



**Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee**

**280 Republic Street  
Valletta VLT 1112  
Malta**

Structural Fund Projects: Experiences from around Europe  
Final Conference of the Network to Know Project  
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Introduction by Dr. Vanni Xuereb, Head of MEUSAC

It is sometimes said Europe is all about money. Of course I totally disagree. To me Europe is about common and shared values and goals. However, many people gauge the benefits of EU membership in terms of how many Euro the country is gaining. I might add that at the end of the day, people feel that the EU is working or not according to how EU membership is affording them a better standard of living. Indeed, the preamble to the Treaty of Rome of 1957 declares that the Member States are “resolved to ensure the economic and social progress of their countries by common action to eliminate the barriers which divide Europe, affirming as the essential objective of their efforts the constant improvements of the living and working conditions of their peoples”.

Both prior to Malta’s accession to the EU five years’ ago, and more insistently following accession, tapping EU funds through the various EU programmes has been a priority for many public and private entities. The Pre-Accession Funds, the 2004-2006 funding programmes and now the 2007-2013 funding programmes have contributed significantly to sustain the development of the islands in many important sectors. The two operational programmes for the 2007-2013 period are targeted at Investing in Competitiveness for a Better Quality of Life and Empowering People for More Jobs and a Better Quality of Life respectively.

The Network to Know Project, funded from April 2008 by the European Commission’s Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities DG Progress Programme and bringing together nine partners, four from East England and five from other EU Member States (Bulgaria, Hungary, Latvia, Malta and Spain), is aimed at partners’ sharing and disseminating the experience of utilising European Structural Funds to address issues relating to employment and employability.

Targeting non-governmental organizations and local government, the project has concentrated on particular themes which enable partners to share expertise and knowledge. One very important and useful tool has been the production of Guides on various themes in different languages, enabling new or experienced organizations in particular fields to understand how to maximise the benefits of Structural Funds.

In the area of EU funds, the Malta-EU Steering and Action Committee that I head has a number of roles to play:



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1. We are responsible to disseminate to the public as well as to local government and NGOs, information on EU funding programmes.
2. We also pride in showcasing success stories.
3. We offer technical assistance to NGOs and local government with respect to EU funding programmes as my colleague Maria Schembri will have the opportunity to describe later on during this session.

Moreover, MEUSAC is contributing towards government's overall strategy of assisting local government and NGOs in maximising on EU funding opportunities. Recently, the government, with the assistance of MEUSAC, launched a co-financing fund to help local government in securing the co-financing element not covered by EU funds. We are also discussing how to review our civil society fund in such a way as to preserve elements of the scheme as it has operated so far and also provide co-financing to NGOs on similar lines as that for local government.

Support one EU funding is one of MEUSAC's functions. besides offering such support, MEUSAC provides information on EU policy and funding programmes and also manages the consultation process on new EU legislation.

MEUSAC is currently undergoing a process of consolidation. We have recently engaged new members of staff in all three sectors of our operations: funding support, information and consultation. As part of this process, we are strengthening our new funding unit in order to help us cope with the ever-increasing demands for assistance from local government and NGOs. We are, at present, assisting numerous local councils and NGOs in applying for EU funds. Moreover, we have strengthened our commitment to provide information on the many funding programmes available to local government and NGOs. Many times, we do so in collaboration with other public and private entities such as the Planning and Priorities Coordination Division of the Office of the Prime Minister which manages EU Structural Funds in Malta.

I compliment Fondazzjoni Temi Zammit and its partners in the Network to Know Project. We look forward to hearing more about the results of this project and augur that it may serve to encourage other NGOs to benefit from the programmes and funds that will serve "to eliminate the barriers which divide Europe, affirming as the essential objective of their efforts the constant improvements of the living and working conditions of their peoples."