



EUROPEAN PROJECT SUSTAIN: SUSTAINABLE TRAINING ACTIVITIES ON TWINNING

Following a proposal submitted by the Union of Cyprus Municipalities within the European Programme "Europe for Citizens", the European Commission decided to finance the cooperation between the Union of Cyprus Municipalities (UCM) and the Local Union of Municipalities and Communities of the Prefecture of Chios (TEDK Chios) from Greece, in order to develop twinning links of municipalities-members of the two Associations with municipalities from other EU countries.

The UCM and TEDK Chios have started their cooperation a few years ago thanks to a twinning link between the Municipality of Chios and the Municipality of Kyrenia. In 2009 the cooperation was formalized with the signing of a memorandum of cooperation. In 2010, the two associations cooperated within the framework of the European Project DECISIVE, a project aiming to train volunteers and municipal personnel on Twinning issues.

During the cooperation of the two associations in the framework of the DECISIVE project, the following facts have become evident: TEDK Chios has a remarkable knowhow on running EU projects and supporting its members in managing their own projects, but lacks access to Europe-wide networks and information flows.



Education and Culture DG

'Europe for Citizens' Programme

On the other hand, the Union of Cyprus Municipalities, through its Brussels Office, has created a vast network of partners able to provide access to information and Municipalities-partners all around Europe, but does not have a mechanism to support its members in submitting project proposals and running the actual projects.

Future major SUSTAIN activities:

January – June: Setting-up and presentation of the SUSTAIN websites and tools

April - May: 1st 10-days long study visit of the Greek expert to Cyprus

April- May: First training session - Cyprus

June – July: 5-days long study visit of the Head of the UCM Brussels Office to Chios

June – July: Second training session - Chios

September – October: Third training session - Brussels

October: Dissemination Event

October - November: 2nd 10-days long study visit of the Greek expert to Cyprus

November: Dissemination Event

December: Evaluation report

For more information: http://www.ucm.org.cy/ENG/Promo/Promo_005.htm

The SUSTAIN project aims to combine the comparative advantages of the two partners, thus creating beneficial synergies for their members.

The project will also seek to gather into a comprehensive guide all information material (guides, websites, bibliography, best practices...) on twinning, in order to provide practical answers to local actors and citizens seeking to work on Town Twinning.

Finally, the project will enable Twinning stakeholders from both partners, not only to learn from each other's experiences, but to physically work within each other's premises, in order to better understand each other's processes.

A common study visit to Brussels will also give them the opportunity to get acquainted with the Executive Agency Education, Audiovisual and Culture (EACEA) and understand the logic of Town Twinning and of the people working on it.

SUSTAIN project: objectives

Citizens of the countries in southern Europe do not benefit from the advantages of the "Europe for citizens" Programme as much as citizens of the northern countries do. Greece and Cyprus already have a lot in common: language, history and culture. The SUSTAIN project will use all these common elements, not only in order to further strengthen relations between the Twinning stakeholders of the two countries, but also to create synergies that will help local authorities-and of course citizens- from both countries to participate in the "Europe for citizens" Programme and cooperate with municipalities from the rest of Europe.

The project aims to provide better access to European networks of towns and better

projects for the citizens of two peripheral island regions of southern Europe.

Besides all these, the project will create economies of scale, by giving to the municipalities of Chios direct access to Brussels without additional cost, through the Brussels office of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities and to the Cypriot Municipalities the opportunity to develop their own capacities to create and run European projects, without being obliged to buy the knowhow from private consultancies. The result will be a boost to the development of the two regions without additional costs, which in the current economic environment will be highly appreciated by citizens, local officials and elected representatives in the two regions.

SUSTAIN: Follow-up of the DECISIVE project

The Sustain project counts already 3 months of life. The idea for the project was based on a series of observations: Both the Union of Cyprus Municipalities and the Local Union of Municipalities and Communities of prefecture Chios (TEDK Chios) represent geographical areas with similar characteristics: islands in external EU borders, with a small population, small number of municipalities and the same language.

Regarding their involvement in European programs, the municipalities-members of the two associations have the same problems, the lack of qualified personnel being the most basic of them. On the other hand, the two associations have competitive advantages that complement each other extremely well: TEDK Chios has long experience in supporting members for participation in European projects, while the Union of Cyprus Municipalities through its Brussels office, has access to information and has created networks of

partners across Europe. Their common participation in 2010 in the DECISIVE project, which has trained volunteers and municipal personnel for creating and managing Town Twinning, showed that the involvement of volunteers / citizens is necessary, but cannot have the expected results, unless based on well-trained personnel from the municipalities, which will be able to guide the volunteers and create the necessary links with Local Authorities.

Thanks to the DECISIVE project, each Cypriot municipality already has one officer able to deal with Town Twinning. In the framework of the SUSTAIN project, these people will be invited to cooperate with their Greek counterparts from TEDK Chios and learn from their experiences. All participants will attend three training sessions (one in Chios, one in Cyprus and one in Brussels) with the target to develop their skills.

As it is already known, the DECISIVE project was funded through the "Measure 2.2. Support Measures" of the Europe for Citizens program. This measure is a tool to develop the quality of projects submitted within Action 1 "Active Citizens for Europe".

It also supports the exchange of experiences, expertise and good practices, as well as activities which may lead to the establishment of long-lasting partnerships and networks.

Support measures appear in a variety of forms, such as:

- Consultancy to provide practical advice for preparing and running good quality projects (from application procedures to internal evaluation of projects).
- Training sessions which enable those responsible for town twinning activities to develop their knowledge of the concept and practice of town twinning and to better understand and work within the European context.
- National or trans-national events promoting the concept of town twinning amongst local authorities.
- Tools facilitating partner search and networking as well as raising awareness and interest in town twinning, for example through publications, audiovisual materials and websites.
- Exchanges of best practices and the accumulation of experience in supporting town twinning in Europe.

For more information, please visit: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/citizenship/index_en.php

Developing the Leadership and Administrative Capacity of Cypriot Local Authorities

A press conference was recently held in the premises of the Ministry of Finance of Cyprus, in connection with the launch of the project "Education for Development of the Administrative and Leadership Skills of Local Authorities". The conference was organized by the Cyprus Academy of Public Administration (CAPA) of the Ministry of Finance.

The project has been designed and jointly implemented by the Cyprus Academy of Public Administration, the Union of Cyprus Municipalities and the Union of Cyprus Communities. Therefore, in the activities of the project there is an active participation of Mayors and Municipal Councillors, Community Council Presidents and Members, Municipal and Community Personnel and legal entities supervised by them, executives of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities and the Union of Communities and officers of the CAPA.

The project aims to strengthen the administrative and leadership capacity of Cypriot local government, through educational programs and by providing support to executives, elected or not.

At the beginning of the conference, the Minister of Finance, Mr. Harilaos Stavrakis sent a greeting, stating the following: "The project is expected to bring multiple and significant benefits for the Local Government, but also for the citizens.

Through the Educational Program, the leaders of municipalities and communities will be provided with all necessary knowledge and skills enabling them to manage the affairs of their organizations independently and effectively.



The same officers will be able to create a new culture of lifelong learning in their organizations for continuous development and improvement. The final goal is to enable the Local Authorities to offer enlarged and quality enhanced services to the citizens".

In his greeting, the President of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities, Mr. Andreas Christou, emphasized the importance of the project, stressing that "it is extremely important for municipalities and for communities, because by upgrading the skills of the personnel we improve the overall performance of the organizations and we improve the services offered to the Citizens".

The project, presented to the Media by officers of CAPA, is funded by the European Social Fund and the Republic of Cyprus, as part of the activities of the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) 2007-2013 of Cyprus and constitutes an intervention funded by the Operational Program "Employment, Human Capital and Social Cohesion".

Cypriot Municipalities for "Europe 2020" Strategy

A meeting was held in Brussels on the 8th of March, between the Permanent Representatives of the 27 EU Member States and the Heads of the National Delegations to the Committee of the Regions (CoR), at the invitation of Mrs. Mercedes Bresso, President of the CoR.

On behalf of Cyprus, the meeting was attended by Mr. Georgios Georgiou, Mayor of Kato Polemidia and Head of Cyprus Delegation to the CoR, and Mr. Andreas Mavroyiannis, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Cyprus to the European Union.

This discussion focused on the CoR proposal that "Europe 2020" has to be implemented in each member state through a Territorial Pact, which is an agreement between a country's various tiers of government (local, regional, national). Parties signing up to a Territorial Pact commit themselves to coordinate their policy agendas in order to focus their actions and financial resources on the "Europe 2020" Strategy goals and targets.

Ms Bresso, after presenting a summary of recent discussions gave the floor to Mr. Peter Gyorkos, Permanent Representative of Hungary and five other delegations, which referred to good practices in this area. Mr. Gyorkos stressed that through territorial pacts begins a new era for regional policy and the majority of delegations said that "Europe 2020" Strategy is intended not only to overcome the economic crisis but also to lay the foundations for sustainable growth.

Each EU Member Country has to submit its National Reform Programme for "Europe 2020" by the end of April 2011. The NRP will set the country's national targets, how it will implement the flagship initiatives and act to remove bottlenecks preventing growth.

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THE UNION OF CYPRUS MUNICIPALITIES

The Union of Cyprus Municipalities was established in 1981. Even though membership is voluntary, all municipalities (33), accounting for 65 per cent of the population of Cyprus, are represented.

The main objective of the Union is to contribute to the development of local government autonomy, as well as to act as spokesman of local government interests vis-à-vis the central government and other national organisations and institutions.

The Union's decision-making power is vested in the General Assembly, which may look into and decide for all issues. The Executive Committee implements decisions taken by the General Assembly. The President of the Union represents the Union before any authority, while the Secretary is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the Union.

The Union follows closely and participates in international activities related to Local Authorities and in recent years, especially after the accession of the Republic to the EU, it takes an active stand and develops relations with organisations, institutions and departments of the European Union that concern Local Authorities. In this regard, the Union has, since July 2005, opened an Office in Brussels.

UNION OF CYPRUS MUNICIPALITIES

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