

Report of
the National Council for the Maltese Language
on the Names of the European Currency in Maltese

EWRO



Methodological Premise

Whenever a new word is chosen or a word from another language comes to be accepted, the process involves the following two stages:

1. **the choice of word:** that is, the most suitable (spoken) word to be chosen is discussed and decided upon, and all possible forms of the word are established (for example, the feminine, the plural, etc., depending on each case); and
2. **the choice of spelling (or orthography):** that is, the correct spelling of the word chosen in (1) is decided upon, in conformity with the official rules of the language concerned.

According to the Maltese Language Law (*Maltese Language Act*, Chapter 470; see Art. 2, under “orthography”) unanimously passed by the Maltese Parliament in 2004, the official rules of Maltese writing are those expounded in the book *Tagħrif fuq il-Kitba Maltija II*, 2004, Malta: Akkademja tal-Malti. According to the same Law, the National Council for the Maltese Language is the sole linguistic authority with the right to interpret and change these orthographical rules (see Art. 5 (2)).

It is important that these two stages:

- a both take place,
- b are kept separate, and
- c take place one after the other in the correct order (as indicated above).

The discussion and decision

In the light of the principles explained above and after the necessary discussion and consultation, the National Council for the Maltese Language makes the following choices, expounded here together with the arguments leading thereto.

The National Council
for the Maltese Language
shall also update
the orthography
of the Maltese Language
as necessary and,
from time to time,
establish the correct manner
of writing words and phrases
which enter
the Maltese Language
from other tongues

Maltese Language Act, Art. 5 (2)

ewro, masculine noun plural ewro



Several possible forms were considered, these being:

- euro, pl. euro / euros / euri
- ewro, pl. ewro / ewri
- jurow, pl. jurow / jurows
- juro, pl. juro / jurows

The choice of word

As normally occurs in the case of other languages, the name of the principal unit of the European currency is taken from the pronunciation of the first two syllables of the name of the European continent in the language concerned (as the English **euro** from **Europe** [ˈjʊərəp], the Italian **euro** from **Europa** [euˈrɔpa], etc.).

This criteria eliminates all forms following the English pronunciation (**jurow**, **juro**, etc.), despite the fact that these are currently being used by some of the Maltese. The word **ewro** thus remains the only possible choice.

The gender of this noun is masculine, as has instinctively been chosen by the Maltese people. We see no reason for this popular choice to be questioned.

With regard to the plural, the following two possibilities were considered: (1) **ewro**, pl. **ewri**, with the use of the Romance suffix **-i**, and (2) **ewro**, pl. **ewro**, an invariable form, i.e. which does not change according to number. **ewro - ewri** follows the great majority of Maltese nouns, where the singular and plural take different forms (**lira** “lira (pound)” - **liri**, **lapes** “pencil” - **lapsijiet**, **sodda** “bed” - **sodod**).

On the other hand, a small number of invariable nouns already exists in Maltese, i.e. nouns which always remain the same, such as **martri** “martyr”, **verġni** “virgin”, etc. (e.g. **martri wieħed** “one martyr”, **ħafna martri** “many martyrs”). Several adjectives stemming from European languages, such as **possibbli** “possible”, **intelligenti** “intelligent”, **orangjo** “orange-coloured”, also retain the same form in the plural (e.g. **żagħżuġh intelligenti** “intelligent young man”, **żgħażaġh intelligenti** “intelligent young men”; **purtiera orangjo** “orange curtain”, **purtieri orangjo** “orange curtains”).

In addition, the form **ewri** was felt to be strained and artificial by practically all the individuals consulted. The reason for this may be that the Maltese have already become accustomed to the form **ewro - ewro** (due perhaps to the influence of the Italian media), which appears to be preferred in sentences such as *Sarraft tmien ewro* (but not *ewri*) “I changed eight euros”.

One should also bear in mind that, should the chosen plural form be **ewri**, this would find difficulty in taking root because in Maltese the plural of nouns is used only for the numbers 2 to 10, whereas the singular is employed not only with the number one but with all numbers from 11 to infinity (e.g. **żewġ karozzi** “two cars”, **disa’ karozzi** “nine cars” but **karozza** “a car”, **ħdax-il karozza** “eleven cars”, **tmenin karozza** “eighty cars”, **miljun karozza** “a million cars”).

Therefore, our choice of plural form is to be **ewro**.

The choice of spelling

The Maltese form is to follow the official rules of Maltese orthography. This principle applies to anything that is written in Maltese.

Maltese orthography does not allow the letters **eu** to appear alongside each other, except where these letters are pronounced as two different syllables, that is **e-u** (e.g. **ateu** “an atheist (m.)”, etc.).¹ This is not the case of **ewro**, where **ew-** constitutes a single syllable.

Wherever the **eu-** of European languages (pronounced as a single syllable) is found in Maltese, this always takes the spelling **ew-** (e.g. **Ewropa** “Europe”, **ewfemiżmu** “euphemism”, **ewkaristija** “eucharist”).

For these reasons, the only form which respects Maltese orthography and properly integrates therein is **ewro** (pl. **ewro**), which is thus the only form which the Council for the Maltese Language may propose.

This basic argument is supported by the following practical consideration. Should the chosen form be the foreign spelling **euro**, this would continue to generate

ambiguity and uncertainty on the part of the readers, as it is already doing. Currently, in fact, whenever the form **euro** is used in Maltese, some speakers pronounce it **ewro** [ˈɛwrɔ] and others pronounce it as in English, **jurow** [ˈjuːrɔw]. For this reason, we find that the article of this word appears both as **l-euro** (*l-ewro*) and as **il-euro** (*il-jurow*). On the other hand, the spelling **ewro** leaves no room for ambiguity, and leads the reader to the only correct pronunciation.

The word **ewro** is always written with a small initial letter, except when occurring at the beginning of a sentence.

As an abbreviation to be used together with a figure (instead of the euro symbol €), the official abbreviation **EUR** is to be accepted as the three-character currency code used internationally in banking systems, together with other codes of the ISO 4217 standard (such as **MTL** for the Maltese Lira and **USD** for the US Dollar). The form **EUR** is not an element of the Maltese language. In all other cases, the form to be used in Maltese is **ewro**.

The only form which respects Maltese orthography and properly integrates therein is **ewro** (pl. **ewro**), and is thus the only form which the Council for the Maltese Language may propose

1. See *Tagħrif fuq il-Kitba Maltija II*, p. 29, rule 39: The letters *j* and *w* are written *j* and *w* (consonant letters), and not *i* or *u*, whenever they have a preceding or subsequent vowel to which they adhere to form a diphthong... This occurs at the beginning of a word, within a word or at the end of a word. We thus write... *sew* and not *seu* (as in *sewwa* and not *seuua*).

ċenteżmu,
masculine noun,
plural ċenteżmi



Again, several possible forms were considered, these being:

- sent, pl. sents
- ċenteżmu, pl. ċenteżmi
- ċent, pl. ċenti

The choice of word

The speakers of Maltese intuitively rejected the hybrid form *ċent* from the very beginning, among other reasons because this morphological stem is in fact associated with the number “hundred” rather than with “a hundredth part of”.

This leaves us with the forms *sent* and *ċenteżmu*.

sent is the phonetic Maltese rendering of the English *cent*. This form is short and practical, and is used by many of the Maltese.

Some feel that adopting this form together with *ewro* would create an awkward and unfortunate combination: a word phonetically associated with Italian (*ewro*, pl. *ewro*) followed by another word taken directly from English (*sent*, pl. *sents*). This is not necessarily negative, firstly because such is the nature of the Maltese language, which strings together words of completely different origin, and secondly because this situation already exists, as several Maltese are saying, for example, *ghoxrin lira u ten sents* “twenty lira and ten cents”.

This brings us to another important point.

A major disadvantage of the words *sent* and *sents* is that these tend to automatically trigger the use of an English number. As we are all aware, Maltese numbers suffer competition from their English counterparts, which in certain situations (e.g. in digital sequences such as telephone numbers) may be considered to have already taken their place. For this reason, it would appear unwise to choose the forms *sent* - *sents*, two words which would contribute to spelling the death-knell of the Maltese numbers.

On the other hand, the form *ċenteżmu*, despite being longer, has already taken root, is considered as the standard word for *cent* and is thus felt to be more Maltese than the form *sent*. It is also certain that this form requires the use of a number in Maltese, as is indeed desirable. With regard to the argument concerning word length, we should bear in mind that all speakers of Italian use the word *centesimo*, despite the fact that the officially chosen name is *cent*.

Therefore, our choice has to be the form *ċenteżmu*. This word is always written with a small initial letter, except when occurring at the beginning of a sentence.

The plural form (*ċenteżmi*) is already established beyond dispute.

Until such time as the new names replace those of the present Maltese currency, in particular cases where it is necessary to specify so as to avoid ambiguity (for example, in contracts and notarial documents), one may use the word **ewroċenteżmu** (pl. **ewroċenteżmi**) as a means to clearly indicate the new currency.

The choice of spelling

The spelling of the word chosen presents no difficulties. The word is written: **ċenteżmu**, pl. **ċenteżmi**.

The abbreviated form is to be **ċ** (always with a dot above it and without a dot following it), as is already the customary abbreviation of **ċenteżmu**. This should not provide any difficulty since abbreviations are normally taken from the letters of the word itself; in Finnish, for example, the official abbreviation of **sentti/senttiä** is **snt**.

In Maltese, **c** without a dot does not exist. For this reason, the foreign letter **c** is not an alternative to the Maltese **ċ**, and in Maltese it represents nothing. Just as Greek was allowed to use its own alphabet in view of the fact that the Latin letters are not part of its system of writing, by virtue of the same argument, the Maltese language should not be forced to use a letter which does not exist in its alphabet.

Conclusion

In the light of these arguments, the National Council for the Maltese Language, at the meeting of 3rd November 2005, proposed that the names of the European currency in Maltese be the following:

- **ewro**
singular masculine noun, plural **ewro**
- **ċenteżmu**
singular masculine noun, plural **ċenteżmi**,
both singular and plural forms to be abbreviated as **ċ**

We are confident that our choices, whilst safeguarding linguistic criteria, draw near to the desire of the people, so that the proposed forms may quickly and without effort become popular and widespread

A few basic points

We would hereby like to make a few relevant statements to assist all those who come to propose the Maltese names given by the Council for the Maltese Language in European fora.

- The Maltese language is often described as a “small language”. This is not because it is in any way inferior to other languages which may be considered larger, but simply because it is used by a small community of speakers.
- Maltese is an official language of the EU, and should expect and enjoy the same rights and the same treatment as the other official languages. This also entails that Maltese be respected as it is, with its own morphology, official alphabet and official orthography.
- As occurs in other languages, certain orthographical forms in Maltese (including those suggested in this report) do not match those of most of the orthographies of the other member states, for each language has its own writing system. Among the forms proposed by the Council for the Maltese Language, we find the word **ewro** written with a w and the word **ċenteżmu** with the letters ċ and ż, both with a dot. These letters are an integral part of the Maltese language with its own particular character and not whimsical or capricious choices or a luxury which we can do without.
- This particular nature of the Maltese language needs to be asserted in our proposals. In this we may find the support, and perhaps the precedent, of other official languages. For instance, there are languages which, like Maltese, do not spell the name of the European continent with **eu** but with different letters (e.g. Latvian **ei-**, Irish **eo-**, Slovenian **ev-**). In German, the words **Euro** and **Cent** are written with a capital letter so as to respect the traditional orthography of the same language. In many of the languages, the forms are subject to other changes by virtue of declination (e.g. Finnish **senttiä**, **sentit**, Swedish **euron**, **eurorna**, etc.). In Greek, not only were the words for the euro and the cent transcribed into the Greek alphabet, but a completely different name was allowed for the cent (**ΛΕΠΤΟ** LEPTÓ).
- We should bear in mind that some of the states concerned, and according to certain sources Malta included, have strongly voiced their case with regard to this situation. Such countries continue to maintain the argument of diversity in the face of a tendency to level out the linguistic forms to a single word. This is a tendency largely stemming from sectors which are not particularly sensitive to the linguistic reality, and indeed much less sensitive to it than the very people who will be using these words once the decision has been taken.
- Our hope is that this levelling attitude will be overcome and due respect be shown towards the individual character of the different languages, the diversity of which the EU so actively promotes.

Appendix A

The examples marked in bold are “irregular” forms officially accepted by the Commission of the European Union, including in legal texts

France	1 euro	100 euros	1 cent	100 cents
Spain	1 euro	100 euros	1 cent	100 cents
Portugal	1 euro	100 euros	1 cent	100 cents
Finland	1 euro	100 euroa	1 sentti	100 senttiä
Germany	1 Euro	100 Euro	1 Cent	100 Cent

Please see the official website of the European Commission
http://europa.eu.int/comm/economy_finance/euro/faqs/faqs_13_en.htm

The following forms are used regularly in both official and unofficial communication in some countries of the EU

Estonia	1 euro	100 eurot	1 sent	100 senti
UK	1 euro	100 euros	1 cent	100 cents
Ireland	1 eoró	100 eoró	1 cheint	100 ceint
France	1 euro	100 euros	1 centime	100 centimes
Spain	1 euro	100 euros	1 céntimo	100 céntimos
Portugal	1 euro	100 euros	1 cêntimo	100 cêntimos
Hungary	1 euró	100 euró	1 cent	100 cent
Italy	1 euro	100 euro	1 centesimo	100 centesimi
Latvia	1 eiro	100 eiro	1 cents	100 centi
Lithuania	1 euras	100 eurų	1 cent	100 centų
Slovenia	1 evro	100 evrov	1 cent	100 centov

See www.evertype.com/standards/euro/euronames.html



Appendix B

Examples of the chosen names as used in context

Examples of practical use

25č	hamsa u ghoxrin čentežmu
€1.05	ewro u hames čentežmi
€2.15	žewg ewro u hmistax-il čentežmu
€6.30	sitt ewro u tletin čentežmu
€12	tnax-il ewro
€2,000	elfejn ewro
€13,000,000	tlettax-il miljun ewro
EUR 52	tnajn u hamsin ewro
	ghal kull ewro “for every euro”
	ghal kull čentežmu “for every cent”

The different values of the euro coins and notes

1č	čentežmu
2č	žewg čentežmi
5č	hames čentežmi
10č	ghaxar čentežmi
20č	ghoxrin čentežmu
50č	hamsin čentežmu
EUR 1	ewro
EUR 2	žewg ewro
EUR 5	hames ewro
EUR 10	ghaxar ewro
EUR 20	ghoxrin ewro
EUR 50	hamsin ewro
EUR 100	mitt ewro
EUR 200	mitejn ewro
EUR 500	hames mitt ewro

€130,000.05

In front of lists of digits, we should write

EUR 130,000.05

In a discursive text, the same amount should be written

130,000.05 ewro

When expressed in words, the same amount is rendered as

mija u tletin elf ewro u hames čentežmi



Il-Kunsill Nazzjonali ta' l-Ilsien Malti

36 Triq iz-Zekka
Valletta VLT 12
Malta

Tel +356 2122 7628

kunsilltalmalti@gov.mt

www.kunsilltalmalti.gov.mt

President	Prof. Manwel Mifsud
Vici-President	Dr Josette Attard
Segretarju	George Farrugia
Membri	Prof. Albert Borg
	Joseph P. Borg
	Dr Charles Briffa
	Victor Cauchi
	Dr Ray Fabri
	Prof. Joe Friggieri
	Dr Simone Inguanez
	Mario Schiavone

Appendix C

Further reading on the names of the European currency

For more information on this subject, on the difficulties being met by other countries and the solutions proposed, you may like to take a look at the following websites.

Spelling of the words “euro” and “cent” in the official Community languages to be used when drawing up Community Legislative acts

http://europa.eu.int/comm/economy_finance/euro/faqs/faqs_13_en.htm

English Style Guide: A handbook for authors and translators in the European Commission

http://europa.eu.int/comm/translation/writing/style_guides/english/style_guide_en.pdf

Euro or eora? Cent or ceint? The new currency and Ireland

www.evertype.com/standards/euro/euro-eora-en.pdf

Linguistic issues concerning the euro

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linguistic_issues_concerning_the_Euro

It's a boy! The euro gets a gender

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/special_report/single_currency/86518.stm

Gli euro e le lingue

www.istruzione.it/euro/web_istruzione/crusca.shtml

The name of the euro in European languages

www.evertype.com/standards/euro/euronames.html

There's more than one way to spell euro

www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2004/10/13/weu113.xml&sSheet=/news/2004/10/13/ixworld.html