

## **Kick-Off meeting for the feasibility of setting up a EuroMedITI in Malta**

### **Spinning off research, technological development and innovation**

The Prime Minister, in his speech on the launch of the Advisory Board to the Malta Council for Science and Technology on the 11<sup>th</sup> January stated that "I am here to visibly and openly underline my personal commitment and that of my Government to the priority that this Administration attaches to research, technological development and innovation (RTDI) in science and technology. We firmly believe in the need for strategic long-term policies targeting Government RTDI investments to sectors of national priority. It is a commitment that I have already underlined by placing MCST within my portfolio." Dr Gonzi added that the challenges of entrepreneurialism and competitiveness in a knowledge-based and value-added EU are underpinned by aggressive research, technological development and innovation in science and technology as well as other domains.

In response, the Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST) is spearheading the development of an Institute for Innovation and Technology for the Mediterranean region, coined as EUROMEDITI. EUROMEDITI is in line with the Government's 2006 budget in seeking partnerships with various European research centres of excellence to use Malta as a technology transfer platform between mainland Europe and the Mediterranean region with a special emphasis on North Africa.

Between the 14 – 16 Jan 2006 a number of Maltese and European founding partners met in Malta to initiate the project and explore areas of cooperation.

Leading science and technology experts from nine Fraunhofer Institutes from Germany, VTT from Finland and the Henri Tudor Research Centre from Luxembourg met with various local science and technology specialists coming from Government and the private sector.

The Fraunhofer Institute is Europe's largest science and technology research agency consisting of 54 centres of excellence and employing around 12,000 scientists and engineers. VTT Finland is the largest science and technology research centre in Scandinavia and is main contributor to Finland's success which is rated as the world's laboratory and most innovative country. The Henri Tudor Research Centre has developed a top-class innovation generation platform that could be emulated and adapted to Malta.

EUROMEDITI will be targeted as a strategic platform for Euro-Mediterranean applied RTDI networks geared at giving space for innovation in the fields of Alternative energy, Water and Environmental technologies, ICT and other related technologies. It will foster collaboration between partners, enabling transfer of knowledge and mobilisation of all professionals including business persons, researchers, academics, and students. EUROMEDITI will enable ideas to be developed rapidly and smoothly, allowing a quick deployment to the market in a profitable manner whilst acting as a test bed in exporting calibrated technologies to the region.

All participants confirmed their commitment to the project and during the coming months more institutes from the European Union are expected to join the project. Twelve projects under various science and technology themes were identified for development. The project is currently in feasibility stage with a business plan being developed and completed by the end of June 2006.



Helmut Jungblot from the Fraunhofer Institute for Open Communication Systems delivering a presentation on Malta's potential for satellite communications.