



KOPIN AND SKOP
**Summer
Workshops**

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195, Suite 2b, Naxxar Road
San Ġwann SGN 9029, Malta
T: (+356) 2756 7460
E: info@kopin.org, info@skopmalta.org

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Executive Summary

Kopin (*Koperazzjoni Internazzjonali – Malta; VO/0200*) in conjunction with SKOP (*Solidarjetà u Koperazzjoni – Malta; VO/0366*) held four workshops over the period between June and August 2016. Kopin is a Maltese NGO working in the field of migration, international development cooperation and global education.

Each workshop attracted roughly 12-20 participants, who were then separated into 4-5 groups to discuss two questions related to the implementation of the Global Goal 2030. A ‘World Café’ approach was used in order to create a dynamic environment for the participants to discuss the two questions in more depth. This approach also allowed group facilitators the chance to discuss their views with outside participants from other groups and vice versa.

The purpose of these workshops was to bring representatives of Maltese civil society, the private sector, parastatal entities and individuals from academic circles to discuss ways of implementing Malta’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). More specifically, the workshops managed to tap on subjects closely connected to the SDGs, such as; Malta’s Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) policy, empowering the socially disadvantaged, Maltese civil society issues and Malta’s EU Council Presidency starting next January.

Participants included representatives from: Kopin, SKOP, Malta Enterprise, Terrafirma, SOS Malta, Playmobil Malta, the General Workers Union, the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Malta, the People for Change Foundation (PFC), The President’s Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society, Malta Cooperative Federation, Koperattiva Kummerċ Ġust (KKG), Malta EU Steering & Action Committee (MEUSAC) and University of Malta.

The first workshop tried to outline the parameters of the SDGs, and how local authorities and civil society can better advocate for their achievement, not forgetting an insight on the role of the private sector to support them. In short, it was argued that creating awareness depended to a large extent on meaningful training opportunities as a prerequisite for individuals, capacity building between the different sectors and the creation of formal and informal partnerships between local government, civil society and the private sector. Local government has an important role which can be further enhanced to create awareness of the SDGs to disseminate this information better to their constituents. The private sector’s role is also very important for the realisation of the SDGs, current approaches in their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) schemes

are of great value and can act as an avenue for the absorption of the objectives of the SDGs, whereas for civil society, existing platforms should be given more access to funds and higher importance by the government itself, whilst creating better links to the private sector through inter-sectoral education and transparency initiatives.

The second workshop was organized in collaboration with the SUSY (Sustainable and Solidarity Economy) project and focused on the role of sustainable economy, as well as the role of the private sector in empowering socially disadvantaged persons and third country nationals.

It was agreed that, the promotion of sustainable economic systems should be a structural approach undertaken by civil society, the private sector and the Maltese government, which shall work together in order to achieve an acceptable definition of what truly a sustainable economy is, and a proper structure of how to achieve such a form of economic activity.

It was also agreed that the private sector plays an important role in the empowerment of socially disadvantaged persons and third country nationals.

A number of issues were identified, that could be turned into opportunities to make the economic system more inclusive and sustainable, to mention a few: the need of a recognition system for practical abilities acquired through experience; the creation of microfinance schemes and initiatives; improve the bureaucratic system, in order to support small and big employers to hire third country nationals.

The third workshop sought to hear the views of Maltese civil society and the private sector on the importance of Malta's ODA commitments and what amendments could be made by the Maltese Government, as well as, the role of social development on Malta's economic activity.

Malta's commitments towards financing development initiatives should focus on the Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) region, as a consequence of Malta's history and its strategic position. It should continue to contribute more and be more proactive vis-à-vis outstanding local and regional social issues, and seek to create a basis for regional civil society to interact to a much greater extent; this could be achieved with the empowerment of local civil society and the organisation (alongside Maltese civil society) of a regional NGDO platform.

Concerning amendments to Malta's ODA policy, it was argued by the participants that the government should be more transparent when it comes to ODA, particularly in the definition of the policy and how the funds should be disseminated into the country itself and abroad. Civil society should be given a chance to give the Government critical advice on the policy, thus giving more responsibility to civil society to effect ODA priorities, which would have the added effect of allowing Malta's national and diplomatic arm to focus on more pressing issues, especially with an EU Council Presidency looming.

It is feared that the Maltese government does not do enough for the empowerment of civil society, a service which both the national Government and Maltese society itself depend on.

The fourth workshop aimed at the identification of alternatives to the current approach to the achievement of the SDGs, taking into consideration the different areas discussed in the previous workshops. Participants came to the conclusion that there is mainly a lack of education among the general public on the SDGs. This might be linked to the need of narrowing down the goals, in order to give the public a more tangible goal to be reached. A possible solution should be advocacy through a Public Relations initiative, organized by the government in close collaboration with civil society.

A large part of the discussion focused on policy action to be taken by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, which is responsible for the achievement of the SDGs in Malta. Main conclusion of this discussion was that the Ministry should advocate at EU level for the creation and recognition of a Mediterranean identity, in order to streamline a Mediterranean approach to problems unique to the Mediterranean region. Such an approach will help the creation of the necessary groundwork for Maltese civil society to better engage in Mediterranean issues.

Final Comments

It is clear that in order for Maltese society to move toward a more sustainable development, there is a need for greater education at all levels (national government; be it politicians as well as public officials, local councils, members of the business community, media outlets, the public, etc.), greater cross-fertilisation between businesses and civil society, a collective voice of civil society and stakeholder parties of the private sector to push for wider government acknowledgement of the importance given to SDGs by the general public, an increase in workshops and collaborative seminars which continue to press for the actualisation of the SDGs and more formal channels between government and the civil/ private sector must be created through SKOP and/or the MCVS in order to continually update and apply changes connected to the goals' implementation.

It is in the interest of the Maltese government and its people to follow the aforementioned ideas and conclusions derived from the Kopin and SKOP workshops. In the view of the EU Presidency, creating innovative strategies vis-à-vis SDGs' realisation, social development, ODA policy and sustainable economics, this report is meant to better equip the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Malta to deal with modern and social issues that will fall within their capacity as EU Council President. It is in the interest of the Maltese Government to also work more closely with the institutions that are vying to make Malta a more equitable and prosperous society.

1st WORKSHOP

1) Questions: How can we strengthen civil society organisations and local authorities to be advocates for the implementation of SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) and what role does the private sector play?

1.1) An important way to empower civil society and local authorities is through training and capacity building to raise awareness. The session showed that there is a great interest in creating strong partnerships between Malta's civil society, private sector and local government. This can happen through the strengthening of existing civil society platforms here in Malta and the Mediterranean, or through the creation of one common platform for all NGOs. There was also a general consensus between the participants that there needs to be more interaction and knowledge-sharing between civil-society organisations. This will facilitate a more effective base for NGOs to learn from past experiences and avoid the possibility of a duplication of research and projects. Furthermore, capacity-building should focus on strengthening NGOs in public consultation processes and advocacy efforts. The formalisation of platform-creation could be one of the ways of making this more feasible. Existing civil society organisation platforms, such as Terra Firma and SKOP, are already a very effective vehicle for the dissemination of information between organisations.

1.2) All government entities need to be engaged, all stakeholders need to be involved, everyone needs to take ownership and become an advocate for the Sustainable Development Goals Agenda. In this way, the *Global Goals* need to be practically explained and made locally or regionally relevant. Concrete implementation plans need to be discussed and formulated in a clear way, disseminated through the correct channels available in Maltese society. In this regard, local councils have a potential for partnership and collaboration which is scarcely realized. Local authorities often have the capacity to reach the wider public through their constituents. Therefore partnerships between CSOs (Civil Society Organisation) and local authorities can work very well, in particular concerning public awareness campaigns. Additionally, empowering the sixty-eight local councils throughout Malta, concerning the dissemination of SDGs to the public and monitoring their reception by local constituents, will serve to highlight which SDGs require most attention from the private sector and civil society, and where it is best to invest resources and manpower. As each local council may suffer from different issues concerning the actualisation of SDGs, such information is imperative to create efficient and cost-effective ways to realize the goals, and will serve to minimise

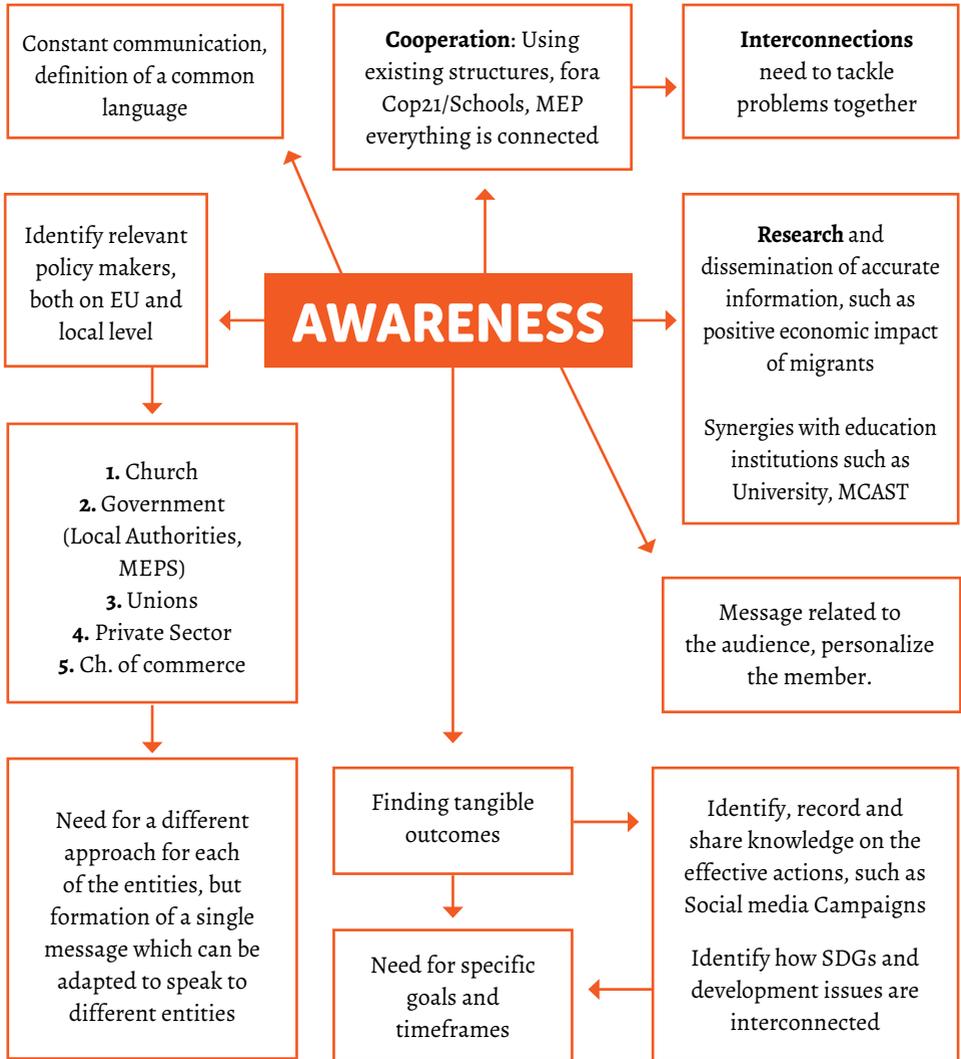


the occurrence of a duplication of resources and efforts by both the private sector and Maltese civil society.

1.3) The Private sector plays an important role in the circular economy as it possesses more resources than CSOs or local authorities. There needs to be more initiatives to encourage the private sector to participate in, as well as, to increase awareness of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a bigger framework encompassing the involvement and responsibility for local and social issues. However, it is evident that there is a lot of potential for developing innovative ways to meet the SDGs, where both the private sector and civil societies of Malta work together. Corporate Social Responsibility is a perfect instrument to bring civil society and the private sector closer together, and it is also a two-way relationship, where both the NGO and Maltese business can learn from each other, and through such an exchange, find more efficient ways of volunteering and creating sustainable alternatives. If this process is transparent and managed correctly, it will benefit and heighten the trust of both the businesses and NGOs in the eye of local citizens and foreign consumers.

1.4) Therefore, partnerships need to encompass all different actors including the local government, the EU, civil society and the private sector. This would yield enormous benefits if executed well, since each actor has expertise in their own field, which the other may lack. Better capacity-building and constant communication is necessary to ensure this. It was suggested that Malta Enterprise could play a large role in bridging this gap and achieving the above mentioned partnerships.

2) Question: How can we raise awareness with civil society and policy makers about the Sustainable Development Goals, their relevance for Malta and interconnectedness of local development issues in particular migration and climate change?



2nd WORKSHOP

1) Question: “What is your definition of social economy and what roles does the local private sector play?”

2.1) A widely agreed definition of Social Economy (SE) was difficult to attain, due to the fact that the concept encapsulates such a wide spectrum of social, economic and even cultural issues and developments. However, there was some agreement between all participants. The groups agreed that Social Economy is locally orientated, and seeks to replace the concept of profit maximisation with a more community-focused economic style. It was also identified that such an approach has to be buttressed by a sustainable market system; where the forces of production cater to a demand-supply curve which takes into consideration the protection of the planet, human beings, especially indigenous communities and other species.

2.2) The participants suggested a far more hands-on role for both businesses and civil society on these issues, which were; protecting workers’ rights, minority rights, heightening the inclusion and empowerment of minorities and other vulnerable members of society, increasing sustainable and environmental business practices, encouraging higher transparency between all stakeholders within society and lobbying by both civil society and businesses for policy transformation that would bring about a more equitable economy .

2.3) The private sectors’ role in the establishment of such a form of economic model was by far the most heavily debated subject. It was agreed that in order for Social Economy to materialise, there had to be an incentive for businesses to work in a more social and sustainable manner. During this debate, it became clear that there was rift between certain groups on how to best realise such a transformation. It was argued by some participants that such a shift from current practices could well take over 5-10 years, if not more. Additionally, it was also argued that there was the danger that businesses going social would become less competitive; such a development may force government to heavily subsidise businesses during their transformation.

2.4) That being said, it was clear that businesses, SME’s , family businesses, sole traders and public-registered companies alike all play an immense role in creating the motivation for transformation. However, it was also recognised that, depending on the size and field of operations of said businesses, there were different responsibilities in encouraging the Social Economy. As a suggestion, it would be wise to map out the different responsibilities each business, dependent on size, should commit to, as this would help to expand the challenges and opportunities connected to Social Economy.

2) Question: How can the local social economy contribute to empower socially disadvantaged groups, especially third country nationals and refugees?

2.5) The group pencilled out ideas such as; the capacity for a local social economy to help in the process of integration, inclusion and increasing the empowerment of individual persons. Additionally, participants argued that a Social Economic system could help bear greater focus on educating the general public, employers and employees on issues related to problems experienced by such persons; education was seen as a crucial part of encouraging the local social economy.

2.6) Conclusions:

1. Recognizing the skills and languages these groups have command of, providing them with certificates accordingly.
2. Develop Microfinance initiatives. Work with banks to do this. Lobby for increased microfinance initiatives.
3. Address the difficulty employers face in hiring third country nationals by lobbying the government.
4. Have social events at the ETC center in Marsa, improve social participation in the workplace of all group.
5. Improve cultural education so that migrants and Maltese can better understand the each others culture, as intergration is a two way street. Offering training to employers and small business owners so they can best work with people that have various cultural, religious and social backgrounds.
6. Sensitize host community to the needs of the disadvantaged groups
7. Offer better protection against exploitation by local businesses

3rd WORKSHOP

1) Question: Why is giving Official Development Assistance important for Malta and can social development effect economic stability?

3.1) Official Development Assistance (ODA) for Malta was unanimously seen as important by all participants of the workshop, there were many reasons mentioned why the Maltese state should continue to commit to reaching the EU-wide goal of 0,7% GNI for ODA. ODA is closely connected to Malta's history of relations with other states within the region and beyond, and most importantly, it was argued by the attendees that Malta's history of development and own colonial past weighs heavily on Malta's role as a provider of humanitarian assistance to the region. Malta as a developed state should contribute more, or approach the dissemination of its ODA with more sensitivity to outstanding societal issues, based on political, international, moral and legal perspectives.

3.2) On a political and national level, Maltese ODA should aim to ultimately lift the Southern Mediterranean (MENA Region) out of instability and poverty. Actively investing in neighbouring states, through the application of ODA will provide a more secure regional environment, and increase security between Malta and neighbouring states. Malta's ODA commitments are important to raise its international image, as well as to raise important regional humanitarian issues. On a societal level, Malta's continued economic growth will automatically increase its overall ODA expenditure, heightening the need for better identification and prioritisation of humanitarian and social issues.

3.3) The Maltese government would do better to invest more into 'active' forms of ODA (education, development, training initiatives) rather than into 'passive' elements. Correspondingly, there were also some arguments made that saw ODA as serving both a local and international image-saving role. Malta was feared of being comfortable of relying too heavily on the political correctness of ODA as a principle of good-will in its own right; certain forms of aid attract higher public attention than other projects that lack 'appeal'. Furthermore, the fact that a large amount of ODA was spent on processing and accommodating (in detention) refugees and asylum seekers was not in the spirit of the policy.

3.4) The participants agreed that social development and economic stability go hand-in-hand, and may precede each other as a foundation for the other to materialise, as social development creates a precondition for a healthy economic environment.

From a societal perspective, it can create the conditions to meet the economic interests of the state at large, especially if one takes into consideration the creation of opportunities for women for instance or socially disadvantaged persons to become more meaningfully engaged in the national work force. Social development also allows for a better environment of knowledge exchange, allowing both locals and migrants to better network their ideas; creating proper avenues for communication will have a positive symbiotic effect on economic stability and social development.

3.5) Additionally, social development will have an effect of broadening education to a wider audience within a local setting; both NGO projects, such as EU DEAR (Development Cooperation and Awareness Raising), and Maltese institutions can spearhead short-to-long term educational programmes that seek to heighten social



development, which in turn, increases the economic stature of a state. Ultimately, participants felt that social development will lead to a more equitable and efficient economy and that investing into social development, from an economical perspective, makes sense for mid-to-long term socio-economic prospects. Evidently, fears that focusing on social development will lead to a crumbling competitive market, or worse, a stagnant economy are unfounded in the eyes of the participants.

2) Question: What amendments would create a more meaningful ODA policy, incorporating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and should this aid target regions prone to ‘instability’?

3.6) The participants agreed that the Maltese government needed to seriously reconsider the government’s approach to ODA and its approach towards Maltese civil society in reaching the SDGs; there is a lack of transparency for civil society and the private sector to understand the institutional processes from which Maltese government derives its ODA policy. The written policy has not been revised to include the new SDG agenda and many of the items of the policy, such as the priority areas (North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and Palestine) are not given priority.

3.7) Additionally, it was argued by the participants that civil society should be able to provide the Maltese government with expertise on implementation of projects financed by ODA. There were also arguments made that Maltese government, especially with the EU Council Presidency looming, should allow civil society to take the initiative on spearheading SDG commitments, as well as, allow civil society to instruct, notify and advise government as to the expenditure of funds committed to tackling the SDGs. Allowing civil society more playroom in this area would give government the necessary breathing space to focus on more pressing issues connected to its position in Brussels, and also empower civil society to pick up more responsibilities.

3.8) It was agreed by the participants that allowing such a linkage between the civil and national approach to blossom, will greatly increase the efficiency to propel ODA funds towards ‘target regions prone to instability’. It was touched upon that unlike larger states, small island states such as Malta, do not have the diplomatic capacity to represent their interests globally. Decentralising its local commitments to civil society and using the Maltese presidency as an opportunity to buttress such a partnership, would allow Malta to better deal with SDG goals and to implement these locally, as well as, regionally.

3.9) Structures to facilitate this are already in existence, such as SKOP which can act as a lattice for such a partnership to be built upon, and it is up to Maltese government to identify the extent to which their involvement with civil society can benefit those in need.

4TH WORKSHOP

1) Question: What outcomes would you like to see from the EU presidency for Malta and the Mediterranean? Ideas for Joint Actions to implement SDGs!

4.1) The final session focused on creating applicable outcomes vis-à-vis the Maltese EU council presidency in the implementation of SDGs. The session was short and focused to a large extent on the dynamic between local Maltese civil society, business and national government in the implementation of SDGs.

4.2) It was suggested by the participants that a lack of information transfer would be detrimental to the implementation of SDGs and the Maltese government should create the necessary ground for this discussion to take place. In other words, government must kick-start a more serious and formal debate on how Malta should strive to achieve SDG-implementation; national administrations from Malta's diplomatic circles down to Maltese parliament and local council level have to include SDGs as part of Malta's local, national and foreign policy in a far more dynamic and systematic fashion. Some issues need to be vocalised, these were;

- There has to be a **removal of the paradigm that the SDGs are a liability** to follow; this could be disseminated by Maltese parliament, civil society and (especially) interested private sector parties.
- **Strengthening and public dissemination of SKOP programmes as part of the EU Malta presidency;**
 - **Communication to stakeholders and creating networks to further attract people to and disseminate information about SKOP approaches to SDGs alongside the Maltese Presidency**
- There needs to be **better education** in what the SDGs are, and after such an informative approach, it is critical to **narrow down the SDGs into sizeable and tangible goals (if translated in an economically friendly way, SDGs will be part of a business's operation)**.
- **Transparency** between the aforementioned sectors was of paramount importance in order for the SDGs to be implemented to the fullest extent. In other words, the EU presidency should be a precursor for better information transfer between local stakeholders.

- **Advocacy**; wider dissemination to the general public as part of a Public Relations initiative organised either by a) government b) as part of extended workshops between civil society and private sector stakeholders c) public workshops d) via MCVS e) trade and business expos, etc.
 - Getting other stakeholders involved in policy making and scrutiny of policy- no discussion on development at the moment unless pushed by civil society.
- **Inter-party information and experience exchange as a staple to identifying and narrowing SDG goals, and ways for implementation.** Both civil society and business can create preliminary programmes where cross-fertilisation between sectors will not only narrow down SDGs into tangible goals, but also help SKOP to better organise funding from the EU Council. Some points;
 - A possible goal from inter-party sessions would be **the creation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)**; creating a clear structure of how to identify which SDGs should be tackled, and creating plans on how to tackle such SDGs with the assistance from (primarily) business and civil-society experts would give the SDGs a heightened formal character, and also lifting the SDGs from aloofness.
 - Connecting SDGs with Corporate Social Responsibility as part of a wider paradigm; using already deeply rooted business schemes as a way to smooth the transition to a more SDG-orientated business model.
 - Completely decoupling the concept of SDG from CSR, as to make SDGs a critical component of business operations in its own right; this would lessen the idea that SDGs are anomalous to normal business activity.
 - Such inter-sectorial activity could be a test-bed which would lead to wider dissemination. This would fall in line with the one-year structural plan SKOP seeks to implement alongside other things.
- **Lasting change in the development policy by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Malta which incorporates SDGs**
 - Funding for Development aid not used for border control – conclusions from the European council meetings
 - Raising awareness of European issues as development issues; migration and irregular migration issues (for example)
 - Raising awareness on the concept of a Mediterranean Identity vis-à-vis SDGs as too streamline a Mediterranean approach to problems unique to the Mediterranean region.
 - Creating the necessary groundwork in helping Maltese civil society better engage in Mediterranean issues with a focus on strengthening the Med civil society organisations base in general



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