

## Europe House Located In 17th Century Building



Photos: Chris Sant Fournier

Europe House, the new quarters of the European Parliament Office and the European Commission Representation in Malta, was officially opened last night.

Situated in the heart of Valletta, the house was deemed by European officials to be the least expensive of all Europe houses at €5 million but reputedly the most beautiful, Julian Vassallo, head of the EP Office in Malta, said.

The opening, presided over by President George Abela, European Parliament vice-president Stavros Lambrinidis and European Commissioner Joe Borg, coincided with the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

A recently-restored 17th century edifice in St Paul Street, Europe House bears the typical characteristics of the dwellings of the Knights of St John. The extensive restoration project seeks to marry the best of Maltese and Valletta architecture with the technology and functionality of today.

The concept of a Europe House open to citizens is being put in practice through conference and meeting facilities, which are available for free to organisations or events with a link to Europe.

Dr Abela said Europe House would contribute to the growing feeling of the Maltese that they formed an integral part of a united Europe.

Mr Lambrinidis said Europe House would host important debates going on in Europe, such as climate change, the economic crisis and immigration. The premises would give the opportunity to Maltese to engage in such debates.

Taking the podium, Dr Borg defined Europe House as the idea of a Europe in the hearts and minds of European citizens. In this respect, he said, each piece of European common law, which sought to improve the living conditions of people, was a building block of this project.

Dr Vassallo paid tribute to the political significance of the inauguration of Europe House: "None of this would have happened without the members of Malta's political class and civil society who fought and won the argument for Malta's membership in the EU".

Dr Vassallo said a special debt was owed to Europeans from central and Eastern Europe which, 20 years back, had thrown the book of rules out of the window and "gave us 1989 - the year when everything seemed possible".

Joanna Drake, head of the European Commission Representation, encouraged the Maltese to take an active part in the European project through Europe House.

Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi, who could not attend because of the Budget, sent a recorded video message, while Labour leader Joseph Muscat showed up after his party's press conference on the Budget.

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## Comments

Franco Farrugia (1 hour, 39 minutes ago)

@ U. D'Amico: The problem is that all former communist countries have ceased to be so and have actually joined the Union. It seems that EVERYONE wants to join the Union. Icelands intends to join; Turkey wants to join .... so, what's up with Galea I?

U. DAmico (4 hours, 3 minutes ago)

@lgalea

People like you should be in a communist country, not running it of course, but rather enjoying its "Fruits" as a common mortal citizen !

Robert Scullion (4 hours, 30 minutes ago)

@lgalea

Well we all know you loved the Socialist Planned economy, and the lack of Freedom of Speech so enjoyed by millions in the old East Europe.

If the EU is so evil, perhaps explain why all the former eastern European Countries (and Malta & Cyprus) couldn't wait to join?

lgalea (6 hours, 45 minutes ago)

Let's hope the anniversary will coincide with the fall of the eu.

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