

meusacnews



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EDITORIAL Dr Vanni Xuereb

Fruitful partnership to communicate Europe

I recently participated in a workshop on management and strategic partnership agreements organised by the Press Office of the Austrian Federal Chancellery. Following the Political Declaration of the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission of 22 October 2008 - "Communicating Europe in Partnership" - this inter-institutional arrangement between the Member States/Council, the Commission and the European Parliament aims at improving communication and establishing common inter-institutional communication priorities as well as developing synergies and complementarities



between the three institutions.

In 2011 there were eighteen Management Partnerships with a budget absorption of over €9 million. The Delegation Agreement whereby MEUSAC was appointed as the Intermediary Body for the implementation of the Management Partnership in Malta was signed in 2009. So far, MEUSAC has implemented joint communication measures that have targeted various sectors of Maltese society and ranged from general

information campaigns to the production of two episodes of the *Tommy and Rosy* cartoon. In three years, €566.448 have been utilised to finance these measures.

MEUSAC values its collaboration with the European Commission Representation in Malta as a result of which, and with the support of the EP Office in Valletta, the Management Partnership is proving to be an effective tool to communicate Europe to Maltese citizens.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

EU Affairs Parliamentary Committee to discuss ACTA

Wikipedia's shut down for 24 hours in protest against a recently enacted legislation in the US has brought about a whiplash in the rest of the developed world

The new law would be giving the US government the power to censor online content and access.

The EU and 22 of its Member States are signatories to the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA). Various parties are concerned that this agreement will infringe on fundamental human rights whilst also leading to certain restrictions on internet use. The European Commission has ensured that the main aim of ACTA is to ensure that organised crime can be pursued when intellectual property is stolen.

A heated debate is also taking place in Malta. Government and Opposition have traded charges on the issue.

Finance Minister Tonio Fenech referred to the MEUSAC Competitiveness and Consumer Affairs Update sent out to members of the sectoral committee (including the

political parties) in July 2011. Reference was made to the Proposal for an EU Council Decision on ACTA. Minister Fenech was reported as having stated that no objections had been raised then on the Agreement.

"A heated debate is also taking place in Malta"

Opposition spokesman for consumer rights, communication and ICT, Michael Farrugia replied that the Labour Party had actively participated in discussions on the subject in the European Parliament.

The ACTA will be discussed by the Foreign and European Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives. The Agreement cannot enter into force until approved by the European Parliament.



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EU FUNDING



URBACT: connecting cities building successes

URBACT, a European exchange and learning programme promoting sustainable urban development that is jointly financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and EU Member States, has enabled cities to work together with the aim of developing solutions to major urban challenges. This funding programme seeks to provide localities with the opportunity to learn from other European cities through the exchange of best practices so as to develop solutions that are innovative and sustainable and that integrate economic, social and environmental aspects.

The third and final call under URBACT entitled, **The Creation of Thematic Networks**, is currently open. The 8 Thematic areas of the call are closely related to the pillars of the Europe 2020 Strategy being:

The 8 Thematic areas

Innovative Cities

1. Promoting Innovation and the Knowledge Economy
2. Promoting Social Innovation
3. Promoting Employment and Supporting Labour Mobility
4. Promoting Entrepreneurship

Sustainable Cities

5. Developing Low Carbon and Energy Efficient Urban Economies
6. Enhancing Urban Planning Performance and an efficient public administration

Inclusive Cities

7. Promoting the active inclusion of specific groups
8. Fostering regeneration of deprived neighbourhoods and combating poverty

Who can apply under this call?

Cities and towns represented by local councils, infra-municipal bodies and organised agglomerations coming from the 27 EU Member States, Norway and Switzerland.

What can a city/town carry out under this call?

A Thematic Network is to focus on fostering an exchange of experiences among European cities with the aim of developing new policies focusing on sustainable urban development. Furthermore, cities/towns under this call will also be able to develop a Local Action Plan in consultation with the local community and stakeholders alike.

The deadline for the submission of project proposals is **March 15, 2012**. To get to know more about URBACT, visit the Programme's website at www.urbact.eu

EDUCATION

25 years of Erasmus

3 million students and €3 billion in EU funds

Erasmus exchanges enable students to develop skills and improve their future job prospects. It also provides opportunities for teacher training and for enhanced co-operation between higher education institutions. Work placements in companies abroad are also supported by *Erasmus*.

The 25th anniversary celebrations opened with a conference in Brussels to evaluate the programme's impact and discuss its future. A follow-up conference will be held in Denmark on May 9. In Malta, the anniversary will be celebrated on May 25 with an artistic event focusing on the theme of mobility. The event will be open to local artists as well as past *Erasmus* beneficiaries.

Launched in 1987, the Programme initiated with 3,244 students from 11 countries. This year, it is expected to reach the 3 million mark with 33 participating countries. Between 2007 and 2013, *Erasmus* cost the EU around €3 billion.

Erasmus for All, the new education and training programme for the period 2014-2020, will consolidate the seven existing programmes for education and training into one. *Erasmus for All* will increase efficiency and make it easier to apply for grants. Once approved, the new programme is expected to assist up to 5 million people.

Are you interested in taking part in an *Erasmus* exchange?

Visit <http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus> or contact the International & EU Office of the University of Malta.



PRE-ANNOUNCEMENT

Urban regeneration and improving the quality of life



The Managing Authority for Cohesion Policy 2007-2013 in Malta (the Planning and Priorities Coordination Department (PPCD) within the Office of the Prime Minister) will shortly be launching a call for project proposals to be part-financed by the EU under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) 2007-2013.

The focus areas under Priority Axis 6: **Urban Regeneration and Improving the Quality of Life** are:

- Internal Mobility
- E-Accessibility
- Education, Social and Health-related Infrastructure

More information will be available on this call to be issued in the coming weeks. The total indicative financial threshold for this call is **€16 million**, with the co-financing rate set at **85%**. Further information on ERDF, the Priority Axis 6 and the Focus areas highlighted above is available at http://www.ppcd.gov.mt/calls_all?l=1



Operational Programme II – Cohesion Policy 2007–2013
Empowering People for More Jobs and a Better Quality of Life
Project part-financed by the European Union
European Social Fund (ESF)
Co-financing rate: 85% EU Funds; 15% National Funds
Investing in Your Future



FINANCE



A new fiscal 'treaty'

25 of the 27 EU Member States have pledged to sign the new "Fiscal Compact" aimed at strengthening fiscal discipline through the introduction of more automatic sanctions and stricter surveillance, and in particular through the "balanced budget rule"

The UK and the Czech Republic are the only countries to opt out of the legally binding pact agreed to during a recent informal European Council meeting held in Brussels on January 30.

According to Council President Van Rompuy "The decisions taken should

increase confidence in our economies."

Reporting to Parliament on the outcome of the meeting, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi also moved the first reading of a Bill amending the Constitution aimed at ensuring that governments present balanced budgets, known as the Golden Rule. Opposition

Leader Joseph Muscat expressed the Opposition's support for the amendment.

The new Treaty will be officially signed during another summit in March and will then have to be ratified by all signatories. It will enter into force once it has been ratified by at least 12 euro area Member States.

Key points about the new "Fiscal Compact"

Requires national budgets to be in balance or in surplus. This will be achieved if the annual structural government deficit does not exceed 0.5% of nominal GDP.

Includes rules on reducing national debt and the introduction of automatic sanctions on those Member States which do not stick to their commitments

The treaty will empower the Court of Justice of the EU to monitor compliance and impose fines on rule-breakers.

The excessive deficit procedure will also become more automatic.

FACT BOX

The European Council

- ✓ Set up in 1974 as a forum for discussion between EU leaders but rapidly developed into the body which fixed goals and priorities for the bloc;
- ✓ Composed of the Heads of State or Government of the 27 Member States and the President of the Commission;
- ✓ Acquired formal status in 1992 and in following the entry into force of the Treaty Of Lisbon in 2009 it became one of the EU's institutions;
- ✓ Has a permanent president who is elected for a 2½ year term - in 2009 Herman Van Rompuy was elected as the first president;
- ✓ Meetings, often referred to as "summits", are held at least 4 times a year with EU leaders discussing and taking decisions on broad political priorities and major initiatives, however, the Council has no powers to pass laws;
- ✓ Decisions taken by consensus except if otherwise provided in the Treaties.

NEWS IN BRIEF



How can we produce and consume more sustainably?

By 2050, the world's population is set to reach 9 billion people. Worldwide demand for food, feed and fibre is forecast to increase by 70%. Economies will need to use natural resources in a far more efficient manner. The way we consume and produce will be key to Europe's success or failure in this process. The European Commission has launched a public consultation linked to the revision of the EU's Consumption and Production policies. This web-based consultation, open until April 3, is part of a broader process that will feed into policy initiatives scheduled for adoption before the end of 2012. More info: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/consultations/sustainable.htm>



50 years of CAP

2012 marks the 50th anniversary of the implementation of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), a cornerstone of European integration that has provided European citizens with 50 years of food security, farmers with a reasonable standard of living and also managed to preserve Europe's rural heritage. The CAP remains the only EU policy where there is a common EU framework. The majority of public spending on agriculture in all Member States comes from the EU budget rather than from national or regional budgets. Figures show that the CAP has helped see a steady increase in economic value, in productivity, and in trade, while also allowing the share of household spending on food to be halved. In October 2011, the European Commission presented its latest proposals for further reforms of the CAP aimed at addressing current and future challenges. For more info: <http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/50-years-of-cap/>



A Maltese on the new OLAF committee

Rita Schembri, Director General in the Internal Audit and Investigations Department (Office of the Prime Minister), has recently been appointed on the Supervisory Committee of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). OLAF's mission is to combat fraud, serious misconduct by EU Institutions' staff and supports the Commission's policies. The other members of the Supervisory Committee are Herbert Bösch (Austrian), Johan Denolf (Belgian), Catherine Pignon (French), and Christiaan Timmermans (Dutch).

ENVIRONMENT

Malta submits noise maps

No pending cases against Malta before EU Court

Malta is fully compliant with the relevant provisions of Directive 2002/49/EC relating to the assessment and management of environmental noise. The Directive stipulates that noise emanating from road traffic, railways, major airports and industry is to be assessed. Noise generated by other activities such as gardening, construction work, sports and leisure activities and pop concerts does not qualify under this Directive. Noise maps represent the annual average noise levels at a height of 4 metres above the local ground level.

Infringement proceedings had been instituted by the European

Commission against Malta before the Court of Justice of the European Union over its failure to draw up and submit the noise maps required by the Directive. However, on January 26, the European Commission formally adopted its decision to close infringement proceedings and withdraw the case it had instituted against Malta.

In withdrawing the case, the Commission accepted that the Maltese authorities have submitted the relevant noise maps required by the Directive and is fully compliant with the relevant provisions of the Directive.

Malta has no further cases pending in front of the Court of Justice of the European Union.

INTERVIEW

The new environmental permitting system...

Bridging environmental concerns and industry!

Industrial activities play an important role in ensuring Europe's economic well-being. However, they also have a negative impact on the environment due to atmospheric pollutants, the production of waste and excessive use of energy. Industrial installations are, therefore, subject to EU legislation. Implementation of the EU rules in Malta necessitates the requirement of requesting and obtaining environmental permits. These permits consist of a type of official document regulating the operational aspects of industrial facilities which have an impact on the environment.

In this context, the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA) has drafted a new environmental permitting system to improve the current regulatory framework. Contacted by MEUSAC News, Rachel Decelis, Environmental Permitting and Industry Unit officer within MEPA, stated that this proposed regime is necessary to consolidate the vast quantities of environmental laws into an integrated, site-specific permit. This should result in simplifying and facilitating industry's compliance with such laws, providing the opportunity to identify priority environmental issues to enable

appropriate risk management, and limiting the extent of liability of operators in case of environmental damage caused by the permitted activity. Most importantly, this system would be beneficial for society as a whole since certain industrial activities may pose serious health risks if not adequately regulated.

This proposed system is open for public consultation until March 7. The topic was also tackled during two well attended consultation sessions held last month and organised by MEUSAC and MEPA. Further information is available at <http://www.mepa.org.mt/environmentalpermitting>.

Kids' corner

“ Discover the digital world together... safely!”

Did you know that 26% of children report having a public social networking profile? Have you heard that in Europe 12% of 9 to 16-year-olds maintain that they have been bothered by or upset about something they came across on the internet? However, only 56% of parents whose child has received nasty or harmful messages online are aware of this, and only 1 in 8 parents do not seem to monitor their children's online activities.

Safer Internet Day takes place on February 7 each year to promote a safer internet for children and young people. One innovation for Internet Day this year is an online kit for schools which can be accessed from <http://www.saferinternetday.org/web/guest/sidkit2012>



Should you have had the opportunity to tweet to your friends on this year's Safer Internet Day theme *Connecting Generations and Educating Each Other*, what would you have written? Remember, a tweet cannot exceed 140 characters! And the more words you use from the Cloud Tag, the more you have the chance to be this issue's winner!



Send your answers to MEUSAC by not later than **February 17**. Good luck!

MN 77 Winner was Christopher Sciberras, 13 from St Julian's Congratulations!

be SMART ONLINE!

besmartonline.org.mt

BeSmartOnline! website is intended to help children, youths, parents, and educators understand all the elements that lead to a safer online experience. The project is coordinated by the Malta Communications Authority (MCA) and includes Agenzija Appogg, the Commissioner for Children, the Directorate for Educational Services (DES), the Secretariat for Catholic Education, and the Malta Police Force.

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