

---

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **EDUCATION AND TRAINING: EXPLORING FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES**

*Forum Malta fl-Ewropa* today (10<sup>th</sup> of July) organised another very successful conference on EU funding, this time focusing on opportunities for the education and training sector. This is the second seminar in a series of EU Funding-related initiatives which *Forum* has embarked upon for the coming months. In its Workplan, *Forum* is giving a lot of importance to the dissemination of funding experiences from Malta, in the conviction that they are of great interest and use to potential applicants.

In fact, the overwhelming response shown by participants is clear evidence of the need for information on funds available during the 2007-2013 programming period as well as of a keen interest to share experiences relating to EU funding.

Addressing a packed hall, Dr Gabriella Pace, *Forum* Chief Executive, explained that in its key messages for the European Spring Council 2007, the Education Council had stressed the importance of education and training as a prerequisite for a well-functioning knowledge triangle based on education, research and innovation. She explained EU funding programmes and schemes vary in scope, purpose and duration, adding that knowing what funding is available for the various sectors of society, when to get it and how to get it, is of the very essence for a successful outcome. Dr Pace urged those present to tap into these funds and make good use of them, since they have helped the economic and social development of the EU citizens in the various Member States. .

At the start of the Conference, participants were also addressed by the Minister for Education, Youth and Employment, the Hon. Louis Galea and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Michael Frendo. In his opening remarks, Dr Galea said that Malta is going through reforms in the education sector. Government, Minister Galea reiterated, is emphasizing a better quality of life which can only be attained through a sound education and training which should be provided for the success of all our children. In fact, Dr Galea said that Government is aiming at doubling the student population at MCAST as well as furthering investment at University level with a view to increase research and innovation within a framework for Malta to reap maximum advantages in information technology as well as to attract foreigners to continue their studies at post-graduate level within the local educational system.

Minister Galea said that Government has identified four main areas of development: enterprise and infrastructure; investment in research, innovation and ICT; sustainable tourism; and urban regeneration for a better quality of life. In fact, Government has allocated €25million, €20million, €30million, and €45million, respectively to these areas from funds attained from the EU 2007 – 2013 funding programme. Dr Galea encouraged participants to tap funds to be applied to the sectors identified by Government. He stressed that funds are not for the sole use of Government and its public entities but also for the private sector and NGOs to share in these funds so as to create prosperity and further opportunities for employment.

Minister Frendo stressed that funding for education is at the core of Government's programme, in fact Minister Frendo said that it is to be acknowledged that education is a major strength of the Maltese Islands. Dr Frendo said that Malta stands out in the education field, having a competitive advantage over other EU Member States. EU funds have to be leveraged to ensure for the provision of education and training locally as well as to turn this opportunity into a challenge to further economic developments. In fact, Government has embarked on a project to make Malta a centre of excellence by 2015. Minister Frendo sustained that this can only be made possible if we make a success of our EU membership by tapping available funds.

Minister Frendo commended *Forum* for its hard work and for its leading role in organising training seminars for civil society in the opportunities available for all to make the best use of European financial assistance. In his concluding remarks, Dr Frendo joined Minister Galea in stressing that funds are accessible for all including civil society, NGOs and the private sector.

Joseph-Lynn Micallef, *Forum* Funding Support Officer, provided participants with some tips and traps relating to EU funding proposals and the implementation of projects. Mr Micallef reiterated that the benefits gained from EU financial assistance by far outnumber the bureaucratic aspects of application compilation for EU funding support and insisted that being proactive and innovative with the proposals presented, will ensure a successful experience in any EU funding fora.

Jeanette Busuttill, Programme Manager - Youth in Action Programme, outlined the aims of the programme and explained that it aims at instilling a sense of European citizenship in young people up to the age of thirty, encouraging active youth participation and enhancing cultural diversity through youth exchanges as well as through voluntary service.

Mauro Miceli, Projects Officer with responsibility for Grundtvig, outlined the structure of the Lifelong Learning Programme which seeks to strengthen the European dimension of education at all levels. Mr Miceli paid particular focus to the action financing adult education.

Information on the Leonardo da Vinci measure, which also forms part of the Lifelong Learning Programme, was provided by Gabriella Agius, a Projects Officer responsible for the Leonardo measure. She provided an overview of the opportunities available under this measure, with particular emphasis being given to projects featuring the development of practices to facilitate access to training for those disadvantaged within the labour market, including the physically disabled, as well as proposals striving to encourage equal opportunities for men and women with the view to combat discrimination in training provision.

Opportunities for education and training may also be made available through the Structural Funds. Alison Mizzi, Senior Manager from the Planning and Priorities Co-Ordination Division (OPM), described at length the opportunities for training which are part-financed by the European Social Fund. Locally, the ESF 2007 – 2013 programme will focus specifically on projects targeted at improvements within the labour market and the education and training field, in particular through proposals which aim at investing in the education system for the upgrading of knowledge and skills

of the labour force, investment in employability and adaptability of the workforce through continuous training, as well as the promotion of an equal and inclusive labour market with a special focus on female participation.

The Conference also included a panel discussion during which some former participants and beneficiaries of EU funded initiatives relating to education and training showcased their experience.

**FME – 10.07.2007**