

FOCUS FRANCE

- Tourism, business
- Learning French
- Beautiful Corsica



INTERVIEW

Together we stand

The only way to cope with the many global and regional challenges we are facing is to put our acts together, says **Brigitte Curmi**, Ambassador of France to Malta.

During your term as Ambassador of France to Malta, what would you consider to have been your main achievements?

When I was assigned to Malta in the summer of 2018, I was very pleased to be posted in the heart of the Mediterranean, in this beautiful historical country bridging the two shores of our shared sea. After three years, I am happy to say that we were able to do a lot of things together in different fields.

No less than six ministers and President Emmanuel Macron visited Malta during my stay. Given the geostrategic position of Malta and our common belonging to the EU, we have indeed many reasons to consult each other regularly on different topics, such as the future of Europe, Libya, migration and European and Mediterranean policies.

I will come to economic diplomacy afterwards, but let me give some examples of what we were able to achieve together.

On migration, my country was, is and will stay by Malta's

side, to help with relocating migrants arriving in Malta and eligible for asylum. Almost 600 migrants were relocated to France during my stay. At the European level, we are working hand-in-hand with the Maltese authorities to build a system whereby migration issues can be dealt with in full dignity, responsibility and solidarity.

Apart from our regular political consultations, our two countries concluded a comprehensive diplomatic agreement in 2018. I am very pleased to have organised many events within this framework.

During my stay, seasoned experts visited Malta to share their insights on , multilateralism, religious diplomacy and migration. We also organised a passionate symposium with the Maltese Presidency on French-Maltese relationship called 'Shared Histories; New Visions,' gathering the best experts of our two countries to revisit our past in order to build a better future together. Both parties

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showed interesting archival pieces on this occasion.

We strengthened our cooperation in the field of security and justice. At the same time, we made a point of regularly reaching out to the civil society organisations working on the rule of law, human rights, migration and diversity.

I am proud to have signed an agreement with the MEDAC and to have developed numerous collaborations with the venerable University of Malta.

We were also able to strongly support the work of the Alliance Française de Malte Méditerranée, a very important body Malta can refer to and work with, since Malta became an observer to the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie in 2018.

Last but not least, I am concluding my stay in Malta with a beautiful cultural season called 'Respir(e)', celebrating the return to a more normal life after the difficult times we went through during the peak of the coronavirus pandemic.

And what has Malta – and its people – given you?

A lot! Indeed, the list is very long. I discovered a fantastic mix of history and diversity, beautiful landscapes – unfortunately endangered by overdevelopment – and fascinating people with solid traditions and, at the same time, very clever at connecting with all the parts of the world. As one of my dear Maltese friends puts it, it's a wonderful 'laboratory' to live in and you never get bored.

This past year has been a struggle on all fronts. How has the coronavirus pandemic affected French-Maltese relations?

The pandemic has even further strengthened our relations. First, Malta stood by us at the beginning of the crisis and helped repatriate a thousand French tourists stranded in Malta. We will not forget this gesture. Furthermore, we developed a very fluid relationship with the whole Maltese administration and different institutions, allowing us to reach each other even better than before the pandemic. Of course, it's al-



Brigitte Curmi, Ambassador of France to Malta. PHOTO: CHRIS SANT FOURNIER



ways better to meet in person, but the internet agility in Malta helped us a lot.

We developed very strong relations with the health sector during the pandemic, through regular and fruitful exchanges with the health superintendence and with the Mater Dei team. I can also mention an interesting session of shared experiences in the midst of the pandemic between Mater Dei doctors and those of the University Hospital Centre of Angers.

Furthermore, I think the pandemic helped us realise that Europe is more necessary than ever. As Deputy Prime M and Health Minister Chris Fearne put it in recent interviews, nothing would have been possible in terms of vaccination without the collective efforts



Europe put in research and production. This is really a breakthrough, and our solidarity is the only way to come out of this crisis.

From a business perspective, how can the two countries collaborate further, especially in areas such as alternative mobility, energy and research, where France is a leader?

First of all, let me take this occasion to thank the Maltese-French Chamber of Commerce and its president, Joseph Bugeja, for the excellent work we are doing together for the business community of our two countries.

France is a staunch supporter of the European green deal, which is one of the priorities we will focus on for our next presidency of the EU. It is with that in mind that we

recently organised two webinars on smart mobility in Malta, putting important French business clusters in direct contact with Maltese stakeholders. Our business body, Business France – based in Milan – will follow the process and help French companies match the Maltese needs in this field. My country will be more than happy to contribute to a greener Malta – and e-mobility is a priority in this context.

France will assume Council of Europe Presidency in January 2022. What will this represent, also in view of Europe's recovery from the effects of the coronavirus pandemic?

We all have had an extraordinarily difficult time with the pandemic, but we also learnt a lot of lessons for the future. On

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Europe is our best asset to gain sovereignty, notably in the economic field

the eve of the French EU presidency, we believe that the only way to cope with the many global and regional challenges we are facing is to put our acts together. In this context, Europe is our best asset to gain sovereignty, notably in the economic field, which does not mean any exclusion of other international stakeholders. On the contrary, France is a firm supporter of multilateralism and international cooperation. We also need to be more resilient, especially in the digital sector, to protect our rights and freedom, notwithstanding the defence of our values. Last but not least, we need to promote a sustainable and greener continent through progress with the green deal. I am confident that Malta and France will

remain very close partners in all those fields.

After your term as Ambassador of France to Malta, what is next for you? And what advice, on Malta, would you give to your successor?

After two years in Libya and Tunisia and three years in Malta, it's now time to return to the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs in Paris.

The best advice I can give to my successor is to enjoy Malta and the Maltese, and their capacity to be a bridge between the two shores of the Mediterranean. I can't think of a better place to grasp what is at stake in the Mediterranean, and to act together as two European countries to contribute to the stability of this tumultuous region.

INTERVIEW

‘Belonging in one common European family’

Malta and France have long-standing relations which are steeped in history, common values and neighbourhood, says Carmelo Inguanez, Ambassador of Malta to France.

You arrived in Paris after having served as Malta’s Permanent Representative to the UN in New York. What have been the highlights of your term as Ambassador of Malta to France, to date?

It is true that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we worked. Yet, it has also exposed us to new challenges and opportunities. We have worked incessantly in close collaboration with the French authorities for the repatriation of Maltese nationals from the French territory in an efficient manner. We have coordinated efforts to purchase medical equipment and protective clothing. We have established close coordination in the exchange of information.

This close coordination has also been reflected in political circles. One example to cite is the participation by our Prime Minister Robert Abela later last year to the 7th Summit of the Southern EU countries held in Ajaccio, Corsica hosted by President Emmanuel Macron.

How would you judge the current relations between Malta and France, on an economic, cultural and political level?

Malta and France have long-standing relations which are steeped in history, common values and neighbourhood. Malta and France’s common heritage as European and Mediterranean countries has led the two countries to be intrinsically connected for centuries. France was one of the first countries establishing bilateral diplomatic relations with Malta following our independence on September 21, 1964. The three levels that you mentioned are distinct yet interrelated. Today it is com-

monly accepted that cultural relations are an essential third dimension in relations between States because they accompany politics and trade. Culture has a particular role to play in overcoming conventional barriers that separate peoples by promoting understanding between them. There is no doubt that bilateral relations between the two countries are excellent in all aspects. But as in everything, there is always scope for improvement.

“Both Malta and France are on the forefront of those countries who really have European solidarity at heart”

Where can these relations improve?

Indeed, Malta and France’s historical ties and shared heritage have led both countries to seek to collaborate on matters of mutual concern. This is particularly evident in issues pertaining to the Mediterranean, where we have sought to collaborate closely on issues such as the situation in Libya; migration including the present discussions on the new European Pact on Migration and Asylum; and the Eastern Mediterranean. But not only. Beyond our region there are international multilateral issues which also need common understanding.

The challenge we face is that in the world we are living where newly emergent developments can occur with rapidity, we must be quick in

finding common solutions. I am convinced that Franco-Maltese relations will continue to improve.

Is there room for enriching trade between the two countries?

Yes. Trade statistics need to grow. We traditionally suffer from a trade deficit with France in that our imports from France by far outweigh what we export to France. Naturally we cannot turn the ball around especially when we compare the size of the two economies. France is the seventh largest economy of the world. But we can certainly improve our diversity of export products to France and perhaps improve the trade gap by a few notches. Of course, on the tourism side the indicators are to our advantage.

France and Malta traditionally share values of solidarity. How does this common vision help strengthen the EU bloc?

Both Malta and France are on the forefront of those countries who really have European solidarity at heart. This is one of the founding principles of the European Union. We have many European examples where a consensual approach based on solidarity has tackled common concerns. One example which comes immediately to mind is last month’s EU approval of the COVID-19 recovery plan of €750 billion. This landmark plan, also known as Next Generation EU, will allow the creation of a pool of common debt shared between EU member states to lower borrowing costs to rebuild a post-COVID-19 Europe. It will be a greener, more digital and more resilient Europe. The governments and national parlia-



Carmelo Inguanez, Ambassador of Malta to France.

ments of the EU27 have shown a strong sense of solidarity and European responsibility.

However, solidarity is not across the board. When it comes to the issue of relocation of migrants, I am glad to say that France has always been one of the few EU member states who supported and assisted Malta in tangible terms. We remain concerned with the continued and increased arrivals of migrants through the Central Mediterranean route. Apart from our southern European neighbours who share the same predicament as us, France has always understood our own inherent realities on the ground. We hope that our shared values of solidarity will help the EU bloc to find a comprehensive, effective and resilient approach in dealing with the proposed EU Migration Pact currently under discussion.

How has a year of COVID-19 affected bilateral relations - and in what ways will recovery be nourished?

I arrived in Paris directly from New York in December 2019. After the initial three months of work and diplomatic interaction, France was in mandatory home lockdown as from March 16, 2020 with

the first peak of COVID-19 infections registered in April-May 2020. In June and July of that same year there was some easing of restrictions but during August 2020, cases began to rise again with the month of October 2020 reaching another peak of infections. We entered a second lockdown on October 28, 2020. On April 3, 2021, France entered a third national lockdown. It is only since the last two months that we have been returning to new normal. It was therefore difficult for all of us to keep the same level of activity when we were on a ‘switch-on-and-off’ basis for such a long period. However, although this has curtailed diplomatic and social activity, some meetings continued albeit fewer in number, mostly in video conference format.

Looking forward we have become more than ever convinced that our bilateral relations are intrinsically linked to that of the European Union. The pandemic has made us more aware of our sense of belonging in one common European family. It has increased the impetus to the quest for convergence knowing that together we are stronger and can do things better.

MALTA-FRANCE

Further developing positive relationships

My vision is to build on the Chamber's success stories and position it as a valued player and influencer in the business relationships between Malta and France, says Joseph Bugeja, President of the Maltese-French Chamber of Commerce.

The 32nd anniversary of the Maltese-French Chamber of Commerce denotes a significantly different commemoration to what we have been accustomed to in the previous years. In the current challenging circumstances, it gives me more pleasure than ever, as president of the Chamber, to contribute to this year's edition of *Focus France*.

While we all acknowledge that 2020 has brought havoc in all our lives, we started this year with fresh hope and enthusiasm. We battled the COVID-19 pandemic with courage and faced the unprecedented challenges head-on. The pandemic has pushed our understanding of what binds us together as a nation and what is truly valuable for our society.

“We started this year with fresh hope”

Shaken, yet resilient, our nation has focused its efforts on our innermost values of solidarity and unity. The welfare system our fore ancestors have proudly enshrined in our society's legislation and character many years ago, came to the rescue for our bleeding nation.

Needless to say, the pandemic has severely impacted our accustomed way of living. It also negatively affected the way we do business locally and most importantly our members' ability or rather inability to seek business development opportunities in foreign markets. Our Chamber's normal operations and activities were also heavily impacted. We tried to assist, facilitate and when necessary, tried to contribute to ensure that our close community remained strong and prepared to rebound to this systemic shock. We also continued to be a dynamic and relevant Chamber that meets the needs of our members and strived to lead on key issues.

Although, the circumstances laid bare our inability to con-



nect with each other, a virtue which we have always taken for granted and the epitome of our Chamber's existence, we maintained focus and continued to promote, facilitate commerce and networking between the Maltese and French business communities within the prevailing limitations.

We tried to adapt and partially make up for the vacuum created by the circumstances by utilising technology. However, socialising online is no substitute for socialising in person but merely a valuable complimentary tool to our

natural way of interacting. In fact, our webinars provided an important loop in the relationship chain between our members. These webinars gave a very interesting insight on topics of interest for both French and Maltese businesses. Particularly, such interactions created a promotional platform for operators in the fields of electromobility, digital communication, collaborative software, and digital mobility to establish preliminary contacts and promote their solutions to the Maltese business community.

These webinars also enabled clusters and associations working in these areas to interlink with the Maltese community and exchange their best practises and experiences. Such interaction will strengthen and support the Maltese business community's transition towards greener transportation systems and electro-mobility.

We also kept in contact with our members through our regular publication and distribution of our newsletters. When the circumstances permitted, our committee managed to organise

several meetings that enabled the proper functioning and administration of our Chamber.

Our close relationship with the Ambassador of France in Malta and Business France was instrumental in making such meetings a success. Working together as team with French Embassy's officers, our Chamber's staff and Council members strived to create the ideal working environment for business from both countries to flourish. We want to enable them to maximise on bilateral trade opportunities between our two countries. We also look forward to the opening of new opportunities and continue to make our Chamber a force in the Franco-Maltese business landscape.

I look forward to the rest of year with immense optimism. My vision is to build on the Chamber's success stories and position the Chamber as a valued player and influencer in the business relationships between Malta and France. I want to ensure we understand the needs and interests of our members and be dynamic and agile in anticipation of the changing business environment. France and French companies play a big role in our Maltese life, and we aim to replicate this for the Maltese companies that have interests in investing in France.

Our unique position in Malta is to further develop existing positive relationships with our government, influencers as well as relevant stakeholders and use such strengths to support further growth. I would like, with the help of the excellent team at our Chamber, to continue to make this access easy and to facilitate our members to business success. As we continue to grow as a Chamber, I would wish for us at the Chamber to continue to add more members and sponsors and appreciate each and everyone's contribution as we continue to bring relevant topics, debates and matters to the fore.

TRAVEL

Mutual attraction

Flying time from French airports to Malta is less than three hours, and so the archipelago's location is a major plus point for French tourists wanting to go to a cultural, leisure destination in the heart of the Mediterranean, says Dominic Micallef, Director France, Malta Tourism Authority.

What level of travel exchanges – for both business and pleasure – do Malta and France enjoy?

2019 was a record year for Maltese tourism and for the French market. For the first time ever, the French market was the third travel market for Malta after the United Kingdom and Italy. In 2019 Malta welcomed 2,753,239 tourists. Of these, 8.7 per cent or 239,140 were French tourists, an increase of 25,841 tourists or +12.1 per cent when compared to 2018. In the same year French tourists booked a total of 1,768,292 overnight stays (+6.2 per cent when compared to 2018) while total expenditure amounted to €192,285,000 (€804 per capita) (+11.6 per cent when compared to 2018).

This is a remarkable achievement, considering that France is the first tourist destination in the world and that it is a highly diverse destination offering leisure holidays on the Mediterranean, Atlantic and Caribbean coasts, as well as mountain and cultural attractions. In 2019, 189,086 business tourists visited Malta. French business tourists represented 5.6 per cent of the total and these were mainly conference and incentive visitors.

The number of Maltese travelling to France in 2019 amounted to 28,061. France was the fifth most popular travel destination for the Maltese following Italy, UK, Spain and Germany. The big attractions in France to the Maltese are Paris and Disneyland as well as Bordeaux and its wine-growing regions.

Have such exchanges increased in recent years?

In five years between 2014 and 2019 the number of French tourists visiting Malta increased from 143,053 in 2014 to 239,140 in 2019 (+96,087 or +67 per cent). This was mainly due to increased flight frequencies from Paris (Charles de Gaulle, Orly and Beauvais), Lyon, Marseille, Nantes,

Toulouse, Bordeaux and Nice. Malta was easily accessible by direct flights from practically every region of France. Air Malta, Transavia, Ryanair and Volotea operated direct flights from French airports to Malta.

In five years, the number of Maltese visiting France increased from 21,853 in 2014 to 28,061 in 2019 (+6,208 or +28 per cent).

How has the coronavirus pandemic affected travel between the two countries?

In 2020, out of a total 658,567 tourists who visited Malta, the number of French tourists amounted to 70,875, a decrease of 168,265 or -70.4 per cent when compared to 2019. The year had started very well and in fact during the first two months of 2020 the French market registered an increase of +27 per cent when compared to the first two months of 2019. During the four summer months of July, August, September and October 2020, the French market performed relatively well – Malta welcomed a total of 38,671 French tourists but of course one can't compare these numbers with what had been achieved during the four summer months of 2019 when Malta welcomed 107,553 French tourists, a decrease of 68,882 or -64 per cent.

In 2020 the number of Maltese visiting France amounted to 7,680, a decrease of 20,380 or -73 per cent when compared to 2019.

What plans do you have to increase travel between the two countries to pre-pandemic levels?

In June 2021 MTA France launched an aggressive television and digital campaign, in France. A 12-second TV spot is currently being screened on the major French TV stations, such as TF1, France 2, France 3, France 5, TMC and M6. Digital campaigns are currently being shown on many travel media – such as Easyvoyage and L'Officiel des Vacances – but also on an array of premium news,

lifestyle and discovery online media, such as LeFigaro.fr/Voyages, PetitFuté.com, Geo.fr, LeMonde.fr, Voici.fr, Gala.fr, among many others.

“These campaigns are having the desired results as most flights arriving in Malta from French airports have an excellent load factor”

These campaigns are having the desired results as most flights arriving in Malta from French airports have an excellent load factor. Air Malta recently added more flights to its summer schedule from Paris Charles de Gaulle and Paris Orly while Air France, for the first time, will be operating a seasonal summer schedule from Paris Charles de Gaulle. The Maltese government's schemes, especially those targeting tour operators, diving, English language courses and senior citizens, to help the recovery of tourism, have been very well received on the French market. Hopefully by 2022 or 2023 the performance of the French market will return to pre-pandemic levels.

What is the role of the MTA office in France?

The MTA office in France promotes the attractions of Malta and Gozo, the main travel segments such as cultural tourism, conference and incentive travel, English language courses, diving, sports tourism and LGBT travel, as well as the main cultural and sports events taking place on the Maltese islands on the French market. MTA France carries out national advertising campaigns as well as targeted regional campaigns to boost departures from regional airports through television, digital, outdoor and print advertising. The



Dominic Micallef, Director France, Malta Tourism Authority.

MTA office in Paris supports French tour operators and Travel agency networks through joint marketing campaigns which are paid for on a 50/50 basis. In this way the available budget is doubled.

MTA France carries out an extensive press and PR strategy. Several French journalists from leading TV stations, magazines and newspapers are invited to the Maltese islands. Moreover, MTA France takes care of the visitmalta social media platforms in French. MTA France participates in professional tourism fairs such as IFTM Top Résa in Paris and Ditex in Marseille.

What attractions does Malta hold for the French traveller?

Flying time from French airports to Malta is less than three hours, and so the archipelago's location is a major plus point for French tourists wanting to go to a cultural-cum-leisure destination in the heart of the Mediterranean. Malta's rich heritage, especially the prehistoric temples and the cities of Valletta, Mdina and Vittoriosa, are great attractions. The fact that the French Knights of Malta left such an impressive heritage appeals to French discerning tourists. Many French cultural tourists are also attracted by Malta's religious heritage, so tours are organ-

ised with specific themes such as 'On the footsteps of St Paul'.

The authenticity of Gozo, as well as typical villages like Marsaxlokk is what attracts French tourists to the islands. Mediterranean cuisine heritage, with an ever-growing selection of quality wines produced in Malta and a vibrant restaurant scene boasting Michelin star restaurants are greatly appreciated. Leisure activities linked to the sea, especially diving holidays, are also a great attraction. Malta and Gozo are also seen as an ideal place to practise English in the sun. The islands are also considered to be an ideal conference and incentive destination due to excellent tourism infrastructure.

Beyond the established itineraries such as Paris, where in France should Maltese travellers go?

Besides Paris and Disneyland, France offers great diversity. I would recommend the French cities of Versailles, Fontainebleau, Marseille, Aix-en-Provence, Avignon, Montpellier, Nîmes, Arles, Lyon, Dijon, Nantes, Rennes, Toulouse and Bordeaux. The French Alps, the Pyrenees, the castles of the Loire, Mont Saint Michel, the wine routes in Alsace and Burgundy as well as France's Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts and the island of Corsica are all unique attractions.

EVENTS/NEWS

To breathe again

Women in Cinema
Stronger together

The Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs, the Embassy of France and the Alliance Française will host an engaging conversation with acclaimed film director **Caroline Vignal** (eight nominations for her film *Antoinette dans les Cévennes* at the Césars 2021), director and screen writer **Rebecca Cremona** (*Semhar*, the first Maltese film to be submitted at the Academy Awards for Best Foreign Language Film), director **Angelique Muller** (*Johnny-Johnny* which premiered on ARTE court-circuit in March 2021) and producer **Rebecca Anastasi** (*Luzzu*, directed by Alex Camilleri, which premiered in competition at the Sundance Film Festival 2021). Moderated by actress **Coryse Borg** (*Gladiator*, *Helen of Troy*, *Revelation*).

Wednesday, June 30 | 6:00 PM
Spazju Kreattiv, St. James Cavalier, Valletta

Rebecca Anastasi, Coryse Borg, Rebecca Cremona, Angelique Muller, Caroline Vignal

SPAZJU KREATTIV

Respir(e)! is a month-long Franco-Maltese festival celebrating arts, culture and sports.

After several months of pandemic and crisis, cultural life is slowly but surely resuming its course.

Being held from June 15 till July 15, the Franco-Maltese cultural season entitled *Respire!* is inspired by this desire of freedom, creation and artistic stimulation.

This month-long festival will be marked by about 20 events in Malta and Gozo celebrating arts, culture and sports.

Respire! is a festival jointly organised by the Embassy of France in Malta and the Alliance Française de Malte-Méditerranée, with the active support of a dozen French and Maltese partners across various industries such as entertainment venues, stationery shops, sportswear, restaurants, accommodation and sport races.

The festival mostly relies on the financial support of generous patrons and French companies based in Malta who were able to mobilise very quickly to make the event possible.

The first event was a special public screening for the Euro soccer game between France and Germany at the Surfside in Sliema, on June 15. It gathered more than 80 French and Maltese supporters who were delighted to cheer on the French team and participate in numerous games and contests, while respecting health measures.

Respire! was launched by the Ambassador of France in Malta H.E. Brigitte Curmi on Monday, June 21, on the occasion of la Fête de la Musique. Singer and songwriter Charles-Baptiste performed both at the French residency



Respire!
France & Malte

du 15 juin au 15 juillet 2021

AMBASSADE DE FRANCE À MALTE

Alliance Française Malte-Méditerranée

En collaboration avec :

RCI INSURANCE, digiprint, Bureau Vallée, Le Grenier à Pain, INTER SPORT, SPAZJU KREATTIV, SR

Nous remercions très chaleureusement pour leur soutien à ce festival de nos partenaires : les Jardins de l'Arrière, Chiosis, Grandis, Lorraine, M&M, ainsi que les compagnies ST Microelectronics et RCI Insurance

Respire!
France & Malte



FRONT
XLENDI . GOZO . MALTA

CHARLES-BAPTISTE
Tuesday 22nd June
From 8pm

and at the Storeroom in Ta' Xbiex. Another concert was held at the Front Bar (Xlendi Bay) in Gozo.

Throughout the summer season, artistic events – including French film screenings at Spazju Kreattiv Cinema and live concerts – will be mixed with sporting events such as the Bailli de Suffren race between Saint-

Tropez and Birgu, but also with conferences and debates, including on the Mediterranean shores and freedom of expression.

For more information visit the social media of the French Embassy in Malta and the Alliance Française de Malte-Méditerranée, <https://mt.ambafrance.org/> and <https://alliancefrmalta.com/>.

World leader in shipping, logistics

Led by Rodolphe Saadé, the CMA CGM Group is a world leader in shipping and logistics. Its 566 vessels serve more than 420 ports around the world, on all five continents. In 2020, CMA CGM transported nearly 21 million TEU (twenty-foot equivalent units) containers.

With CEVA Logistics, a world leader in logistics services, CMA CGM handles 400,000 tons of airfreight and 2.8 million tons of inland freight every year. In 2021, the CMA CGM Group announced a new strategic development in logistics with the establishment of CMA CGM AIR CARGO, a new air freight divi-

sion, and the purchase of four freighter aircraft.

CMA CGM is constantly innovating to offer customers new maritime, inland and logistics solutions.

Present on every continent and in 160 countries through its network of more than 400 offices and 750 warehouses, the

Group employs more than 110,000 people worldwide, of which 2,400 are in Marseille where its head office is located.

CMA CGM has been operating in Malta for nearly 25 years. In 1997, CMA CGM transferred its transshipment operations in the Mediterranean to Malta. The CMA

CGM Transshipment office started its activity in Malta in 1998 and is a branch 100% owned by CMA CGM, and now counts 16 staff members. CMA CGM Malta Agency, a joint venture company, employs 26 staff members, bring the total complement in Malta to 42 members of staff.

LANGUAGE

Not just a language

Our aim is promoting the French language, culture and values, says Isabelle Colin, director of the Alliance Française de Malte-Méditerranée.

Language is not simply a means of communication. Language defines and signifies worlds, enriches traditions, inspires culture. It's a ticket to travel. It's the beginning of every story – and lives on beyond the end.

This is why learning a language is not just about proficiency or grammatical discipline – rather, it's about becoming familiar with the source, its culture and its people.

"The Alliance Française de Malte-Méditerranée has been in Malta for 63 years, forming part of a network of over 800 Alliances Françaises in more than 130 countries. Our main aim is promoting the French language, culture and values," says Isabelle Colin, who took over the direction of the Alliance Française Malte-Méditerranée in September, 2019, after several years on the board of directors as vice president.

A teacher by profession, Isabelle's commitment is towards the proper functioning of the Alliance Française – in order to enrich the proficiency of the language in Malta.

The Alliance Française is well positioned to do that – as its teachers are extremely qualified, and it is the only accredited centre in Malta for the DELF and DALF examinations, the TEF and other certificates and diplomas from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Paris and La Sorbonne Nouvelle.

"We have about 300 to 350 students every year – of whom some 70 per cent are Maltese – from young students to adults who want to learn or improve their French for professional reasons. And we enjoy significant success – with an almost 100 per cent success rate in our DELF examinations."

Isabelle adds that apart from teaching students, an important mission of the Alliance Française is training its teachers.

"We provide them with a variety of resources that can be used for their courses, and we also organise training sessions. We recently hosted a series of

webinars in collaboration with the Association des Professeurs de Français à Malte, the Department of Languages and Humanities in Education of the University of Malta, and the Secretariat for Catholic Education. These webinars were animated by Adrien Payet, an expert in training of French teachers around the world. The five webinars focused on online teaching methods, and how to make them interactive."

French may be spoken by 270 million people worldwide – and is the second most widely spoken mother tongue in the European Union. However, locally, the Italian language may have an edge, due to the proximity of Italy as well as the easier accessibility of Italian popular culture.

"An almost 100 per cent success rate in our DELF examinations"

"However, in recent years, access to French culture has been improving," says Isabelle. "The popularity of the *Lupin* series on Netflix attests to that.

"Like travel, culture is essential in helping people discover France, its beautiful and musical language, and culture. This is why the Alliance Française is heavily involved in organising cultural events," Colin says.

"Every year, we are involved in Francophonie Week, the Fête de la Musique, the wine-tasting celebration Beaujolais Nouveau and the Book Fair, while throughout the year, we organise the French Film Days in collaboration with Spazju Kreattiv Cinema and collaborate with Žigužajg and the European Art Cinema Day.

"This summer, we also contributed to the Festival Respir(e)! in collaboration with the French Embassy and, together with a number of European embassies, various cultural institutes in Malta, and



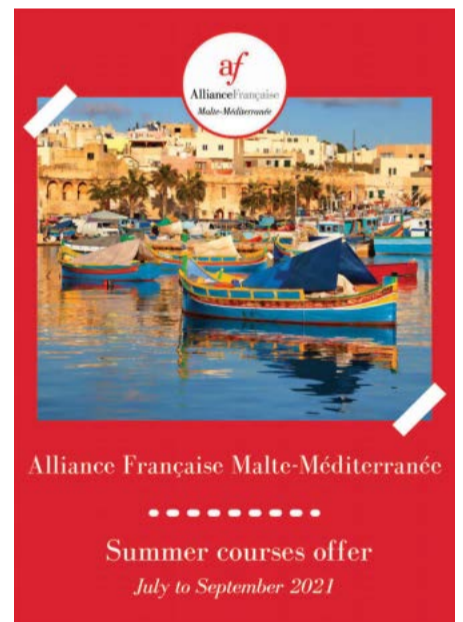
Arts Council Malta, we launched the EUNIC Malta Cluster. The first event to be organised by the cluster will be a European film festival which will culminate with the European Art House Cinema Day in November.

"The Alliance Française also invites various high-profile artists – and later this year, we will have the pleasure of hosting French director Patrice Leconte."

The coronavirus pandemic has forced the Alliance Française to make some changes. During lockdown, cultural events were cancelled and all classes were held virtually – now these are being held online for adults, and according to a hybrid model for younger students.

"We have to adapt," Colin says. "But our aim remains the same – to promote the French language, culture and values."

For more details and information visit <https://alliancefrmalta.com/>.



CULTURE

Fabulous fabulist

France celebrates the 400th anniversary of the birth of Jean de la Fontaine.

This year marks the 400th anniversary of the birth of Jean de la Fontaine, whose fables are nowadays still considered as one of the greatest masterpieces of French literature.

Born on July 8, 1621, at Château-Thierry in France, de la Fontaine was educated at the grammar school of Château-Thierry, before entering at the Oratory and the seminary of Saint-Magloire. After that he studied law and, when past 30, his literary career began. His first serious work was a translation of the *Eunuchus* of Terence. At this time the patron of French writing was the Superintendent Fouquet, to whom La Fontaine was introduced by Jacques Janart, a connection of his wife's. La Fontaine soon received a pension of 1,000 livres, on the terms of a copy of verses for each quarter receipt. He also began a medley of prose and poetry, entitled *Le Songe de Vaux*.

It was about this time that the quartet of the Rue du Vieux Colombier was formed, consisting of La Fontaine, Racine, Boileau and Molière. Chapelain was also a kind of outsider in the coterie.

In 1664 de la Fontaine was regularly commissioned and sworn in as gentleman to the duchess dowager of Orléans, and was installed in the Luxembourg. In the same year the second book of the *Contes* was published, and in 1668 the first six books of the *Fables*, with more of both kinds in 1671.

In 1682 he was, at more than 60 years of age, recognised as one of the foremost men of letters of France. Madame de Sévigné, one of the foremost literary critics of the time, had spoken of his second collection of *Fables* published in the winter of 1678 as divine.

In 1692, the writer had published a revised edition of the *Contes*, despite having suffered a severe illness. In that same year, La Fontaine converted to Christianity. A young priest, M. Poucet, tried to persuade him about the impropriety of the *Contes* and it is said that the destruction of a new play was demanded and submitted to as a proof of repentance. De la Fontaine received the *viaticum*, and the following years continued to write poems and fables. He died on April 13, 1695 in



Detail of the monument to fabulist Jean de la Fontaine at the Jardin du Ranelagh, Paris, France. PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Paris, at the age of 73. When the Père Lachaise Cemetery opened in Paris, De la Fontaine's remains were moved there.

The works of De la Fontaine fall into three traditional divisions: the *Fables*, the *Tales* and miscellaneous works. He is best known for the *Fables*, in which a tradition of fable collecting in French verse reaching back to the Middle Ages was brought to a peak. Although these earlier works refer to Aesop in their title, they collected many fables from more recent sources such as Marie de France's *Ysopet* and Gilles Corrozet's *Les Fables du très ancien Esope, mises en rithme françoise*.

The publication of the 12 books of De la Fontaine's *Fables* extended from 1668 to 1694. The stories in the first six of

these derive for the most part from Aesop and Horace and are told in free verse. Those in the later editions are often taken from more recent sources or from translations of Eastern stories and are told at greater length. The deceptively simple verses are easily memorised, yet display deep insights into human nature. Many of the lines have entered the French language as standard phrases, often proverbial.

To celebrate the 400th anniversary of the birth of de la Fontaine, various events and initiatives are being organised in France, including the issuance of commemorative coins, exhibitions, including one at the Château de Vascoeuil and the ongoing restoration of his home in Château-Thierry.

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EVENTS



The

20th edition of the Trophée Bailli de Suffren 2021 arrived in Malta on July 10.



gentlemen's race

The Bailli de Suffren, a 580-nautical mile race dubbed 'the gentlemen's race', follows in the footsteps of Pierre André de Suffren of Saint-Tropez, Bailli and Grand Cross of the Order of St John of Jerusalem and Vice-Admiral of the French Navy under Louis XVI.

Lega Navale Italiano, AIVE, RANC, AEBEC, FFV, FIV, RFEV, UNCL.

Unique in its historical significance, naval etiquette and Corinthian spirit, the Trophée Bailli de Suffren has for the past two decades brought

together more than 108 classic yachts, in a race from St Tropez to Malta. Acknowledged as being the embodiment of classic yachting, the race combines a passion for sailing, history and some of the most beautiful locations

in the Mediterranean, including the Maltese islands.

Following the official starting ceremony at the memorial of Pierre André de Suffren, this year's fleet left the old port of St Tropez on June 26. The fleet will stop over in

some of the most attractive ports in the Mediterranean, including Bonifacio, Trapani and Mgarr, before completing the course at the Royal Malta Yacht Club.

For more news and updates visit www.tropheebaillidesuffren.com.

“Unique in its historical significance, naval etiquette and Corinthian spirit”

The 20th edition of the race, being held from June 26 till July 10, is being organised by the Société Nautique de Saint-Tropez, the Yacht Club de Bonifacio, the Lega Navale Italiano, the Royal Malta Yacht Club and coordinated by the Marenstrum Racing Club, member of AFYT, and placed under the sponsorship of the Yacht Club de France, CIM,



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EU

Recovery, power, belonging

What will be the priorities for the French Presidency of the Council of the EU?

France is set to take over the rotating EU Council Presidency in the first half of 2022. Based on a common programme developed together with Sweden and the Czech Republic, France will have the responsibility to push the EU's strategic agenda. This will be a crucial presidency as during this period – January to June 2022 – Europe will be aiming to bounce back from the ravages of the coronavirus pandemic and chart a course for sustainable recovery.

Rotating presidency

The EU Council Presidency rotates among EU member states every six months – with the current trio made up of the presidencies of Germany, Portugal and Slovenia. During this six-month period, the presidency chairs meetings at every level in the Council, helping ensure the continuity of the EU's work in the Council.

Member states holding the presidency work together closely in groups of three – a system introduced by the Lisbon Treaty in 2009. The trio sets long-term goals and prepares a common agenda determining the topics and major issues that will be addressed by the Council over an 18-month period. On this basis, each of the three countries prepares its own detailed six-month programme.

The presidency has two main tasks. The first is chairing meetings of the different Council configurations (with the exception of the Foreign Affairs Council) and the Council's preparatory bodies, which include permanent committees. The second task is representing the Council in relations with the other EU in-

stitutions, particularly with the Commission and the European Parliament.

Priorities

While most of the French presidency's priorities are yet to be defined, these will reflect the French government's motto: 'Recovery, power, belonging.' This explains why many observers are expecting priorities to include a revision of budgetary rules – which has assumed further importance due to the COVID-19 crisis – climate issues, social rights and Europe's digital transition. Priorities will also be inspired by major legislative texts that should arrive by 2022, including the Digital Markets Act, the Digital Services Act and the Green Deal.

“Explains why many observers expect priorities to include a revision of budgetary rules”

Launch of two committees

Last March, France's European Affairs Minister Clément Beaune launched two committees: a monitoring committee and a reflection committee. “In order to lead this presidency well, it is essential to prepare for it now and to set up a precise and rigorous organisation,” he said. The committees bring together French MPs, senators and MEPs, to ensure all national representatives have their say.



French President Emmanuel Macron. PHOTO: AFP

Bringing Europe to life everywhere in France

Chair of the European Affairs Committee at the National Assembly Sabine Thillaye has said that, “We need to make much more of a link between the national, European and local levels.” Within this same context, a cultural committee is expected to be set up, with the responsibility of encouraging theatrical and audiovisual productions that

encourage a debate on bringing Europe to life everywhere in France.

French language

During France's presidency, it is expected that French will be the main working language. Proposed plans see French being used during meetings and in documents. French is already one of the widest-used languages at EU levels – with recent statistics showing that some 80 per cent of Commission officials

list French as their first, second or third language.

EU Presidency and French general elections

The French EU Presidency will coincide with French general elections, set for mid-April 2022 – this should help put European issues at the forefront. This also affects President Emmanuel Macron's future – if he is re-elected in 2022, he is set to be Europe's pre-eminent leader for several years.

MOBILITY

Leading the charge

France lights a spark in e-mobility.

France has one of the largest electric vehicle markets in Europe. Last year, it hit 185,500 plug-in sales, up from 61,500 in 2019 – this is an especially good result, considering the disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic, and also taking into account that total passenger car sales were down 25.5 per cent from 2.2 million in 2019.

This year, France has continued to perform well in the electric vehicle market. In the first quarter of this year, some 30,500 electric vehicles were sold in France – in April, another 21,690 new electric vehicles were registered, a staggering 12 times more than April 2020. This has increased the market share of passenger plug-ins to about 14.8 per cent of the car market. Other forms of alternative mobility are performing well – with passenger BEVs accounting for 6.8 per cent market share, light commercial BEVs up by 767 per cent.

But what is pushing this growth?

Incentives

France offers very generous incentives to people willing to switch to electric and rechargeable hybrid vehicles.

As part of its COVID-19 recovery plan, the French government has increased the environmental



bonus and introduced a new conversion bonus.

“Reforming renewable energy law”

The environmental bonus is a subsidy designed to encourage people to buy vehicles with low emissions – thus accelerat-

ing the conversion of the car population to electric, hydrogen-powered and rechargeable, with the ultimate aim of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

The French government has also recently introduced two new environmental incentives: a bonus of €1,000 for the purchase or long-term lease of a used electric vehicle and a

bonus for municipalities in overseas territories.

With regards to the conversion bonus, eligibility criteria have been changed. People with an income of less than €6,300 per person, or €13,489 for those who travel more than 12,000 kilometres per year to get to and from work, or have a commute of more than 30 kilometres, as well as buyers of electric utility vehicles weighing less than 3.5 tons, are eligible for a bonus of up to €5,000 when purchasing an electric or rechargeable hybrid vehicle. For those whose income exceeds these thresholds, the maximum bonus is €2,500.

When purchasing a new or second-hand electric or rechargeable hybrid car, buyers may qualify for an additional bonus of €2,000 if they live or work in a low emission zone.

Charging points

Last year, French President Emmanuel Macron committed to deploy 100,000 charging points throughout France by the end of 2021 – in order to accelerate the transition to cleaner transport. This commitment had already been there – yet the objective of 100,000 charging points had originally been set for 2022.

During the launch, President Macron said: “We need a moti-

national goal: make France Europe’s top producer of clean vehicles by bringing output to more than one million electric and hybrid cars per year over the next five years.”

This commitment also supports reforming the renewable energy law to make it more attractive for operators to sell clean electricity. For private charging there is also an ongoing effort to make it easier for people to install plugs at home and in large apartment buildings.

Homegrown talent

Through innovation, technology and affordability, Citroën and Peugeot regularly top the list of the most popular electric vehicles in France – in April and May, the Peugeot e-208 was the most in-demand electric vehicle. Renault also build popular models – and last month, Renault announced it would be creating an independent umbrella company, called Renault ElectriCity for electric car production. Renault ElectriCity will be measured against a target of 400,000 vehicles per year from 2025.

The new umbrella company is to become “the largest and most competitive production centre for electric vehicles in Europe,” according to the French carmaker.



SPORT

Ready, get set...

Paris 2024 Summer Olympics is ready to take centre stage.

Last month, the International Olympic Committee (IOC)'s Coordination Commission for the Olympic Games Paris 2024 met, with the local Organising Committee delivering a clear message – Paris 2024 is ready to take centre stage.

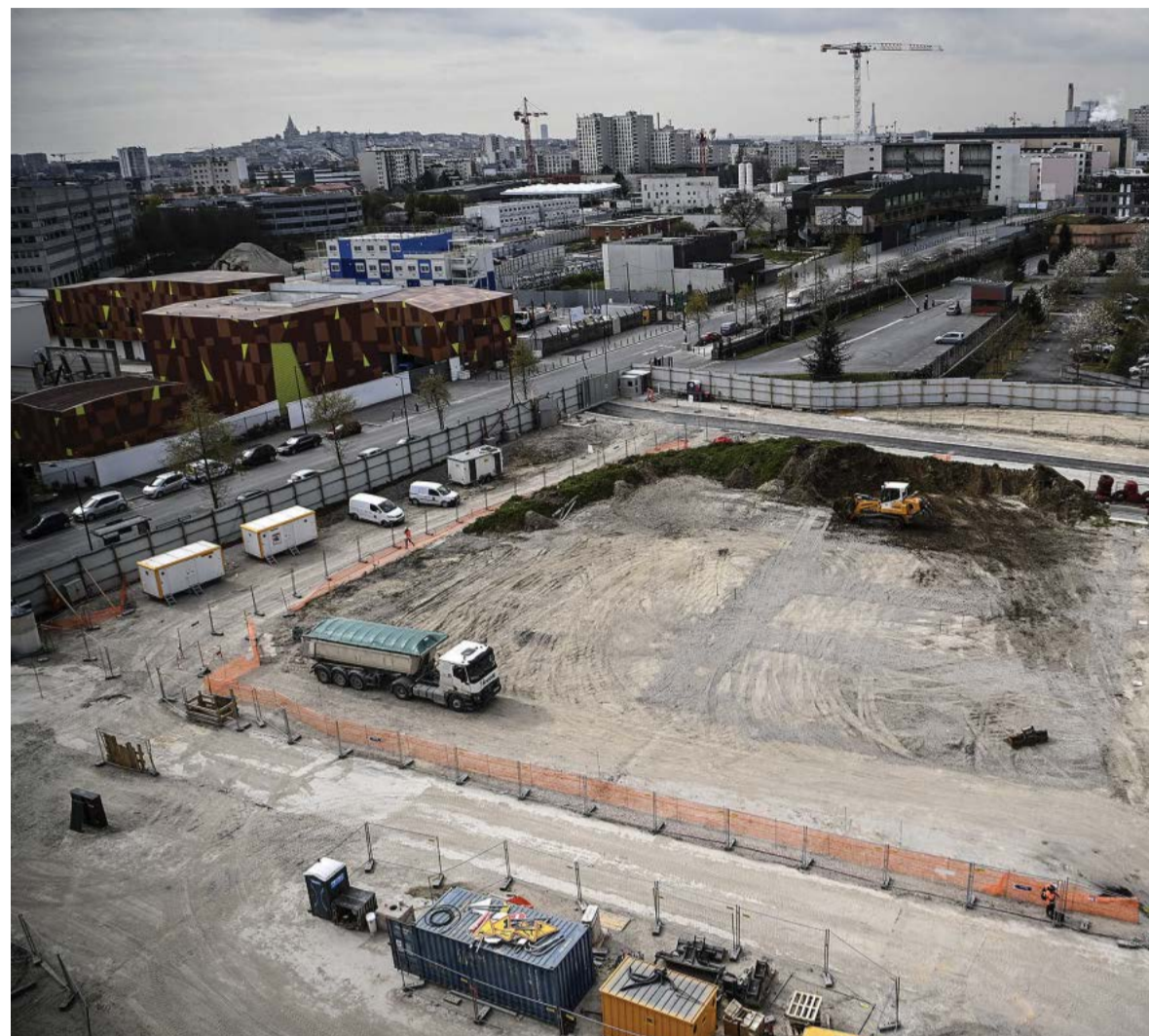
Speaking after these meetings, the IOC's Coordination Commission Chair, Pierre-Olivier Beckers-Vieujant, said: "As the Tokyo 2020 Games approach, it's clear Paris 2024 is ready and excited to take on the great responsibility of receiving the Olympic flag from Tokyo 2020. Its anticipation is underlined by the great progress being made, despite an incredibly challenging period for society."

He continued: "The Organising Committee's innovation, flexibility and creativity continues to bring the recommendations outlined in Olympic Agenda 2020+5 and the New Norm to life, setting a precedent for a new era of Games, fit for a post-coronavirus world. This was highlighted again today through its commitment to hosting the first climate-positive Games, as well as the success of recent engagement activations, such

as the Olympic and Paralympic Week programme."

Tony Estanguet, president of the Paris 2024 Organising Committee, added: "Despite the unprecedented global context, we are pursuing our ambition together with the IOC and International Paralympic Committee (IPC), and we are ready to take the baton at the end of the Tokyo 2020 Games. All the event planning indicators are green. We will now be able to roll out our programmes to engage with and make all French people proud, in particular the Paris 2024 Club, the Terre de Jeux 2024 label and the Cultural Olympiad, which will be launched in the autumn. The coming months will also see us finalise the concepts for our Ceremonies, Torch Relay and Volunteer programmes."

Paris 2024 used the June meeting to provide an update on its plans to organise the world's first Olympic and Paralympic Games that contribute positively to the climate. With aims to reduce its CO2 emissions in line with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the team in Paris explained how they would reduce



This picture taken on April 8, 2021, shows an overview of the construction site of the Paris 2024 Olympic Paris suburb. PHOTO: AFP. Top right: This handout image released by the Metropole du Grand Paris on... impression of an area of The Aquatic Centre ahead of the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris. PHOTO: METRO...

the Games' carbon emissions by 50 per cent compared to previous editions, offset more than their residual emissions, and use their influence to develop long-term carbon compensation projects.

The Organising Committee explained that a major step towards reaching these goals has been the optimisation of its Games delivery approach, making use of existing and temporary facilities, many of which

utilise iconic locations across the city and beyond.

One of these, the Grand Palais Éphémère, which will be called Arena Champs de Mars during the Games, was officially opened on June 12. This venue will host judo and wrestling during the Olympic Games, in addition to para-judo and wheelchair rugby during the Paralympic Games. Elsewhere, work on the Olympic and Paralympic Village and the Aquatics Centre continues to progress.

"Paris 2024 is ready and excited to take on the great responsibility of receiving the Olympic flag from Tokyo"

A site that is already fully operational is Paris 2024's new, highly sustainable headquarters – Pulse – situated in the Seine Saint Denis district. Open since January to the Organising Committee's staff, now approaching 500 personnel, it serves as the basis for operations.

As the team continues to grow ahead of the Games, the Coordi-

nation Commission used today's meetings to praise Paris 2024 for maintaining parity throughout its organisation. With the organisation equally balanced in terms of male and female employees, including amongst the senior leadership, the structure aligns with the fact that the Olympic Games in 2024 will be the first to be completely gender balanced from a sports perspective.

Recent engagement strategies were another important topic discussed. One of the highlights was February's Olympic and Paralympic Week programme, which reached more than half a million schoolchildren in a campaign aimed at introducing 30 minutes of daily physical activity into French schools. Other flagship initiatives showcased included Club Paris 2024, which now has over 100,000 members, and Terre de Jeux 2024, which incorporates over 1,900 community projects within reach of more than 26 million people across the country.

While it is intended these projects will leave a lasting legacy, Paris 2024 detailed the progress being made in respect of its endowment fund. During the first phase of applications, 55 successful projects were funded. In addition, more than 1,000 projects were registered for the Impact 2024 pro-



Presentation of the Paris 2024 logo. PHOTO: AFP



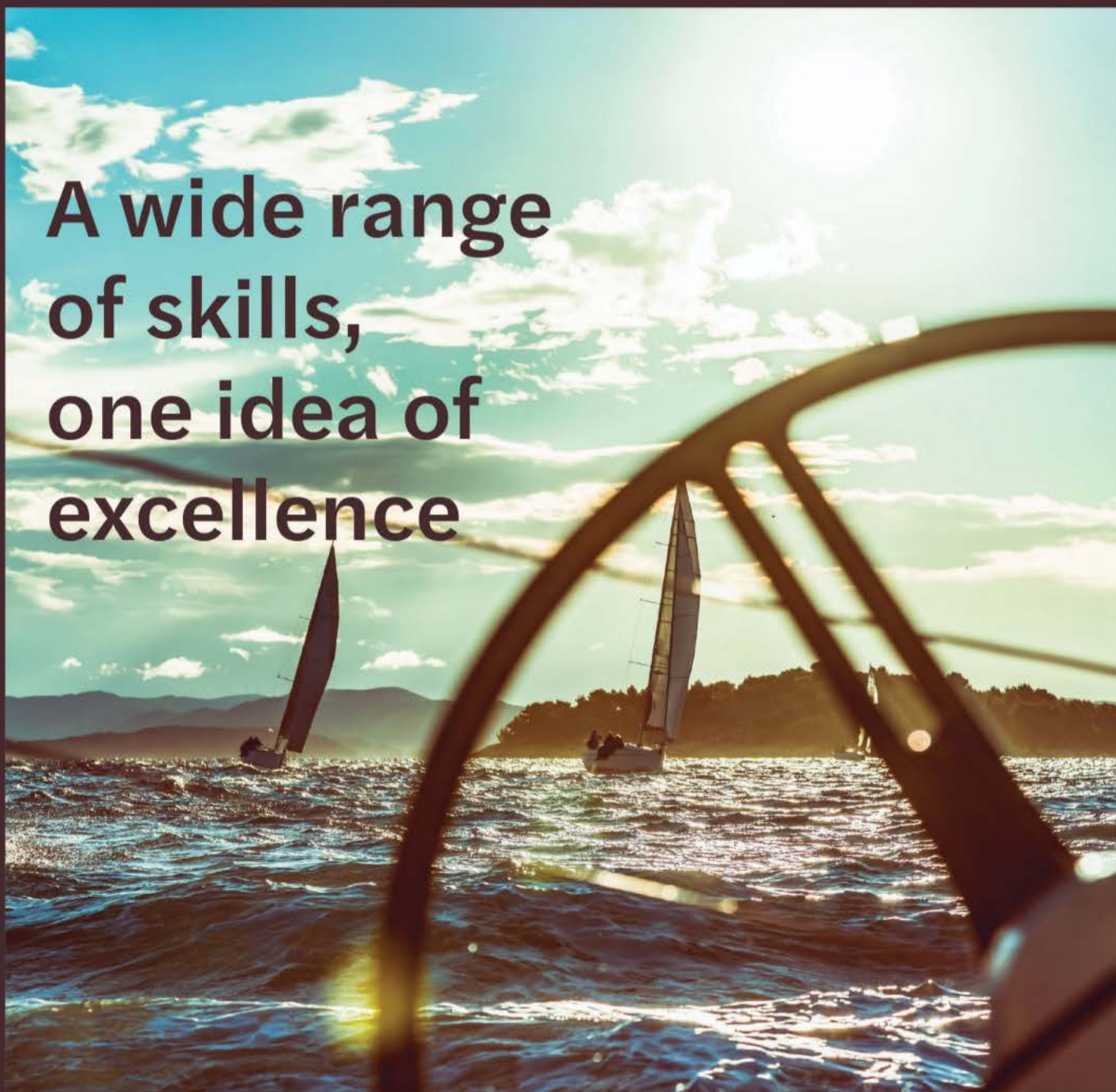
...ic village in Saint-Denis, a northern
April 29, 2020, shows an artistic
POLE DU GRAND PARIS/AFP



President of the Paris Organising
Committee of the 2024 Olympic
and Paralympic Games Tony
Estanguet. PHOTO: AFP

gramme, with the second phase
of applications now open – of-
fering over EUR 5 million of
funding for projects that use
sport as a tool for social impact.

The progress being made by
Paris 2024's commercial team
was also shared. With eight
partnerships agreed to date and
four more expected to be fi-
nalised shortly, the Coordina-
tion Commission heard that
they are expected to achieve
two-thirds of their revenue tar-
get by the end of 2021.



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TRAVEL



An aerial view of Lavezzi Islands.



Island of beauty

Corsica conquers all with its wild beauty, spectacular beaches and stunning seascapes.

Savage cliffs, wild backdrops, eerie forests, historic cities, spectacular beaches and a sea that gradients all the blues under the sun – Corsica has it all and lives up to its name as ‘Island of beauty’. Wash down the sights with a lunch of baked mussels and langoustines, and a chilled white, and wonder just how spectacular this island is – and why you didn’t visit before.

Beauty and the beaches

For clear water and sugar-white sand, head to Lozari beach, east of L’Ile Rousse. The beach is just spectacular – and as you lift your eyes from your paperback, you can see the ruins of the Genoese watchtower on the hilltop.

Some of Corsica’s best sandy beaches are around Porto Vecchio, a busy summer resort. Gentle waves, unspoiled scenery and soft sand characterise these beaches, with the most famous being the Plage de Palombaggia and the Plage de Santa Giulia. Slightly further away is the Plage de Rondinara, whose crystal-clear waters lend it a tropical quality.

History

Corsica is an ancient land – as attests Filitosa, the 8,000-year-old megalithic settlement of carved granite menhirs. And the port towns and picturesque villages are ripe for exploration, each of-



The ancient walled town of Sant’Antonino.

fering unique perspectives – because while Corsica has been part of France since 1769, it has its own culture, translated into unique landscapes, architecture, food and music.

The capital, Ajaccio, is a celebration of its most famous native son, Napoleon Bonaparte – and you can see statues of him everywhere. But beyond this hero worship, Ajaccio offers sensational views of the sea and

people-watching at the grand Place de Gaulle. You should also visit the Cathedrale d’Ajaccio, where Napoleon was baptised – and which boasts Delacroix’s painting *La Vierge au Sacré Cœur*.

The ancient walled town of Sant’Antonino is also worth the proverbial detour. Perched on a granite hilltop, the town has superb views of the surrounding countryside and the sea. One of the oldest villages in Corsica,

Sant’Antonino’s heritage dates back to the Moors in the 9th century.

Another well-preserved fortified town is Bonifacio – a maze of medieval lanes and narrow alleyways, all centred around the Romanesque church of Sainte-Marie-Majeure. The town is set in Corsica’s largest nature reserves, which boasts limestone cliffs, seaside grottos and the Lavezzi Islands.

Get active

Corsica is best known for its gruelling two-week GR20 hike, which stretches from Calenzana in the north to Conca in the south. But you can leave that to the professionals and opt for gentler walks, such as the Napoleon Trail, which starts from the capital Ajaccio. The starting point is the Bois des Anglais and stretches for about 10 kilometres, ending at the seaside village of Vignola.

“While Corsica has been part of France since 1769, it has its own culture, translated into unique landscapes, architecture, food and music”

But the island has more to offer – with a 1,000-kilometre coastline, there are plenty of spots for snorkelling and scuba diving. Hiking and camping at Cap Corse is also an interesting prospect. The promontory pointing north has some of Europe’s most dramatic scenery – cliff-hugging roads, rocky outcrops and densely forested hillsides, all against the backdrop of a sea that crashes far below.



The dramatic beauty of Cap Corse.



Corsica's capital, Ajaccio. PHOTOS: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



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NEWS

Multigas announces launch of new nitrogen production plant

Multigas Ltd., a leading producer and distributor of industrial and medical gases based in Kirkop, has recently installed and commissioned a new Air Separation Plant. This second plant will significantly add to Multigas' production capacity of nitrogen and is part of a long-term agreement with Air Liquide Italia – the Italian affiliate of the French multinational Air Liquide Group – to supply their customers with this gas.

The new plant produces liquid nitrogen and oxygen through the cryogenic air separation process. The installation is equipped with the latest technology for production control and reliability together with environmental considerations such as noise abatement. The multi-million Euro project also included an investment in electrical supply switchgear, cooling water systems and product storage.

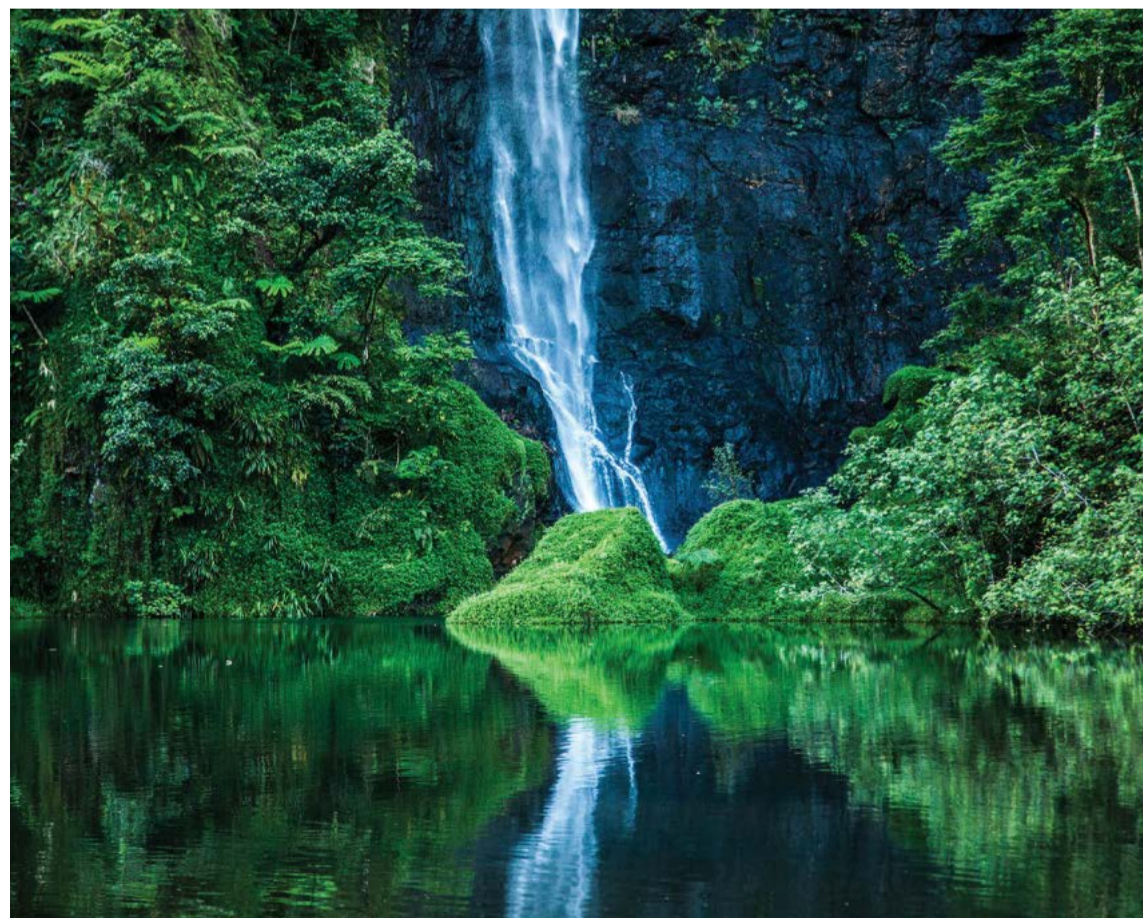
The market disruption brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in significant product shortages in the region. The new plant is therefore proving critical to ensuring business continuity to customers including the healthcare sector.

Multigas and Air Liquide Italia's successful collaboration stretches back several years, to the 1980s, and has supported Multigas' commitment to provide a secure and robust supply of gases to the Maltese industrial and healthcare sectors.

Ing. Michael Mifsud, CEO of Multigas, said: "This project enables us to take our service offering to a new level, providing a robust supply chain and



peace of mind to our customers. We thank our counterparts at Air Liquide and our dedicated team of employees and partners who have worked tirelessly to bring this project to a successful completion notwithstanding the challenges brought about by a worldwide pandemic."



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Thanks to biotechnologies applied to life sciences, Texinfine's multidisciplinary teams work on the similarities between the plant and animal kingdoms.

Joining the group in 2017, Texinfine Tahiti is a unit dedicated to the valorisation of active ingredients derived from plants from French Polynesia.

From the extraction of plants to the certification of the activity of our finished products, the entire process is controlled in house, guaranteeing the quality of Texinfine products. The extract contained in Texinfine formulas is systematically tested to provide the optimal dose-effect relationship, according to the desired pharmacological response.

NEWS

Investment pushing Freeport forward

Malta Freeport Terminals this year consolidated its position as a leading state-of-the-art terminal with another major investment: dedicating €20m to its final two mega max quay cranes which will be in operation this summer, presenting Malta Freeport with a five megamax crane formation and enhancing the facility's capability to handle the world's largest container ships with a capacity of 23,000 TEUs.

The latest cranes - completing a fleet of six megamax quay cranes - were acquired from world leading manufacturers Liebherr Container Cranes and feature outstanding specifications including outreach of 72m, an air draft of 54m, twin-lift spreader capability and the ability to stack rows an 11-containers-high onto these vessels.

Large container ships calling regularly at the Freeport are not just impressive in terms of size - spanning some 400 metres in length - but also because those operated by CMA-CGM are now more environmentally-friendly than ever; utilising LNG

power, which reduces CO2 emissions by 20 per cent. Noise has also been reduced at the facility with the installation of quieter equipment and crane alarm systems.

The Freeport has also added prestigious services to its portfolio: It is now among the weekly ports of call on the French Asia Line Service (FAL 1), which connects Europe to Asia through the operation of CMA CG M's nine LNG-powered container ships which are the largest in the world with a capacity of 23,000 TEUs.

MSC has also increased its operations from Malta and is operating various mainline services including Canada Express Service 1, California Express and Indus Express as well as the New NEMO Service with CMA CGM.

Malta Freeport has now invested more than €300m since the facility was privatised in 2004, upgrading virtually all areas of the operation: from significantly increased reefer slots and new yard cranes, tugs and tractors to the installation of the latest IT and semi-au-



tomation technology. This crucial investment affirms Malta Freeport as one of the few exclusive ports in Europe which have the physical capability to operate the latest class of megamax vessels. It has also met the safety and

logistical challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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EERE Malta is co-financed by the Republic of Malta, the European Union under the European Regional Development Fund.

NEWS



Electric and hybrid offensive by Michael Attard Ltd

As everyone is becoming more conscious of taking care of our planet and the environment, electric and hybrid vehicles are becoming highly sought after and more economical. Michael Attard Ltd. is at the forefront of this transition, with an expanding line-up with new electrified powertrains.

The Peugeot range of electric vehicles can meet all your needs: ultra-compact city car or functional commercial vehicle. Peugeot's full electric vehicles combine innovative design, outstanding environmental performance and state-of-the-art technology. Electro-mobility is offered across Peugeot's portfolio. Whether you're looking for a city car, with the e-208, or prefer an SUV with the e-2008 and 3008 Plug-in Hybrid, Peugeot has got you covered. The range includes the recently revealed New PEUGEOT 308 Plug-in Hybrid, as well as the 508 PHEV and high performance 508 Peugeot Sport Engineered,

Citroën offer practical, efficient electric vehicles that provide you with the comfort, space and technology you need to make every journey enjoyable and peaceful. Following the introduction of the C5 Aircross Plug-In Hybrid, the electric offensive strategy for Citroën is truly charged. The New ë-C4 is a new step forward in design, technology, and exceptional onboard comfort. Quieter, less stressful, and zero particulate emissions – there's a reason why the range of future Citroën electric cars is so important and popular. This is shown in the newly revealed Citroën C5X, the most advanced expression of Citroën's philosophy.

Our electric offering does not only include passenger cars, LCVs will also be electrically driven. All our brands have been



awarded the International Van of the Year 2021 award, for the Peugeot e-Expert and Citroën ë-Dispatch. These vehicles offer payloads and loading volumes without compromise to all clients: artisans, companies, and administrations. They benefit from a new generation of technologies and

assistance systems, and our commitment to the security and comfort of our clients. These join the commercial line up of full electric light utility vehicles, the Peugeot e-Partner and Citroën ë-Berlingo Van.

Since 2019, every new model will also systematically come in a hybrid

or all-electric version. Therefore customers will be spoilt for choice when it comes to choosing their next electric vehicle.

Find Michael Attard Ltd on social media, or visit www.michaelattard.com for further details.

NEWS

France acquires de Sade's 'Sodom' manuscript for over €4.55m

The French state has acquired the original manuscript of the Marquis de Sade's *120 Days of Sodom* for €4.55m, safeguarding for the country a work declared a national treasure, the culture ministry said Friday.

The 18th-century erotic masterpiece has endured a turbulent destiny over the centuries but the future of the original text now appears secure after a private benefactor stepped in with the money.

The culture ministry had in December 2017 stepped in to pull the sale of the manuscript from an auction, declaring it a national treasure and banning its export.

The ministry said in a statement that it had paid €4.55 million to acquire the work for France.

It hailed the text as a "monument" that has influenced numerous authors.

Before the culture ministry's intervention, the manuscript had been due to be sold in an auction of historic documents owned by the French investment firm Aristophil, which was shut down in scandal two years previously, taking investors' money with it.

"Preserved after hidden by a revolutionary"

Sade wrote the controversial work about four rich libertines in search of sexual gratification on a roll made from bits of parchment he had smuggled into his cell in the Bastille prison.

When the Paris prison was stormed at the beginning of the French revolution on July 14, 1789, the famously philandering aristocrat was freed, but he was swept out by the mob without his manuscript.

Sade believed it had been lost to looters and wept "tears of blood" over it, but the unfinished manuscript was preserved after being hidden by a revolutionary and then secretly bought by an aristocrat, the Marquis de Villeneuve-Trans.

It became known to the public only after a German psychologist, Iwan Bloch, bought it and allowed its first publication in 1904.

Even so, the book languished unpublished for more than a century and was banned in Britain until the 1950s.

Measuring 12 metres long, the manuscript is itself something out of the ordinary, consisting of 33 sheets stuck together in a scroll.

The sum for its purchase by France was provided entirely by Emmanuel Boussard, a former investment banker and co-founder of the Boussard & Gavaudan investment fund, the ministry said.

It will become part of the collection of the Arsenal library in

Paris, a branch of France's BNF national library.

French courts seized 130,000 historic documents that Aristophil had bought for its investors in 2015 after police denounced the company as huge "pyramid scheme."

Aristophil claimed to have amassed the greatest private collection of French literary and historical documents in the world.

A libertine persecuted by the former regime and after the French Revolution, the marquis, whose full name was Donatien Alphonse Francois de

Sade (1740-1814), spent a good part of his life behind bars.

His contribution to literature was not truly recognised until the twentieth century, when the scandal over his writing abated in favour of understanding his ideas beyond the term "sadism" that takes his name. (AFP)

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NEWS

French surgeon behind world-first face and hand transplants dies



Jean-Michel Dubernard in a file photo taken on May 31, 2007.
PHOTO: AFP

A pioneering French surgeon who undertook the world's first successful hand and face transplants has died at the age of 80.

Jean-Michel Dubernard, who became one of France's most famous medics during his career working in southeastern Lyon, collapsed at Istanbul airport on July 10, while travelling with his family, the friend said, asking not to be named.

Dubernard led the world's first hand transplant in September 1998 on a man from New

Zealand, creating a sensation in the medical world that brought him global recognition.

Heading an international team of specialists, Dubernard and his fellow surgeons joined the patient's arteries, veins, nerves, tendons, muscles and skin after pinning together the two bones of the forearm during a 13-hour operation.

He followed up this feat with the first double hand and forearm transplant two years later on a Frenchman who had been holding a home-made rocket when it exploded.

In November 2005, Dubernard reached the height of his fame with the first partial face transplant, which saw him graft on the nose, lips and chin from a brain-dead donor onto French divorcee Isabelle Dinoire, who had been mauled by her dog.

Dinoire appeared at a remarkable news conference three months later in the full glare of the global media, wearing thick makeup to disguise the scars but with an otherwise restored face.

"We want to launch these new techniques to give hope to other people all over the world," Dubernard, then aged 64, said.

The first full face transplant was performed by a Spanish team in March 2010.

Dubernard, a rugby fan and father of three, was known for his remarkable work ethic and passion for his profession.

He credited his decision to become a doctor to a bout of appendicitis as a child and his interest in transplants on hearing about the first successful organ graft – of a kidney – in the United States in 1954.

"My only motivation is to advance our understanding of medicine. I do it for my patients," he told *Le Monde* newspaper in 2005.

He also wrote widely in medical journals about his expertise, as well as the challenges of transplants for recipients, both physical and psychological.

"Psychological consequences of hand and face allografts (transplants) show that it is not so easy to use and see permanently a dead person's hands nor is it easy to look in a mirror and see a dead person's face," he wrote in an article for *European Urology* in 2006.

His high profile and methods also meant that his patients and his work were subjected to intense scrutiny and occasionally criticism.

The National Order of Doctors condemned the release of images of Dinoire after her face transplant and it accused the medical team led by Dubernard and fellow surgeon Bernard Devauchelle of attention-seeking.

"Premature and uncontrolled communication put all the focus on the technical feat, at the expense of the proper respect owed to the patient and to the donor — for her generosity and that of her family," the order said in a statement.

His first hand transplant also attracted unwelcome publicity when it emerged that the recipient, Clint Hallam, had stopped taking the powerful immunosuppressants needed to stop his body rejecting the new hand.

Hallam, who had had an accident with a saw while in prison, begged to have the new hand amputated in 2000, saying he felt "mentally detached" from it, but Dubernard refused on the grounds that it was still functional.

"Known for his remarkable work ethic and passion for his profession"

The convicted fraudster left his doctors furious for what they saw as wasting his opportunity but he succeeded in having the hand removed in London in 2001.

Dinoire died in 2016, 11 years after her face transplant, having battled illnesses, mood swings and several bouts of cancer linked to the powerful drugs she needed to take daily to stop her body rejecting the tissue, according to reports.

Le Figaro newspaper said that Dinoire's body had begun rejecting the transplant the year before her death and that "she had lost part of the use of her lips".

Dubernard's influence lives on in Lyon where younger generations of surgeons continue to push the boundaries of science.

In January this year, an Icelandic man received the world's first double shoulder and arm transplant in the city, two decades after an accident that had cost him both limbs.

The operation was "his biggest dream", the man's wife told a news conference. (AFP)



Supporting the onshore oil and gas industry

Medserv in partnership with Air Liquide operates a compressed gases filling plant at the Medserv facility at the Malta Freeport, opening routes from Malta to the Mediterranean and African region. Diving and industrial gases, rental equipment including cryogenic 10' iso containers, nitrogen pumps and nitrogen production units as well as dry ice blasting services are supplied for offshore operations from the Malta Freeport.

Air Liquide is a world leader in gases, technologies and services for Industry and Health, is present in 78 countries with approximately 64,500 employees and serves more than 3.8 million customers and patients. Oxygen, nitrogen and hydrogen are essential small molecules for life, matter and energy. Air Liquide is listed on the Euronext Paris stock exchange and belongs to the CAC 40, EURO STOXX 50 and FTSE4Good indexes.

The Medserv Regis Group has over 45 years' experience in providing integrated shore base logistics and engineering services to the offshore oil and gas industry and supply chain management for Oil Country Tubular Goods (OCTG) to support the onshore oil and gas



industry. Medserv Regis clients include the International Energy Companies and multinational contractors. The Group's global reach spans across four continents, comprising a presence in 12 countries and operations out of 10 bases. Presently its geographic footprint comprises in strategic locations around the Mediterranean region (Libya, Malta, Cyprus and Egypt), in the Middle East (UAE, Oman and Iraq), Sub-Saharan Africa (Mozambique, Uganda, Angola) and South America (Suriname).

WINE

The grape and the good

Where there's a wine, there's a way. So even if this year's Bordeaux Wine Festival was a less jolly affair than usual, it still showcased the region's grape credentials.

The coronavirus pandemic wreaked havoc on the tourism sector – and led to the cancellation of various red-letter events, including the Bordeaux Fête le Vin, an annual highlight for anyone who appreciates the good of the grape and the French way of life.

This year, the Bordeaux Wine Festival was organised from June 17-20 – but it was a lesser affair than past editions, due to public health and event restrictions. Still, the organisers managed to highlight some of the best ingredients that this French region has to offer.



“Heritage sailboats also made an appearance”

The wine festival partnered up with various restaurants and wine merchants, who offered the Bordeaux Fête le Vin experience at their outlets through meetings with wine-growers and merchants. And all those diners who enjoyed a glass – or bottle – of Bordeaux were eligible to enter a competition and win various delicious gifts.

In collaboration with the Bordeaux Métropole tourist office, the festival also organised a competition on social networks, allowing participants to win mystery tastings, workshops at the Bordeaux Wine School, products and tickets to

museums such as the Cité du Vin, the Musée du Vin et du Trading, and the Eco-Museum of Vine and Wine.

For next year's edition of the festival, Brussels has already been confirmed as the guest city of honour. As a preamble to this, Belgian artist Philippe Geluck held his *Le Chat Déambule* exhibition on the quays of Bordeaux – consisting of 20 monumental statues of the artist's famous cat.

The famous heritage sailboats also made an unforgettable appearance – the *Marité*, the *French*, the *Galéon* and the *Nebula* docked in the heart of Bordeaux to welcome the public for tours by reservation. It was a taster of what hopefully will be a regular – and grand – edition in 2022.



BETTER WAYS

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CULTURE

50 years after his death, Paris remembers Jim Morrison

He occupies a small, tucked-away corner of a Paris cemetery, but many thousands still seek it out: half a century since his death, Jim Morrison remains a fabled presence in the City of Light.

The death of The Doors' frontman on July 3, 1971 was one of the key signs that the optimism of the 1960s was coming to a grim end.

Today, the Lizard King lies in the Pere-Lachaise cemetery at the eastern end of the city.

Even with Google Maps, it can be tricky to find – a deliberate decision of the family who rightly feared a deluge of fans.

"It's a cemetery that he particularly loved. He often came

walking here," says rock critic and Doors aficionado Sophie Rosemont.

"He would have wanted to be buried next to Oscar Wilde," she said, referring to the other famous tenant of the cemetery, but the spot would have been too prominent.

The grave's seclusion has not prevented millions from paying their respects over the decades – the photo of another rock legend, Patti Smith, posing here is itself iconic.

Its headstone is protected by barriers that will no doubt be under threat again this week.

Morrison's last home was an apartment on the third floor of 17 rue Beautreillis



People gather by the grave of The Doors frontman Jim Morrison to commemorate the 50th anniversary of his death at the Pere Lachaise cemetery in Paris. PHOTOS: MARTIN BUREAU, AFP

in the bohemian district of the Marais.

It was owned by model Elizabeth "Zozo" Lariviere, and Morrison moved there with his girlfriend Pamela Cour-

son, hoping to escape the madness of his fame in the United States and dedicate himself to writing.

He would survive just three months in Paris.

The official version is that he died in his bathtub of cardiac arrest, aged 27.

But on the facade of his old building, someone has left a note: "Jim Morrison didn't die here" – a sign that another story has long been making the rounds.

"He would have wanted to be buried next to Oscar Wilde"

Journalist Sam Bennett has investigated the case over the years, and argues that the rock legend overdosed in the toilets of a nightclub, the Rock'n'Roll Circus, that he helped run.

"His face was grey, his eyes closed, there was blood under his nose and a white foam around his slightly open mouth and in his beard, he was not breathing," Bennett writes in *The End: Jim Morrison*.

Singer and 1960s icon Marianne Faithfull backed that story in an interview with Mojo magazine, saying

the fatal dose came from dealer-to-the-stars Jean de Breteuil, whom she was dating at the time.

The club at 57 rue de Seine – long gone – "was a fairly crazy place", says Rosemont.

"It was frequented by intellectuals, hippies, little thugs, big thugs, bourgeois folks, stars like Mick Jagger..."

As she is speaking at the site to AFP, an American introduces himself.

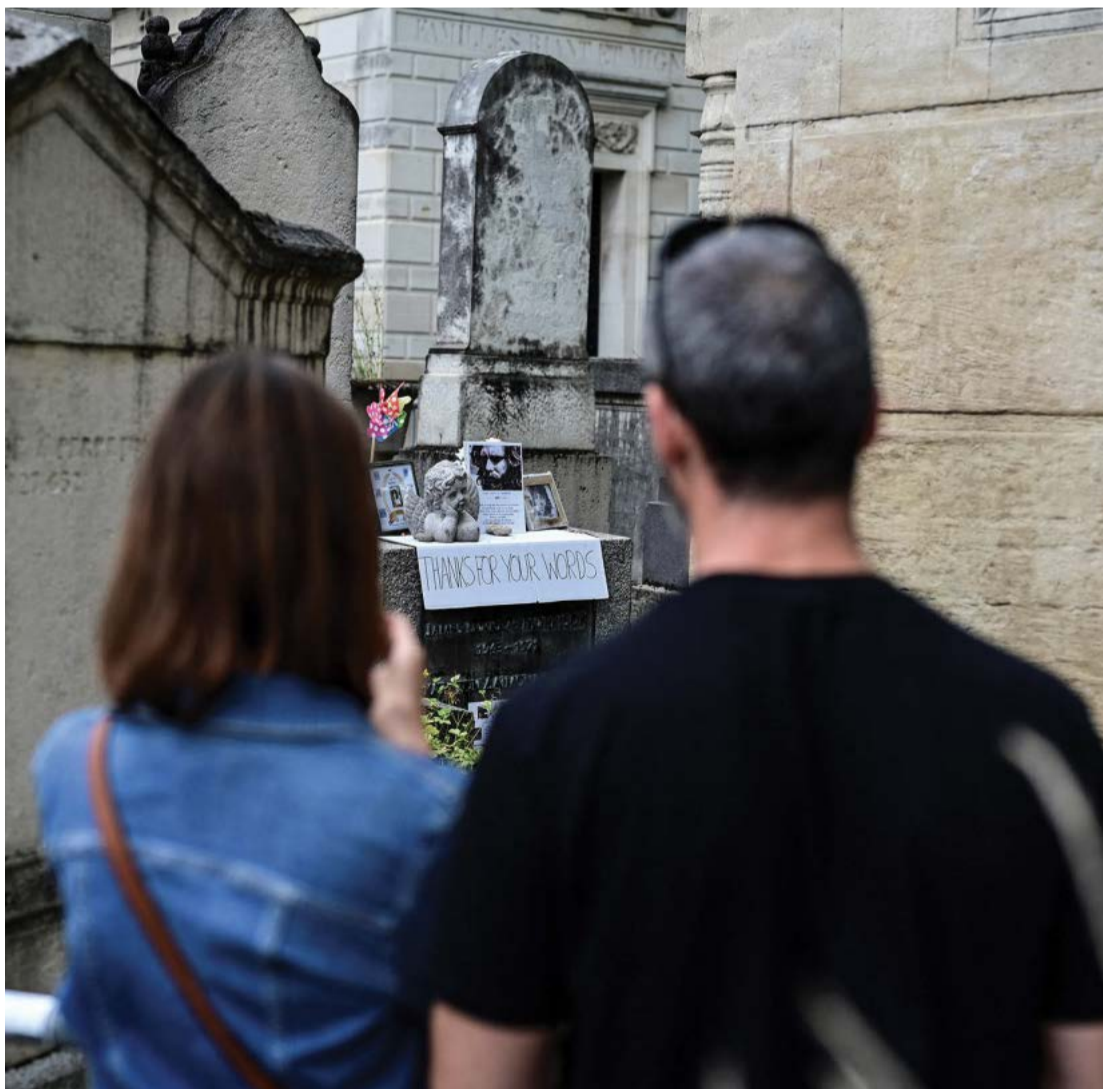
Pete has been coming here regularly since 1991 around the anniversary of Morrison's death, holding meetings with other "friends of Jim in cafes around Pere-Lachaise".

Other stops on the pilgrimage might include Place des Vosges and the book kiosks that line the Seine where Morrison liked to wander, trying to stay as anonymous as possible.

And also the famous English-language bookshop Shakespeare and Company.

"It's a place that Morrison very quickly became attached to. He didn't speak very good French, even if he loved Rimbaud, Beaudelaire, Mallarme a lot," says Rosemont.

This brought him regularly into the Left Bank, near the home of his friend, the filmmaker Agnes Varda, and Cafe La Palette where he liked to drink, and where a few glasses will no doubt be raised to his name on Saturday. (AFP)



The Malta flag – reputation, quality and confidence

Hard work and clear strategic vision pay off

Malta has nowadays established itself as one of the leading maritime hubs and service centres in the Mediterranean region. It has developed a very strong regulatory platform that has enabled the Malta flag to become a reputable and internationally recognised ship register which is now one of the largest in the world.

The maritime sector is one of the driving forces of Malta's economy, as we cannot depend on road transport with respect to imports and exports. Without good maritime links our economy would stifle. We have invested heavily and actively with respect to maritime policy development, both on EU and international levels. Malta's geographical location, albeit having a number of benefits as it is closely located to one of the major trading routes, also offers a number of challenges, such as the competitive exposure to non-EU member states.

Transport Malta is well aware that Malta has a natural potential to become a centre of maritime excellence in the Mediterranean and over the last years has implemented a number of initiatives to further facilitate this. Malta's status as an EU member state has further enhanced the country's attractiveness as a centre for international business in the Euro-Mediterranean region. Internationally, Malta is recognised as a safe and secure place to do business, with high economic, legal, and political stability and a consistent policy on maritime affairs. It boasts a highly qualified and flexible workforce and a proactive business environment. All these key factors have made maritime Malta the ideal location for foreign direct investment and international trade.

In recent years, in close and healthy dialogue with all stakeholders in this important sector for the island, we continued to consolidate the industry with the introduction of further robust legal framework and initiatives to ensure the further sustainable development of the industry. This led to the introduction of

major amendments to the laws regulating the shipping sector in order to make it more attractive, such as the amendments to shipping organisations that facilitate the relocation of companies to Malta, and the introduction of tax incentives to qualified maritime personnel thus facilitating the relocation of ship management companies to Malta. This has also proven to be a source for generating more added value jobs to Malta and contributed to the shipping industry generating over 14 per cent of Malta's GDP.

The Maltese ship register is regulated by a framework of the highest standards based on international and European Union legislation. The Maltese registration system is formulated in such a way as to attract the registration of newer vessels, as opposed to older ones, with the aim of reinforcing its safety record and more environmentally sustainable ships that are more energy efficient and pollute less. Safe ships and clean seas are matters of priority for the Malta flag, a policy that is successfully increasing the number of ships on its register and highlighting Malta as a reputable and quality register.

Throughout the years, the Maltese ship register has maintained a steady growth rate and by the end of 2020 the total gross tons registered was almost that of 85 million, consolidating Malta's position as the largest flag State in Europe and the sixth largest in the world. This represents a 22 per cent increase over the last four years, which is the largest growth ever registered by the Malta register.

This also means that over six per cent of the world merchant fleet is flying the prestigious eight-pointed cross around the world. These statistics have also confirmed the Malta register as one of the fastest growing registers worldwide.

These positive achievements are a result of continuous hard work both by Transport Malta, the regulator of the shipping industry in Malta, and the industry that has always given its support and full cooperation



PHOTOS: PETER PAUL BARBARA

to the Maltese authorities. There has always been a strong commitment towards establishing a sound, effective, and efficient legal framework addressing safety, security and environmental protection. We have successfully achieved a number of key milestones such as attracting a younger tonnage fleet. We are committed to continue to intensify our efforts both on an international level and EU level for safe, secure, and clean shipping. In addition, Malta has heavily invested in other niche markets becoming, for example, a world leader in the registration of superyachts and passenger ships.

The Malta flag also caters for the distinctive requirements of the yacht and superyacht industry. In fact, it has developed specific legislation to this effect. The Maltese law provides for the registration of yachts and superyachts which are in commercial use as commercially registered yachts or superyachts. Since the end of 2020, there were over 880 superyachts registered under the Malta flag, thus making Malta the world leading register in the yachting industry. It is important to note that during the last four



years, Malta registered an increase of 53 per cent in the registration of superyachts.

These statistics are a clear indication of the policy adopted by Malta's flag administration to focus on quality shipping and ensure that ships with a poor detention or safety and marine pollution record do not operate under the Malta flag. The Maltese authorities maintain that growth must not be at the expense of quality while growth can be attained through quality. During the last four years, despite the growth being registered, Malta ensured to register its best technical performance ever

and has established its position as one of the safest Registers in the world.

Merchant shipping has yet again proved that with a clear strategic vision, it has continued to be a very important component of Malta's maritime and international service industries, therefore vital for the country's economic well-being.



TV



From left: Director Antoine Garceau, producer Aurelien Larger, French actors Gregory Montel, Camille Cottin and, Nicolas Maury, director Marc Fitoussi, producer and actor Dominique Besnehard and producer Harold Valentin pose for pictures as they arrive for the presentation of *Call My Agent* last year in Cannes. PHOTO: AFP

Call My Agent cast eager to hit New York

Actors in French TV series *Call My Agent* can't wait to start work on a feature-length movie of the blockbuster show with New York tipped as the likely location, they told AFP at the Cannes festival.

The series of four seasons, originally produced by French TV, became an international smash hit after streaming on Netflix, propelling the French cast, especially Camille Cottin, to global stardom.

But fans of the series, which chronicles the goings-on at a Paris showbiz talent agency, have had to wait for more episodes as COVID-19 put the brakes on shooting.

The series's producer, Mediawan Studios boss Thomas Anargyros, told French radio in April that there would be a single feature-length episode of *Call My Agent* to be produced this year and broadcast by early 2022.

While the location has not been confirmed, all signs point to New York City.

"I'm not sure how much I can say about New York for now, but it's in the process of scripting," Nicolas Maury, who plays the agency's assistant, Herve, told AFP in an interview.

"I'm all packed already," he laughed. "New York is a city I love and that I fantasise about. It would be amazing to go there, great fun," Maury said.

Cottin, who plays one of the senior talent agents in the series, also seemed ready for the trip when asked about a shoot in New York. "If I need to pack my bags and go, I will," she told AFP.

But Maury still sounded a cautious note, saying that the coronavirus risk could affect the project, its timetable and its financing. "Everything is still fragile at the moment," he said.

"If there's only enough money to go to (French industrial city) Clermont-Ferrand, then that's where we'll go. Only joking," he said.

The feature-length episode would serve to bridge the gap between the show's fourth season, which aired last year, and a fifth season, which producer Anargyros said he hoped to tackle quickly after the feature.

Commenting on the international success of *Call My Agent*, which is being adapted in several countries, Maury said he had only become fully aware of it recently.

"Some international artists I admire came to see me this year and that was very moving," he said.

"It's a comedy about work. And I think a lot of people are interested in that. Work is a big part of our lives," Maury added.

"All these stories about the office, about colleagues, affairs of the heart and the betrayals — I find they're all done very intelligently in *Call My Agent*."

Some industry observers, meanwhile, already see Camille Cottin as walking in the footsteps of Marion Cotillard, who has conquered Hollywood.

Cottin is already in a major US production, co-leading opposite Matt Damon in *Stillwater*, which premiered at Cannes this year out of competition. (AFP)

“
New York is a city I love
and that I fantasise
about

NEWS

International scale, local roots

Mazars in Malta, one of the island's leading audit and advisory firms, forms part of Mazars, an international group with French roots specialising in audit, tax and advisory services.

Mazars bears the name of its original founder, Robert Mazars, who started his practice near Rouen, in Western France, in 1945. Since then, the Group has grown into a global, connected partnership of over 42,000 professionals with a presence in over 90 countries and territories, working seamlessly as one integrated team across borders, services and sectors.

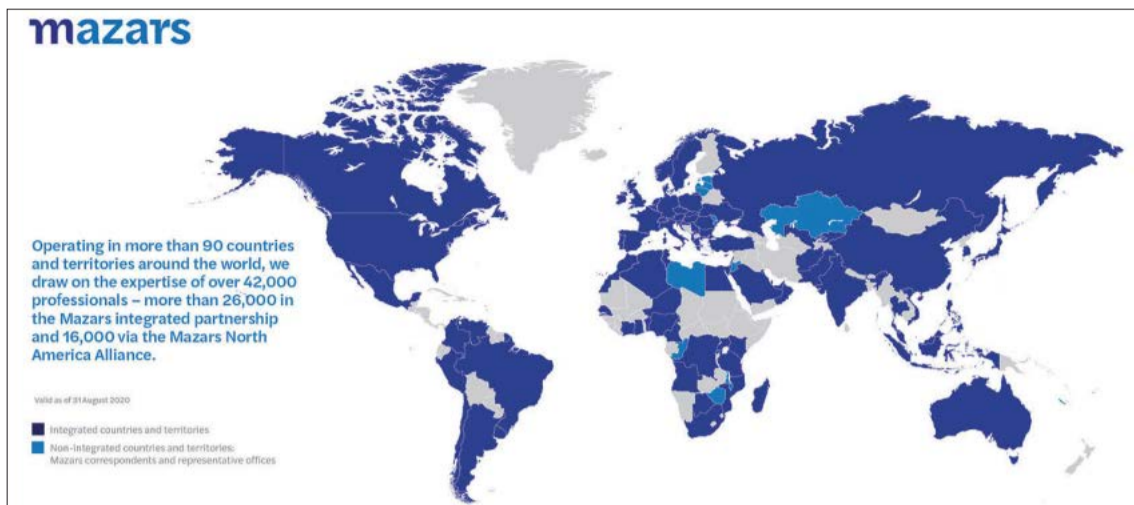
Mazars' roots in Malta go back to 1998, having started its journey as a small firm known as Attard Giglio + Co. Over the years, Mazars in Malta established itself as a leading firm, focused on its clients' needs and delivering value through a personalised service, quality advice and deep knowledge of market sectors. As an integrated member firm of Mazars, Mazars in Malta is in a position to draw upon the experience and resources of the international group.

Strong values have been at the heart of Mazars in Malta since its creation. Our values provide the ethical point of reference for the partners and the teams in their interactions with clients, local and foreign authorities, and other players in the sector.

Mazars in Malta's managing partner Anthony Attard explained that the firm's strength lies in the holistic approach it adopts towards understanding its clients' business: "We seek to make a difference to our clients, our team and our community by providing exceptional professional services, in a manner that is personal, principled and professional. We believe in taking personal responsibility, remaining client-focused, working together with respect and achieving the highest personal standards.

"Our structures ensure that all the firm's specialist services are delivered in a manner consistent with the client's needs, and in a seamless and integrated fashion. As advisors and auditors, we foster state-of-the-art accountability, efficient and agile structures and organisations, enhanced performance, thereby creating long-term value for our clients."

Article written by Mazars in Malta. For more information visit www.mazars.com.mt.



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