

MALTA:

What are the main challenges for your country in terms of employability? (E.g. is graduate employment a problem? Are there restrictions on access to certain jobs? Is there a careers and guidance service?) What would help you most as an output from this working group?

N.B. The following comments are from the perspective of the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) and therefore focus primarily on the Hospitality and Tourism industry.

The main challenge in Malta regarding employment is moving further up the career ladder and not obtaining the first job. It is very common practice in Malta, especially in the hospitality & tourism industry, the catering sector in particular, where the middle and the higher management positions are kept by the same person for a very long time. This makes it hard for the young to find their place in higher positions, and also to show their creativity due to the mentality of the older work force that look at the younger and more energetic workers as a threat to their jobs. This mostly happens in small hotels or old establishments. In large hotels this has become less of a problem especially in international companies where job mobility is quite common.

The Institute of Tourism studies trains students for the industry. Besides, the students are given exposure to industry during a summer placement after their first academic year. They are also sent on a placement to practice front-office and housekeeping duties during the second year. In their third year, all diploma students are sent abroad on an international internship; which proves to be a very fruitful learning experience. This also helps them in becoming more mature and independent. There is also a practical module in the final semester wherein the students shadow managers in industry. This has a two-pronged effect as it gives students a lot of experience whilst increasing the possibility of them finding work in the future.

A constant challenge being faced by the industry is the “brain-drain” phenomena. This has been further enhanced by greater opportunities for our youngsters since Malta became a full member of the EU on 1st May 2004. This obviously increased the chances of our young people moving to another EU state to further their careers,

Is there a dialogue in your country between higher education institutions and employers? If so at what level does this take place – national, regional, institutional, etc? What sort of issues does it cover?

ITS is in constant dialogue with employers directly or through MHRA (the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association). Besides, several events such as seminars, conferences and talks are organised during the academic year. ITS also has excellent rapport with industry both locally and abroad and it maintains a very healthy relationship with many hotels and establishments. This obviously facilitates the international internships and the local work placements. ITS is also looked at by employers as the focal point for future employees. In fact career shows, talks, etc. are held regularly. This gives the employers the opportunity to scout potential prospects whilst students are given first-hand knowledge of the jobs available.

Can you provide two examples of good practice in your country in relation to any of the themes to be covered by the report?

1. By offering a holistic vocational environment, ITS is bridging the gap between vocational education and career development. This because all courses have a very high practical content.
2. The partnership between ITS and the employers maintains a constant flow of young employees in the workforce.