
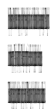


The assessment made by the Ombudsman regarding the inefficiency of ERA since the demerger is incorrect and unfounded. Since its inception less than 5 months ago, ERA embarked and successfully concluded several actions that had been pending for a long time prior to the demerger and that gave rise to new regulations and policies, including 30 sites for Natura 2000 and 22 management plans. ERA also designated 9 new marine protected areas covering 12 times the size of Malta. It also set in motion regulatory processes such as those aimed at facilitating the environmental permitting regime. In the past months, the ERA Board has also tackled and resolved a significant amount of specific environmental infringements that had been shelved for a number of years.

Despite the impression given by the Ombudsman's letter, the discrepancy between the ERA and the PA is not in their strength, or lack of it, but might lie in the fact that ERA is still in the process of investing in robust resources to execute its new functions from a Directorate to an Authority. Investment that is targeting human resources and the fundamental support services, such as IT systems.

ERA continues to take a leading role in all discussions at the PA Board and the Executive Council in line with the current legislation. 

For the past five (5) months ERA has honoured its obligations by contributing towards the planning development process by contributing in the consultation processes on development applications. This has been substantiated by the role of the representative on the PA Board. It has contributed to the decisions regarding changes in scheme alignments and has influenced proposals of scheme changes that impact ODZ. The result is that these areas now benefit from amended schemes with minimal impacts on ODZ areas. ERA's input on the Executive Council has also contributed at policy level and it is committed to continue with this contribution towards policies with greater regard to the environment.



1. Freedom of Information Act imma wkoll hemm il-Konvenzjoni ta' Aarhus biex tiggarrantixxi l-aċċess għall-informazzjoni ta' natura ambjentali. Irridu wkoll inżommu quddiem għajnejna kemm il-proċess tal-ippjanar huwa miftuħ tant li hemm aċċess għall-informazzjoni dwar il-proċess tal-iżvilupp.

Għalhekk u fl-isfond ta' dan kollu jkun għajb għall-Oppożizzjoni li ttipprova tattakka u timmina istituzzjoni li qed tikkontribwixxi pożittivament għal harsien ambjentali ta' pajjiżna. Aktar minn hekk ta' min isemi li kienet l-Oppożizzjoni stess li fil-bord tal-MEPA vvutat favur il-politika tal-*Floor to Area Ratio* kif inhi imhaddma bħalissa.

Barra minn hekk ma jinftehemx kif l-Oppożizzjoni qed tikkritika lil dan il-Gvern dwar il-politika tiegħu fuq il-*high rise* meta din kienet diġà teżisti minn zmien l-amministrazzjonijiet preċedenti u li kien bis-saħħa ta' dan il-Gvern li naqqas drastikament in-numru ta' lokalitajiet li fihom jista' jsir *high rise* filwaqt li introduċa għadd ta' salvwagrdji bħal spazji miftuħa b'xejn u għall-pubbliku. Ta' min jgħid li filwaqt li taht l-amministrazzjoni preċedenti il-*high rises* setgħu jsiru f'kull belt jew raħal f'Malta u f'Għawdex, illum huma sitta biss il-lokalitajiet li fihom huma permessibli *high rises* filwaqt li Għawdex gie eskluż għal kollox.

