

5 questions with... Miriam Dalli

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Opinion

The sea, autism and academia.



Miriam Dalli | *Photo credit: European Parliament audiovisual*

1. Which person you have worked with has most inspired you in your career and how?

Somehow children and young adults always manage to amaze me with their creative thinking and their honesty in laying out the challenges that they face. In this regard, I have to mention three outstanding young people. Emily Slater, a 16 year old girl with autism who spoke publicly at the European Parliament to highlight the barriers she faces in accessing education. Also 19 year old Kurt Mizzi, who is an amazing photographer and helps me understand the challenges that children with dyslexia face, and 13 year old Sharon Cilia, who came to Brussels to fight for children's rights and help others overcome bullying.

2. Is there anything you have personally achieved or done that would surprise people?

I spent 15 years at university and read for four different degrees and a doctorate while working. I am an avid believer in combining work and academic life.

3. What is the most humbling thing you have experienced in your career?

Meeting parents of children with autism. The number of sacrifices they make, the level of misunderstanding they have to face and the amount of love they have for their children, to hopefully create a better future are beyond anyone's comprehension. It is only when you sit down with them and understand the issues they have to face that I started to realise how much we need to do more to actually help them.

4. What do you do in your free time to relax and unwind?

I love the sea. In the summer, whenever I have free time it's all about swimming and boating. During the other months, spending time with my children and monkeying around does the trick.

5. What was the most inspirational and influential book you have read and why?

Definitely 'The Fault in Our Stars' by John Green. Such a poignant narrative about life and death and everything that happens in between. It was one of those books where I laughed, then I cried and then I laughed again.

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