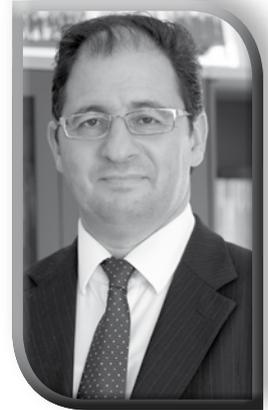




Looking Ahead: An EU Citizen's Approach

Professor Stephen Calleya



In June this year, we Maltese citizens and all citizens of the European Union were once again invited to exercise our grand duty and role to vote in the European Parliament elections. The total turnout for these elections across Europe was 51.07%, with Malta's turnout being the third highest in the European Union at 73%. What could have led almost half of the European Union's population to decide not to vote for their representatives? Has the European Union lost touch with its citizens?

The emergence of more nationalist political movements within the European Union, at its peak with BREXIT, could reflect citizens' drift away from the European Union dream. As the European Union continues to enlarge in the years to come, citizens' detachment from the EU may continue to deepen.

Taking the case of Malta, our island is also vulnerable to the world's external shocks and has challenges which other member states might not have to confront. Therefore, the European Union should do its utmost to focus on the issues that are most relevant to its citizens primarily focusing on enhancing economic prosperity and the environmental outlook of all countries.

In the post-pandemic moment we are experiencing it is clear that the European Union should prioritise its citizens' most basic needs, particularly health and education – which are the most important bedrock of our societies. Such initiatives would raise the

profile of the European Union in areas that are of direct relevance to citizens' everyday lives and well-being.

The European Commission's initiative 'You are EU' truly brings out what the European Union stands for in three words. Let us not forget that we, the 448 million citizens, are the most important dimension of the European Union. The EU must be perceived as continuing to promote and protect the European Union's values and simultaneously encourage our youth to actively participate in all EU policy mechanisms available to continue building a pragmatic future oriented European Union.

An approach which could greatly help in this regard is to highlight the roles which regions and cities can play in the European Union arena. As an example, our Mediterranean should be prioritised and the Union should present a unified approach to the common challenges faced by the Mediterranean-European Union member states. With that being said, the countless opportunities which the Mediterranean offers for all European Union member states should also be fully explored and policy initiatives launched to start implementing such an agenda.



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