

Media Release – 15.09.2020

Working towards a just transition for a Greener Europe - FOR.U.M. and MEA hold virtual seminar on the EU's Green Deal

The FOR.U.M. Unions Maltin and the Malta Employers' Association today 15 September 2020, organised a webinar which discussed the EU's Green Deal. It was addressed by local and EU speakers from European Commission's DG Environment, the European Centre of Employers and Enterprises (CEEP), the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), the University of Malta and the Ministry for the Environment.

The webinar discussed the EU's Green Deal, announced by the European Commission in December 2019, which commits the EU to becoming climate-neutral by 2050 whilst promising to help companies to become world leaders in clean products and green technologies while investing in Human Resources. The Green Deal will have at its core a number of strategies and regulations which each EU member state will have to abide to.

The MEA DG, Mr Joseph Farrugia, said that the "Green Deal will affect business in various ways as we have to change the way we produce, consume, dispose and the way we think. Entire production processes will have to be renewed, and renovated to reach the set targets. It is important that businesses will not be on their own, but the EU and governments will offer their assistance through financial mechanisms to ease the transition". Furthermore, he stated that "the Green Deal offers a new way of thinking that creates opportunities, research, innovation, and the upskilling of labour force". Ms Dolores Sammut Bonnici, MEA President highlighted that "we need our most intelligent citizens to research and innovate our industries", and this can only be done if we follow a holistic approach. It is also crucial that for this to move forward, we need to urge the Maltese government and the EU support to set up the infrastructure and education system with the Green Deal in mind.

For.U.M. President, Mr Marco Bonnici, also addressed the webinar and stated that "it is of paramount importance to have a continued tripartite discussion between Government, trade unions and employers. This discussion cannot be considered apart from our day to day lives because ultimately policies will affect our lives. Another point of note is the need for support, including financing of initiatives which are deemed green which tend to be expensive. Opportunities for prevention of future problems are key". For.U.M. Vice President, Mr Chris Attard also added that there are implications on existing practices and industries, and an important aspect is the safeguarding of jobs especially in new economic realities. As unions we want to be part of this change and discussion should be established and continued. Malta should establish an entity as a focal point to work on the green deal and its implementation, similar to the approach in Spain."

During his intervention, Mr Ludovic Voet, ETUC Confederal Secretary, stated that "we need to act fast against climate change now before it is too late. As Trade Unions, ETUC agrees that the only way forward is through a just transition, including policies that support the most vulnerable through policies and greener jobs, public services and opportunities and policies designed with and for workers through social dialogue and collective bargaining." Mr Jean-Eudes Moncomble, Chair of the Sustainability Board at CEEP stated that there "need to be a link between the Green Deal with the Digital Deal, to support the modernisation of the economy".

Mr William Neale, Advisor for Directorate "Circular Economy & Green Growth" in DG Environment at the EU Commission, said that "it is much cheaper to have incentives to avoid creating problems than to fix the problems later after they have been created". He also stated that it is very important to emphasise creating quality jobs, and these jobs are not just related to waste management but in many sectors."

Profs Simone Borg, Ambassador for Climate Change stated that "currently Malta is working on the Low Carbon Development Strategy and on the Energy & Climate Plan, two very important policy instruments that will set targets for 2050". She encouraged business support organisations and social partners to continue working together, to be at the forefront and encouraging government to move forward.

The MEA and For.U.M. would like to thank all speakers and participants of this webinar and looks forward to more discussion with stakeholders on this very important topic.