

ThirdSector

Expert View

Quote:

“The not for profit sector in Europe faces many challenges in the 21st Century as the expectations in terms of transparency and good governance from both private and institutional donors have grown. EUConsult can play a key role in bringing best practice and decades of experience from markets such as the UK to those countries with emerging third sectors.”

Daryl Upsall, Chair, EUConsult

Europe in the frame

The EU is expanding, frontiers are falling, and separatism is causing conflict. With this in mind, there is an increasing awareness that third sector organisations across Europe can and should reap the benefit of sharing both general and specialist knowledge with each other, in order to be as professional as possible and to address transparency and accountability to greatest effect. There is also the power of mutual support in the face of sometimes obstructive or procrastinating statutory bureaucracy.

Twice a year a group of consultants get together in a European city with knowledge sharing in mind. They are all members of EUConsult, the European Association of Consultants to and about Not-For-Profit Organisations. With well over forty members from thirteen countries there is a wealth of expertise to draw on. This summer we met in Rome, at the John Cabot University. These events, led by consultants deeply familiar with the chosen city, explore in depth the environment in which the third sector operates in that country, in the context of Europe as a whole. Mediterranean Europe has its own leadership and governance challenges as became clear over the two days of discussions.

The challenges of income generation in principle are common to all but affected by the political environment of individual countries, some of which, such as several in eastern and central eastern Europe, are in the early stages of establishing civil society. Hearing from consultants working in these countries enables those of us with a long established third sector to look at the way we do things from a fresh angle, and to consider how we can support and encourage those who are just getting started.

Governance has moved higher up the agenda in recent years, as indeed it should, for failures in leadership often start with the governing body. EU Consult members are exploring how best they can help clients appreciate the importance of good governance and how it impinges on all aspects of not-for-profit activity. We are currently seeing the development of a proposed set of common governance principles for the third sector across the EU, in which I

am personally involved. This is an example of where the specialist knowledge of an EUConsult member can inform the group for the benefit of their clients.

One of the great advantages of being a member of EUConsult or attending events such as the annual International Fundraising Congress in Holland is the opportunity to share timely and relevant experiences. Delegates at this year's event in Holland learned how Argentine NGOs survived and thrived during the country's economic breakdown, as well as accessing the creative thinking of some of the leading minds in fundraising on how to weather the current global economic crisis.

Quote:

“EUConsult conferences don't just provide a forum for consultants to network: they are also a forum for active interaction with key sector representatives and the expertise they bring. This year's Rome conference is a case in point. Key figures from the world of Europe-wide grant-giving and from the arts and culture sector presented their views on the challenges for the sector going forward. Of course there was also expert input on the Italian voluntary sector itself but the focus is always on the transnational challenges. Next January, EUConsult's winter conference will pick up this theme and take a special view not just of the Belgian voluntary sector, but also of the particular challenges of EU-wide sector umbrella bodies making the voices of their members heard at the EU policy level.”

John Tierney, Board Member, EUConsult

For further information about EUConsult: www.euconsult.org

Linda Laurance

Governance consultant/mediator

EUConsult member