

PHOTOS BY ALAN CARVILLE



Ing Mario Schembri, CEO at GreenPak Coop

MAKING IT EASY TO BE GREEN

When Malta joined the EU in 2004, companies on the island were suddenly faced with the responsibility and duty of recycling all the packaging generated by their business. Very few businesses back then did so of their own volition, so a quick and effective solution was needed to tackle this new challenge. GreenPak, founded by Ing. Mario Schembri with the endorsement of the Malta Chamber of Commerce, was founded in response to those same demands; 11 years later, the company provides recycling services not only to 1,300 businesses but to the vast majority of towns and villages in Malta and Gozo on a daily basis - around 72 per cent of the population.

Ing. Schembri has been working in the environmental

field for 20 years, and has been involved in many projects related to waste management, energy, transportation and habitat protection over the past two decades. "The GreenPak system works on a simple principle," Ing. Schembri explains. "When a company sells a product, it sets aside a small amount of money - as little as a fraction of a cent - for packaging recycling. This money is sent to GreenPak, which in turn uses it to finance the 'Bring-In Sites' services and the 'Recycling Tuesdays' bag collections offered to those communities whose locality is enlisted with GreenPak. As GreenPak is a not-for-profit organisation, any surplus money left at the end of each year is given back to the Cooperative Society members." Driven by a young and dynamic team whose aim is to provide environmental sustainability and economic viability for

the benefit of the public and industry, GreenPak also apportions some of the money it makes through its recycling drives for education purposes, school projects as well as other environmental projects. Modelled on the Extended Producer Responsibility, GreenPak fulfils its objectives by engaging the industry, the authorities, and the community to work together towards sustainable recycling. Ing. Schembri himself has also been instrumental in setting up the international organisation Extended Producer Alliance (EXPRA), which promotes the not-for-profit concept that producers are best placed to recover end-of-life products, where he now sits on the Board of Directors. This year marks the fifth edition of GreenPak's 'Nirriċikla għall-Istrina' campaign, which was set up in 2010 with the aim of collecting funds for the

annual I-Istrina charity event by gathering and recycling plastic bottle caps. "This year's edition was launched in April to allow participants time to collect plastic caps - this way we can increase the final donation we make to the Malta Community Chest Fund," Ing. Schembri explains. The scheme has been a runaway success - so far, over 138 schools and 30 business organisations from various sectors including financial services, manufacturing, education, governmental entities and sports clubs are actively participating in the drive to collect, with GreenPak actively collaborating with the Malta Community Chest Fund and the Directorate for Educational Services to help it reach an even wider audience. "We believe that through this campaign we can deliver a positive message by connecting two socially beneficial activities - recycling

and charity. And with over five million plastic caps already collected, this year's edition of Nirriċikla għall-Istrina is set to break its own record," Ing. Schembri beams. The next major challenge for GreenPak lies in helping Malta implement the Waste Electrical & Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Compliance Scheme, which was launched in July. Electrical and electronic waste is one of the fastest growing waste streams in the EU, and is expected to grow to more than 12 million tonnes by 2020. "We are also seeing a growth in the number of companies joining the Cooperative - this can only bode well for the future of Malta's circular economy," Ing. Schembri says. **BB**

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