



EUROPEAN PROJECT SUSTAIN: SETTING UP OF THE INTRANET

Within the framework of the SUSTAIN project, an Intranet has been set up, linking the websites of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities and TEDK Chios. The Intranet aims to accelerate and optimize the management and dissemination of crucial information to and from the Municipalities of North Aegean and Cyprus and their Associations, in order for all of them to have direct access to all the documents of the SUSTAIN project, as well as project ideas and proposals, partner searches and best practices.

The Intranet has been set up as an internal section of the website of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities. Via this internal e-space, registered users from the Municipalities or other stakeholders, will have access to partner searches gathered from the Brussels Office of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities and other sources, completed projects which can be considered as good practices, practical guides and other useful information, in order for even the most inexperienced Municipalities to have access to targeted and easy-to-use information. The Intranet will also give the opportunity for online comments, consultation, discussions and

assistance. This function will initially have limited functionality until the majority of the users get acquainted with the system and learn how to fully use it by themselves, in a way that when there is a specific question or a final idea, all of the users who have access to the system will be able to share their experience and comments.



Access to this communication network will initially be given to registered users, only among the Municipalities of Cyprus and of the Northern Aegean Islands. In the future, access will also be given to users from other areas in Greece and other EU Member States. Gradually, the system will be upgraded and used more widely, to cover the demanding needs of digitalized communication among Local Authorities and their Associations, in an automatic and costless way.

Future major SUSTAIN activities:

October: Third training session - Brussels

October - November: Second 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/Project-SUSTAIN,1,63,Greek>

SUSTAIN Project: Visit of the Head of the UCM Brussels Office to Chios

Within the framework of the SUSTAIN project, the Head of Brussels Office of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities, Mr. F. Pantelogiannis, visited Chios from the 27th of June to the 4th of July.

On June 28, Mr. Pantelogiannis participated to the second training session of the SUSTAIN Project: "Europe for Citizens 2007-2013, financial tools, actions and implementation practices by public and private stakeholders of local and regional level". He also participated -along with eleven representatives from Cypriot Municipalities- to part of the organised visits in areas of Chios that have experienced the positive impact of the implementation of European Programmes.



Later on, the Head of the Brussels Office of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities, visited the Municipalities of Chios (29 and 30 June), Psara (1 July) and Oinousses (2 July), in order to explain to elected officials and municipal officers the role of a representation office in Brussels. These meetings aimed also to open a communication channel and create within the three Municipalities, a mechanism for receiving and using information sent by the UCM Brussels Office (search partners, calls for proposals, etc.), so that they could benefit from these information to the greatest extent possible.

SUSTAIN Project: Drafting of a study outlining the current situation in Cyprus

During his 10-day visit in Cyprus (9-19 May), the expert of TEDK Chios had thoroughly recorded the situation in the Municipalities of Cyprus with regard to their involvement in Town-Twinning and other European Programmes.

This recording has now been documented into a study, which compiles the results of the meetings that took place in Cyprus involving representatives of thirty out of its thirty three Municipalities, including Mayors, Municipal Secretaries and municipal personnel. Five such meetings had been organized in Cyprus, where the municipalities were divided as follows:

- Nicosia, Strovolos, Ayios Dhometios, Aglantzia, Lakatamia, Latsia, Engomi, Idalion.
- Kyrenia, Morphou, Lapithos, Kythrea, Karavas, Lefkonikon.
- Limassol, Mesa Yitonia, Ayios Athanasios, Kato Polemidia, Yermasoyia.
- Larnaka, Aradippou, Athienou, Lefkara, Paralimni, Agia Napa, Deryneia, Akanthou, Lysi.
- Pafos, Polis Chrysochous, Geroskipou, Peyia.

In each of these meetings, the twinning coordinator of the Union of Municipalities, Ms. Kalia Martides, presented a summary of the SUSTAIN project and the "Europe for Citizens" Programme, while the presentation of the Greek expert, Mr. Kampouras, focused on the methodology of the project and facilitated the gathering of all the necessary information concerning the participation of Cypriot Municipalities in European Programmes.

The participants were then asked to describe the experience of their Municipality in European Programmes, the

process they follow in order to participate in them and the problems encountered at all stages of their participation. Mr. Kampouras went through the steps of an application procedure (diagnosis of the Municipality's needs, correct formulation of the central idea of a project, searching for a suitable call for proposals, partner search, submission and successful implementation of the project) and asked the participants to describe their experiences in relation to all these steps. All the discussions were then recorded in detail in the aforementioned study.



According to the expert's conclusions, most of Cypriot Municipalities understand sufficiently the meaning, the importance and the added value of Town-Twinning and of the European Programmes in general.

In small Municipalities where the human and financial resources are relatively small, there seemed to be less awareness of the issue and its correct dimension. For this reason, the meetings highlighted from the beginning of the discussion the general concept of the European Programmes and what they offer to the implementing bodies.

All these observations and conclusions of the expert of TEDK Chios were included in the first part of his study, while its second part has been dedicated to proposals and recommendations, in order to improve the performance of Municipalities in the use of Town-Twinning and other European Programmes.

SUSTAIN project: proposals and recommendations of the expert

Having completed three quarters of the implementation time of the SUSTAIN project and four out of its six main activities, the expert of TEDK Chios, Mr. V. Kampouras was able to make a series of proposals and recommendations aimed at improving the current situation and increasing the efficiency of the participating Municipalities in the use of Town-Twinning and other EU Programmes.

According to Mr. Kampouras, despite all difficulties and obstacles faced by Cypriot Municipalities, there is a very lively interest from both officers and their Municipalities to participate in European Programmes.

According to the expert, a toolkit should therefore be created for Municipalities with the support of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities, which should make an effort to steer the Municipalities of Cyprus and of the Northern Aegean Region, towards the implementation of a well-structured process of participation and implementation of European projects, which to the extent that it will be followed, would ensure success and maximum benefit for the stakeholders.

According to Mr. Kampouras, this procedure should be strengthened and supported by existing tools, as well as others which will be produced in the framework of the SUSTAIN project, like the ones outlined below:

- Development of the intranet. On the first page of our issue, we referred in detail to the development of this tool. As pointed out, the intranet has been developed as an internal section of the website of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities, which gives access only to registered users.

These users will have access to partner searches, completed projects which can be considered as good practices, practical guides and other useful information.

- Editing of a "Practical Twinning Guide" (in Greek), containing good practices information, guidelines and tips for the successful implementation and use of the "Europe for citizens" programme. This Guide will be a permanent point of reference not only for the participating Municipalities and municipal officials of the Greek and Cypriot Municipalities to this project, but also for all of those who would like to participate in the "Europe for Citizens" Programme in the future.
- Annual publication of the "European Programmes' Guide". This Guide is already being published (in Greek) since 2007 by the Brussels Office of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities, but it should be updated and upgraded.
- Re-activation of the inter-municipal network of European Affairs Officers of the Cypriot Municipalities. This network, which used to be active in the past in the framework of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities, should be reconstituted and re-activated. Its aim should be the mutual support of its members, and the constant recording of targets, problems and opportunities in the sphere of European Programmes. The network could make use of the SUSTAIN intranet and gradually identify and exploit synergies and potential collaborations, with the support of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities.
- Offering support (advice, implementation guides and integrated examples) for the drafting of five-year "mini business plans" by the Municipalities, outlining their plans and objectives, regarding Town-Twinning and other European programs.
- Offering support for the drafting of project proposals to the Municipalities that do not have relevant experience and further step by step support until the full cycle of a first European project is completed.
- Editing of a terminology and "things to do or not to do" guide, for submitting, managing and implementing European projects.
- Registration of all qualified and experienced municipal personnel (e.g. in thematic areas such as IT, environment, e-health etc) and joint use of it, in the framework of a wider cooperation between Municipalities.
- Setting up of an "automatic and standardized process" for the participation of Municipalities to European Programmes. The process consists of four steps:
 - Step 1: Preparation of a Business Plan
 - Step 2: Search for calls, drafting or search and evaluation of the proposals based on one's needs
 - Step 3: Implementation of the action
 - Step 4: Use and dissemination of results

The detailed description of the four steps of the process is available (in Greek) in the "Preliminary report outlining the current situation of Cypriot Municipalities regarding the use of Town-Twinning and other European programmes", which is available on the intranet of the SUSTAIN project.

It is worth mentioning that almost all the proposals and recommendations of the expert have not only been adopted, but their implementation has already started. Thus, by the end of the year, when the SUSTAIN project will be completed, the Municipalities of Cyprus and of the Northern Aegean Region, will have a complete arsenal of tools at their disposal for the development of Town-Twinning and other European Projects.

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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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