

PRESS RELEASE

12th November 2019

Malta Chamber supports MCAST Work Based Learning project

"The Malta Chamber is a firm believer in job exposure at various stages of the educational system, as it supports work-based learning activities such as internships, apprenticeships and work placements" said Perit David Xuereb, President of the Malta Chamber, as he was addressing the launch of "Achieving Vocational Excellence Through Enhanced Work Based Learning", an ESF funded project by the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology at the Chamber on Tuesday.

Mr Xuereb noted how official figures showed that the number of young people currently not in employment, in education or in training (NEETs) was on the increase.

"This is coupled by a high rate of early school-leavers which is leaving the country with an unskilled or low-skilled workforce. It is therefore a priority that youth, first and foremost should keep studying. However should they decide to take the vocational pathway, rather than the academic one, they should be given the opportunity to learn on the job and have a practical learning experience through placements" he said.

"Apprenticeship programmes are an effective tool to improve the skill-set of young people" Mr Xuereb remarked.

Mr Xuereb noted how the Chamber strongly supported the recent legal reform of the apprenticeship system. "The Chamber believes that it is fundamental in improving the employment opportunities of school leavers and those pursuing vocational studies while it further reduces the skills gap that currently exists in Malta."

In conclusion the President said that the Chamber was looking forward to providing MCAST with the assistance it needed to ensure this project would be a success.

MCAST President of the Board of Governors Mr Frederick Schembri reflected on the alarming students' drop-out rate which was partly attributed to the fact that students were unable to see any connection between what they were learning and what they may one day be doing professionally.

"We need to act differently to the traditional manner in which education and training has been thought. The heterogeneous and fragmented system of job-training is proving to be counter-productive" he said.

A discussion with the participation of Chamber Deputy President Ms Marisa Xuereb amongst others was chaired by the MCAST Principal Prof James Calleja, and looked at the projected initiatives and challenges to be addressed by the project.

The press conference was also addressed by the Minister for Education and Employment the Hon Evarist Bartolo and the Parliamentary Secretary for EU Funds and Social Dialogue the Hon Dr Aaron Farrugia.

“Achieving Vocational Excellence Through Enhanced Work Based Learning” aims at consolidating MCAST structures in the context of apprenticeship and work-based learning. The creation of robust education structures within this context are geared towards increasing academic attainment and employability possibilities of a cohort of students already engaged in the labour market as apprentices.

On this project, MCAST is partnering with the Ministry for Education and Employment, the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry as well as the National Skills Council.

This project will be 80% funded through the European Social Fund.

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