

## PRESS RELEASE

Wednesday, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2007

**Lifelong Learning is also for Parents: Minister Galea launches the FES Lifelong Learning Portfolio and presents certificates and portfolios to 10 Tutors and 100 Parents**

The Hon. Minister of Education Dr. Louis Galea today Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> August 2007 launched the Parents' Lifelong Learning Portfolio and praised it as an important tool for parents in the national lifelong learning endeavour. He also presented certificates of proficiency to 10 parent leaders and teachers who trained as the first Parents' Lifelong Learning Portfolio Tutors in Malta. This training was part of a course provided by the Foundation for Educational Services (FES), and had three objectives:

- To develop, test and publish the Parents' Lifelong Learning Portfolio;
- To train the first group of tutors who would be able to assist parents in filling such a Portfolio;
- To assist the first group of 100 parents to fill in their own Portfolio.

Minister Galea also presented copies of the newly published Portfolio to these 100 parents. In his comments, Minister Galea referred to the priority to lifelong learning that this administration is giving through on-going reforms from pre-kinder to tertiary education. The most recent manifestations of this were:

- the priority being given to lifelong learning in the Operational Programmes through which the 855 million Euro in EU funds were to be spent over the next 7 years, and
- the new Collective Agreement with the MUT that allows for the implementation of the *For All Children to Succeed* Reform in compulsory education.

Indeed, the new Collective Agreement allowed for teachers to be given specific roles to enhance parental involvement in the school community. This was important not only for the betterment of children's educational attainment, but because it led to parents' own development along their lifelong learning pathway.

"The Parents' Lifelong Learning Portfolio, itself partly funded through EU funds, is a key tool in the strategy to help more and more parents realize their full potential, which includes entering or re-entering the world of work, for which the Portfolio will be an invaluable asset during interviews," said Minister Galea.

The authors of the Parents' Lifelong Learning Portfolio are Sandro Spiteri and Victor Galea, respectively Senior Executive and Head of the Parents-in-Education Programme within the FES. The Portfolio is the first of its kind, certainly in Europe.

In her introduction, FES CEO Nora Macelli explained that the course that led to the development of the Parents' Lifelong Learning Portfolio was part of the project 'Initiating and Managing Community-based Lifelong Learning Centres' led by the FES and which was partly funded through the EU Structural Funds for Malta (2004-2006) / European Social Fund. Mrs Macelli explained that through this ESF Project 5, 215 courses were designed and delivered to 2,038 adults in 7 centres around Malta. The project, she said, was executed in close collaboration with the respective Local Councils and a network of community-based organisations. It is noteworthy that 79% of participants in the project were women, most of whom were housewives for whom these courses were the first steps along their lifelong learning pathway after the compulsory schooling. This was also true of the parents who took part in the Lifelong Learning Portfolio Course.

### **The Lifelong Learning Portfolio**

The tool is an essential for adults who want to acknowledge the great value of their active involvement in:

- their children's educational development;
- the life of their children's schools;
- the life of their own community;
- their own lifelong learning journey.

This Portfolio provides its owner with a cumulative record of all these accomplishments. It is unique because it provides a complete picture of the parent's growth and development as a parent and a lifelong learner. The Portfolio is the story of its owner's journey through his/her lifelong learning process as a parent. In this journey the owner looks back at what has been learnt so that s/he may reflect on it and set new goals for self-improvement.

Moreover, the Portfolio is an ongoing project. As the author accumulates more experiences along his/her lifelong learning journey, s/he may want to add to the Portfolio,

or even change parts of it. This is why an electronic CD-Rom version of the Portfolio is also provided. The Portfolio can help the adult author to:

- reflect on and evaluate his/her experiences, strengths and needs for further development;
- as a tool for dialogue with other parents, adult educators and teachers;
- showcase the author's lifelong learning progress during interviews with prospective employers;
- as a consultation tool with learning and career guidance officers.

### **Authors' bionotes**

**Sandro Spiteri** taught for 13 years in state and non-state schools. From 2001 as the National Co-ordinator of the Institute for Child and Parent Learning Support in the Foundation for Educational Services (FES), he led national programmes to establish and expand family literacy and parent empowerment provision as well as to assist schools to develop in-house basic skills provision. He was also the Project Co-ordinator for the P.E.Fa.L. EU-funded project, which was the first Grundtvig thematic project co-ordinated by a Maltese institution. Sandro is also the founder and Head of the Malta Writing Programme that is now within the FES, and has led and participated in Writing workshops for student teachers, teachers, school administrators and parents. He has also co-ordinated the first B.Ed. Course specialisation for Parent-in-Education Support Teacher. Sandro is now Senior Executive within the FES, with responsibility for training, research, development and international projects.

**Victor Galea** B.A.,H.G. Dip(UK), P.G.C.E. is the Head of the Parents-in-Education Programme of FES. Victor started his career as a teacher in 1989 assigned to an Opportunity Centre for low-achieving students. The circumstances of these students instilled in him a keen interest in both pedagogical and social sciences studies. Since then, Victor has taught in various primary schools in Malta and Gozo. Since 2001, within FES he has spearheaded innovative approaches in parental inclusion in school processes and parental lifelong learning. Being a qualified social worker and therapist, he has worked with families in difficult circumstances and with a number of organisations in the social welfare sector. He is also a registered Therapist with the European Therapy Studies

Foundation (UK). For his M.Ed., Victor is researching how parental participation in curricular matters within the context of educational programmes specifically targeting parents leads to engagement in a lifelong learning process.