



## Strengthening the relationship between Voluntary Sectors and the Work Environment

### **MoU signed between OCVO and MEA**

The Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations (OCVO) and the Employers' Association (MEA) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding aimed at strengthening the relationship and mutual appreciation between the voluntary sector and the world of work.

The Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations, Jesmond Saliba highlighted the fact that this MOU is aimed at enhancing the collaborative aspects emerging from the VO Plus National Convention that brings together a number of stakeholders which are directly or indirectly engaged in the voluntary sector. He explained that the main objective behind this MoU was for employers to become more appreciative of voluntary work performed by their employees because the skills acquired in the process by the volunteer could be beneficial at the place of work, thereby creating value to the employer.

In fact, the highlight of this agreement is in the area of formal recognition of voluntary work experience that workers could potentially include on their CVs, as well as future discussions on (a) potential models that could be introduced to formalise and better structure the practice of voluntary work and (b) the generation of new ideas on strengthening the relationship between employment and the voluntary sector.

The Commissioner pointed out that the voluntary sector is not merely one of the pillars in the country's social dimension but it is, in fact, a major contributor to the Maltese economy, rendering it "a key socio-economic pillar in Malta's composition." Saliba said that this demonstrates how no sector is isolated. On the contrary, each sector should complement and work with other sectors. "Through this agreement we will see how the voluntary sector and the world of employment can work together and complement each other.

In her intervention, Dr Raiza Borg Carr, the Head of the OCVO's Programs and Policy Implementation Unit, stressed how the voluntary sector is not an amateur one. Indeed, it is composed of passionate people. In this sector, professional people running voluntary organisations contribute high-level services, which are at par with those provided by private-sector operators. Dr Borg Carr outlined the need "to clarify how the voluntary sector and other sectors like employment could promote common interests as well as offer similar services to citizens and the community."

On this occasion, the MEA Director General, Joseph Farrugia expressed his pride at the signing of the MoU, highlighting the fact that this was the first of its kind. Confident that the agreement would serve to stimulate better collaboration between the employment and voluntary sectors, he thanked the Commissioner for his trust in the MEA to promote such noble objectives.

On her part, MEA President Joanne Bondin remarked that this MoU is not an isolated initiative within the sphere of ESG (Environment, Social, Governance) principles which the Association holds in high regard. She emphasised the MEA's resolve in this regard which it is already practising even on a wider scale such as in the case of a national conference it organised last June entitled "Balancing Sustainable Economic Growth with Quality of Life". This conference served to firmly cement on the national agenda the importance of quality of life on the healthy well-being of society.