

The Maritime Proof of Concept Fund is designed to facilitate innovation and the creation of science-based business ideas in the marine field



Harbouring Innovation

The Maritime Seed Award assists academics and entrepreneurs to create and develop their ideas into commercially feasible projects in the maritime field, says ***Dr. Daniel Aquilina***.



Dr. Daniel Aquilina

The Memorandum of Understanding entered into between Malta Marittima Agency and the University of Malta, back in 2017 for the management of the Joint Proof of Concept Fund, is proving to be an ongoing success story.

The Government of Malta, through Malta Marittima Agency has, allocated national budget funds towards the Joint Maritime Proof of Concept Fund with the funds being awarded and distributed to successful applicants following competitive calls named 'Maritime Seed Award' (MarSA) with the support of the University's Knowledge Transfer Office (KTO), Takeoff Business Incubator and Centre for Entrepreneurship and Business Incubation (CEBI).

It is the policy of Malta Marittima to assist and support innovative and creative individuals to succeed. The Maritime Proof of Concept Fund is designed to facilitate innovation and the creation of science-based business ideas in the marine field through research in the University of Malta aiming for commercialisation. The idea behind this fund is to encourage academics, entrepreneurs and students, who have creative and innovative ideas, to get the financial support necessary to enable them to develop their ideas into business concepts.

The fund aims to reduce the gap between the laboratory and initial development market, and provide support for researchers and entrepreneurs. Scientific research does not only imply academic opportunities, but it also creates vast and various job opportunities in the maritime sector, which can harmonise growth with the blue economy.

In this regard, MarSA supports and encourages early-stage technologies and knowledge and technology based start-ups in the maritime field. The maritime field is interpreted in a broad sense and includes sectors and sub-sectors of the blue growth such as logistics, blue-biotechnology, coastal and maritime tourism, blue energy and marine engineering to mention just a few.

The eligible project would typically involve research or technology which has not yet reached commercial viability, marketability, prototyping or field-testing and requires financial support which would offer that marketability platform. Beneficiaries, whether individuals or companies, welcome the much-needed financial support in order to develop new technologies, perhaps originally just conceptual; into commercially feasible business models and effective start-ups. Another call for project proposals will be issued on May 15, 2019.

The MarSA initiative is evidence of Malta Marittima's commitment to enhance maritime growth and competitiveness of Malta in the maritime field by supporting the thinkers, the innovators and entrepreneurs who require that fundamental funding to enable the translation of their ideas and concepts into commercially viable and active projects and ultimately the growth of business in Malta's already thriving maritime sector. The MarSA initiative helps to bridge the gap between a concept and its actual market development and provides financial backing at that stage in which it is most needed.

While celebrating Malta's success as EU's largest flag in terms of registered tonnage, number of visiting passengers and cruise calls in the cruise line industry, a thriving yachting business and growing modern marinas together with Malta Freeport's remarkable growth to the third largest transshipment and logistics centre in the Mediterranean region, Malta Marittima Agency is committed to bring industry and government stakeholders together to focus the continued development of Malta's maritime industry generally.

Besides acting as the EU Focal Point for the Integrated Maritime Policy and the promoter of the blue economy and blue jobs, the agency prides itself in being the national catalyst for the creation and promotion of maritime clusters and a key player in co-ordinating and creating maritime policies in education, research, environment, spatial planning, safety and surveillance.

The MarSA awards and funding will no doubt aid and assist the long-term growth of Malta in the maritime sector and further enhance our position and reputation as leaders in this exciting sector.

Daniel Aquilina is non-executive Chairman of Malta Marittima Agency.

Successful Projects :

Glowrust:

Designed smart molecules to detect corrosion before it is visible to the human eye.

Solaqua 2 Floating Photovoltaics

An innovative design of floating photovoltaic platforms on the sea.

SEA! Water:

An innovative technology which converts the regeneration of concentrated solute (seawater) with release of the fresh water after forward osmosis.

Floating Wind Turbine Platform with Integrated Deep Seawater Storage

An innovative technology of offshore wind energy and deep-water source cooling, to improve the performance of LNG liquefaction.

Floating SolDi

Low-cost floating solar distillation device.

IMTA (Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture) - Mussels

Assessment of seawater quality parameters in vicinity of near shore sea bream farm for mussel culture.

Delphinus

This eco-tourism project targets persons who are passionate about marine biology and tourists who appreciate nature and life enriching experiences, including families and students.

ELCAPA

Aims at the development of renewable and sustainable vegetable leaf bio-composite for load bearing maritime, aerospace and land based engineering applications as opposed to available vegetable based fibres. The plants require very little soil, nutrients and water and are an ideal candidate plant for the Maltese environment such as landfills (Magħtab).

Innovation Water

Proposed technology offers substantial electrical savings to augment reverse osmosis with discarded salinity forming toxic by-products known as brine that require special efforts and more costs to dispose of safely.

Fish Thaw

This potential solution can result in the tuna farms investing heavily in proper thawing methods and specialised feeding barges that will contain the defrosted baitfish in a proper manner. The returns of this new methodology will surpass the investment costs since the oil slime problems that create such a nuisance during the summer months in Malta will be eliminated and therefore the extra costs to remove it via skimmers and booms will be avoided. In addition, the baitfish that is fed to the tuna will have a much higher nutritional quality and all the beneficial highly unsaturated fatty acids (that are naturally present in the baitfish) will be consumed and utilised by the tuna, rather than lost into the open seas – resulting in a superior product quality.