

EU funding for ICT and sustainable 'intelligent' cities

by Pedro Fernandez Alvarez

Malta, like the entire Europe, is facing today the need to speed-up economic growth through higher productivity, innovativeness and competitiveness, but in a manner that ensures a sustainable and rational use of resources. ICT has now become one of the main infrastructures and an obvious enabler for the achievement of long-term sustainability, within "smarter" societies. Malta's size and geographical location, its highly developed ICT infrastructure and commitment to sustainable growth, makes it a great "test-bed" for new ICT solutions and infrastructure paradigms, and thus a "catalyst" for their expansion and development into the Euro-Mediterranean region.

ICT plays an instrumental role in boosting innovation in all sectors and contributes to more than 40 per cent of overall productivity growth. Widespread use of ICT can result in new public and private markets, shorter innovation cycles and faster responses to key socio-economic challenges. ICT fuels the delivery of new and better public services, brings efficiency gains and helps in cutting the rising costs related to global problems that Europe is facing. It brings unique responses such as a lower carbon economy and intelligent transport to the growing needs for sustainable healthcare and ageing well, for better security and privacy. Europe can drive progress in developing and using ICT-based innovations in addressing such global socio-economic challenges.

ICT is at the core of the EU's Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP) through a specific programme called Information and Communication Technologies Policy Support Programme (ICT PSP). The ICT Policy Support Programme aims at a wider uptake and best use of ICT by citizens, governments and businesses, in particular SMEs. It helps overcome technical but also organisational hurdles that hinder the advancement of an information society for all.

ICT PSP aims to develop pan-European, innovative ICT-based solutions and services, most notably in areas of public interest. It seeks in particular to strengthen the role that the public sector can play in actively driving uptake of innovative products and services in sectors with a potential for high-growth. Greater uptake of such ICT services will open a wide range of new business opportunities, in particular for innovative SMEs.

The ICT PSP programme mainly supports pilot projects aimed at testing in real settings innovative ICT based services in areas such as ICT for energy efficiency, environment and smart mobility; ICT for health; ICT for ageing and inclusion; Digital Libraries; ICT for government and governance; Public Sector information; and Internet evolution and security. It also supports networking actions providing a forum for stakeholders for experience sharing and consensus building on

such areas.

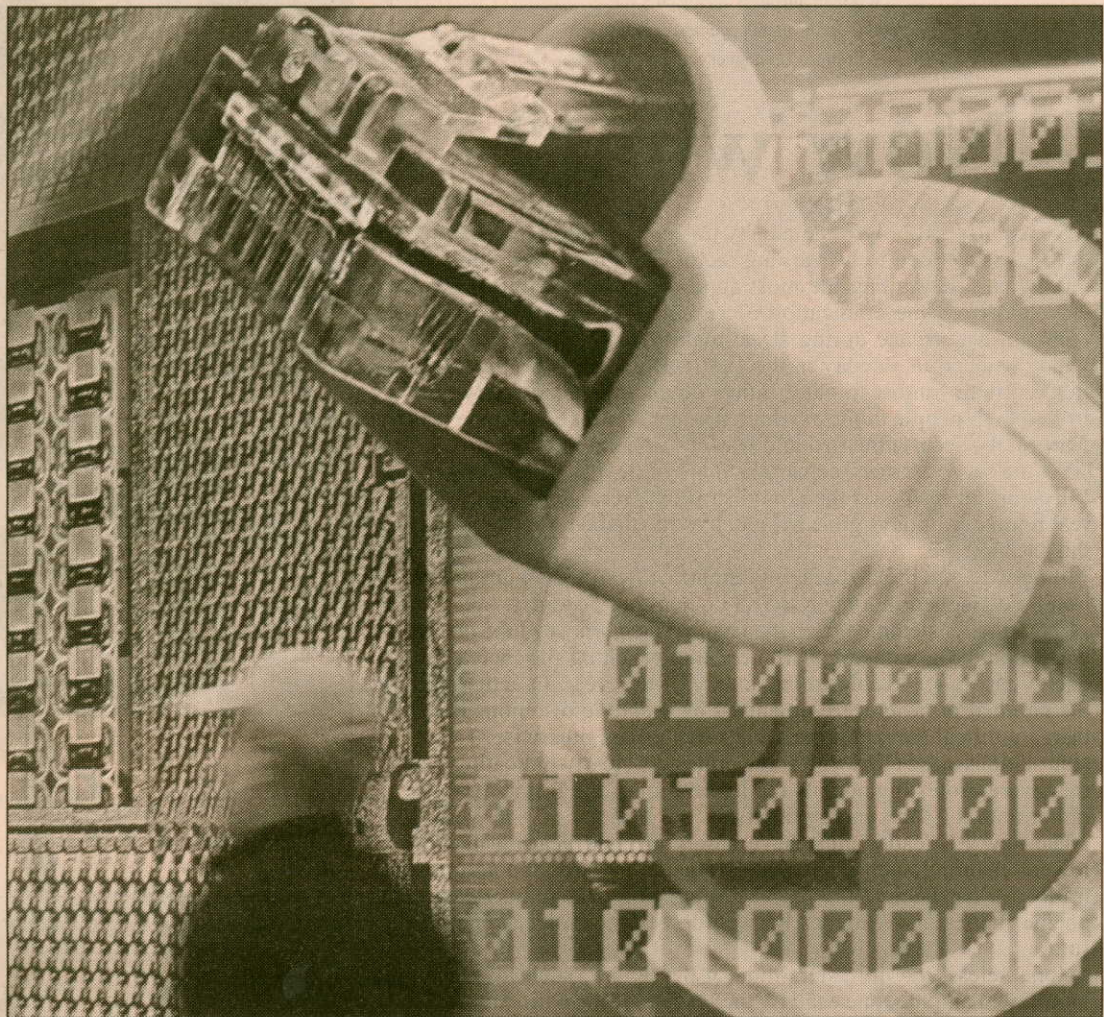
Bearing in mind the fact that the ICT PSP 2010 call for proposals opened in the end of January and with an eye on the importance of using ICT to create more innovative, sustainable, competitive and energy efficient environments, the Malta CIP National Contact Point organised on 3 March its 2010 annual international seminar, this time addressing "ICT-enabled sustainability in 'smart' cities". The event was organised in collaboration with MEUSAC and with the support of a number of relevant stakeholders like Smart City Malta, Malta IT Agency, Cisco Malta and AirMalta. Enterprise Europe Network within Malta Enterprise also supported the event by offering match-making services for the participants.

This information and networking event, which attracted over 170 stakeholders from 13 different countries, including Senegal, India, United Arab Emirates, Nigeria and various European States, was addressed by the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications, Dr Austin Gatt, the Parliamentary Secretary for Consumers, Fair Competition, Local Councils and Public Dialogue, Dr Chris Said, as well as by other high calibre speakers, including officials from the DG Information Society within the European Commission.

The aim of this event has been to provide information on the specific funding opportunities existing under themes 1 and 4 of the 2010 ICT PSP, as well as to serve as a meeting place for representatives of public administration, academia, business and civil society from across CIP member countries, giving them the occasion to establish direct communication channels and set the base for joint projects and further collaborations.

Theme 1 under the 2010 ICT PSP funds actions in support of mobilising Information and Communication Technologies to facilitate the transition to an energy-efficient, low-carbon economy as well as "smart mobility". It aims at improving energy efficiency by monitoring and directly managing energy consumption; it also supports addressing the challenge of water scarcity and droughts in the European Union, increase water efficiency and water savings and facilitates the uptake and best use of co-operative mobility services in Europe.

Theme 4 deals with open innovation for future internet-enabled services in "smart" cities. Cities or urban areas are constantly faced with important challenges that necessitate investment in innovative solutions (notably ICT-based) to improve the quality and efficiency of their infrastructures and services. Some anticipate and are leaders in adopting smarter development models. They play also a pioneering role in engaging the user in the innovation process. Building on existing user-driven innovation initiatives in Europe, the aim is to ensure a wider imple-



mentation of open platforms for the provision of Internet-enabled services in cities. These platforms should help develop innovation ecosystems accelerating the move towards "smart" cities and providing a wide range of opportunities for new, higher quality, and sustainable services for citizens and businesses. For the purposes of this work programme, a "smart" city is a city that makes a

conscious effort to uptake innovative ICT based solutions to improve conditions of living and working and support a more inclusive, and sustainable urban environment.

In two parallel networking sessions, each focused on one of the above mentioned themes, participants presented project proposal ideas for which they are currently seeking participants or their

organisation's competences as potential project partner. The Malta NCPs also presented a number of partner searches on behalf of foreign organisations that could not attend the event.

Mr Fernandez Alvarez is part of the CIP Malta National Contact Point, which was set-up within the auspices of Malta Invest Management Co. Ltd (MIMCOL)

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

RedHat Linux Maintenance and Support Services

The Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA) needs to procure RedHat Linux Maintenance and Support Services and invites interested bidders to submit their proposals.

A soft copy of the document "RedHat Linux Maintenance and Support Services - Ref T005/10" may be downloaded from MITA website: <http://www.mita.gov.mt/tenders> at no charge. A hard copy of the same document may be obtained by an email request to T00510.mita@gov.mt on cash payment of €50.

Any clarifications and addenda would be communicated on the website ONLY.

Closing date for "RedHat Linux Maintenance and Support Services for MITA - Ref T005/10" is scheduled for noon (CET) on Friday, 2nd April 2010.



For further information contact:
Sourcing and Vendor Management Department
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www.mita.gov.mt