



*Member of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), the European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations (EBLIDA) and of the Commonwealth Library Association (COMLA)*

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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### **A state-of-the-art Cultural Centre in place of the Opera House ruins**

**Msida, -- 10 October 2008 --** The Malta Library and Information Association (MaLIA) is, through this Press Release, making an official proposal for a Cultural Centre to be constructed in place of the ruins of the Royal Opera House in Valletta.

MaLIA is proposing that this Cultural Centre that should include a state-of-the-art modern public library that will provide all the modern services and facilities that are provided by other public libraries in major cities across all Europe and other parts of the world. There is no doubt that such a location would be ideal to offer the best possible services to users and entice new users to visit the place. MaLIA is of the opinion that the current location of the Central Public Library is not considered ideal in terms of accessibility and safety, especially for children and young adults after sunset.

MaLIA's vision, based on existing best practices abroad, is that this new Cultural Centre will become a landmark in Valletta and should provide the following facilities:

- A modern public library with a rich collection made up of books, CDs, DVDs, digital collections, etc. Ample reading areas with natural light should be available together with an environment conducive to promoting education, recreation and satisfying the information needs of all users.
- A Lifelong Learning Centre with organised classes for adult education in various areas including information literacy and social inclusion.
- An exhibition Hall with a permanent display about the building and the history of the Royal Opera House.
- Designated areas suitable for presenting various cultural activities.
- A Tourist and Community Information Centre
- A Multimedia Centre
- Cafeteria

MaLIA is fully aware that such a project entails a massive capital expenditure but feels that just as the country is aiming high in various other areas where millions of euro have been allocated, this investment is equally important and will have an impact on the cultural and educational development of current and future generations in Malta and Gozo. MaLIA is of the opinion that such a project will be a major contributor in the government's 2015 vision of making Malta a centre of excellence in identified areas. The Cultural Centre will compliment the various initiatives being taken to foster the love for culture, provide the Maltese citizens with opportunities for lifelong learning and provide an environment for informal learning and enjoyment.

## **A state-of-the-art Cultural Centre (part 2)**

Apart from the initial investment, such a project will also require a recurrent expenditure that should ensure that the place is run by professional staff and the highest standards are maintained. The public library should be in a position to have a budget for proper collection development, recruitment of professional staff and professional training for staff in specific areas of the profession.

MaLIA is of the opinion that such a project should be seen as a bold statement by the government that indeed, knowledge is important. MaLIA strongly believes that apart from the traditional functions of a public library (a public repository of books), the modern public library, in its changing role as urban hangout, meeting place and arbiter of information has a fundamental role to play in the development of knowledge-based society. MaLIA strongly believes that it would indeed be a feather in our cap if this Cultural Centre is up and running by the year 2018, when Malta will be hosting the European Capital of Culture event.

As part of its campaign in favour of this project, MaLIA has today launched an online petition to gather support from people who believe that this project should be carried out. To add your name to this petition, which will be presented to the Prime Minister, go to [www.malia-malta.org](http://www.malia-malta.org).

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