Maltese standard alphabet approved...

After months of intensive work by a special commission the new Maltese standard alphabet has been approved and published, encouraging people to use written Maltese.

The Maltese alphabet consists of 29 letters including the letters of ħ, ġ, ż, gh and ċ.

The 18th December 1921 is the day we are given the first standard alphabet of our Maltese language, following the setting up of what is known as L-Ghaqda tal-Kittieba tal-Malti, just over a year ago. In the past, various attempts were made to create a standard alphabet beginning with Mikiel Anton Vassalli whose first thoughts on the subject were contained in a 1790 publication entitled Alfabet Malti. Several other attempts were made last century, especially by the so-called Xirka Xemxija. These proposals were presented by Annibale Preca receiving quite a consensus. The standard alphabet published today by the special commission set up by L-Ghaqda tal-Kittieba tal-Malti includes the letters h, ġ, ż and gh, as well as the letter ċ. The importance of the standardisation of the alphabet lies in the fact that it further encourages the Maltese to write in their native language, as opposed to simply speaking it, as has been the case for centuries on end.

18 December 1921
Maltese one of Malta’s official languages...

Letters Patent published today have declared English, Maltese and Italian to be the official languages in Malta. New orthographic regulations are being discussed and drafted.

English to be the administrative language. Maltese the general language of the Law Courts.

The 16th August of 1934 will remain an important date in the history of the Maltese language, as letters patent published today have declared the Maltese language to be one of the official languages of the islands, together with English and Italian. This is a result of the general agitation caused by the language question which has been an ongoing cause of controversy in recent years. English will be the language of administration, while both English and Maltese will be given due importance in the Civil Service. Maltese will also be the general language used at the Law Courts.

In the meantime, discussions are ongoing in regard to the orthographic rules proposed a few years ago by the Ghaqda tal-Kittieba tal-Malti. The new rules are intended to ensure a correct use of the written Maltese language whilst standardising the orthography. Sources have stated that they are hopeful of a positive outcome and the implementation of these language rules rather soon.

16 August 1934
Maltese is the national language...

The new Constitution (Article 5, Chapter 1) recognizes Maltese as the national Language. Likewise, both English and Maltese remain the official languages of these islands.

Maltese is also the official language of the Law Courts and the Church

The brand new Independence Constitution has led to both Maltese and English being declared official languages, but in contrast to the colonial Constitution of 1961, it also establishes Maltese as the national language. The Constitution also proclaims Maltese to be the language of the Law Courts. Parliament, is allowed by the Constitution to decide on the official language to be used in its proceedings and records, and hence has the opportunity to choose between the two official languages with the automatic choice being Maltese.

In the meantime, Maltese has also become the official language of the Maltese Church and it will be used during Holy Mass and all other liturgy. This was made possible through Vatican Council II, the council opened by Pope John XXIII in 1962 to discuss the relations between the Catholic Church and the realities of the modern world. Indeed, it has brought about a number of significant changes to the liturgy.

21 September 1964
Maltese becomes an official EU language...

Accession to the European Union brought the recognition of the Maltese language as one of the 24 official languages used in the European Parliament and during meetings of the European Council.

Linguistic diversity at the heart of the European Union. Interpreters needed.

The principle of linguistic diversity is enshrined in the Charter of fundamental rights and in the Treaty of the European Union. For this reason the EU recognizes no less than 24 languages (the languages of all the member states) as its official or working languages. With Malta becoming a member state, Maltese is one of these working languages. The EU, however, also distinguishes between the working languages of the European Parliament and the procedural languages (namely English, French and German) of the European Commission.

The recognition of Maltese as a working language has led to the need of a number of translators and interpreters in this language to work in Brussels. While there is an adequate supply of translators within EU institutions, there is a lack of qualified interpreters in Maltese and hence a number of vacancies in this field have been created with educational institutions encouraging students to take up this rather innovative field of study.

1 May 2004