



Press Release

PR162844

11.12.2016

PRESS RELEASE ISSUED BY THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Speech by President of Malta Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, at the Launching of Two Publications – The Annual ELSA Malta Law Reviews and a Policy Paper on Hate Speech: Negotiating Peace in the Ambit of Freedom of Speech

Dear Friends

It is my pleasure to join you at this commemoration of Human Rights' Day.

ELSA Malta, as the European Law Student Organisation of the University of Malta, has distinguished itself over the years thanks to its commitment to the promotion of human dignity and solidarity.

Throughout its initiatives, ELSA Malta continues to reflect a fundamental respect for the principles of cultural diversity and social inclusion.

Such respect is a necessary safeguard to protect and nurture the democratic ideals which we hold in such high regard.

The publications which are being launched today also offer a perspective on this important remit. The first is a celebration of the legal and social research developed over the past year in Malta.

The second is a policy paper that deals with the difficult topic of hate speech. Entitled “Negotiating Peace in the Ambit of Freedom of Speech”, it offers a topical perspective on a subject of great relevance to the subject of international human rights, and to the national context more specifically.

It is essential that we continue to deepen our knowledge about the complex interplay which exists between respect for freedom of speech, a foundational value of our European culture, and the safeguarding of respect in our communities.

I believe that the most important factor in our journey, as a society, towards meaningful change is our society's continuing commitment to the protection of respectful dialogue, which will always include opportunities for criticism and differences of opinion.

In a society where free exchange is the rule, where dialogue is protected and prioritised, the power of the truth can take root and flourish.

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We owe so much of our progress, as members of the European family of nations, to freedom of speech and freedom of thought.

The best society for all of us is one in which the freedoms of speech, of expression, and of thought are safeguarded, so that each person can give voice to their truth and find a respectful space in which to be heard.

It is always encouraging to see young people reach out and engage with issues of human rights and freedoms. Above all, we must remember that, while the academic pursuit of excellence in this area is essential, it must be backed up by practical action.

Many of your lecturers are active practitioners, who implement the mandate of the core international human rights instruments in their professional lives.

The President's Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society, which works very closely with the University of Malta, exemplifies this combination of academic research and practical engagement.

Furthermore, the President's Foundation reaches out to young people from all walks of life, including university organisations, to provide a platform for their personal and professional development.

I am sure that ELSA will find a welcome space within the Foundation's work, through DEGREEplus and other opportunities.

Let me conclude by once again congratulating you all on the publication of these documents, and by encouraging you to keep being vocal champions for human rights, for peace, and for wellbeing among your peers at university and in society across Malta.

It is only when we begin to create, in our own lives, the positive changes we wish to see reflected in our nation, that we can be sure of the continued resilience of our democratic society, and its commitment to secure freedom and dignity for all.