



## Conference Report – WLN ‘Sunny’ Conference in Malta 12-14 May 2022

There could have been worse places to meet each other than on the terrace overlooking the **Malta’s Golden Bay** on a warm May evening. Our conference began on Thursday just as the sun was setting, but the air was warm and the atmosphere bright and vibrant as many of us were reunited for the first time in almost (or over!) 3 years...

Our hosts were the fantastic **Corrieri Cilia** team, who have been preparing for a WLN conference since 2019, dealing with several postponed dates and obstacles due to the pandemic in the meantime. **Silvio Cilia, Jonathan Corrieri, Melissa Speigner, Louella Grech, and Michael Gauci** – a special thanks go to you all for making the conference a success.

Our themes explored during our business program revolved around cryptocurrency, blockchain, and NFTs; with a focus on the legal and tax issues surrounding crypto. It was great to engage in the following presentations and panel discussions:

- **‘Malta and Blockchain Four Years On’**: **Professor Joshua Ellul** was appointed as the Chairman of the Malta Digital Innovation Authority which provides a regulatory framework for technology aspects of blockchain and safety-critical systems including those that may make use of Artificial Intelligence. He introduced us to the techno-regulatory issues of emerging technologies (including Crypto, Blockchain, Smart contracts, NFTs, Metaverse, and AI).
- **‘Crypto-economy: tax and legal issues’**: our panellists **Michael Gauci** (Malta), **Charis Papachristodoulou** (Cyprus), and **Aloysius Wee** (Singapore) discussed the experiences and challenges they have faced as lawyers dealing with crypto-economy.
- **‘Directors’ liability and crypto-economy’**: our panellists **Sjef Bartels** (Netherlands), **Gautam Khurana** (India), **Simon Mason** (U.K.), and **Sebastiaan Meeuwens** (Belgium) delved into the complex world of directors’ liability in relation to crypto issues. **Gloria Viñals** (Spain) and **Carlo Gurioli** (Italy) moderated the discussion, providing us with interesting insight from the perspective of our Litigation and Corporate Focus Groups.
- **‘A million steps: lighting the fire every day in work and life’**: to close our formal event on Friday, we listened to a speech by **Nathan Farrugia**. Nathan coaches CEOs to effectively motivate and lead their teams; and shared some of his experience as well as his own challenges in life that incited his following adventures and career.

We were also joined by guests from **Pashman Stein Walder Hayden** and we thank them for making the considerable journey from New Jersey to Malta to join us. **Dan Guadalupe, Sean Mack, Oren Chaplin**, and **Samantha Alexander** presented their firm during our business conference and we also enjoyed getting to know them personally during our time in Malta.

We thank all our guests and speakers for their enthusiastic contribution to our business program and for sharing their expertise and experience with us.

Let us not forget our photo competition, *WLN goes to the Beach*... The dedication displayed was admirable and included (but was not limited to) soaring into the swimming pool on a flamingo and banana (not mentioning any names... **Andreas**), and we were introduced to many new ways of posing with inflatable palm trees and beach balls (**Diane**, **Frank** and **Axel** come to mind)!

Our jury deliberated in Bulgaria and Germany and gave their verdict... **Gautam** took the crown (and champagne)!

**Moving onto our social program!** We were treated to a wonderful reception on Friday at the **Corrieri Cilia** offices in **Birkirkara** – thank you all the warm welcome to your beautiful offices!

We were enjoyed two lovely dinners on Thursday and Friday, both in very different but attractive locations. It was Friday's venue that quite literally caused audible gasps – **La Valette Hall** in the impressive **Mediterranean Conference Centre** in Valletta. We were taken back through time into the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the incredible atmosphere was soaked up by everyone (some more than others – *did we find any sign of the supernatural in the end?!).* Thank you, **Michael**, for then showing some of us the nightlife in **St Julian's** – *maybe we should call it 'morninglife' for those who arrived back at the hotel after 4am?!*

On Saturday morning we participated in team-building activity, *WLN Olympic Beach Games*, led by **Stephanie** and her fun team at **Jugs Malta**. All wearing our WLN caps it would seem we were all a happy and united WLN team, however as the first whistle sounded it was clear that no-one was playing around. Each team was there to win. Of course, not every team could win, so a big well done to the **Grey Team** for their victory (although if the competition was based on the Water Skis alone, they likely would have finished in last place).

Finally, a group of us travelled to Gozo on Saturday afternoon to take part in a treasure hunt – exploring the island in jeeps! **Thomas** at **Jugs Malta** briefed us on how to drive the 40-year-old jeeps (who needs power-steering anyway?), and then left us to explore the island's historic monuments, *very* winding roads, and spectacular views. The headcount to return on the ferry to Malta was nerve-wracking – did **Carry** and **Tim's team** ever return after joining the Gozo football parade?!

Thankfully they did (although maybe they went back to join the parade again after – it did look like a lot of fun).

Thank you, **Corrieri Cilia**, for hosting an unforgettable conference! Malta was certainly worth the wait!