

A hub for new ideas

By EDWARD DE BONO

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EDWARD DE BONO is widely known as one of the world's leading creative thinkers and is regarded at home as a Maltese national treasure. He is the originator of 'lateral thinking', and his books have been translated into forty three languages, with some receiving forewords from Nobel Laureates. His ideas have been used and hailed by some of the world's leading politicians, artists, scientists and businessmen. He has met and advised numerous Heads of State and corporate CEOs, and his clients have included IBM, Du Pont, Prudential, AT&T, British Airways, British Coal, NTT, Ericsson and Total.

Edward de Bono lectures worldwide on creative thinking

For me, Malta has always been a very special place. So, I would like Malta to have a very special place in the world. In my eighty-odd years, I have – and still do – travel a great deal all around the world, from Korea to Argentina, from the USA to Australia. One year I did add up all the air miles I had flown that year. It would have taken me beyond the moon. When people often ask me where I come from and where I live, I do have to say that most people have never heard of Malta, especially those outside Europe. So, as an ambassador of my country, I tell them that Malta is actually the oldest civilisation in the world – far older than the Egyptian pyramids. I also tell them that Malta is a member of the EU and the Commonwealth, and is a successful economic hub in the Mediterranean.

Malta is hugely endowed with history and this is rightly treasured, as it should be. There is a small danger, however. Naturally, the greatest attention and investment is directed at protecting and exhibiting this abundance of history. That is as it should be. But we also live in the present and will shortly live in the future. History should not swamp attention to the future.

How could Malta contribute to the world? Military, political or economic contributions are rather unlikely given Malta's small size and resources. A research contribution is possible but that takes time and a lot of investment. I believe there is one special area where Malta could make a unique contribution. That is the area of 'creativity and new ideas'. Our standard thinking even at the highest level is full of analysis and logical deduction. We seek to identify a standard

situation in order to apply the standard remedy. For the first time in history, however, creative thinking can be deliberate and based on the logic of patterning systems. This is lateral thinking. Interestingly mathematicians and physicists agree with me, including the leading physicist in the world, who got his Nobel prize for discovering the quark.

Many years ago with the help of Borg Olivier, who was the Malta representative at the UN in New York, I tried to set up a special group to generate new and additional ideas, based on my concept of lateral thinking. This proved impossible because they said they were there to represent their countries not to think differently. But the idea was widely acknowledged as necessary under some other framework.

So there is no place in the world for the deliberate generation of new and different ideas. That, in my view, is the opportunity for Malta. It is a unique and special opportunity for Malta to make a unique and very visible contribution to the world as the source and centre for new ideas, which will have a direct effect on inward investment and also help development as a research centre. The extra visibility would also affect tourism. My books have been translated into forty three languages, from Chinese to Hindi and Russian. I have been invited to lecture in sixty one countries and I am regarded as the world's leading exponent of deliberate creative thinking. I now would very much like for my international reputation to be capitalised on by my own home country.

I therefore propose for Malta to host an iconic organisation, which I would call the Palace of Thinking.

This would be a global platform for the compilation and propagation of additional new ideas on world issues, submitted from a variety of sources. As Albert Einstein once said: "the problems of today will not be solved by the same thinking that created those problems in the first place." Malta should pioneer this need for new thinking, and it is in a great position to be able to do so. It is regarded as politically neutral, is geographically unique, and has an environment and culture which are conducive to creativity.

From the oldest civilisation, I say, may come the newest ideas.

