
*Speech delivered by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta
on the occasion of the National Day of Croatia, 19 June 2018*

Distinguished guests,
Dear friends.

Thank you, Ambassador, for sharing your thoughts with us, as we celebrate the National Day of Croatia.

I would like to take the opportunity to convey, my sincere best wishes to my friend, President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, and to the People of Croatia.

Excellency,
Our countries are united by many common values, which include a mutual commitment to democratic participation, and a deep concern for the wellbeing of our respective societies.

In light of these shared European values, the relations between our countries have steadily strengthened since they were first established, in 1992.

Frequent exchanges, at the highest levels, are further evidence of the close relations, which are enjoyed between Malta and Croatia.

These have included meetings between our respective Ministers of Foreign Affairs and bilateral talks between our Prime Ministers, held last year.

Let me also mention the participation of the President of Croatia during the Malta Meeting of the Arraiolos Group, which also took place in 2017.

My State Visit, held earlier this year, led to the signing of an important agreement of cooperation between the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Enterprise, and the Croatia Chamber of Economy.

This agreement reflects our mutual commitment to develop sustainable collaborations and potential partnerships, thereby developing inclusive prosperity for both our nations.

Our countries hold positions of geo-strategic importance in the southern and eastern regions of the European Union.

For this reason, I believe that Malta and Croatia are ideal collaborators.

Our relations are also strong due to the importance that both our countries place, in the success of the European Project.

Our mutual commitment towards this success of the European Project reflects shared values, which are founded on a common concern for sustainable peace within our regions, in our European Union, and throughout the world.

I firmly believe that we must continue working together, to give due prominence to all issues that promote the prosperity and the wellbeing of our nations.

I believe that, in order to achieve this, we must continue to strengthen social and cultural diversity; the participation of civil society; and the fostering of active citizenship.

By doing so, we shall be safeguarding the most important ideals of our democracies.

The role of the European Union to safeguard our ideals is clear.

Therefore, I commend the Republic of Croatia for its efforts to ensure stability in Southern-Eastern Europe. We must continue to focus on building stronger links across the various regions of Europe, because stability is a fundamental building-block for peace and prosperity.

In this spirit of shared prosperity, I am pleased to note the large number of registered Croatian employees who are currently working in Malta.

Moreover, tourism between our countries is also steadily growing.

Employment and tourism are an excellent means of bringing our peoples together, to nurture connections and to build friendships among the communities of our respective countries.

Valletta's ongoing term as European Capital of Culture for 2018 is offering exciting opportunities for social, artistic, and cultural cooperation.

I would like to encourage the Croatian authorities to participate in the interesting multicultural events, happening during this year.

I believe that we must continue to make innovative use of Valletta's role, as European capital of culture, to explore the shared values that make us proud to be European nations.

Within this European context, I would like to take the opportunity to augur success for the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, which will take place, for the first time, in the first half of 2020.

A focus on stability and opportunity in Southern-Eastern European Region, and the potential for prosperity, was a priority of the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and we are ready to share our own experiences with our Croatian counterparts, and to offer our support.

I am confident that the friendship between our two countries will continue to grow, and that we shall continue to build upon what we have achieved so far, for the common good of our peoples and our European family of nations.

Excellency,

On the occasion of the National Day of the Republic of Croatia, I would like to invite you to toast to the health of Her Excellency, President Grabar-Kitarovic, and to the excellent relations and firm friendship between the peoples of Malta and Croatia.