



Servizzi Ewropej f'Malta

Annual Report 2023





Contents

Foreword.....	4-5
Bringing EU Funds closer to Citizens	7
Our Vision, Our Mission, Our Values	8-9
Communicating on the Benefits and Opportunities of EU Funds	11
Public Events	12
Events for Students and Children	16
Seminars and Conferences.....	19
Reaching Out Through the Media	23
Personalised Assistance to Potential Beneficiaries of EU Funds.....	25
Outreach Campaigns and Information Sessions	26
Capacity Building in EU funding	32
Supporting organisations to successfully implement EU funded projects	32
Coordination of National Contact Points	33
Europe Direct Valletta	35
Tree Planting Activity	36
Science in the City Festival	37
Building Europe with Local Councils	38
Study Visits - Foreign Students.....	39
Network of Networks Meetings	40
Promoting EU Careers	43
EU Careers promotion at Schools and Higher Education Institutions	44
Information Sessions on EU Careers	46
European Personnel Selection Office Visit	47
Organisational Structure	48
Quality Label	49
Testimonials	50
Agency Report and Financial Statements	53

Foreword

As we celebrate the 20th anniversary of Malta's accession to the EU on May 1 this year, we can easily say that European funds have over the years, contributed towards the socio-economic development of both Malta and Gozo.

European funds have significantly contributed towards improving our educational and health infrastructure, our cultural and historical heritage, our tourism infrastructure and products, our waste and water management systems, major roads and arteries and our environment, to name but a few.

However, investment of European funds does not stop at infrastructure. These funds have been catalysts in improving the life prospects of our citizens for the better, particularly through investment targeting the social and educational sectors.

Within this context, it is clear that the benefits of European funds impact us all directly or indirectly in our daily life. Above all, they make a difference in the quality of life of individuals and organisations when they acquire funds for their projects, big or small.

Several voluntary organisations often speak of how European funds have supported them in implementing projects for their members or the community they work with. Notwithstanding the limited resources of voluntary organisations, they manage to capitalise different funding sources for projects that make a difference in our communities.

Government has been at the forefront to ensure that EU Funds are indeed accessible to all. In this regard, I strongly believe that these achievements have also been possible through Government's investment in an agency like SEM. This Agency has over the years contributed significantly to raise awareness on the benefits and opportunities that come along with EU funds, and to ensure that individuals, entities and organisations are supported throughout the whole



process of acquiring EU funds for projects that are beneficial to our communities and country.

As this report clearly shows, SEM assists individuals and organisations to tap into EU funding for their projects. Be they youths who would like to participate in exchanges with other European counterparts and explore other EU countries and cultures; be they educators, local band clubs and sport clubs to embark on job shadowing and training, to buy the necessary equipment or to have better facilities for their members; be they local communities who offer lifelong learning and recreational opportunities for their senior citizens.

Last year, as in the past years, the efforts of SEM have continued to facilitate the access to European Funds, to improve the quality of life and to make our Islands more sustainable and resilient in facing today's and tomorrow's challenges.

Looking forward, we need to continue capitalising on the added value which EU funds bring to our communities. Thus, Government will continue to consolidate its outreach and support services through SEM so that we maximise the benefits of EU funding.

HON. CHRIS FEARNE

Deputy Prime Minister
Minister for European Funds, Equality,
Reforms and Social Dialogue

Foreword

EU Funds is a very particular subject... either you love it or you don't. It is not something which people can easily associate themselves with.

And this is where SEM comes in. We make EU funds more understandable... closer to people... to help them realise how close EU funds are to us all, much more than we often realise.

As SEM, we offer a personalised and holistic service to assist persons who would like to explore, apply for and implement EU funded projects; be it to expand and diversify their operations, be it for their individual growth, be it for the benefit of the community they work with, be it for contributing to the socio-economic development of our Islands.

This annual report is testament to the diversity of work undertaken throughout the year with the objective to make the benefits and opportunities of EU funds known and accessible to the widest possible audience.

SEM reaches relevant stakeholders and potential beneficiaries through thematic outreach campaigns, information sessions, conferences and seminars, such as 'Women and European Funds', 'Simplifying EU Funds for Business', and 'EU Funds for Local and Regional Councils'. Through public events, we offered visibility of EU funds, such as Europe Day and Notte Bianca in Valletta, and an outdoor roaming exhibition in Floriana, Paola and Mdina.

Children and students are also in our programme for the year. In summer, we delivered sessions to children attending SkolaSajf to make them more aware of how EU funds are invested in several ways. In addition, several on-site visits to EU funded projects for students and cyclists were organised.

In 2023 SEM supported target groups through its helpdesk. In fact SEM answered 1,091 enquiries through phone calls, emails and physical meetings.



Furthermore as an Agency, SEM organised capacity-building sessions on project development and writing and on project implementation.

As part of our commitment to widen access to EU Funded initiatives, last year we collaborated with the relevant authorities to simplify the processes in relation to the application process locally as much as possible. This was complemented with appropriate outreach campaigns and information sessions which were organised to facilitate matters to potential beneficiaries to apply for open calls, grants and schemes under several funding strands.

As from last year, SEM also took the responsibility to coordinate the several national contact points for EU funds that are directly managed by the European Commission with the objective to exchange knowledge as well as to provide support to relevant contact points.

SEM is indeed committed to continue to assist potential beneficiaries of European funds in realising their projects for the benefit of citizens, communities and country.

DENISE FIORENTINO
Chief Executive Officer



Bringing EU Funds closer to Citizens

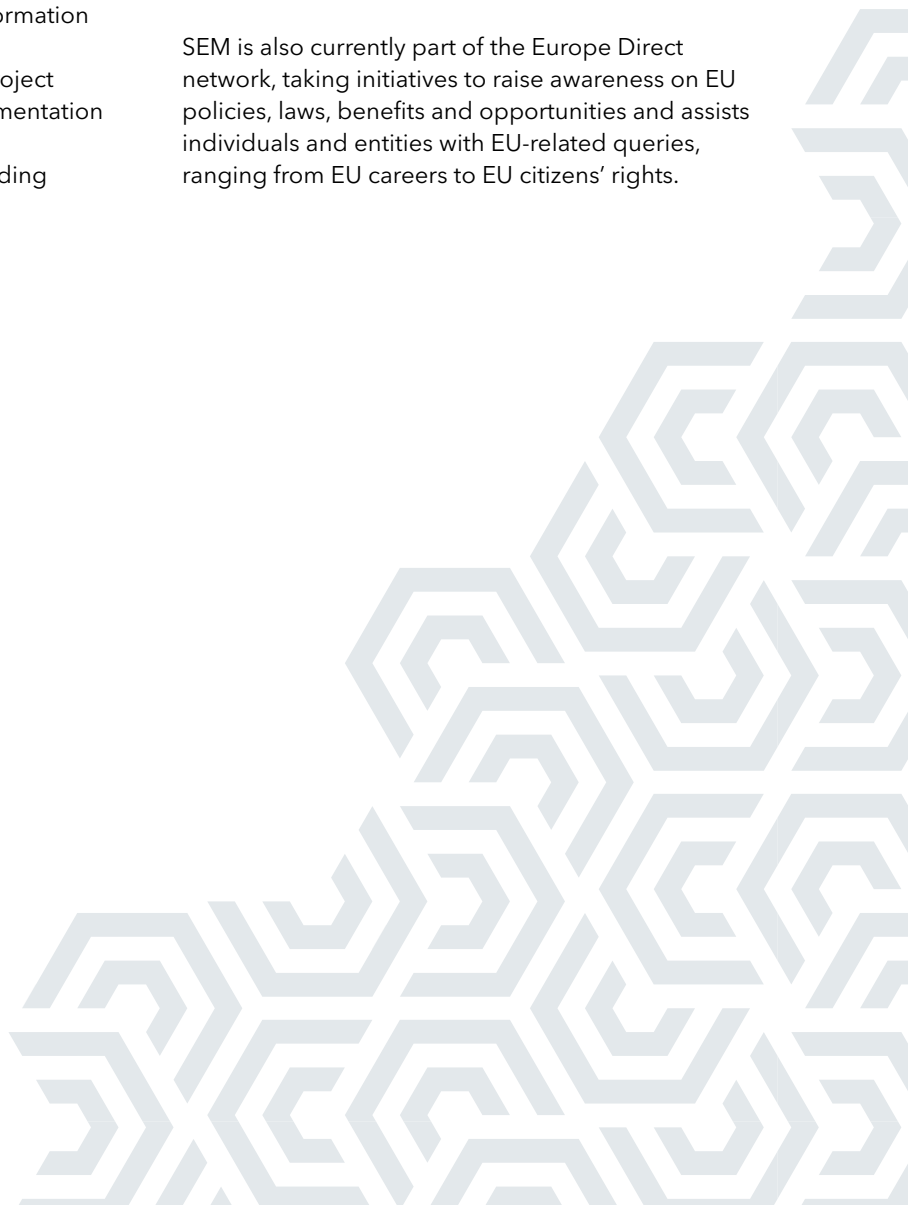
Servizzi Ewropej f'Malta (SEM) is the government agency set up to provide information on EU funds, to assist in the application process for EU funds and to guide beneficiaries during the implementation of EU funded projects to Malta-based entities and individuals.

To deliver on its mission, SEM works closely with the Ministry for European Funds, Social Dialogue and Consumer Protection and the respective Managing Authorities and Intermediary Bodies for European funds to:

- promote open calls and organise information sessions;
- assist potential beneficiaries in the project development, application and implementation stages;
- answer enquiries related to open funding opportunities;

- promote the benefits of EU-funded projects to the public, in particular Cohesion Policy, and their relevance to bring a better quality of life to citizens in Malta and Gozo;
- coordinate and support the National Contact Points (NCP) for EU centralised funds on a national level through the exchange of best practices. SEM has also been entrusted as the NCP for the Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) strand under the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), as well as for the TAIEX and Twinning instruments.

SEM is also currently part of the Europe Direct network, taking initiatives to raise awareness on EU policies, laws, benefits and opportunities and assists individuals and entities with EU-related queries, ranging from EU careers to EU citizens' rights.





Our Values

At SEM we strive to provide professional and efficient services that make a difference in people's lives through EU funds. We are:

- Committed to make the process to tap into EU funding easier.
- Efficient and reliable when delivering our core services.
- Proud in what we do through making things differently and better.

Our Vision

Committed to make the benefits of EU funds known to the widest audience and facilitate access to EU funds to target groups.

Our Mission

Transforming people's lives by making EU funds accessible to all.





Communicating on the Benefits and Opportunities of EU Funds

SEM uses different channels of communication and organises several activities throughout the year to make the benefits and opportunities of EU funds known and accessible to the widest possible audience.

In 2023, SEM organised 90 events, as well as capacity-building and information sessions to targeted beneficiaries of EU funds. Such initiatives highlight the positive impact of EU funds and provide information on how these funds can improve the quality of life of citizens. These events included:

- a public event in Valletta on May 9 to mark Europe Day during which EU funds for the period 2021-2027 were outlined;
- 9 on-site visits to EU funded projects for students and cyclists;
- a photographic competition on EU funded projects in Malta and Gozo, followed by an outdoor roaming exhibition in Floriana, Paola and Mdina;
- a nationwide campaign to promote the Interreg Italia-Malta funding programme, in collaboration with the Funds and Programmes Division;
- in summer, 35 sessions were undertaken whereby 400 children attending the government-run summer school - Skolasajf - were delivered to make them more aware how EU funds are invested in several ways, most of all to enhance the educational experience of children and students; and
- seminars, such as on 'Women and European Funds' with the Programmes and Priorities Coordination Division, and 'EU Funds for Local and Regional Councils' with the Local Government Division and the Local Councils' Association.

SEM USES DIFFERENT CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION AND ORGANISES SEVERAL ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT THE YEAR TO MAKE THE BENEFITS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF EU FUNDS KNOWN AND ACCESSIBLE TO THE WIDEST POSSIBLE AUDIENCE



Public Events

Europe Day

Europe Day 2023 was celebrated on May 9 in Freedom Square Valletta with a half-day of activities organised by SEM and Europe Direct Valletta, in collaboration with the European Parliament Liaison Office and the European Commission Representation in Malta. The event served to showcase the benefits and opportunities for EU citizens in Malta and Gozo, mainly through EU funds and through EU-related services.

The public event brought together in one place several entities to offer visitors information and assistance on how EU funds are invested in Malta and Gozo for a better quality of life as well as what opportunities are offered for individuals, enterprises, NGOs, youths and local councils, amongst others.

The event kicked off with a performance by students from the Malta Visual and Performing Arts School, followed by a quiz for secondary school students participating in the Student Ambassadors Programme of the European Parliament.

The Parliamentary Secretary for European Funds, Hon. Chris Bonett addressed a press conference, with speeches also delivered by Denise Fiorentino - CEO of SEM, Mark Vella - Head of Communications of the European Commission Representation Malta and Mario Sammut - Head of the European Parliament Liaison Office in Malta.



Photo: DOI - Clifton Fenech



Photographic Competition and Exhibition

In August, SEM and the Malta Photographic Society launched a competition for photographers to capture the various economic and social contributions of EU funds through the several projects implemented in Malta and Gozo and which have brought a positive difference in all areas of life.

Submissions for the competition, themed, 'EU Funds for a Better Quality of Life' had to address one or more of the following themes: Tourism; Health; Transport; Knowledge and Innovation; Enterprises; Education, Lifelong Learning and Employment; Waste Management; Flood Relief; Water Management; Climate Change and Renewable Energy; Rural and Urban Regeneration; Ecclesiastical, Cultural and Historical Heritage; Agricultural and Maritime Sectors; European Mobility and Identity.

The competition resulted in the submission of 90 different photos. The best photo and a selection from the best 40 photos, judged by a jury from SEM and the Malta Photographic Society were awarded a voucher for their participation at an award ceremony held on November 10.

The award ceremony was presided by the Parliamentary Secretary for European Funds, Hon. Chris Bonett, accompanied by the Permanent Secretary for European Funds, Jonathan Vassallo, SEM CEO Denise Fiorentino and the President of the Malta Photographic Society, Stephen Buhagiar.

A selection of the best photos was displayed at an outdoor roaming exhibition held in Floriana, Paola and Mdina between November 10 and December 1.

Visitors to the exhibition had the opportunity to see snapshots of the various contributions of EU funds to the socio-economic development of our country through the several projects implemented in Malta and Gozo.



Cycling Tours

SEM and Europe Direct Valletta teamed up with ROTA - an NGO advocating for safe bicycle use - to hold cycling tours around three main areas: a South Tour, a North Tour and a Gozo Tour. These organised tours for adults to different sites and projects around Malta and Gozo, have been co-financed by the European Union, showcased the various EU Funded projects.

The South Route was the first in this series of three tours and was held on April 30. It started from the Siggiewi parish square and took a scenic trail with a stop at the Haġar Qim and Mnajdra Archaeological Park, up to Wied Fulija in Żurrieq. Officials from Heritage Malta and Wasteserv provided a detailed explanation of how EU funds were invested in the respective sites. Participants then rode back to Siggiewi parish church via Hal Safi, Hal Millieri, Hax-Xluq and the lesser-known valley of Wied Xkora, covering a distance of about 25km.

On May 28, SEM and Europe Direct Valletta held the second cycling tour. The North Route started from the Salina Nature Reserve, on to BirdPark Malta. Officials from BirdLife Malta and BirdPark Malta provided a detailed explanation of how EU funds were invested in the respective sites. Participants then rode up to Bidnija and down to beautiful Wied

tal-Imselliet, heading towards Ġnien I-Għarusa tal-Mosta, Birguma, Top of the World in Ghargħur and back to Salina, covering a distance of about 18km.

The last tour was held in Gozo on June 4. It started and ended at the ferry harbour in Mġarr, having three main stops, the first being at San Lawrenz village and a second at the Ċittadella in Victoria en route to the third one at the Ġgantija Archaeological Park in Xagħra. Officials from the San Lawrenz Local Council, the Cultural Heritage Directorate within the Ministry for Gozo and also Heritage Malta provided detailed explanations of how EU funds were invested in the respective sites. The route covered a total distance of around 26km.

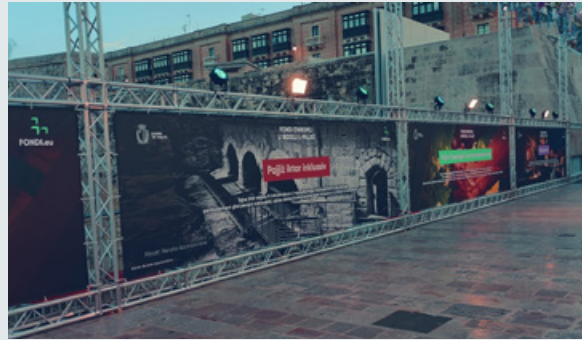


Notte Bianca

Notte Bianca, held annually in Valletta, is an excellent opportunity for SEM to disseminate information on how EU funds raise the quality of life of citizens and the standard of living in the country.

For this year's festival, SEM showcased major achievements for the Maltese Islands through a visual installation on Valletta City Gate Bridge.

The public entering or exiting Valletta during the week preceding Notte Bianca and on the day of the festival, could see in a nutshell how EU funds were invested in areas such as education, agriculture and fisheries, urban and rural regeneration, cultural and historical heritage, and the environment.



SEM SHOWCASED MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS FOR THE MALTESE ISLANDS THROUGH A VISUAL INSTALLATION ON VALLETTA CITY GATE BRIDGE



Events for Students and Children

Visits to EU Funded Sites

SEM and Europe Direct Valletta, with the support and in close collaboration with Heritage Malta, organised a series of visits for secondary school students to EU co-funded sites. These visits were intended to raise awareness among students on how EU funds are invested in several areas and projects.

Salina Nature Park and Bird Park Malta

The first two visits were organised on May 3 and 5. Students from St Nicholas College Dingli Secondary and St Clare College Pembroke Secondary, visited the Salina Nature Park which was rehabilitated through a €7 million project partially financed with EU funds.

Leaving the nature park, heading to the Bird Park Malta, students were given a brief overview of how EU funds were invested to build major roads that form part of the EU funded TEN-T network. At the Bird Park, students had the opportunity to learn about several kinds of species that are found in the park and were also briefed by the owner of the park on how EU funds helped him set up the park and install energy efficient systems to reduce the high costs for running such a park.



Ċittadella / Ġgantija Archaeological Park / San Lawrenz

On June 2 and 9, two more visits were held, this time in Gozo. Students from the Gozo College, Sir Arturo Mercieca Primary School Victoria - The Happy School, visited the Ċittadella in Victoria, the Ġgantija Archaeological Park complex in Xagħra and the town of San Lawrenz. The visits started at the Ċittadella, a site which was rehabilitated through a €12 million project partially financed with EU funds.

At the Ġgantija Archaeological Park, students had the opportunity to visit the Interpretation Centre that provides visitors with the opportunity to explore various aspects related to life in the Neolithic Period. The embellishment and conservation project of this UNESCO World Heritage also benefitted from EU funds. Leaving Ġgantija, heading to the town of San Lawrenz, students were given a brief overview of how EU funds were invested to build the Ta' Pinu Road and other major roads in a project which exceeded €4 million, partially financed through the European Regional Development Fund. Reaching San Lawrenz, the students were greeted by the mayor who explained how the complete restoration of the façade of the Parish Church together with the upgrading of the main square benefitted from EU funding.



MUŻA / Fort St Elmo

On November 29, students from St Thomas More College, Santa Luċija Secondary School, visited MUŻA and Fort St Elmo, experiencing first-hand the ways in which EU funds transformed both sites. The tour started at MUŻA - Malta's museum of art - where students were provided with a general insight of the main structural upgrades which literally transformed this site. The conservation and restoration of the Auberge d'Italie - a €9 million project which benefitted from EU funding through the European Regional Development Fund, proved to be a journey of discovery.

The students then walked all the way to the second site in programme, Fort St Elmo, a star-shaped fort constructed in 1552. The students had the opportunity to experience the impressive grounds of the fort, including the splendid architecture of the two chapels dedicated to St Anne and were provided with detailed information on how EU funding helped in the regeneration of this site. The €15 million project, co-funded from the European Regional Development Fund, entailed the embellishment of Fort St Elmo's heritage, including a Military History Museum and a rampart walk along Caraffa Enceinte. Historic buildings, structures and spaces have also been restored, helping to realise the full cultural and tourism potential of the site.



Tarxien Prehistoric Complex

On December 6, students from St Benedict College, Hal Kirkop Secondary School and St Clare College, Pembroke Secondary School visited the Tarxien Prehistoric Complex.

Inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List, the temples experienced major upgrades in recent years. In 2012, an elevated walkway was installed to enhance the visitors' experience when looking at the prehistoric remains from a unique viewpoint. The construction of a shelter, with an investment of €2.5 million co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund as part of the Archaeological Heritage Conservation Project, was also finalised in 2015, including improvements to the visitors' centre.

The Parliamentary Secretary for European Funds, Hon. Chris Bonett met the group of students and highlighted the fact that we are all invited to be active citizens of the European Union by working together to protect and take care of our heritage. Initiatives like this are the proof of how EU funds provide an active contribution to our society.



SkolaSajf

For the 11th consecutive year, Europe Direct Valletta and SEM participated in the government-run summer school SkolaSajf, by delivering 35 sessions to 8-12-year-olds, reaching around 400 students in Malta and Gozo.

These activities, themed ‘EU Funds and Me’ were organised in close collaboration with the Foundation for Educational Services (FES), while the sessions in Gozo were delivered with the support of Europe Direct Gozo.

From July 17 till September 1, children attending SkolaSajf visited SEM’s offices in Valletta for sessions focusing on the EU, what EU funds are and how these are used around us.

Through a short presentation, a quiz and interactive games, children were engaged to learn some basic facts about the EU and EU funds through different projects related to education, heritage, health, transport, environment, inclusion and energy.



On July 21, the Parliamentary Secretary for European Funds, Hon. Chris Bonett, visited a group of children attending one of the sessions. The Parliamentary Secretary entered into a conversation with the children on EU funds and how these are invested in Malta through projects that are of benefit to society such as health, education and the environment. The children were also given the opportunity to interact directly with Hon. Bonett and ask questions about his role as Parliamentary Secretary for European Funds.

SEM CEO, Denise Fiorentino and FES Chairperson, Pamela Schembri were also present for the event, accompanied by officials from both entities.



Seminars and Conferences

'Women and European Funds'



The challenges and successes for women in relation to European funds were discussed during a seminar themed 'Women and European Funds', organised jointly with the Planning and Priorities Coordination Division.

The seminar kicked off by the Parliamentary Secretary for European Funds, Hon. Chris Bonett, who emphasized that European funds must be used so that no one is in a disadvantaged position, particularly in gender inequality, and so that we may all contribute to the growth of the economy and to the success of our country.

Parliamentary Secretary for Reforms and Equality, Hon. Rebecca Buttigieg, made reference to the fact that in November 2022 the Government launched the first strategy and action plan on gender mainstreaming with the aim of eliminating gender discrimination. She also emphasised that greater efforts are needed to restrict gender discrimination, stressing that EU Funds are helping to challenge the inequality and the systematic obstructions that can hinder the progress of women.

While focusing on previous EU funding programmes for the 2014-2020 period, the seminar gave participants the opportunity to learn more about the situation of women in Malta from a statistical perspective and within the context of the Malta's Gender Equality Strategy and provided an overview of the outcomes of EU funds in different areas under the 2014-2020 programming period, ending with a visual representation of the success stories of a number of women who benefitted from EU funds in the last years.



Photo: DCI - Pierre Sammut

‘Simplified EU funds for Business’

On June 28, SEM and the Ministry responsible for European Funds, organised a business breakfast for business associations and service providers regarding the new €16.5 million EU-funded schemes for businesses.

The aim of this event was to provide an overview of the new schemes for businesses and to give a platform to advisory firms to directly clarify any queries or raise any concerns that they have in relation to these schemes.

The event kicked off with opening remarks by SEM CEO, Denise Fiorentino, who highlighted the Agency’s dual role of supporting businesses in applying for EU funds and bridging the gap between beneficiaries and the relevant Authorities to explore ways on how to facilitate access to EU funds.

The Parliamentary Secretary for European Funds, Hon. Chris Bonett also expressed his continued commitment to simplify the process for accessing EU funds, particularly to encourage small and micro businesses who are discouraged from applying due to the bureaucracy involved.

The first part of the event provided an overview of the new business schemes, aimed at supporting established businesses and start-ups to digitalise their operations, to enhance productivity through investment for equipment and machinery and to engage consultancy services.

Attendees had the opportunity to ask questions and flag any concerns. For the second part of this event, representatives from SEM and the Measures and Support Division presented the outcome from the focus groups held with stakeholders in the previous months as part of an exercise to simplify the application process for such schemes, so that more enterprises benefit from EU funds to innovate and grow their business.



Photo: DOI- Jeremy Wonnacott



Photo: DOI- Jeremy Wonnacott



Launch of Interreg Italia-Malta Programme 2021-2027

On November 14, 2023, SEM and the Funds and Programmes Division organised the launch of the Interreg VI-A Italia-Malta Programme 2021-2027.

This event brought together past beneficiaries as well as potential future beneficiaries under the Interreg Italia-Malta programme with the aim of providing them with the necessary information about this new funding programme, particularly its key priorities for the coming years.

The Parliamentary Secretary for European Funds, Hon. Chris Bonett noted how the Interreg Italia-Malta programme is an opportunity for both regions to harness collaboration for innovative and smart development for positive impact on the lives of citizens. Dott. Vincenzo Falgares, General Director of the Sicilian Region, thanked Malta for their continued commitment to collaborate which gives positive prospects for the next programming period 2021-2027.

Following the introductions, a brief overview of the Interreg Italia-Malta Programme 2021-2027 objectives and priorities was outlined with an emphasis on the importance of common strategies of the Mediterranean, coordination and synergies, followed by a presentation delivered by SEM highlighting the Agency's services and how it can assist potential future beneficiaries to apply under this funding programme. A representative from the Interreg Italia-Malta Managing Authority and Joint Secretariat, Regione Sicilia, then provided an in-depth explanation on the requirements of the upcoming calls under this programme that prospective applicants need to be aware of when submitting project proposals, such as the eligibility requirements and award criteria.



For the second part of the event, some of the successful projects which were executed in the last programming period were presented, followed by a panel discussion which addressed experiences and perspectives related to the process of applying and implementing Interreg Italia-Malta funded projects.

The event concluded a three-month long media campaign carried out by SEM to promote successful projects from the Interreg Italia-Malta 2014-2020 programme and to encourage potential beneficiaries to apply for the new call of the programme.

‘Strengthening Local Communities with EU Funds’

On December 4, SEM, the Local Government Division and the Local Councils’ Association organised a conference on EU Funding opportunities for Local Councils and Regional Committees.

During this event, various topics were discussed, among which the services offered by SEM and also the support provided by the Local Government Division.

Denise Fiorentino, SEM’s CEO, delivered the opening address, highlighting the Agency’s role in making EU funds more accessible and also SEM’s assistance in the implementation process of EU-funded projects, services which the Agency offers free of charge.

The Parliamentary Secretary for European Funds, Hon. Chris Bonett, spoke of the Government’s approach in simplifying EU funds and for this reason, Local Councils should not hesitate to propose new ideas for the good of their communities which could benefit from EU funding. This concept was endorsed by the Parliamentary Secretary for Local Government, Hon. Alison Zerafa Civelli, who encouraged Local Councils to take advantage from every possibility to improve their respective localities.

The conference ended up with a number of Local Councils sharing their experiences of projects which benefitted from EU funds through the assistance of SEM.



Reaching Out through the Media

To spread information on the benefits and opportunities of EU funds for a better quality of life to citizens in Malta and Gozo, in 2023 SEM published 120 articles on online and print news portals and newspapers, expanded its presence on TV with participation in 68 programmes, and maintained an active online presence.

Between October and December, SEM and the national broadcaster TVM, produced and aired 12 features on different EU-funded projects, implemented successfully in the past years.





Personalised Assistance to Potential Beneficiaries of EU Funds

As part of its role to assist individuals and entities in tapping into EU funding opportunities, SEM organises outreach campaigns and information sessions related to open calls with Managing Authorities and Intermediary Bodies of EU funding programmes.

In 2023, 15 outreach campaigns were organised to inform potential beneficiaries about open EU funding opportunities. Outreach is also done through various communication channels, including social media, online articles, TV and radio programmes.

18 information sessions were organised, covering different funding programme themes, such as 'Digitalise your Micro Business,' 'CERV-Town-Twinning,' 'Funding Opportunities in Healthcare', and the 'Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund'.

SEM believes in the capacity-building of organisations and entities to develop the necessary skills to apply for EU funds. During the year, 10 capacity-building sessions were organised on Project Development and Writing and on Project Implementation.

In terms of personalised assistance to facilitate access to specific EU funding opportunities, SEM held 426 individual meetings, resulting in the submission of 130 project applications across various EU funding programmes and schemes.

When it comes to the direct provision of information through telephone and emails, SEM officials addressed 1,091 requests for assistance.



**SEM BELIEVES IN THE CAPACITY-BUILDING
OF ORGANISATIONS AND ENTITIES TO DEVELOP
THE NECESSARY SKILLS TO APPLY FOR EU FUNDS**



Outreach Campaigns and Information Sessions

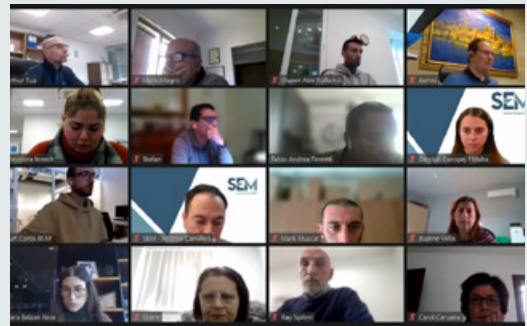
From time to time, SEM implements outreach campaigns to promote open funding calls and organises information sessions with Managing Authorities of EU funds to provide more information on the calls for EU funding, explain the parameters of the calls, raise any enquiries they may have and learn more on SEM's funding assistance services.

Funding Opportunities for Enterprises

Equipment and Machinery Grant for SMEs

On January 26, February 2 and April 4, SEM and the Measures and Support Division (MSD) held three information sessions on the funding call to finance equipment and machinery for SMEs.

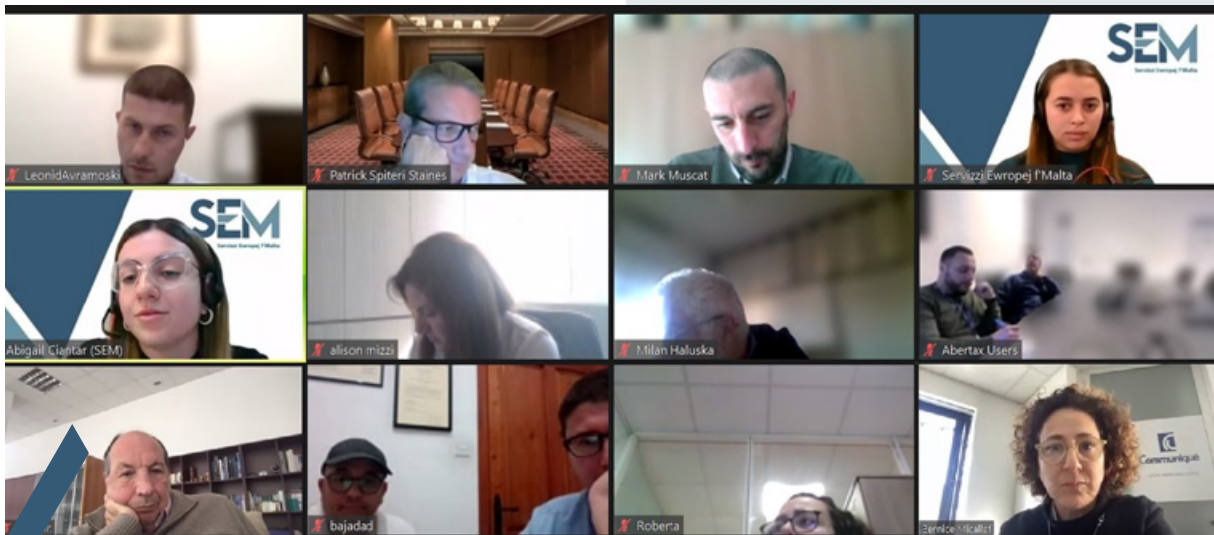
This incentive was intended to support micro, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) through the provision of assistance in the form of non-repayable grants to part-finance investment in equipment and machinery aimed at directly improving the productivity of the enterprise and to promote entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms, including through business incubators.



Grant Scheme for the Renovation of Private Sector Buildings

On March 9 and 16, SEM and MSD held two information sessions on the call for enterprises to support investments to address high upfront costs of building renovation in the private sector.

Renovation, retrofitting and refurbishment of existing buildings represent an opportunity to upgrade the energy performance of commercial building assets for their ongoing life. In this regard, this Grant Scheme supported eligible micro, small, medium and large enterprises to undertake actions that reduce the primary energy demand of the building by reducing the energy used for heating, cooling, ventilation, hot water and lighting.



Digitalisation of Micro Businesses

On May 3, May 11, September 12 and September 28, SEM and MSD, organised five information sessions on the Business Enhance - Digitalise your Micro Business scheme.

This incentive was specifically designed to assist microenterprises through non-repayable Grants to part-finance investment to digitalise their operations, and hence improve their resilience, efficiency, productivity and customer experience by addressing new digital capabilities and digitalised processes such as product and process design and engineering, end-to-end procurement, supply chain/distribution and after sales.

Through the Digitalise your Micro Business aid scheme, micro enterprises could invest in digital technologies and related processes and implementation. Investments in hardware, software and other digital solutions were eligible if the content was directly related to the digitalisation investment and/or the funding objectives. The maximum funding amount was €10,000 per investment and part-financing eligible expenditure up to 50% for investments in Malta and 60% for investments in Gozo.

**EU FUNDED GRANT
SCHEMES ASSIST
MICROENTERPRISES
TO PART-FINANCE
INVESTMENTS TO
DIGITALISE THEIR
OPERATIONS**

Grant Schemes for SMEs

On September 18, SEM and MSD organised two online information sessions on ERDF schemes for SMEs namely the SME Enhance, Start-Up Enhance and Business Reports for SMEs schemes.

The SME Enhance scheme provided support to SMEs through non-repayable Grants to part-finance investment towards expansion, diversification, innovation of the operations and initial investment, aimed at potentially improving the productivity of the enterprise.

The Start-Up Enhance grant scheme supported Start-ups through non-repayable Grants to part-finance investments in tangible and intangible assets contributing to potentially improve the productivity of the enterprise. The maximum funding amount was €400,000 per investment and part-financing eligible expenditure up to 50% for investments in Malta and 60% for investments in Gozo.

The Business Reports for SMEs grant scheme assisted SMEs through the provision of non-repayable Grants in the form of a lump sum to part-finance a business report procured from external Consultancy Service Providers which were registered with the Intermediate Body and which were autonomous and unrelated to the Beneficiary Undertaking. The maximum funding amount was €4,000 per investment and part-financing eligible expenditure up to 80% for investments in Malta and Gozo.

Funding Opportunities for Rural Development

Investments in Agriculture

On March 29 and 30, the Funds and Programmes Division (FPD) and SEM organised two information sessions in Malta and Gozo on funding opportunities for farmers, enterprises, Local Councils and NGOs.

The calls covered were the following:

- Sub-Measure 4.1 - support for investments in agricultural holdings;
- Sub-Measure 4.4 - support for non-productive investments linked to the achievement of agri-environment climate objectives;
- Sub-Measure 8.5 - support for investments improving the resilience and environmental value of forest ecosystems.



Sustainable Agricultural Investments

On October 23, the Managing Authority for the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 and SEM organised an information session in relation to the call for applications under *Sub-measure 10.2: Support for conservation and sustainable use and development of genetic resources in agriculture.*

This information session, which was held at SEM offices, was targeted towards private entities – research institutions, private bodies, non-governmental organisations, producers’ organisations and associations.

The call was aimed at providing support for the conservation and sustainable use and development of genetic resources in agriculture, of both plants and animals. Eligible actions included the promotion of ex-situ and in-situ conservation, characterisation, collection, and utilisation of genetic resource, as well as actions promoting the exchange of information, amongst others.





Erasmus+ Opportunities for Organisations Active in the Field of Disability

On July 25, SEM participated in an information session organised by the European Union Programmes Agency (EUPA) for voluntary organisations active in the field of disability.

EUPA organised this information session to discuss the different funding opportunities under the Erasmus+ programme that organisations in the field of disability can benefit from. The funding opportunities include job shadowing and training for staff members of organisations outside of Malta and youth exchange projects for members, among others.

During the session, SEM officials explained the Agency's mission to facilitate the access to EU funds and the different services offered by the Agency to assist organisations in applying for EU funds as well as to implement EU funded projects.



Funding Opportunities for Regional Development

On April 19, SEM and Funds and Programmes Division (FPD) organised an online information session on the 2nd Call for project proposals under the Interreg Europe 2021-2027 programme.

This interregional cooperation programme helps local, regional and national governments across Europe to develop and deliver better policy, create an environment and opportunities for sharing solutions to regional development issues, and support the exchange of good practices and policy learning among European regions.

During the information session, attendees hailing from public authorities, bodies governed by public law and private non-profit bodies, were provided with more information on the programme in general. This session also allowed attendees to gain more awareness of SEM's funding assistance services and raise queries in this regard.

INFORMATION SESSIONS ON OPEN EU FUNDING CALLS FOR ENTITIES AND ORGANISATIONS GIVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO POTENTIAL BENEFICIARIES TO UNDERSTAND THE CALLS AND ASK THEIR QUESTIONS

European Social Fund+ (2021-2027)

On October 12, the Planning and Priorities Coordination Division (PPCD) and SEM organised an information session in relation to the calls for applications under the European Social Fund+ (ESF+) 2021-2027 which were targeted towards Non-Governmental Organisations, voluntary organisations, social partners, public entities and government departments.

During the information session, more information was provided on the respective calls and attendees had the opportunity to better understand the parameters of each call, raise any questions they had and learn more about SEM's funding assistance services.

The calls were the following:

- Call 2.1 - ESO: 4.6 - Quality Education and Training Systems;
- Call 2.2 - ESO: 4.7 - Lifelong Learning and Career Transitions;
- Call 2.3 - ESO: 4.1 - Enhancing Employability and Labour Market Resilience.



Funding Opportunity in Healthcare

On October 31, the PPCD and SEM organised an information session in relation to the call for applications under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) 2021-2027: RSO4.5 - *Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family-and community-based care.*

The objective of the call was for Non-Governmental Organisations and Voluntary Organisations in the health and/or disability sector to submit project proposals for investment in specialised recreational facilities for persons with a disability or illness and their families.

This call supported the development, modernisation and adaptation of specialised non-residential care facilities and equipment managed by NGOs and VOs to provide a more holistic offering to vulnerable groups including those affected by mental health problems, people with a disability and those suffering from diseases that require special care, including children, persons suffering from cancer and other debilitating conditions, and their families.



Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) 2021-2027

Asylum

On November 28, the Funds and Programmes Division (FPD) and SEM organised an information session in relation to the call for applications under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) 2021-2027: *Specific Objective 1 - strengthening and developing all aspects of the Common European Asylum System, including its external dimension.*

Applications contributed to the funding priority aiming to facilitate access to information on the asylum determination process. Government departments, public entities, international organisations, social partners, non-governmental organisations and voluntary organisations working in the field of migration are all potential beneficiaries of these funds.



Third Country Nationals

SEM and FPD organised an information session on December 12, in relation to the call for applications under the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund 2021-2027 for actions contributing to *Specific Objective 2: Strengthening and developing legal migration to the Member States in accordance with their economic and social needs, promoting and contributing to the effective integration and social inclusion of third country nationals.*

Applications contributed to the following funding priority addressing pre-integration services for third-country nationals focusing on:

- Strengthening multiculturalism and cultural mediation;
- Addressing information gaps that inhibit local integration;
- Reducing language barriers in schools to facilitate integration among children; and
- Providing language learning to TCNs through digital means.

Eligible beneficiaries were government departments, public entities, international organisations, social partners, non-governmental organisations and voluntary organisations working in the field of migration.





Capacity-Building in EU funding

As part of the Agency's mission to support organisations to acquire the necessary skills to apply for EU funding, training sessions and interactive webinars on project development and writing were held throughout the year.

The sessions delved into project design, understanding a call for proposals, how to prepare for the submission of a proposal, finding and selecting a project partner, the project development process and practical tips for successful project proposals.

Participants were also given hands-on examples to put into practice the matters covered during the training sessions, by participating in small-group exercises where they worked together as a group to develop a mock project.

Overall, 7 training sessions were held, including one in Gozo. Two sessions, held in April, were organised in collaboration with the Institute for the Public Service and targeted public entities, while another session held in May with the support of the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector, targeted NGOs. The remaining sessions were organised directly by SEM, for Local Councils, enterprises and schools.

Supporting organisations to successfully implement EU funded projects

Since the introduction of this new service in 2021, the Agency received overwhelming feedback from various entities showing interest in receiving information and guidance in relation to the implementation of EU funded projects.

During the last year, SEM organised five training sessions, including one in Gozo, during which participants were provided with key guidelines and tips on how to implement an EU funded project successfully.

Two sessions, held in May, were organised in collaboration with the Institute for the Public Service and targeted public entities, while another session held in June with the support of the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector, targeted NGOs. The remaining sessions were organised directly by SEM, for Local Councils, enterprises and schools.

Coordination of National Contact Points

In 2023 SEM assumed the function of coordinator of National Contact Points (NCPs) responsible for EU centralised funds, directly managed by the European Commission, such as Horizon Europe; LIFE; URBACT; Connecting Europe Facility; Citizens, Equality, Rights and Citizenship (CERV) and others.

SEM's role as coordinator is to support the various NCPs through the exchange of best practices among national NCPs of various EU funding programmes.

The Agency has also been entrusted as the NCP for the Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) strand under the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), as well as for the TAIEX and Twinning instruments.

Coming Together

On December 11, SEM invited representatives of NCPs for a meeting to discuss issues of common interest and common challenges.

The role of NCP coordinator, as SEM CEO, Denise Fiorentino said in her introductory speech, "is very much in line with SEM's raison d'être, which is to act as the face of EU funds locally whilst providing information on all EU funding opportunities. On a daily basis, we meet with NGOs, public entities, schools, farmers and fishers and many more."

Addressing the NCP representatives, Parliamentary Secretary for European Funds, Hon. Chris Bonett asked NCPs to increase their efforts to increase Malta's absorption within the context of centralised funds.





Europe Direct Valletta


Since 2018, SEM has formed part of a network of over 420 EU-information centres across the EU.

Europe Direct Valletta works closely with the European Commission Representation in Malta and two other centres in Malta - Europe Direct CORE and Europe Direct Gozo - to disseminate information and assist European citizens in EU related matters.


Europe Direct Valletta provides information, advice, assistance and answers to questions about the EU in general, the rights of EU citizens, the EU's priorities, legislation, policies, programmes and EU funding opportunities.

The Centre organises several activities for the public and for specific target audiences, such as children and students. In 2023, major activities for Europe Direct Valletta were the Europe Day celebrations in Valletta, activities for SkolaSajf children, and tree planting activities in a number of schools.

During 2023, Europe Direct Valletta kept the momentum that was created in previous years to bring together on a regular basis the national network of EU information providers and national contact points to streamline EU related services in Malta.



EUROPE DIRECT VALLETTA PROVIDES INFORMATION, ADVICE, ASSISTANCE AND ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ABOUT THE EU IN GENERAL, THE RIGHTS OF EU CITIZENS, THE EU'S PRIORITIES, LEGISLATION, POLICIES, PROGRAMMES AND EU FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES



Tree Planting Initiative with School Children

Europe Direct Valletta and SEM organised a tree-planting initiative with the objective to highlight the EU's commitment to climate action with specific reference to children's engagement to the ambitious EU targets.

This activity was organised with the collaboration of Nature Trust Malta, who coordinate the EkoSkola initiative. Four local schools were invited and accepted to participate in this activity, being Immaculate Conception Secondary School - St Jeanne Antide College Tarxien, St Thomas More College - Sta Lucia Secondary School, San Ġorġ Preca College - Paola Primary School and St Thomas More College - Tarxien Middle School.

Tree planting ceremonies were held, during which a number of fruit trees, which were donated to these schools, were planted with the participation of their respective students. This initiative strongly contributed to greening school spaces, where children spend a lot of time during the academic year.

The ceremony which was held on November 29 at San Ġorġ Preca College Paola Primary School, was presided by the Parliamentary Secretary for European Funds, Hon. Chris Bonett.

In addressing the students, Dr Bonett highlighted the fact that we are all invited to behave as active citizens of the European Union by working together to protect and take care of the environment, especially to save on energy and water and green the places we live in. Initiatives like this are the proof of how EU funds can play a main role in achieving these targets.

Planting fruit trees reminds us of an important word - sustainability - meaning that whatever we do, we do not just think of ourselves but those around us and the whole world which needs our example.

Accompanying the Parliamentary Secretary were Paola Primary Head of School, Alexandra Vella; CEO of SEM, Denise Fiorentino; Head of the European Commission Representation in Malta, Lorenzo Vella; CEO of Nature Trust Malta, Vince Attard; school staff and Year 4 students.





Science in the City 2023 - EU Corner

SEM and Europe Direct Valletta set up an EU Corner at this year's Science in the City Festival, which took place on Friday, September 29 at Tritons Square in Valletta.

The yearly festival is part of 'European Researchers' Night' - an EU-wide event which takes place in over 30 countries and 300 cities simultaneously. The event is co-funded by the European Commission's Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions of the Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Programme.

This year's theme, 'Changemakers' focused on using research-based knowledge and creativity to solve the political, social, environmental and technical challenges that confront us.

This year's EU Corner consisted of EU-funded projects from the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action Programme, covering research by University of Malta Marie Curie Fellows, on the development and synthesis of an auxetic, antimicrobial polymer with potential uses in biomedical fields. Another research project focused on the culture, resilience and development in Island States.

A puppet show for children was also set up in collaboration with the European Commission Representation in Malta. The puppet show 'Be a Climate Hero', held at 45-minute intervals, focused on climate change and how we can contribute towards making our community carbon neutral.

EU Publications on general EU themes and specific themes on research and science were also available for those interested in learning more about the EU.

Building Europe with Local Councillors

On April 24, Europe Direct Valletta participated in the event 'Building Europe with Local Councillors' (BELC) organised by the European Commission Representation in Malta.

The aim of this project is to build a network of locally elected politicians, creating an alliance to better communicate the European Union. It is also organised in close cooperation with the Committee of the Regions' European Network of Regional and Local Councillors.

The main speaker of the event was Alessandro Giordani - Head of Unit, COMM C4, Networks in the Member States, European Commission, who provided an overview of the BELC network and encouraged local councils to become partners of the Commission in communicating the EU on the ground by appointing locally elected representatives as members of this network.

Following this presentation, the three Europe Direct centres in Malta as well as the European Documentation Centre introduced their respective entities with a view to forging future collaboration with Local Council representatives within their catchment areas. After the event, Mr Giordani visited Europe Direct Valletta and was briefed on the work and the initiatives undertaken by the Centre.



Discussing the State of the European Union for Local Communities

On September 13, Europe Direct Valletta hosted a debate organised by the European Commission Representation in Malta. This debate was held with members from the Building Europe with Local Councillors' (BELC) following the State of the European Union speech by the European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen to the European Parliament earlier on the same day.

The aim of this debate was to bring together representatives of the local communities to discuss ways of communicating the opportunities and benefits of the European Union to their respective communities in various ways according to the diverse need of their communities.

Mr Lorenzo Vella, the Head of the European Commission Representation in Malta, opened the event by welcoming the BELC members in attendance and provided a summary of the State of the European Union speech. Mr Vella highlighted the most pressing challenges for the EU, how the Commission will address these and the ideas for shaping the future of the EU.

Mr Vella then invited the panel speakers from different Local Councils to discuss the issues mentioned by President von Der Leyen and how they can work together to overcome these issues in their communities. During the debate, panel members highlighted the importance of the European project and the need to better inform and educate our communities about the benefits of the EU at large, as well as the relevance of the BELC initiative to help connect local communities with other European communities and bringing the EU closer to its citizens.





Students' Visits

On March 29 and 30, SEM officials delivered two presentations on Malta's role in the EU to groups of students from Denmark who were on a study visit to Malta.

These presentations were delivered to around 30 students per session, who are currently in their final year of studies at Egedal Gymnasium and Sonderborg Statsskole, respectively.

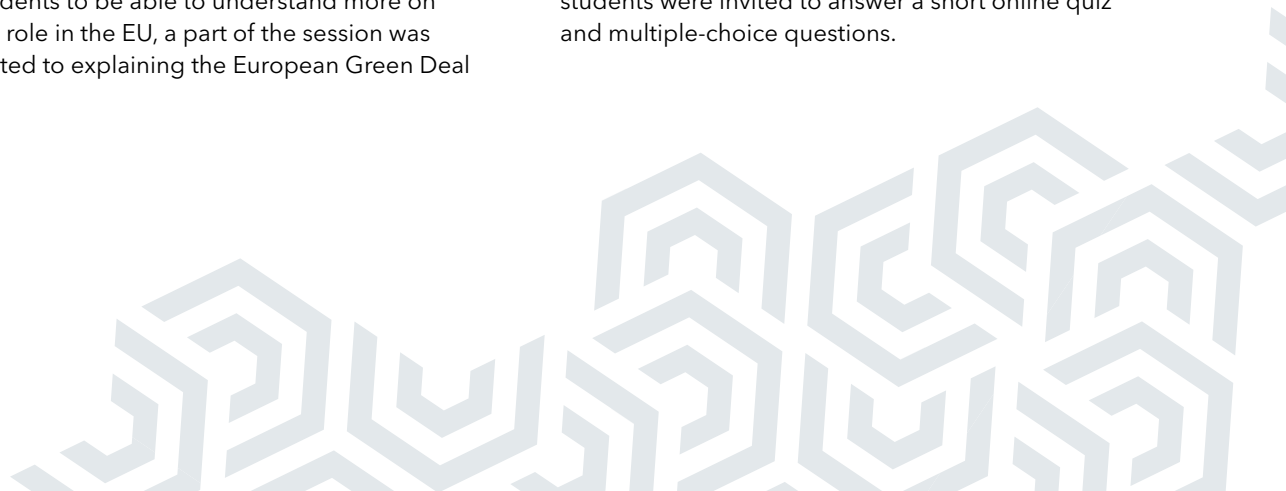
To kickstart the session, students were given a brief overview of Malta and the EU, and the milestones that Malta has achieved since its accession and how it is represented in the different EU Institutions.

For students to be able to understand more on Malta's role in the EU, a part of the session was dedicated to explaining the European Green Deal

and the RePowerEU plan, particularly on how the EU institutions and Member States will achieve the goals set out in these plans. This was followed by a discussion on the ongoing war in Ukraine, how the EU has been assisting Ukraine, and Malta's position as a Neutral State committed to preserving peace. Finally, a comparison was presented between Malta and Denmark based on the latest Eurobarometer.

Seeing that in 2024, the European Parliament Elections will be taking place, SEM officials encouraged the students to exercise their right to vote to ensure that their views and beliefs are represented at the highest levels of the EU.

To ensure student participation and encourage active discussion throughout these sessions, students were invited to answer a short online quiz and multiple-choice questions.



Europe Direct Valletta hosts Network of Networks Meetings

During the year, SEM and Europe Direct Valletta bring together EU-related national contact points and information providers in Malta, to discuss issues of common interest in promoting the EU and related services to various sections of the population.

Europe Day 2023

On March 22, SEM and Europe Direct Valletta organised a Network of Networks meeting to coordinate the preparations for Europe Day 2023 and the European Elections 2024.

The meeting consisted of a presentation on the preparations leading up to the event planned for Europe Day in Valletta on May 9. Here, the logistical aspects as well as the programme of activities were presented and discussed.

The floor was then taken over by Europe Direct Gozo, who gave an overview of the preparations being undertaken for marking Europe Day in Gozo with a public event on April 29.

This was then followed by a short presentation by the European Parliament Liaison Office in Malta, who gave an update on the efforts already being undertaken in relation to the upcoming 2024 European Elections and presented an overview of the together.eu website, which the entities were encouraged to access and promote.

Participants hailed from the following entities: SEM, Europe Direct Valletta, Europe Direct Gozo, Europe Direct CORE, European Parliament Liaison Office in Malta (EPLO), European Commission Representation Malta, European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA),

European Employment Services (EURES), Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST), EU Programmes Agency (EUPA), Strategy & Implementation Division, SOLVIT Malta, European Consumers Centre (ECC Net), Entitlement Unit - Ministry for Health.

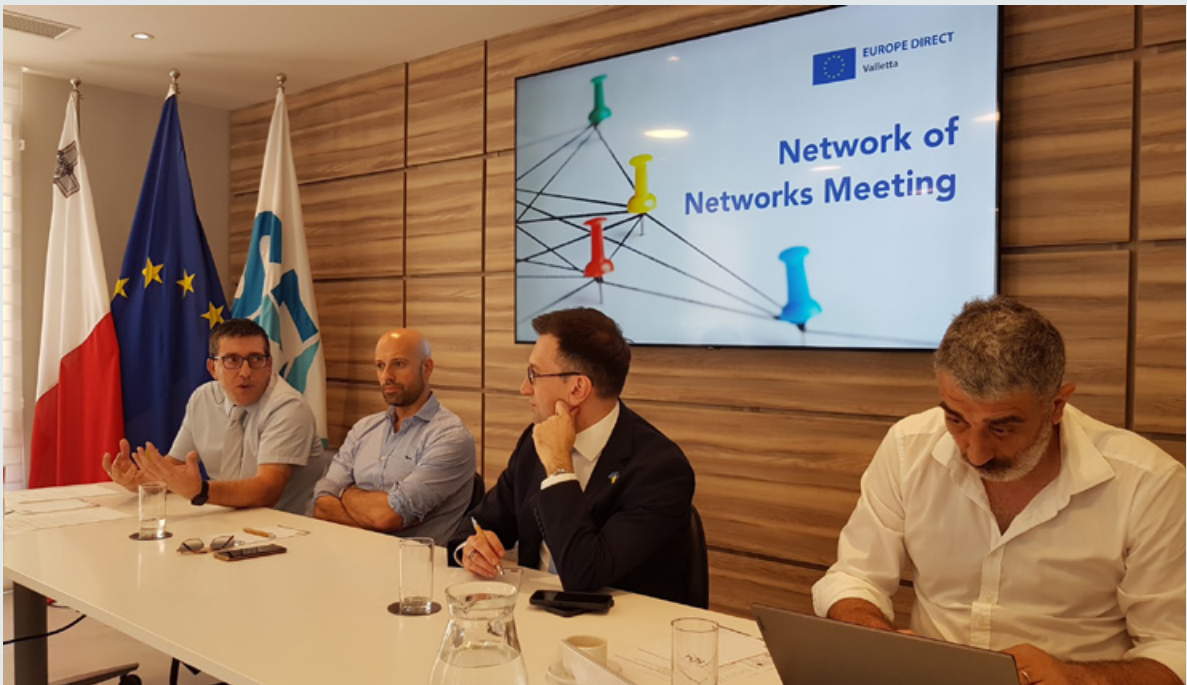
Meeting the new Head of the European Commission Representation

On July 13, Europe Direct Valletta brought together EU-related national contact points and information providers in Malta, to welcome the recently appointed Head of the European Commission Representation in Malta, Lorenzo Vella.

Mr Vella introduced himself to the network and emphasised the importance of such services through which the EU has a direct impact in the daily lives of citizens. He also remarked on the importance of collaboration in the run-up to next year's 20th anniversary since Malta's accession to the EU and in following-up on the Von der Leyen State of the Union speech later this year.

Mr Mario Sammut, Head of the European Parliament Liaison Office in Malta then took the floor to also welcome Mr Vella to the new role. He also remarked on the importance of promotion that needs to be undertaken by the entire network in the run-up to the 2024 European Elections, while also looking forward to collaborating with the European Commission Representation in Malta and the EU Information providers in this regard and on other fronts.

The meeting then continued with a roundtable introduction of the entities present. Mr Vella thanked all those present for their work and contribution to reaping the benefits of EU membership in our country, while also acknowledging the importance of such a network for continuous collaboration.





Promoting EU Careers

Since 2021, SEM has been tasked with promoting EU Careers locally to increase awareness among Maltese citizens about career opportunities in the EU institutions and agencies. Apart from promoting these opportunities, SEM also supports interested individuals and candidates on enquiries related to EU Careers, ranging from generic questions on career opportunities in the EU Institutions to specific queries on ongoing EPSO competitions and various vacancy notices.

Throughout 2023, SEM continued to consolidate its work in targeting students, graduates and professionals through social media campaigns, informative webinars and in-person information sessions.

Over the course of this year, SEM delivered seven information sessions on EU Career opportunities to students in tertiary education, as well as four information webinars on different traineeship opportunities in the EU institutions. SEM also had the opportunity to participate in three career fairs organised at secondary schools, post-secondary institutions and the University of Malta representing EU Careers.

SEM also marked important milestones in the promotion of EU Careers locally, as in 2023, the Agency organised an official visit by the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) in Malta and hosted the first in-person information session on EU Careers for the general public.

Earlier in 2023, SEM launched a dedicated page for EU Careers on its website with the aim of bringing together all the relevant information on EU Careers, making it easier for individuals to find all the necessary resources such as links to EU vacancy pages and the FAQs on EU Careers.

In 2023, SEM had the opportunity to meet several Maltese working in the EU institutions in Brussels and Luxembourg to create a series of testimonial videos as part of a promotional campaign that will be officially launched in 2024.

In 2023, SEM was once again responsible for selecting the EU Careers Student Ambassadors, both for the University of Malta and MCAST. Four student ambassadors, two from each academic institution, were selected for the academic year 2023-2024. During the past year, SEM sought to provide support and guidance to the students with their respective promotional activities.

SEM also continued to assist on a daily basis individuals interested in EU Careers, and in 2023, the Agency replied to 66 enquiries related to EU Careers.

The work undertaken throughout 2023 by SEM in respect to EU Careers was also possible thanks to the collaborative efforts with key stakeholders, namely the Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade, the European Commission Representation in Malta, the European Parliament Liaison Office in Malta and the Institute for European Studies at the University of Malta.

SEM HAS BEEN TASKED WITH PROMOTING EU CAREERS LOCALLY TO INCREASE AWARENESS AMONG MALTESE CITIZENS ABOUT CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN THE EU INSTITUTIONS AND AGENCIES



EU Careers Promotion in Schools and Higher Education Institutions

Kirkop Secondary School

On January 10, SEM participated in a Careers Fair organised by St Benedict College, Hal Kirkop Secondary School.

This Careers Fair was organised for Year 11 students to help them learn more about their options once they finish their final year in secondary school and prevent early school leaving. More than 20 organisations, ranging from government entities to post-secondary schools, participated in this fair.

SEM participated in the fair to promote career opportunities in the EU. The Agency's aim was to help introduce the idea of working in the EU institutions to young students and encourage them to take advantage of the different opportunities outside of Malta to help them grow personally and professionally.



Junior College

SEM was invited by the Institute for European Studies to participate at the Junior College Careers Expo between January 16 and 18.

The Careers Expo was organised by the Junior College Student Advisory Services with the aim to give a first-hand opportunity to students to discover and start exploring different study routes and career paths.

During the Expo, SEM promoted EU Careers on a stand shared with the Institute for European Studies. SEM explained to students interested in pursuing European studies, about career options that they may explore with the EU once they graduate.

Similarly, SEM joined the Institute to deliver a talk on Traineeship opportunities with the EU institution that students can pursue after they graduate. SEM also provided students with some tips that they can follow to prepare themselves for an EU career during their studies.

KSU Careers Expo

On March 1, SEM participated in the KSU Careers Expo promoting career opportunities in the EU institutions and agencies.

During the Careers Expo, SEM aimed to encourage more students from different academic backgrounds to consider an EU Career. Officials present also provided information on the different career paths available and the different traineeship opportunities that students can apply for once they graduate.

On the day SEM officials were also joined by the EU Careers Student Ambassador for the University of Malta.

University of Malta

On May 22, SEM was invited to deliver an information session at the University of Malta to a group of students currently in their final year of reading for a Bachelor in European Studies.

The aim of this session was to provide the students with an overview of the EU career opportunities they can apply for once they graduate.

The first part of the session was focused on traineeship opportunities offered by the European institutions with specific focus on the traineeships offered by the European Commission and the European Parliament. Students were also provided with guidance on the respective application procedures and some tips to keep in mind when applying.

The second part of the session was focused on looking at permanent official, contract agent and temporary staff positions. This included a brief overview of each position, including salary and grades. Considering the new EPSO competition model, students were also given an in-detail explanation of this new model and guidance on where to find support should they apply for permanent official positions in the future.

De La Salle College

On March 16, SEM participated at the Careers Day organised by De La Salle College, Birgu.

This Careers Day was organised for Senior School students, to inform them about the different academic and career options that they can pursue after they finish senior school. More than 20 organisations ranging from government entities to post-secondary schools, participated.

SEM, along with the EU Careers Student Ambassador, promoted career opportunities in the EU. The Agency's aim was to help introduce the idea of working in the EU institutions to young students and encourage them to take advantage of the different opportunities outside of Malta to help them grow personally and professionally.



Information Sessions on EU Careers

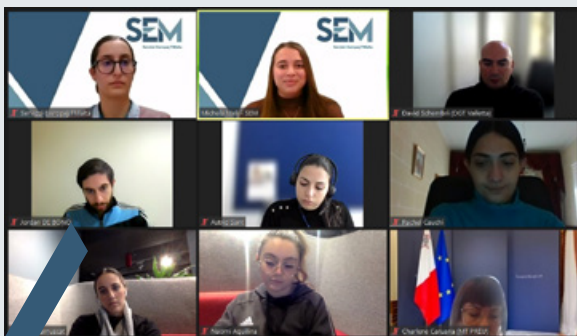
Traineeships at the European Commission

On January 17 and August 1, SEM and the Permanent Representation of Malta to the European Union (PREU), hosted webinars in relation to the open application for Blue Book (European Commission) traineeships for the Autumn Session starting October 2023 and the Spring Session starting March 2024.

The first part of the sessions, aimed at helping attendees better understand what this opportunity is about, provided general information on the European Commission, what a traineeship in this EU institution entails and how such an opportunity can benefit young graduates.

During the sessions, information was also provided on the updated application and selection procedure. Furthermore, useful tips and tricks that should be taken into consideration when applying for a Blue Book Traineeship were shared with the attendees.

For the second half of the sessions, a Maltese trainee currently taking part in the Blue Book Traineeship, shared her experience working with the Commission and provided attendees with practical advice on how to apply for this opportunity as well as how to navigate life abroad.



Traineeships at the General Secretariat of the EU Council

On February 23, SEM and the Permanent Representation of Malta to the European Union (PREU), organised a webinar in relation to the open application for traineeships at the General Secretariat of the EU Council for the Autumn Session starting September 2023.

The aim of the first part of this webinar was to give participants a better understanding of the opportunity, by giving a basic overview of the General Secretariat, defining a traineeship in the EU Council, and outlining the advantages this opportunity has for young graduates.

During this webinar, information was provided on the overall application and selection procedure. Very useful and important tips were shared with the attendees, to take into consideration when applying for any traineeship, mainly focusing on the General Secretariat Traineeship of the EU Council.

In the second part of this webinar, Maltese that took part in this traineeship between 2021 and 2022, shared their experience of working with the EU Council and provided words of wisdom to the attendees, to motivate them to apply for these types of traineeships.

Traineeships at the European Parliament

On May 17, SEM hosted a webinar in relation to the open application for the Schuman (European Parliament) traineeship for the Autumn Session starting October 2023.

The first part of the session, aimed at helping attendees better understand what this opportunity is about, provided general information on the European Parliament Secretariat, what work the traineeship entails and how such an opportunity can benefit young graduates.

During this session, information was also provided on the application and selection procedure. Furthermore, useful tips and tricks that should be taken into consideration when applying for a Schuman Traineeship were shared with the attendees.

For the second half of the session, two Maltese trainees, who had taken part in the Schuman Traineeship in 2022, shared their experience working with the European Parliament and provided attendees with practical advice on how to apply for this opportunity as well as how to navigate life abroad.

EPSO Promotional Visit to Malta

Between November 16 and 17, 2023, SEM hosted Mr Luis Loureiro De Amorim, Head of Outreach and External Relations at the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) who visited Malta to further promote EU Career opportunities in Malta. This visit was organised in collaboration with the Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade.

This visit consisted of several promotional events aimed at providing interested individuals and potential Maltese candidates with more information on the EU Career opportunities as well as more insight on the new EPSO competition model for upcoming competitions.

On Thursday November 16, an information session was held at the University of Malta for all current students and in the evening a public session was held at Europe House in Valletta for individuals who are interested in applying for the upcoming EPSO competitions in 2024.

On Friday November 17, a final information session was held at MCAST Paola for students from different academic backgrounds.



In addition to these promotional events, SEM facilitated meetings between EPSO and different faculty and institute representatives at the University of Malta and MCAST. The aim of these meetings was to provide academic representatives with more information on EU Careers to be then relayed to students accordingly.

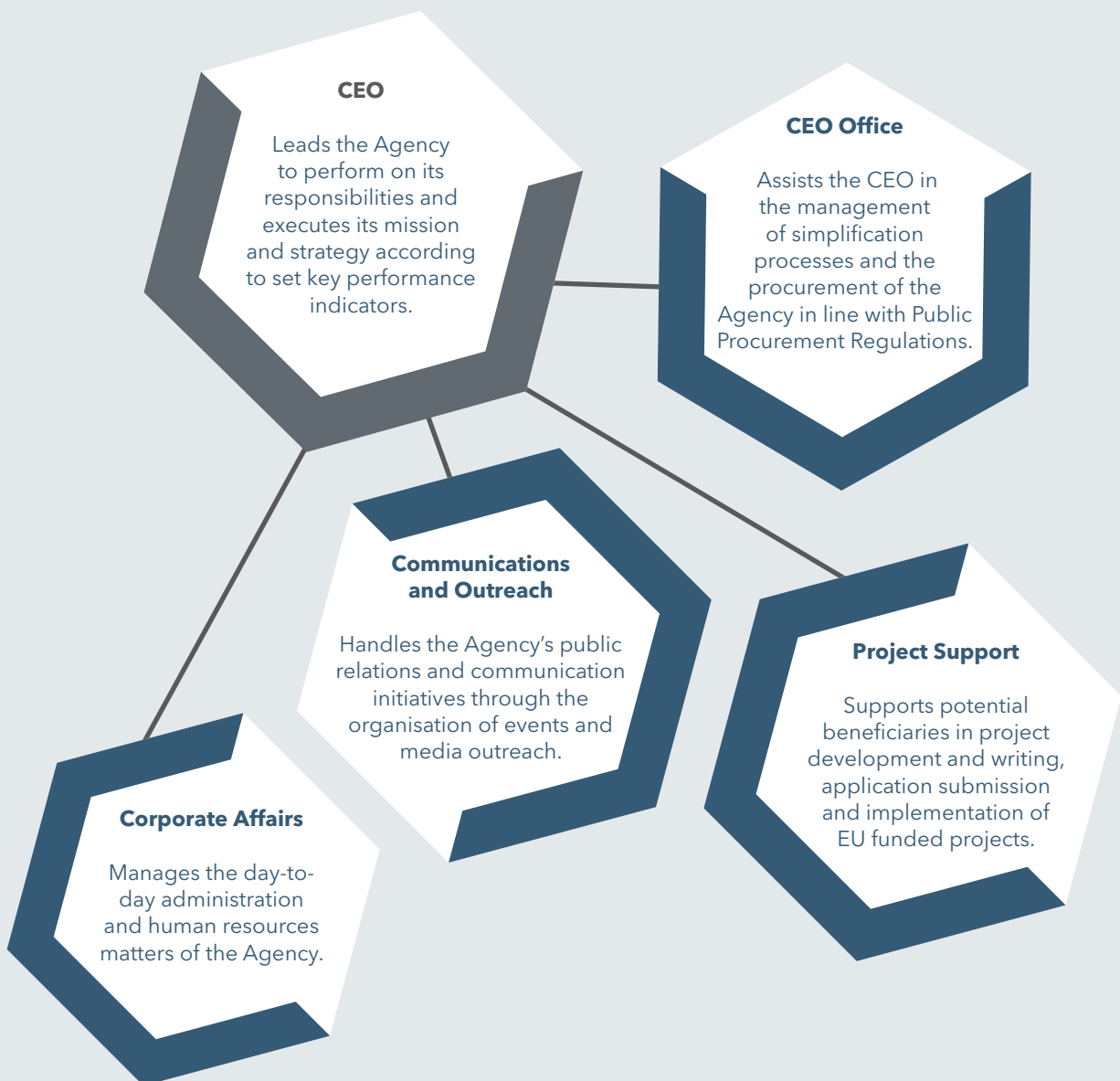
During the visit, a meeting was also held between EPSO, the European Commission Representation and the European Parliament Liaison Office in Malta to discuss the new EPSO competition model. A meeting was also held at the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) where views were exchanged on how the EUAA and EPSO may collaborate further.



Organisational Structure

SEM boasts of a small team of professional and dedicated officers, determined to provide efficient and personalised services to its clients.

In terms of organisational structure, SEM is headed by the CEO and composed of three units: Corporate Affairs, Project Support and Communications & Outreach.



Quality Label

At SEM we are committed to maintain high standards of quality of service to our service users.

Following the achievement of the Quality Award and the Quality Label in 2020, SEM has ensured that a service of excellence in the provision of services is maintained throughout the year. This is done according to the Quality Service Charter of the Public Service, based on four pillars: voice and understanding the customer, design and implementation of policies and services that meet customer expectation, delivery of a quality service and accountability, where people become part of the excellence of the service provided.

During 2023, discussions were undertaken with representatives from the Quality of Service Directorate and the People and Standards Division to strengthen the framework for regular reviews and updates to monitor the quality label criteria. This multifaceted approach ensures a holistic

assessment to support SEM's service-oriented culture that prioritizes our stakeholders' satisfaction and aligns with directives. The adherence to these comprehensive criteria reflects a commitment to continuous improvement and the provision of our services.

An internal review has been carried out to develop a monitoring mechanism for carrying out the internal monitoring of a set of indicators, which will be measured and reported every quarter to ensure that the agency continues to offer a service of excellence in line with the Pillars stipulated in the Quality Charter.

In conjunction, independent mystery-shopping exercises held during the year by the public service rate SEM as a government agency that offers excellent services delivered through physical visits, e-mail, and telephone to its service users.



SEM HAS ENSURED THAT A SERVICE OF EXCELLENCE IN THE PROVISION OF SERVICES IS MAINTAINED THROUGHOUT THE YEAR



Testimonials

"As beneficiaries of an EU-funded project, we used SEM services from the application stage, implementation and furthermore until the final report submission. They provided excellent communication and gave us feedback in a short time. I highly recommend this service to anyone who wants to apply for EU funding, as SEM gives the support needed at every stage of the project."

ANNABELLE AZZOPARDI

Learning Support Educator,
Erasmus+ Project Coordinator

"The assistance the Marsa Local Council has been receiving from SEM both at application and implementation stage have been extremely important for us to succeed. I highly encourage other Local Councils and agencies to seek their services because I truly believe they would make the difference."

EDWARD SPITERI AUDIBERT

Executive Secretary, Marsa Local Council

"St. Ignatius College (SIC) Administration Centre has benefited from the professional and excellent support services that SEM offers through the different stages of the project from the writing of the application, its submission, and the eventual materialisation of the project. We look forward for future collaboration with SEM who have always answered all our enquiries in a timely manner."

DR DOREEN SAID PACE

St Ignatius College (SIC) Administration Centre,
Erasmus+ Project Coordinator

"SEM provides professional and personalised service. The team has always helped our organisation for European funded project applications and for their implementation. Their contribution was essential for their success."

KENDRICK BONDIN

Government and Public Entities Section, GWU
ESF Project Coordinator

“Resources are always scarce, but never more so than with voluntary organisations. The option to rely on SEM’s professionals for guidance, review and support is leaving a positive mark on our project.”

DR AARON ZAMMIT APAP

Secretary General,
bBrave Founder

“Support in project coordination and implementation is rudimentary for success, especially in projects coordinated at College level. SEM has been a point of reference throughout each project journey embarked on by St Benedict College and the support given has been instrumental in getting the College accredited ”.

ROBERTA ARGENTO

Head College Network,
St Benedict College, Hal Kirkop

“SEM have been an invaluable resource during our journey in EU projects. Their representatives are insightful, knowledgeable and offer a guiding hand during the project writing, implementation, and dissemination.”

ALEXANDRA CAMILLERI

Executive Officer, National Inventory,
Research and Archaeology Unit

“At application process SEM staff helped and guided us as to the relevant documents to get in time, also assisted in filling in the application form in a very professional way and communication was excellent. Following this positive experience, we look forward to the implementation stage, since we were successful in securing the funds. Thank You.”

GERTRUDE BUTTIGIEG

Malta Sea Cadets

“An agency that makes one’s application theirs as much as yours, helping throughout all phases of the application stage in offering advice, support, and direction.”

DAVID SCHEMBRI

Mayor, Qrendi Local Council

“SEM was like a lighthouse in the previously uncharted territory of EU funding. SEM gave us practical guidance, firmly endorsing our ideas, helping in filtering project designs and facilitating the projection of our ideas towards tangible goals. What is so precious is the opportunity for learning, innovation and improvement the SEM’s officers gave us in becoming more self-sufficient in our quest for funding.”

JOHN A. AGIUS

Secretary General, Għaqda Muzikali Santa Marija, Hal Għaxaq A.D.1873

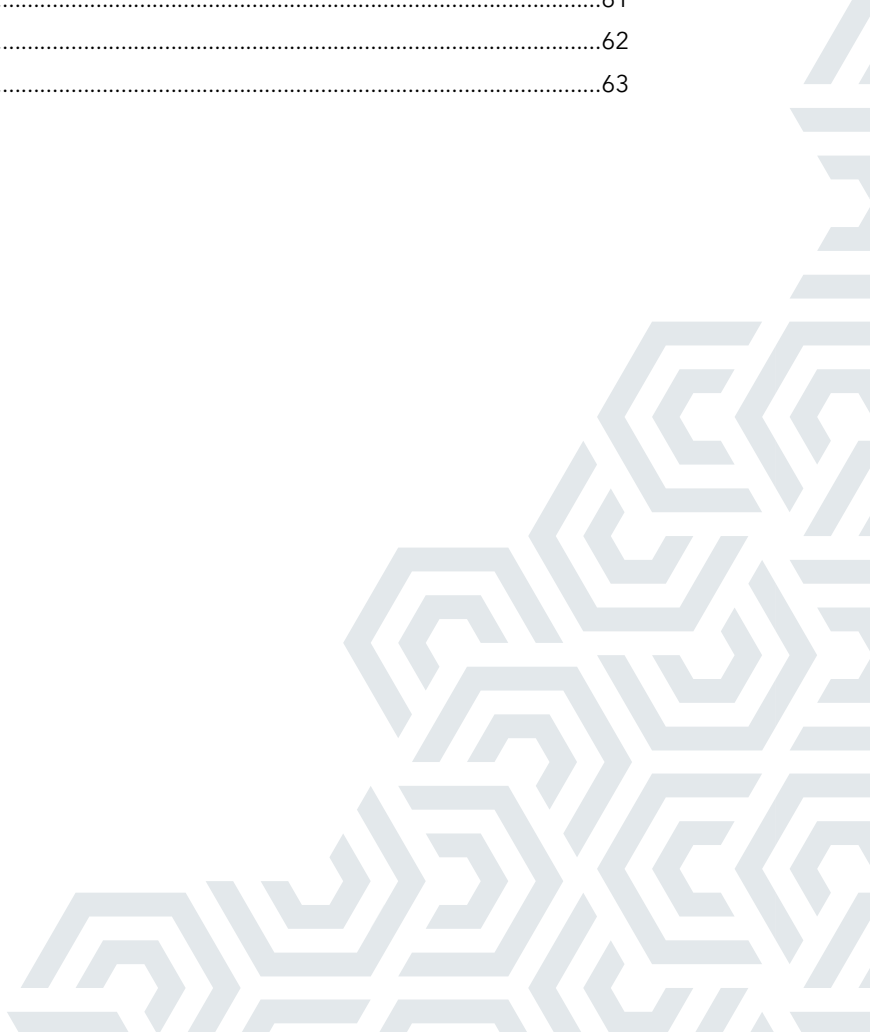


Agency Report and Financial Statements

For the Year Ended 31 December 2023

Contents

Agency's Report.....	54
Independent Auditor's Report	56
Statement of Comprehensive Income	59
Statement of Financial Position	60
Statement of Changes in Equity	61
Statement of Cash Flows	62
Notes to the Financial Statements	63



Agency's Report

For the Year ended 31 December 2023

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) presents the annual report together with the audited financial statements of Servizzi Ewropej f' Malta for the year ended 31 December 2023.

General Information

Servizzi Ewropej f' Malta (hereafter the "Agency") was established in 2021 by virtue of the Public Administration Act (Cap.595) by Legal Notice 445 of 2020 hereafter (the "Act") as an agency, which shall carry out functions related to EU- related information and assistance on EU funding programmes.

Principal Activities

The Agency's principal activities are to inform citizens on the latest developments on EU funds and support organisations in tapping into EU-funding opportunities by informing them on funding opportunities, helping those who are interested in applying for available funds and guiding successful applicants in implementing their projects.

Results

The Agency registered a surplus of €51,480 for the year ended 31 December 2023 (2022: €109,694) as shown in the Statement of Comprehensive Income on page 59.

Disclosure of Information to the Auditors

The CEO is aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the Agency's auditors are unaware. All steps have been taken to ensure that the Agency's auditors are aware of any relevant information.

Events after the end of the Reporting Period

No significant events have occurred after the end of the reporting period which requires mention in this report.

Future Developments

The Agency is not envisaging any changes in operating activities for the forthcoming year.

Bankers

Bank of Valletta p.l.c.
Cannon Road
Santa Venera SVR 9030
Malta

Central Bank of Malta
Castille Place
Valletta VLT 1060
Malta

Statement of Responsibilities of the Agency

The Public Administration Act (Cap.595) article 31(a) of the Laws of Malta requires the CEO to prepare financial statements for each financial year ended which give a true and fair view of the state of the affairs of the Agency and of the profit or loss of the Agency for that period. In preparing these, the CEO is required to:

- adopt the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Agency will continue in the business;
- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- account for income and charges relating to the accounting period on the accruals basis;
- value separately the components of asset and liability items; and
- report comparative figures corresponding to those of the preceding accounting period.

The CEO is responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Agency and to enable them to ensure that the financial statement comply with the Public Administration Act, enacted in Malta. The CEO is also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Agency and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Auditors

PKF Malta Limited, Registered Auditors, have expressed their willingness to continue in office. Approved by the Chief Executive Officer and signed on 16 February 2024:



MS DENISE FIORENTINO
CEO

Registered Address:

Head Office
280, Republic Street
Valletta
VLT1112
Malta

Independent Auditor's Report

To the CEO of Servizzi Ewropej f'Malta
Report on the Audit of the Financial Statements

Opinion

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of Servizzi Ewropej f'Malta set out on pages 6 to 20 which comprise the statement of financial position as at 31 December 2023, the statement of comprehensive income, statement of changes in equity and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements give a true and fair view of the balance sheet of the Agency as at 31 December 2023, and of its financial performance and cashflows for the year then ended in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards as adopted by the European Union and have been properly prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Public Administration Act, Cap. 595 of the Laws of Malta.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs). Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are independent of the Agency in accordance with the International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants' Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (IESBA Code) together with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in accordance with the Accountancy Profession (Code of Ethics for Warrant Holders) Directive issued in terms of the Accountancy Profession Act (Cap. 281) in Malta, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements and the IESBA Code. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Other Information

The CEO is responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the CEO's Report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

Based on the work we have performed, in our opinion:

- the information given in the CEO's report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the CEO's report has been prepared in accordance with the Public Administration Act (Cap. 595) of the Laws of Malta.

In addition, in light of the knowledge and understanding of the Agency and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we are required to report if we have identified material misstatements in the CEO's report and other information. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Responsibilities of the CEO

The CEO is responsible for the preparation of the financial statements that give a true and fair view in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards and the requirements of the Public Administration Act, Cap.595 of the Laws of Malta, and for such internal control as the CEO determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the CEO is responsible for assessing the Agency's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the CEO either intend to liquidate the Agency or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Agency's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the CEO.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the CEO's use of the going concern basis of accounting and based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Agency's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Agency to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with the CEO regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

We also provide those charged with governance with a statement that we have complied with relevant ethical requirements regarding independence, and to communicate with them all relationships and other matters that may reasonably be thought to bear on our independence, and where applicable, related safeguards.

The principal in charge of the audit resulting in the independent auditor's report is Mr George Mangion for and on behalf of:

PKF MALTA LIMITED

Registered Auditors

15, Level 3, Mannarino Road
Birkirkara BKR 9080
Malta

16 February 2024



Statement of Comprehensive Income

For the Year Ended 31 December 2023

	2023	2022
Note	€	€
Subvention and contributions	3. 956,547	965,566
Other income	4. 45,930	18,629
Total income	1,002,477	984,195
Administrative and other expenses	(948,613)	(871,741)
Finance costs	(2,384)	(2,760)
Profit for the year	51,480	109,694

The notes on pages 63 to 75 form an integral part of these financial statements.



Statement of Financial Position

As at 31 December 2023

	Note	2023 €	2022 €
ASSETS			
Non-current assets			
Property, plant and equipment	7.	53,125	48,347
Current assets			
Other receivables	9.	37,329	24,677
Cash and cash equivalents	10.	707,032	582,607
Total current assets		744,361	607,284
TOTAL ASSETS		797,486	655,631
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES			
Equity			
Retained earnings		618,187	566,707
Liabilities			
Non-current liabilities			
Lease Liability	8.	26,667	34,624
Current liabilities			
Lease liability	8.	7,956	7,530
Trade and other payables	11.	144,676	46,770
Total current liabilities		152,632	54,300
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		797,486	655,631

The notes on pages 63 to 75 form an integral part of these financial statements.

These financial statements on pages 59 to 75 were approved by the Chief Executive Officer and authorised for issue on 16 February 2024 by:

DENISE FIORENTINO
Chief Executive Officer

Statement of Changes in Equity

For the Year Ended 31 December 2023

	Accumulated Fund
	€
Balance as at 31 December 2021	457,013
Surplus for the year	109,694
Equity as at 31 December, 2022	566,707
Surplus for the year	51,480
Equity as at 31 December 2023	618,187

The notes on pages 63 to 75 form an integral part of these financial statements.



Statement of Cash Flows

For the Year Ended 31 December 2023

	2023	2022
Note	€	€
Cash from operating activities:		
Profit from operations	51,480	109,694
Interest expense to reconcile to profit (loss) from operations	2,384	2,760
Depreciation	16,054	17,204
Profit from operations	69,918	129,658
Movement in other receivables	(12,652)	18,453
Movement in trade and other payables	97,906	(11,844)
Net cash flows from operating activities	155,172	136,267
Cash flows from investing activities:		
Payments to acquire property, plant and equipment	(20,832)	(3,095)
Net cash flows used in investing activities	(20,832)	(3,095)
Cash flows from financing activities:		
Repayment of finance lease liabilities	(9,915)	(9,440)
Net cash flows used in financing activities	(9,915)	(9,440)
Increase in Cash and Cash Equivalents	124,425	123,732
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year	582,607	458,875
Cash and cash equivalents at end of year	10. 707,032	582,607

The notes on pages 63 to 75 form an integral part of these financial statements.



Notes to the Financial Statements

For the Year Ended 31 December 2023

1. General Information

Servizzi Ewropej f'Malta (the "Agency") was established in 2021 under the Public Administration Act (Cap. 595) in terms of Legal Notice 445 of 2020. The Office of the Agency is situated at 280, Republic Street, Valletta, VLT 1112, Malta. The ultimate controlling party of the Agency is the Government of Malta.

These financial statements cover the period from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023.

a. Basis of preparation

i. Statement of compliance

The financial statements of the Agency have been prepared and presented in accordance with the requirements of the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as adopted by the European Union and comply with the requirements of the Public Administration Act (Cap. 595) of the Laws of Malta.

ii. Basis of measurement

The financial statements have been prepared on the historical cost basis.

iii. Functional and presentation currency

The financial statements are presented in euro (€), which is the Agency's functional currency. Transactions denominated in foreign currencies are converted to the functional currency at the rates of exchange ruling on the dates on which the transactions first qualify for recognition. Monetary assets and liabilities denominated in foreign currencies at the reporting date are retranslated to the functional currency at the exchange rate at that date. The foreign currency gain or loss on monetary items is the difference between amortised cost in the functional currency at the beginning of the period, adjusted for effective interest and payments during the period, and the amortised cost in foreign currency translated at the exchange rate at the end of the period. Foreign currency differences arising on retranslation are recognised in profit or loss.

iv. Changes in Accounting Policies and Disclosures

Standards, interpretations and amendments to published standards as endorsed by the EU effective in the current year.

In the current year, the Agency has applied new and amended IFRS Standards issued by the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB) and adopted by the EU that are mandatorily effective in the EU for an accounting period that begins on or after 1 January 2023. The adoption of new and amended standards did not have a material impact on the Agency's financial statements;

- Amendments to IAS 8 Accounting Policies, Changes in Accounting Estimates and Errors - The amendments to IAS 8 clarify the distinction between changes in accounting estimates, changes in accounting policies and the correction of errors. (effective for annual reporting periods beginning on or after 01 January 2023);
- Amendments to IAS 1 and IFRS Practice Statement 2 - The amendments to IAS 1 and IFRS Practice Statement 2 Making Materiality Judgements provide guidance and examples to help entities apply materiality judgements to accounting policy disclosures (effective for annual reporting periods beginning on or after 01 January 2023);
- Amendments to IAS 12 - Deferred Tax related to Assets and Liabilities arising from a Single Transaction, International Tax Reform—Pillar Two Model Rules (effective for annual reporting periods beginning on or after 01 January 2023).

Standards, interpretations and amendments to published standards as endorsed by the EU that are not yet effective:

At the date of the authorisation of these financial statements, certain new standards, amendments and interpretations to existing standards have been published by the IASB but are not yet effective and have not been adopted early by the Agency. Management anticipates that all the relevant pronouncements will be adopted in the Agency's accounting policies upon their effective date. The Agency is still assessing the effect of these changes on the financial statements. However, certain new standards and interpretations are not expected to have a material impact on the Agency's financial statements. The new and amended standards are as follows:

- Amendments to IFRS 16: Lease Liability in a Sale and Leaseback. (effective for annual reporting periods beginning on or after 01 January 2024);
- Amendments to IAS 1: Classification of Liabilities as Current or Non-current (effective for annual reporting periods beginning on or after 01 January 2024);
- Amendments to IAS 7 and IFRS 7: Supplier Finance Arrangements (effective for annual reporting periods beginning on or after 01 January 2024).

Standards, interpretations and amendments to published standards that are not yet endorsed by the EU:

Certain amendments to accounting standards have been published that are not mandatory for 31 December 2023 reporting periods and have not been early adopted by the Company. These amendments are not expected to have a material impact on the entity in the current or future reporting periods and on foreseeable future transactions. The Company intends to adopt these new and amended standards and interpretations, if applicable, when they become effective.

v. Going concern

The financial statements have been prepared on the going concern basis which assumes that the Government of Malta will continue to provide the necessary funding to the Agency to enable it to continue with its activities.

2. Significant Accounting Policies

a. Property, plant and equipment

i. Value method

The Agency's property, plant and equipment are measured at cost less accumulated depreciation and accumulated impairment losses.

Cost includes expenditure that is directly attributable to the acquisition of the asset and any other costs directly attributable to bringing the assets to a working condition for their intended use, and the costs of dismantling and removing the items and restoring the site on which they are located.

ii. Recognition and measurement

The cost of an item of property, plant and equipment is recognised as an asset when it is probable that the future economic benefits that are associated with the asset will flow to the entity and the cost can be measured reliably. Property, plant and equipment are initially measured at cost comprising the purchase price, any costs directly attributable to bringing the assets to a working condition for their intended use, and the costs of dismantling and removing the item and restoring the site to which it is located. Subsequent expenditure is capitalised as part of the cost of property, plant and equipment only if it enhances the economic benefits of an asset in excess of the previously assessed standard of performance, or it replaces or restores a component that has been separately depreciated over its useful life.

After initial recognition, property, plant and equipment are carried under the cost model, that is at cost less any accumulated depreciation and any accumulated impairment losses.

iii. Depreciation

Depreciation is charged to the income and expenditure account on a straight-line method over the estimated useful lives of items of property, plant and equipment, and major components are accounted for separately.

The estimated useful lives, residual values and depreciation method are reviewed at the end of each reporting period, with the effect of any changes in estimate accounted for on a prospective basis.

The rates of depreciation used are the following:

Furniture and fixtures	10 years
Motor vehicles	5 years
Computer and Electronic Equipment	4 years
Air Conditioners	6 years

Derecognition of property, plant and equipment

An item of property, plant and equipment is derecognised upon disposal or when no future economic benefits are expected to arise from the continued use of asset. Any gains or losses arising on the disposal or retirement of property, plant and equipment are determined as the difference between the disposal proceeds and the carrying amount of the assets and are recognised in profit or loss within other income or administrative and other expenses.

b. Right of Use Asset

A right-of-use asset is recognised at the commencement date of a lease. The right-of-use asset is measured at cost, which comprises the initial amount of the lease liability, adjusted for, as applicable, any lease payments made at or before the commencement date net of any lease incentives received, any initial direct costs incurred, and, except where included in the cost of inventories, an estimate of costs expected to be incurred for dismantling and removing the underlying asset, and restoring the site or asset.

Right-of-use assets are depreciated on a straight-line basis over the unexpired period of the lease or the estimated useful life of the asset, whichever is the shorter. Where the Agency expects to obtain ownership of the leased asset at the end of the lease term, the depreciation is over its estimated useful life. Right-of use assets are subject to impairment or adjusted for any remeasurement of lease liabilities.

The Agency has elected not to recognise a right-of-use asset and corresponding lease liability for short-term leases with terms of 12 months or less and leases of low-value assets. Lease payments on these assets are expensed to profit or loss as incurred.

c. Impairment of non-financial assets

The Agency assesses at each reporting date whether there is an indication that an asset may be impaired. If any such indication exists, or when annual impairment testing for an asset is required, the Agency makes an estimate of the asset's recoverable amount. An asset's recoverable amount is the higher of an asset's fair value less costs to sell and its value in use. Where the carrying amount of an asset exceeds its recoverable amount, the asset is considered impaired and is written down to its recoverable amount.

In assessing value in use, the estimated future cash flows are discounted to their present value using a pre-tax discount rate that reflects current market assessments of the time value of money and the risks specific to the asset. In determining fair value less costs to sell, recent market transactions are taken into account, if available. If no such transactions can be identified, an appropriate valuation model is used. Impairment losses of continuing operations are recognised in the statement of comprehensive income (income statement) in those expense categories consistent with the function of the impaired asset. An assessment is made at each reporting date as to whether there is any indication that previously recognised impairment losses may no longer exist or may have decreased. If such indication exists, the recoverable amount is estimated. A previously recognised impairment loss is reversed only if there has been a change in the estimates used to determine the asset's recoverable amount since the last impairment loss was recognised. If that is the case the carrying amount of the asset is increased to its recoverable amount. That increased amount cannot exceed the carrying amount that would have been determined, net of depreciation, had no impairment loss been recognised for the asset in prior years. Such reversal is recognised in the statement of comprehensive income (income statement). After such a reversal the depreciation charge is adjusted in future periods to allocate the asset's revised carrying amount, less any residual value, on a systematic basis over its remaining useful life.

d. Financial instruments

i. Recognition, initial measurement and derecognition

Financial assets and financial liabilities are recognised when the Agency becomes a party to the contractual provisions of the financial instrument and are measured initially at fair value adjusted by transactions costs. Subsequent measurement of financial assets and financial liabilities are described below.

Financial assets are derecognised when the contractual rights to the cash flows from the financial asset expire, or when the financial asset and all substantial risks and rewards are transferred. A financial liability is derecognised when it is extinguished, discharged, cancelled or expires.

ii. Classification and initial measurement of financial assets

All financial assets are initially measured at fair value adjusted for transaction costs (where applicable). Financial assets, other than those designated and effective as hedging instruments, are classified into the following categories:

- amortised cost
- fair value through profit or loss (FVTPL); or
- fair value through other comprehensive income (FVOCI)

In the period presented, the Agency does not have any financial assets categorised as FVOCI.

The classification is determined by both:

- the entity's business model for managing the financial asset; and
- the contractual cash flow characteristics of the financial asset.

iii. Subsequent measurement of financial assets

Financial assets are measured at amortised cost if the assets meet the following conditions (and are not designated as FVTPL):

- they are held within a business model whose objective is to hold the financial assets and collect its contractual cash flows; and
- the contractual terms of the financial assets give rise to cash flows that are solely payments of principal and interest on the principal amount outstanding.

After initial recognition, these are measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method. Discounting is omitted where the effect of discounting is immaterial. The Agency's cash and cash equivalents and receivables fall into this category of financial instrument.

Even if an instrument meets the two requirements to be measured at amortised cost, IFRS 9 contains an option to designate, at initial recognition, a financial asset as measured at FVTPL if doing so eliminates or significantly reduces a measurement or recognition inconsistency that would otherwise arise from measuring assets or liabilities or recognising the gains and losses on them on different bases.

Where assets are measured at fair value, gains and losses are recognised entirely in profit or loss (fair value through profit or loss, FVTPL). The Agency's investments fall into this category of financial instruments.

iv. Impairment of financial assets

IFRS 9's impairment requirements use more forward-looking information to recognise expected credit losses - the 'expected credit loss (ECL) model'. This replaces IAS 39's 'incurred loss model'. Instruments within the scope of the new requirements includes loans and other debt-type financial assets measured at amortised cost and FVOCI, trade receivables, contract assets recognised and measured under IFRS 15 and loan commitments and some financial guarantee contracts (for the issuer) that are not measured at fair value through profit or loss.

Recognition of credit losses is no longer dependent on the Authority first identifying a credit loss event. Instead, the Authority considers a broader range of information when assessing credit risk and measuring expected credit losses, including past events, current conditions, reasonable and supportable forecasts that affect the expected collectability of the future cash flows of the instrument.

In applying this forward-looking approach, a distinction is made between:

- financial instruments that have not deteriorated significantly in credit quality since initial recognition or that have low credit risk ('Stage 1') and
- financial instruments that have deteriorated significantly in credit quality since initial recognition and whose credit risk is not low ('Stage 2')

'Stage 3' would cover financial assets that have objective evidence of impairment at the reporting date.

'12-month expected credit losses' are recognised for the first category while 'lifetime expected credit losses' are recognised for the second category.

Measurement of the expected credit losses is determined by a probability-weighted estimate of credit losses over the expected life of the financial instrument.

v. Classification and measurement of financial liabilities

As the accounting for financial liabilities remains largely the same under IFRS 9 compared to IAS 39, the Agency's financial liabilities were not impacted by the adoption of IFRS 9. However, for completeness, the accounting policy is disclosed below.

The Authority's financial liabilities include trade and other payables. Financial liabilities are initially measured at fair value, and, where applicable, adjusted for transaction costs unless the Authority designated a financial liability at FVTPL.

Subsequently, financial liabilities are measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method except for derivatives and financial liabilities designated at FVTPL, which are carried subsequently at fair value with gains or losses recognised in profit or loss (other than derivative financial instruments that are designated and effective as hedging instruments).

All interest-related charges and, if applicable, changes in an instrument's fair value that are reported in the statement of income and expenditure are included within finance costs.

e. Other receivables

Other receivables are recognised initially at fair value and subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method, less provision for impairment. A provision for impairment of other receivables is established when there is objective evidence that the Agency will not be able to collect all amounts due to the original terms of the receivables.

f. Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and short-term deposits in the statement of financial position comprise cash at banks and on hand and short-term deposits.

g. Lease Liabilities

A lease liability is recognised at the commencement date of a lease. The lease liability is initially recognised at the present value of the lease payments to be made over the term of the lease, discounted using the interest rate implicit in the lease or, if that rate cannot be readily determined, the Agency's incremental borrowing rate. Lease payments comprise of fixed payments less any lease incentives receivable, variable lease payments that depend on an index or a rate, amounts expected to be paid under residual value guarantees, exercise price of a purchase option when the exercise of the option is reasonably certain to occur, and any anticipated termination penalties. The variable lease payments that do not depend on an index or a rate are expensed in the period in which they are incurred.

Lease liabilities are measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method. The carrying amounts are remeasured if there is a change in the following: future lease payments arising from a change in an index or a rate used; residual guarantee; lease term; certainty of a purchase option and termination penalties. When a lease liability is remeasured, an adjustment is made to the corresponding right-of-use asset, or to profit or loss if the carrying amount of the right-of-use asset is fully written down.

h. Trade and other payables

Trade and other payables are carried at cost which is the fair value of the consideration to be paid in the future for good and services received, whether or not billed to the Agency.

i. Provisions and contingent liabilities

Provisions are recognised when the Agency has a present obligation (legal or constructive) as a result of a past event, it is probable that the Agency will be required to settle that obligation and a reliable estimate can be made of the amount of the obligation. The amount recognised as a provision is the best estimate of the consideration required to settle the present obligation at the reporting date, taking into account the risks and uncertainties surrounding the obligation. Where a provision is measured using the cash flows estimated to settle the present obligation, its carrying amount is the present value of those cash flows (when the effect of the time value of money is material). When some or all of the economic benefits required to settle a provision are expected to be recovered from a third party, a receivable is recognised as an asset if it is virtually certain that reimbursement will be received and the amount of the receivable can be measured reliably.

A contingent liability is disclosed where the existence of the obligation will only be confirmed by future events or where the amount of the obligation cannot be measured with sufficient reliability.

j. Subvention and contributions

Revenue from the subvention voted to the Agency from the consolidated fund is accrued for in accordance with the Agency's approved budget for the year.

k. Government Grants

Government grants are assistance by government, inter-governmental agencies and similar bodies whether local, national or international, in the form of cash or transfers of assets to the Agency in return for past or future compliance with certain conditions relating to operating activities of the Agency. Government grants are recognised when there is reasonable assurance that the Agency will comply with the conditions attaching to them and the grants will be received.

Government grants are recognised at their fair value where there is reasonable assurance that the grant will be received and all attaching conditions will be complied with. When the grant relates to an expense item, it is recognised as income over the periods necessary to match the grant on a systematic basis to the costs that it is intended to compensate. Where the grant relates to an asset, the fair value is credited to a deferred income account and is released to the statement of comprehensive income over the expected useful life of the relevant asset by equal annual instalments.

l. Borrowing costs

Borrowing costs consists of interest and other costs that the Agency incurs in connection with the borrowing of funds. Borrowing costs directly attributable to the acquisition, construction or production of an asset that necessarily takes a substantial period of time to get ready for its intended use or sale are capitalised as part of the cost of the asset. All other borrowing costs are expensed in the period in which they occur. In view of the borrowings of the Agency all interest costs were expensed in the period.

m. Financial risk management objectives and policies

At the year end, the Agency's main financial assets on the statement of financial position comprise other receivables and cash. At the year end, there were no off-balance sheet financial assets.

At the year end, the Agency's main financial liabilities on the statement of financial position consisted of trade and other payables.

The main risks arising from the Agency's financial statements are interest rate risk, credit risk and liquidity risk. The CEO review and agree policies for managing each of these risks as summarised below:

i. Interest rate risk

Interest rate risk is the risk that the fair value or future cash flows of a financial instrument will fluctuate because of changes in market interest rates.

ii. Credit risk

Credit risk is the risk that a counterparty will not meet its obligations under a financial instrument leading to a financial loss.

Financial assets which potentially subject the Agency to concentrations of credit risk consist principally of certain other receivables and cash at bank.

The credit risk relating to the Agency's cash at bank is considered to be low since these are placed with quality financial institutions.

iii. Liquidity risk

The Agency actively manages its risk of a shortage of funds by closely monitoring the maturity of its financial assets and liabilities and projected cash flows from operations.

iv. Capital management

The Agency's objectives when managing capital are to safeguard its ability to continue as a going concern and to ensure that expenditures of the Agency are monitored in line with the financial contributions from the Government and other resources.

The capital structure of the Agency relates mainly with the accumulated fund in the statement of financial position.

3. Subvention and Contributions

	2023	2022
	€	€
Government recurrent Subvention	910,000	910,000
EU Contribution	28,989	35,388
Salary Refunds	17,558	20,178
	956,547	965,566

4. Other Income

	2023	2022
	€	€
Other Income	29,640	-
Income from Cost Sharing Agreement	16,290	18,629
Total	45,930	18,629

5. Surplus for the Year

Surplus for the year is stated after charging the following:

	2023	2022
	€	€
Audit fee	2,832	2,596
Depreciation and amortisation	16,054	17,204
Personal Emoluments	639,270	571,287
	658,156	591,087

During the year under review the average number of persons employed by the Agency was as follows:

	2023	2022
	Nr	Nr
Full-time employed by the Agency	17	16
Part-time employed by the Agency	1	1
Total	18	17

6. Taxation

The Minister for Finance and Employment has authorised that the Servizzi Ewropej f'Malta (SEM) shall be exempt from payment of income tax in terms of the Article 12(2) of the Income Tax Act (Chapter 123) of the Laws of Malta.



7. Property, Plant and Equipment

	Right of Use Asset - Property €	Furniture and fixtures €	Motor vehicles €	Computer and Electronic Equipment €	Air Conditioners €	Total €
Cost						
At 01 January 2023	66,809	8,292	17,000	21,837	2,001	115,939
Additions	-	535	-	20,297	-	20,832
Balance at 31 December 2023	66,809	8,827	17,000	42,134	2,001	136,771
Depreciation and impairment losses						
At 01 January 2023	(29,692)	(2,021)	(17,000)	(17,906)	(973)	(67,592)
Depreciation charge for the year	(7,423)	(775)	-	(7,523)	(333)	(16,054)
Balance at 31 December 2023	(37,115)	(2,796)	(17,000)	(25,429)	(1,306)	(83,646)
Carrying amount						
At 01 January 2023	37,117	6,271	-	3,931	1,028	48,347
At 31 December 2023	29,694	6,031	-	16,705	695	53,125

8. Lease Liability

	2023	2022
	€	€
Maturity Analysis		
Less than one year	7,956	7,530
One to five years	26,667	34,624
Total undiscounted lease liabilities at 31 December	34,623	42,154
Split as follows:		
Current	7,956	7,530
Non-Current	26,667	34,624
Total	34,623	42,154

9. Other Receivables

	2023	2022
	€	€
Accrued Income	14,361	11,492
Prepayments	22,968	13,185
Total	37,329	24,677



10. Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents included in the cash flow statement comprise the following:

	2023	2022
	€	€
Bank balances	706,751	582,410
Cash on hand	281	197
Total cash and cash equivalents in the statement of cash flows	707,032	582,607

11. Trade and other Payables

	2023	2022
	€	€
Trade payables	75,219	6,337
Accruals	6,562	6,764
Deferred Income	62,895	33,669
Total	144,676	46,770

12. Related Party Disclosures Identity of Related Parties

The ultimate controlling party of the Agency is the Government of Malta.

Schedule 1 - Administrative and Financial Expenditure

	2023	2022
	€	€
Personal Emoluments		
Salaries and Social Security Contributions	639,270	571,287
Utilities		
Telephones, Internet & Mobiles	3,663	4,683
Water and Electricity	8,658	9,413
	12,321	14,096
Materials and supplies	1,709	2,338
Repairs and Upkeep	5,659	15,747
Office Services		
Printing	2,396	2,112
Online Subscriptions	471	1,127
Newspapers, Stationery and IT Consumables	5,327	2,990
	8,194	6,229
Transport		
Vehicle Maintenance	2,818	4,028
Fuel	162	1,265
Others	1,383	599
	4,363	5,892
Travel		
Overseas Tickets	6,040	4,299
Local Travel and Insurance	501	476
Overseas Subsistence and Accommodation	9,166	6,527
	15,707	11,302
Information-related Expenditure	121,726	81,530

Contractual Services

Insurance	3,100	3,437
Lift	-	862
Other	-	38
Cleaning	13,551	11,957
Hosting & IT	47,571	49,905
	64,222	66,199

Professional Services

Accountancy	11,595	11,236
Professional services - Consultants	1,408	2,360
Auditor's remuneration	2,832	2,596
Other fees	-	826
	15,835	17,018

Staff Professional Development	13,131	16,320
Incidental Expenses paid from Petty Cash	293	-
European Direct Information Centre Expenses	28,989	46,054

European Social Fund

Bank charges	531	392
Other Expenditure	-	133
Rent - government building	609	-
Depreciation and amortisation	16,054	17,204

Total Administrative and Financial Expenditure

	948,613	871,741
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Annual Report 2023

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