands** making the political commitment to achieve the 20-20-20 objectives of the European Union for 2020. **Five Maltese Local Authorities** signed the Pact on that occasion: Kalkara, Tarxien, Dingli, Santa Luċija and Għargħur. The Maltese Local Authorities were represented at the event by Mayor Mario Gauci and Mayor Joseph Cordina as representative of the Malta Local Councils' Association. This pact is an initiative parallel to the Covenant of Mayors and was part of the **European Union Sustainable Energy Week**. The Maltese Local Authorities will be assisted in implementing their obligations under the Pact by Paragon Europe, in the framework of the EU-funded **IslePact** project which launched the initiative.

Approximately 3.5% of the European citizens live in islands and this percentage increases significantly during the high tourism season, adding pressure to the islands' ecosystems, transport systems, energy systems and water requirements.

Placing the project in a wider context, **Alex MacDonald**, Convener of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (the Outer Hebrides of Scotland) and **member of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR)** said "the Pact of Islands makes a number of significant commitments such as to submit an Islands Sustainable Energy Action Plan, to develop a pipeline of bankable projects and mobilise sustainable energy investments in their respective territories. The 30-month project will help making a significant contribution in achieving EU sustainable energy and climate change targets, such as the reduction of CO₂ emissions by 20% or more and the improvement of energy efficiency by 20% or more by 2020".

The initiative was commended by the **EC Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Maria Damanaki** who asserted that "(the) initiative makes (IslePact project beneficiaries) front runners in promoting an independent and environmentally sound energy supply. It is a bottom-up, voluntary commitment that crosses geographical and national borders, it links together authorities, territories and ultimately people in a common effort toward sustainability. And it is exactly what our Integrated Maritime Policy is all about."

The strategic importance of the initiative was also underlined by **Marie Donnelly, Director** for new and renewable sources of energy, energy efficiency & innovation **at the Commission's DG ENERGY**, who stated that "retrofitting buildings to reduce their energy consumption is a priority of the European Commission; 40% of the EU energy consumption is in the building sector."

Eleni Marianou, Secretary General of CPMR made reference to the territorial aspect of the initiative, saying that "it has been recognised that many of the European islands are suffering from structural handicaps, leading to population reduction and more particularly the young leaving the islands for better employment and living conditions in the mainland. Therefore I

believe sustainable development is one of the main tools to help enhance local economic development, job creation and reverse the decline of the local population.”

Mercedes Bresso, President of the Committee of the Regions, also addressed the 40 island authorities focusing on territorial cohesion reminding that “Energy and Territorial Cohesion are two new competences that the Lisbon Treaty attributed to the EU. Your Pact shows that with projects and cooperation we can turn the Treaty into reality.”

The signed pact and a list of the signatories are available on www.islepact.eu.

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