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WP 9: 2nd Thematic Discussion Summary Report (Malta)

Report Compiled by,
Malta Business Bureau

1.0 Introduction

MBB CEO Joe Tanti welcomed all attendees and noted that this discussion is being organised as part of the INCOME Tourism project, co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union. In this project the Malta Business Bureau (MBB) together with the Malta University Holding Company (MUHC) is working closely with the Institute of Tourism Travel and Culture (ITTC) at the University of Malta to reach out to EQF Level 6 students. The aim of the project and of the discussion was to incorporate the academic and work aspects of the tourism industry. This project brings the two together as it focuses on the importance of soft skills training and promotes a new model of teaching and learning that is based on the development of such skills.

The three year project targets the relationship between industry and universities through the implementation of a cooperative learning model in several Mediterranean countries. Whilst Germany's dual education system serves as a role model for all of the other participating countries, each country is expected to assess what works best for their educational system. Locally, the pilot project will target particularly third year students who voluntarily agree to take up two study units focusing on soft skills development, as part of their Tourism Bachelor's degree. MUHC also mentioned that the project consists of a mobility programme in Germany which is going to be incorporated with ITB Berlin, the World's Leading Travel Trade Show, which would also serve as a motivation for students to apply.

2.0 Main Outcomes of the Round-table Discussion

The discussion highlighted that the countries selected for this project are all leaders in tourism but have yet to improve on their education system to complement the required skills. However, it is important to note that these countries have a different culture and thus the question should be on how this model can be adapted to different countries and ensure its success.

In light of this, ITTC representatives raised their concerns regarding the multiple commitments that third-year Tourism students already have. This could be a potential problem as students might find it difficult and not agree to participate in this pilot. Thus it is important to ensure that the students have an incentive to participate in the project and that they will benefit from it. Furthermore, ITTC highlighted that the only limitation with the project was that there are no study units that are taught in the second year that would be compatible with the project. Therefore, although not ideal, the third year is the best option.

Business representatives from the Eden Leisure Group and Robert Arrigo & Sons also mentioned that due to the use of online platforms and communication being mainly text-based, the majority of students lack basic soft skills such as writing emails and answering phone calls. It is up to the students to realise the value and importance of acquiring soft skills as it is something that businesses and employers look for when recruiting. Thus the need to develop these soft skills at a university level is both evident and necessary. However, it also goes beyond that and depends very much on people's aptitude. Although university might help to improve this, it is not something that can be taught but rather a very personal issue.

In relation to this, it was also pointed out that it is important to have all the details of this project fixed before approaching students, such as whether it is voluntary or compulsory, whether they would get paid and how much hours it would involve. This will let students know of what the project entails and might further encourage them to apply. A 'Malta Hotels and Catering Services' representative expressed his concerns with regards to the industry and how will it be prepared to train these students. He suggested that mentors from participating companies should be given guidelines as to what they should be doing with the students throughout the project. MBB stressed that the pilot will have to have a professional set up and the companies chosen would have an HR department and professionals who understand the system. In addition, it was noted that each company tutor will be expected to travel to Ravensburg and participate in the mobility programme of March 2020, alongside the academic tutors. Company representatives who were present during this meeting suggested that, if at all possible, they would opt for participation during the last three days of the mobility programme (to give them some time to travel back to Malta between ITB and the INCOME Tourism programme).

3.0 Conclusion

Following the discussion, MBB CEO Joe Tanti concluded that it is important to take this feedback and find the best way to pitch this pilot project to the targeted students, in order to encourage and motivate them to participate. The project should be individually adapted to ensure its success and efficiency. This means students should be personally assessed to then match the job with their skills and after completion they would be credited for their participation. In this way, students will not only have the theoretical background, but also the right skills which benefit both students and businesses, which is the ultimate objective of the project.

Appendix 1: Event Agenda



2nd Round-Table Discussion: Piloting a Cooperative Learning Model

Thursday 28th March 2019

14:00 – 16:00hrs

Malta Chamber of Commerce,
Enterprise and Industry,
Republic Street,
Valletta

14:00hrs	Registration & Coffee
14:30hrs	Opening Remarks – <i>Joe Tanti, MBB CEO</i>
14:45hrs	Update on the INCOME Tourism Project – <i>Marija Elena Borg, Senior EU Funding Executive at the Malta Business Bureau and Alexia Pace Kiomall, Manager at Malta University Consulting.</i>
15:00hrs	Round-table Discussion: Piloting a Cooperative Learning Model to strengthen the collaboration between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and companies. <i>Chaired by: Joe Tanti, Chief Executive Officer at the Malta Business Bureau</i>
16:00hrs	Concluding Remarks



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Appendix 2: Participants List



Erasmus+ Programme - Project No. 588474-EPP-1-2017-1-PT-EPPKA2-KA

Event Type: 2nd Round-Table Discussion
 Event Date: Thursday, 28th March 2019
 Location: Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry, Republic Street, Valletta

2nd Round-Table Discussion

Participants List

No.	Name and Surname	Organisation	Address	Email	Signature
1	Arrigo Alan	Robert Arrigo and Sons	51, Gena Terrace Street St. Julian's SJ11214	ALAN@ROBERTARRIGO.COM	
2	George George Avelina Maria	University of Malta's Institute for Tourism, Travel and Culture	17TC JON	george.gasser@um.edu.mt	
3	Attepari Ceria	Eden Leisure Group	EDEN ALICE TRIO SANTA MARIJA ST. JULIAN	C.ATTEPARI@EDENLEISURE.COM	
4	Borg Marija Elena	Malta Business Bureau	64, THE EXCHANGE BUILDING, REPUBLIC ST. VALLETTA	mbbs@mbb.org.mt	
5	Cachia Mann	Malta University holding Company	Room 220 The Gateway Zabala University Valletta	manca.cachia@malta.com.mt	
6	Avelina Maria Cassol/George	University of Malta's Institute for Tourism, Travel and Culture	Room 434 Gateway of Valletta	manca.cachia@um.edu.mt	
7	Dequara Rachel	Malta Business Bureau	57, THE EXCHANGE BUILDING, REPUBLIC ST. VALLETTA	rachel.dequara@mbb.org.mt	
8	Ferrugia Joseph	Heritage Malta	/	/	

9	Lungaro Mifsud Vince	Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association	2 Tony Gullino Kappara San Giovanni	membership officer @ mhrc.org.mt	
10	Mifsud David	Malta Tourism Authority	MTA, Smart City MATA CORDA SCHOOL	david.mifsud@visi.mta.mt	
11	Pace Kionelli Alexia	Malta University Holding Company	Rm 210, Malta University Consulting Unit Dr. Giuseppe Zohra University of Malta	alexia.pacekionelli@muhc.com.mt	
12	Fenech Seguna Michelle	Westin Dragonara Resort	/	/	/
13	Selvaigi Charles	MHCS Ltd.	184 Valley Road HLEPA	charles@mhcs.mt	
14	Tanti Joe	Malta Business Bureau	64, The Exchange Building, Republic Street, VALLETTA	ceo@mbb.org.mt	

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