

# Maltese-Serbian community NGO celebrates fifth anniversary

Last weekend the non-governmental organisation Maltese-Serbian Community celebrated its fifth year of progress

TIA RELJIC

The Maltese-Serbian Community (MSC), a non-profit and non-governmental organisation hosted a gathering for its fifth year anniversary on February 7 held at Sliema Pitch. The event saw a considerable turnout – including founders of the organisation, special envoy of the Prime Minister Alex Scerberras Trigona and Robert Arrigo, as well as Honorary consul of Montenegro, Alfred Barthet. As has been the custom so far, joining the occasion through Skype was Ambassador in Rome Ana Hrustanovic, delivering her supportive oration.

The organisation was established with the aim of strengthening ties between the Serbian and the Maltese community, especially those residing permanently in Malta.

Predrag Andrejevic, the President of the organisation, explained the initiative that gave rise to the NGO. In 2010, the former foreign minister of Serbia, on a visit to Malta, decided to organise an NGO of sorts for Serbs residing in Malta. It started from a small committee, which appointed Dr Andrejevic as President, now in charge of organising these events. Dr Scerberras Trigona was among the founders of this organisation, whose interest in the community stems from his long history of involvement in Yugoslav-Maltese relations. He also hosted a number of Serb students who came to study in Malta. One of these students was Jovan Kurbalija, with whom they established the Diplo Foundation operating in Geneva, Belgrade and Malta.

"We founded this society just five years ago," Scerberras Trigona explained. "It is useful because there are a lot of Yugoslavs who feel the need to coalesce and find a society of friendship with a Maltese counterpart."

"I am glad the community has people from both sides of parliament and that this isn't a political issue," he added.

Robert Arrigo, former mayor and director of Arrigo and Sons, has been supporting the community in many ways and offering employment to its people. "This community is an example to other communities," he said. "The Serbian community has integrated exceptionally well within the Maltese community."

During the celebration, the President introduced the recent collaboration with two lawyers, offering their legal services in the area of Family and Employment law to the members of the community. The overall costs of consultations and court cases if necessary will be offered at a reduced price exclusively to members, for any cases involving marriages, separations, adoptions or any other matters involving children and custody issues, as well as regulations and disputes between employers and employees.

The organisation also announced the establishment of a new Branko - Bane Djuric Fund to offer aid to its members in case of sudden death in the family. Donations to this fund will be published to the website.



Archpriest Petar, the Serbian priest in Malta, greeting via Skype the Serbian ambassador in Rome Ana Hrustanovic



Predrag Andrejevic, MSC President, with a young member of organisation



"The Serbian community has integrated exceptionally well within the Maltese community" – Robert Arrigo



The event also celebrated the tenth anniversary of the St Sava football tournament held annually in Malta. More than 20 Maltese nationals became new members of the MSC over the course of the evening and the majority of the attendees were young people. "This gives us hope that the organisation will continue," Andrejevic said. "We look forward to seeing more Maltese and Serbian youth in future events."

Bishop Andrej of Austria, Switzerland, Italy and Malta and Archpriest Petar were awarded with honorary memberships.

The MSC is also engaging Serbian professionals attending relevant events in Malta. One of the highlights is an event taking place at the University of Malta Valletta Campus, a Conference and a Workshop, 'The Commonwealth and its People: Diasporas, Identities, Memories'. "We want to explore how the memories of such communities are captured by the institutions, because the National Archives in Malta so far have limited material on people from these backgrounds. But this is something that could be done," Prof. Milena Dobrev, the Head of Library Information and Archive Sciences at the University of Malta, said.

The event is organised by the University of Malta in collaboration with ChoGM Malta, the Ministry of Education and Employment and The Ministry for Social Dialogue. Taking place between June 24 and 26 this year, the conference is based on the Commonwealth and the importance of archiving memories of different communities – an aspect of great interest to the community.

The MSC website ([msc-malta.org](http://msc-malta.org)) provides information on becoming a member, supporting the community and details on future events. The website is sponsored by Ofion Software and run by Ninoslav Jovanovic in charge of web design and digital marketing. Featuring live during the anniversary celebration were musicians Sasa Ognjanovic and Red House Blues Band. The event was catered by Dragan Mirceta, Tania Kavaji and Jesper's Danish Bakery

