



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

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PRESS RELEASE

ASSISTANCE TO CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS THROUGH THE CIVIL SOCIETY FUND

The Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information, Dr Chris Said today presented cheques to beneficiaries of the Civil Society Fund (CSF). The fund, which is administered by the Malta-EU Steering and Action Committee (MEUSAC), is aimed at assisting constituted bodies and representative organisations to keep abreast of developments in the European Union, and enabling them to better educate their members about EU matters related to their respective fields of competence and to participate effectively in the decision-making process at European level. For 2008, the financial assistance provided by Government through the CSF consisted in a refund covering part of the expenses actually incurred by these organisations throughout 2008 in relation to the above-mentioned objectives.

When addressing participants at today's CSF distribution ceremony, MEUSAC Head Dr Vanni Xuereb explained MEUSAC's objectives following its reactivation and the subsequent absorption of *Forum Malta fl-Ewropa* in July 2008. The CSF had previously been administered by the FME and following the re-activation of MEUSAC it was decided to utilise the outstanding balance of the CSF. Dr Xuereb said that MEUSAC aims at empowering civil society



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organisations to make the best of the many and various opportunities provided by EU membership.

The Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information Dr Chris Said said that the process to financially assist constituted bodies and civil society organisations prior to Malta's EU accession will continue in a different format this year. In fact, the CSF which initially provided assistance to the constituted bodies and civil society organisations to familiarise themselves with the EU's institutions and policies prior to Malta's accession to the Union, will as from this year be re-designed as a Co-financing Fund for non-governmental organisations, in parallel with the fund provided for in the 2009 Budget for EU Funded Projects in Localities. Both funds will assist NGOs and local councils respectively in terms of the co-financing element of EU Funded Projects.

27 organisations have this year benefited from the 2008 Civil Society Fund. Dr Said encouraged CSF beneficiaries to tap EU funding. He reiterated that MEUSAC through its newly-established Funding Unit is gearing itself to assist CSOs in the preparation of project proposals under the various EU Funding Programmes. Moreover, MEUSAC will continue to provide a forum for the consultation process that actively involves CSOs in the Core Group and sectoral committees, as well as continuing to provide information on EU Policy and EU funding opportunities.

The Parliamentary Secretary encouraged participants to be pro-active not only with regard to EU funding but also with regard to their active involvement in the consultation process which Government has embarked on, both through MEUSAC and MCESD. He stated that as of this

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year both MEUSAC and MCESD will be housed in the same centrally-located building in Valletta to maximise accessibility to the public and to CSOs as well as to further synergise the consultation processes on EU related issues and on domestic issues respectively.

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