

OPENING SPEECH
EUROPE FOR CITIZENS PROGRAMME
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HOTEL VICTORIA
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Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you on behalf of the Malta-EU Steering and Action Committee to this Seminar on “Europe for Citizens”, the European Union’s programme for 2007-2013 aimed at bringing Europe closer to its citizens and to enable them to participate fully in the process of European integration.

As is stated in the Programme Guide, the general objectives of the Europe for citizens Programme are to contribute to:

- giving citizens the opportunity to interact and participate in constructing an ever closer Europe, which is democratic and world-oriented, united in and enriched through its cultural diversity, thus developing citizenship of the European Union;
- developing a sense of European identity, based on common values, history and culture;
- fostering a sense of ownership of the European Union among its citizens;
- enhancing tolerance and mutual understanding between European citizens respecting and promoting cultural and linguistic diversity, while contributing to intercultural dialogue.

The Programme has the following specific objectives, to be implemented on a transnational basis:

- bringing together people from local communities across Europe to share and exchange experiences, opinions and values, to learn from history and to build for the future;
- fostering action, debate and reflection related to European citizenship and democracy, shared values, common history and culture through cooperation within civil society organisations at European level;
- bringing Europe closer to its citizens by promoting Europe's values and achievements, while preserving the memory of its past;
- encouraging interaction between citizens and civil society organisations from all participating countries, contributing to intercultural dialogue and bringing to the fore both Europe's diversity and unity, with particular attention to activities aimed at developing closer ties between citizens from Member States of the European Union.

The programme supports four main types of actions:

Action 1 – **Active Citizens for Europe**: involving citizens either through activities linked to town-twinning or through other kinds of citizens' projects.

Action 2 – **Active civil society in Europe**: targeted to civil society organisations either through structural support on the basis of their European level work programme or through support to projects.

Action 3 - **Together for Europe**: including high visibility events, studies and information tools.

Action 4 – **Active European Remembrance**: support to projects aiming at preserving the sites and archives associated with de deportations as well as the commemorating of victims of Nazism and Stalinism.

The Programme is open to all stakeholders promoting active European citizenship. These include:

- local councils and organisations
- European public policy research organisations (think-tanks)
- citizens' groups
- civil society organisations

- non-governmental organisations
- trade unions
- educational institutions
- organisations active in the field of voluntary work
- organisations active in the field of amateur sport, etc.

The aim of our Seminar today is to focus in particular on the possibilities for local councils and NGOs particularly those operating at the local level. On the 25th July, officials from MEUSAC already had the opportunity to address representatives of the local councils on the town-twinning actions during a seminar organized by the Department for Local Councils and the Parliamentary Secretariat for Public Dialogue and Information. Later on this morning, Ms. Natasha Jovicic from the Information, Communication Citizenship unit of the Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) will be giving us an overview of Action 1 which is subdivided into two measures:

1. **Town Twinning** - consisting in benefiting from the links established at local level between twinned municipalities for fostering exchanges and cooperation.
2. **Citizens' projects and support measures** that explore innovative methods of citizens' participation.

We are grateful to Ms. Jovicic for finding the time to come over to Malta to be with us this morning for this seminar. Later on, she will also be giving us a presentation regarding the application and selection process.

We will also have the opportunity to hear about the Programme from the perspective of a local council that has benefited from it - that of San Lawrenz in Gozo.

As many of you are aware, it is the intention of the government that within MEUSAC a Funding Unit is established in order to assist local councils and NGOs not only in identifying funding opportunities but also in assisting in the actual procedures that would lead to the submission of an application. We are currently in the process of recruiting a Head for the new Funding Unit as well as a number of funding support executives. At present we have already started to offer limited services through the existing structure and

staff that MEUSAC inherited from *Forum Malta fl-Ewropa* with the support of an expert consultant on EU funding programmes with whom some of you are probably already familiar. It is also my pleasure to announce that we have finalized the text of a draft Cooperation Agreement which will serve as the basis of what I hope will be a mutually beneficial relationship between MEUSAC and the local councils.

Naturally I cannot fail to mention that in June 2008, the European Union Programmes Agency (EUPA) was appointed as the national contact point for the Europe for Citizens Programme. I am confident that the EUPA team would also be most willing to assist you.

I hope that you will find the proceedings of this seminar interesting. MEUSAC's assistance will not end with the conclusion of this seminar but, as I have already mentioned, will be extended through the assistance that the Funding Unit will be providing as from the coming weeks.

Finally, may I thank all members of MEUSAC staff for their efforts in the organisation of this event.

Thank you.