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Mr Martin Schulz,
President,
European Parliament.

3rd June 2016

Dear Martin,

I write to express my frustration and deep disquiet at the outcome of the European Citizens Prize this year with regard to the award made for Malta.

The endorsement unanimously made by the six Maltese MEPs was arbitrarily reversed by the awards committee for the prize, without any consultation.

Admittedly the organization chosen by the committee is a worthy one and the Maltese MEPs had agreed to endorse it in the year 2017.

However for the year 2016, the Malta Band Clubs Association had been endorsed and the following reasons fully justified that choice:

--year after year, voluntary organization in the field of social and health care had been selected, so the time had come to diversify towards the cultural field;

--band clubs in Malta constitute a network of non-profit making societies covering practically all the island. They are active in mobilizing communities together at grass roots level by organizing on an ongoing basis concerts, marches, village festas, church ceremonies and music classes and competitions, thereby serving to propagate musical knowledge and culture.

--a huge amount of time and effort is dedicated to their operations which are totally run by volunteers coming from all points of the political spectrum. According to the latest statistical survey, over 10 per cent of the population have some involvement in these activities, in an impressive display of social cohesion.

I completely fail to understand how the European Citizens awards committee could so blithely overlook the considerations which led to the selection endorsed by the full caucus of Maltese MEPs. Presumably, they did this following a few minutes of deliberations from the distance of Brussels and with scant knowledge of the Maltese context.

Surely, decisions such as this place the European Parliament in a very bad light, at a time when European institutions are being seen as too distant, overpowering and elitist by many voters in our member states – a problem which I know, is a source of deep concern to you. I would appreciate your views on the above.

With best regards.

Alfred Sant MEP