

**Maltese lexical stratigraphy seen through the eyes of the
*Eurolect Observatory Multilingual Corpus***

Sandro Caruana (University of Malta)

Sergio Portelli (University of Malta)

Laura Mori (Università degli Studi Internazionali di Roma)

Data collected and analysed through the *Eurolect Observatory Multilingual Corpus*, based on the legislative varieties of eleven EU official and working languages (Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Italian, Latvian, Maltese, Polish, Spanish) has led to an investigation of variational dynamics and translation-induced patterns of these languages. The underlying assumption is that, within the sociolinguistic continua of the EU languages, it is possible to single out specific legislative varieties (Eurolects) that originate at a supra-national level.

The corpus collected for Maltese during the workings of this observatory, albeit rather limited in size, provides initial indications that one cannot conclude that Maltese Eurolect constitutes a variety in its own right: this finding, which will be illustrated during this presentation, is based on a comparison of the language variety used in EU directives and in Legal Notices. The data analysed, however, does provide evidence of some contained differences between EU directives and National Legal Maltese: while the presence of loanwords, especially from Italian, is attested in both, words of Arabic origin are sometimes preferred in National Legal Maltese over words of Italian origin in EU directives. The process we documented also reflects typical intra-linguistic variability related to lexical choice in Maltese: a specialised term is more likely to be of Italian or English, rather than Arabic, origin. Furthermore there is also evidence that in Maltese, as is typical in EU-related language, there is the use of formulaic expressions that, in some cases for Maltese, reflect the historical stratigraphy of the language, mainly by combining Romance and Semitic terms. Word formation also includes extensive use of Italian affixation, which leads to typical derivational morphology word formation. Europeisms are present in Maltese also through the use of prefixes and prefixoids.

In this presentation, reference will also be made to issues that have characterized Maltese in EU institutions since accession in 2004, and areas for future research will be identified on the basis of the experience garnered through participation in the *Eurolect Observatory Project since 2013*.