



“Side By Side: A newspaper promoting integration and diversity in Malta.”



A project co-financed through the European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals

“Side by Side”

**Evaluation and
Recommendations Report**





Aims and Objectives of the Project

'*Side by Side*: A newspaper promoting integration and diversity in Malta' was a 14-month project, co-funded by the European Fund for the integration of third country nationals - EIF (75% EU Funds – 25% Beneficiary Finds) aimed at promoting integration and raising awareness about different cultures in Malta through the production of a pilot printed and e-newspaper.

The objective was to promote understanding of positive aspects of interculturalism and cultural diversity and the richness that TCNs living in Malta can bring to the Maltese islands. The project brought together a team of journalists and contributors, both TCNs and Maltese who were involved in the production of 3 issues of a printed and online newspaper. The main theme of the newspaper is '*What does interculturalism and cultural diversity mean to you?*' The newspapers consist of an informative exchange between the Maltese population and different TCN populations promoting understanding, tolerance and integration. The newspaper carries stories related to experiences, cultures, lives of TCNs and Maltese.

The project started with the recruitment of the editor and journalist, and together with the project leader, a scoping exercise was produced. This was aimed at Maltese citizens as well as TCNs in order to provide information and a baseline through which to develop the newspaper and bring together information on what cultural diversity means to the Maltese and TCN population. An online questionnaire was disseminated via Facebook as well as to a number of relevant contacts. The results of the scoping study provided useful information regarding possible content of the newspapers. The next phase of the project was the sourcing of articles of the newspapers. The newspapers are printed as well as published online, through a portal whereby its format is an e-newspaper.

The project ended with a roundtable workshop in which contributors, TCNs and other stakeholders came together to discuss cultural diversity in Malta.

These results are in this recommendations report and tackle how to move forward with a cultural diversity newspaper as a tool for increased integration.



- ***Project Kick off: Recruitment and Research***

The project kicked off with the bringing together of the project team. The project started in the beginning of May, where the Project Leader issued a call for expressions of interest for the recruitment of an Editor/Journalist and a Journalist as well as the drafting of the scoping exercise. The Editor and Journalist, Maltese and American respectively have experience in the media as well as academia and started their employment in the first week of July.

The aim of the questionnaire was to find out what Maltese and Third Country Nationals (TCNs) living in Malta wanted to read in this newspaper. This was an interesting exercise, as the TCNs were very interested in learning about the Maltese cultures, as were the Maltese, however, despite the fact that the Maltese participants were very interested in the cultural aspect, they did not seem to meet or have contact with TCNs. The general feedback received from the Maltese public was positive, however, they did not distinguish TCNs to asylum seekers or refugees. The major themes emerged included:

- Food;
- Cultural events and activities;
- Success Stories of Maltese living abroad and TCNs living here;
- Music and Art
- Fashion

A detailed analysis of the questionnaire was published in the first issue of Side by Side, and will be included in the final report of the project.

- ***Sourcing Content***

Upon the basis of the questionnaire, where a total of 323 persons gave their input, a meeting was held among the project team to source the content of the three issues of the newspaper in general, then specifically for each newspaper, scheduled for November 2013, January and April 2014. During this process, a call for expressions of interest was produced for the procurement of the Design, Printing and Distribution of the Newspaper, whereby Communiqué Creative was chosen to be the service provider and the newspaper was distributed with L'Orizzont, as part of their service, a local national newspaper on a Monday, on specific dates as agreed with the service provider.

- ***Raising Awareness***

The project was given visibility during each phase of the project. The SOS Malta website was kept constantly updated with updates related to Side by Side, namely the questionnaire, the recruitment process as well as the publishing of the newspaper on the given dates.



The SOS Malta Facebook page was also constantly updated with news as well as an awareness campaign. An additional page, specifically for Side by Side was produced, where the same updates pertaining Side by Side was published, as well as general news updates related to cultural diversity and local initiatives were promoted.

The main aim of the newspaper and the project was to raise awareness amongst Maltese as well as TCNs and promote understanding of positive aspects of interculturalism and cultural diversity and the richness that TCNs living in Malta can bring to the Maltese islands. In fact, the main theme of the newspaper is '*What does interculturalism and cultural diversity mean to you?*' The newspapers consist of an informative exchange between the Maltese population and different TCN populations promoting understanding, tolerance and integration.

- *Networking Events*

The project staffs was invited to a number of Events which promoted cultural diversity, and the journalist had the opportunity to cover most of the events in articles in order to promote their initiatives, and Side by Side to be promoted in return, these were published in the subsequent issue of the newspaper, where pictures were also provided.

On one particular occasion, the Qawra Access Centre invited Side by Side as a good practice and the project team conducted Vox-Pops where TCNs as well as Maltese were asked questions about integration and whether they feels accepted or otherwise. We feel this was a successful exercise, which was also published in one of the editions of Side by Side.

- *A description of the feedback received from the public with regards to Side by Side*

The feedback throughout the implementation of the project was generally positive – apart from the dissemination in the newspapers, we have also disseminated copies to Members of parliament as well as public places where Side by Side could be of interest such as the University of Malta; the Millennium Chapel, Mater Dei hospital.

We have received a number of communications from the public telling us that they enjoyed reading the newspapers as well as some suggestions of what should be tackled in future issues. Others have shown an interest in contributing, which was considered and obtained.

The feedback on Facebook, however, being a social network and more susceptible to direct comments, some individuals tended to resort to negative comments regarding migration and the topic, considering the fact that immigration is a topical and controversial issue in the Maltese islands. Again, the Maltese population failed to distinguish between TCNs, who are here legally and with all the necessary documentation and asylum seekers/refugees – instilling a feeling of xenophobia and racism, as well as discrimination. Thus, this served as



motivation to continue promoting and 'educating' the general public, tackling these issues through the newspaper itself.

As part of the regular meetings held with the Responsible Authorities, when asked about the feedback received, it was suggested and discussed that since there were some unspent funds from the project, a different dimension should be given to the newspaper. After internal discussions, it was decided that since the previous three issues of Side by Side were reaching just above 15,000 of the Maltese population, a Special Edition would be produced so as to reach a bigger audience and raise further awareness about TCNs living in Malta. Thus, a total of 100,000 copies of Side by Side were printed and distributed Door to Door to households in Malta and Gozo.

- ***An evaluation of the Final Round Table Workshop Event held as a closing event of the Side by Side Project***

As the project was nearing its end, plans for the round table event started to take shape. One of the interviews for the special edition was with the newly appointed President of Malta, Ms. Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, who kindly invited us to organize the event at San Anton Palace under her Patronage. This was also because cultural diversity was so important in her agenda, that she also wanted active participation in the event.

Official invitations were sent to stakeholders including members of the media, government officials from the ministry of education as well as Qawra Access Centre, TCN and Maltese contributors, officials from the University of Malta, representatives from Embassies, schools, as well as the institute of Journalism. The event took the form of an informal discussion of the success and challenges of Side by Side as an initiative, as well as how the newspaper can be taken on by other entities, since the project had the end date of 30th June, thus the initiative is also terminated by the said date.

The event took place on the 23rd of June 2014 and a morning of cultural diversity and interculturalism was opened by Her Excellency the President of Malta Ms. Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, who emphasized how important initiatives such as Side by Side are.

The half day event was divided into two sessions, both holding panel discussions: the first session, chaired by Dr. Carmen Sammut, from the University of Malta delved into the role of the media with regards to TCNs and their portrayal and their labelling. The issue of the lack of knowledge of the difference between TCNs and asylum seekers and refugees was discussed. Members of the panel were Mr. Stephen Camilleri from the ministry of education; Laiq Ahmed Atif from the Muslim Society in Malta, Mr. Martin Chetcuti from the Qawra Access Centre and Mario Cucciardi, a PSD teacher in a state school in Malta.

The second session took a different approach, where Side by Side was analysed and how the media can take on such an initiative. The session was chaired by Mr. Mark Micallef, a



journalist working with the Times of Malta, who also has the subject of cultural diversity and interculturalism at heart. The members of the panel were Mr. Malcolm J. Naudi, President of the Institute of Journalism, Ms. Maria Muscat, former journalist, contributor on another project involving the integration of TCNs with SOS Malta, and Emma Zammit, Project Leader of Side by Side.

The discussion took the form of how the media should portray the positive stories and issues TCNs bring about, such as development of economy and economical opportunities and positive attitudes.

Key Issues discussed during the event included:

- Public perception of migrants and the role the media plays in this
- Working with the media, the existing relationship with TCNs and the often-sensationalized stories.
- Highlight the critical role of national newspaper and their role in creating a negative discourse of immigration and ways to improve or change this.
- Education and portrayal of TCNs and foreigners from a young age
- The importance of terminology and definitions and how they are used in the media.
- The attitudes the Maltese public and the media has towards all migrants in Malta
- More initiatives should be taken on to promote the positive stories of migrants and TCNs in Malta.

The morning ended with an evaluation of the project with key stakeholders where recommendations of the way forward of Side by Side: A newspaper promoting integration and diversity in Malta.

- ***Lessons learnt and recommendations on further actions that can be taken with regards to Side by Side and Similar Initiatives***
- Education to the public with regards to terminology;
- Training of media and journalists and NGOs;
- Need for more statistical reportage;
- Commercial model for journalism/literature or even a whole paper dedicated to such;
- More focus on children integration, future generation and the future;
- End use of Third Country National which already segments one group of individuals;
- Misrepresentation of Black migrants specifically;
- Public service obligation thus morally should do such, as part of its mandate;
- Example of Serbian floods and lack of coverage despite Serb contribution amongst a number of instances where no media coverage was given.