

Sustainable Transport: Adaptation and Resilience in the Maltese Islands / The Sustainable Multi-Intermodal Transport Hubs (SMITHS) Project.

The aim of today's conference organised by The Risk Management, Policy, and EU Affairs within Transport Malta at the Radisson Blu Resort, St Julian's, between 8.30hrs and 14.15hrs, was to bring together key stakeholders to discuss the current scenario and future opportunities in relation to the transition towards more sustainable transport. The ultimate goal being that of enhancing and supporting the transition towards more sustainable means of mobility which contribute to a more sustainable future and better quality of life. The event itself was funded through The Sustainable Multi-Intermodal Transport Hubs (SMITHS) Project.

Transport currently accounts for a quarter of the EU's greenhouse gas emissions and this figure continues to rise as demand grows. Malta is no exception. Over the past decade, the population has grown by over 33%, to a total of over 535,064. This has been parallel to an increase in the number of cars on our roads and shifts in where people live and work. Simultaneously, new technologies and new transport services have emerged to cater to a change in lifestyle, and it is fair to say that residents of Malta and Gozo now have more transport options. Despite this, the modal share remains dominated by private vehicle use.

Acknowledging that the transport sector is a relatively high GHG emitter and that this influences our air quality and life in general, a shift away from the private car is both needed and welcomed. This conference therefore aimed to provide an opportunity to focus attention on the opportunities, challenges, and solutions towards achieving sustainable transport in Malta. The Conference also provided further information on the different initiatives completed as part of the SMITHS Project which all aim towards facilitating the transition towards cleaner and multimodal transportation.

It followed up on previous conferences organised, during which discussions resumed on different options to continue fulfilling the needs of current generations without compromising the needs of future generations, while ensuring a balance between economic growth, environmental care, and social well-being. Several interesting aspects concerning this important issue were presented to the delegates during the first part of the conference such as the Challenges in Addressing Malta's Targets for the Reduction in GHG from Transport, the Urban Regional Planning and the Transport System, the Sustainable Transport and Green Development: The Role of the Transport Master Plan and Urban Planning and Transport Infrastructure in Gozo.

Throughout the afternoon session 3 parallel workshops were conducted where the delegates had the opportunity to focus on specific areas of their interest.

The first workshop focused on: *Urban Planning and Non-motorized Travel*, during which it was highlighted that the focus should be towards more simple issues which generally come at no cost as well as the role of the individual; how can we influence change? Planning is crucial and should cater for this change in demand. Malta has an ageing population but by 2100 the population will increase by 50% most of which will be immigrants. Thus, here lies the great potential of targeting immigrants for a shift to cycling as a mode of transport.

The second workshop focused on: *Electric and clean energy in Land Transportation*, as expected the main focal point of this workshop were the EVs and their advantages and disadvantages. It transpired that the government schemes being offered since 2017 are being very effective in encouraging the population towards buying an electric vehicle rather than a combustion engine one, although it also

transpired that more infrastructural and policy upgrades need to take place such as, more planning regarding charging points locations as well as the enforcement of present legislations. Again, cultural change is vital, we must stop waiting for the change to happen and be the change ourselves. The use of mass transportation, walking and cycling together with other sustainable means of transport are all part of the solution.

The third workshop focused on: *Promoting modal shift and interconnecting Land and Sea Transport*, throughout this workshop the delegates together with the panellists managed to identify several relevant points, such as the need of more promotional and awareness campaigns regarding the use of water taxis, the Ferry service, and the Fast Ferry. Again, the cultural change was identified as the most significant obstacle together with the need in policies upgrade and continuous enforcement of already present legislations. This sector can offer ample solutions to our country's challenges taking inconsideration our strategic positioning and weather conditions.

In conclusion, we can firmly consider today's conference as a very successful one where we had the opportunity to acquire different point of views and information which will help the authority and the concerned stakeholders to better target the present and future challenges which lay ahead.

### **SMITHS PROJECT SUMMARY:**

SMITHS aims to encourage a modal shift from private car use to collective, sustainable, and alternative lowcarbon transport modes, improve air quality and reduce GHG emissions. The different components of the project were designed to facilitate inter-modality and address cleaner air through the introduction of various inter-modal choices. In particular, the project includes the upgrading of ferry infrastructure, the introduction of segregated cycling lanes and pedestrian paths along the road network. SMITHS also works towards the transition to a low carbon transport system through the introduction of a new multimodal hub in Gozo including a park and the ride facility operated by clean collective modes of transport and, the extension of the national electric vehicle charging networks across Malta and Gozo.

The project is made up from the following components:

- 1) The deployment of activities related to Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS)
- 2) The collection of monitoring data on all the Actions
- 3) The deployment of National Information and Dissemination Campaign
- 4) The deployment of segregating infrastructure for promoting safe pedestrian and cycling paths (three pedestrian bridges and three cycle lanes)
- 5) The deployment of Electric buses and Multi modal Hub in Xewkija, Gozo
- 6) The deployment of ferry Infrastructure
- 7) The extension of the national EV Charging Infrastructure

MTIP as the project coordinator/contact person of the project regularly organises coordination meetings among all parties to follow upon the progress on implementation, disbursement, reporting and other obligations of the beneficiary organisations in addition to, separate individual meetings or requests for clarifications, updates and follow up with the beneficiary organisations concerned, as necessary, for the smooth running of the project.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The project intends to increase public and communal transport patronage/uptake through state-of-the-art information systems, as well as campaigns earmarked to influence behavioural patterns. This included infrastructural work linked to the use and the introduction of new/improved and or additional modes of transport as well as additional complimentary investment in this area including sea landing places as well as investment in cleaner public transport were also undertaken.

SMITHS directly contributes towards the provision of better ferry infrastructure, safer cycling, safer pedestrian access, and non-carbon transport. The low-carbon and holistic transport system to be created because of this project shall be directly promoted through the information and awareness raising campaign forming part of the same project.

NET €36,864,295.09	VAT €3,753,679.09	TOTAL €40,617,974.18
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