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## Site Visit - The implementation of the Bologna Process in Malta and with focus on regional development

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## **Site Visit - The implementation of the Bologna Process in Malta and with focus on regional development**

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**Institution:** University of Malta (UoM), Malta

**Participants:** Ms Michelle Attard Tonna, Mr Colin Calleja, Ms Valerie Salerno, Ms Susan Grixti all Faculty of Education and Let Me Learn), Dr. Suzanne Gatt (Bologna representant.)and Dr.Christopher Soler (legal office), mainly joint discussions with the participants

**Visit carried out by:** Ebba Ossiannilsson, Lund University, Sweden, 8-9 jan 2009.

### **Brief overview of the University**

Situated at Tal-Qroqq, the University of Malta is the highest teaching institution of the State by which it is mainly financed and is open to all those who have the requisite qualifications. Over the past few years, the University has reviewed its structures in order to be in line with the Bologna process which envisages the establishment of the European Higher Education Area by 2010. Conscious of its public role, the University strives to create courses which are relevant and timely in response to the needs of the country. The supreme governing bodies of the University are the Council and the Senate. There are some 10,000 students including over 750 foreign/exchange students from nearly 80 different countries, following full-time or part-time degree and diploma courses, many of them run on the modular or credit system. A basic Foundation Studies Course enables international high school students who have completed their secondary or high school education overseas but who do not have the necessary entry requirements, to qualify for admission to an undergraduate degree course at the University of Malta. The University is geared towards the infrastructural and industrial needs of the country so as to provide expertise in crucial fields. Over 2,500 students graduate in various disciplines annually. The degree courses at the University are designed to produce highly qualified professionals, with experience of research, who will play key roles in industry, commerce and public affairs in general. There are a further 3,000 pre-tertiary students at the Junior College which is also managed by the University.

The University today has eleven faculties: Arts; Built Environment; Dental Surgery; Economics, Management & Accountancy; Education; Engineering; Information & Communication Technology;Laws;Medicine& Surgery; Science and Theology.

A number of interdisciplinary institutes and centres have been set up in various fields. These include Agriculture, Anglo-Italian Studies, Baroque Studies, Energy Technology, International Environment, Forensic Studies, Health Care, Islands and Small States, Linguistics, Maltese Studies, Masonry & Construction Research, Public Administration & Management, Physical Education & Sport, Mediterranean Institute and Edward de Bono Institute for the Design & Development of Thinking.

The Centres comprise: Centre for Communication Technology, European Centre for Gerontology, Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Educational Research, Centre for Environmental Education and Research, Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Insular Coastal Dynamics, Centre for Labour Studies, Centre for Literary and the European Documentation & Research Centre which incorporates the European Documentation Centre established to serve as a repository of European Community documents as well as a resource centre for students and the general public.



A Link Campus has been opened in Rome in recent years. Initially, four Bachelor of Arts undergraduate degree courses are being offered in the areas of International Studies, International Management, International Legal Affairs and Communication Management while Masters Programmes are offered in the latter two fields as well as Business Administration (MBA) and in the area of Intelligence and Security.

The University of Malta is a member of the European Universities Association, the European Access Network, the Association of Commonwealth Universities, the Utrecht Network, the Santander Network, the Compostela Group and the International Student Exchange Programme (ISEP). Over the years, the University has participated in a number of EU Programmes and has won several projects under the 5th and 6th Framework programmes in collaboration with various partner universities. The University of Malta has a large number of bilateral cooperation agreements with universities overseas through which staff and students may also participate in programmes such as Erasmus, Leonardo and Comenius.

Links have been forged with the Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Industry and the Employment & Training Corporation in order to determine how the University, industry, business and the public sector can develop a mutually beneficial dialogue. Whilst acquainting potential employers with the knowledge and skills acquired by students at university, the University seeks to assess the needs of the various facets of the labour market in order to provide timely and relevant instruction.

The Malta University Holding Company Ltd (MUHC) embodies the commercial interests of the University of Malta. The companies comprised in the Holding Company serve as the commercial interface between the University of Malta and the business community, brokering the resources and assets of the University to provide added value through commercial activity. The Malta University Holding Company Ltd provides strategic direction and corporate support to the companies within the Group.

- Foundation for International Studies Ltd
- Malta University Consulting Ltd
- Malta University Technical Services
- Continuing Education
- International School of Languages.
- Malta University Broadcasting Ltd
- Malta University Residence Ltd

There are some 10,000 students including over 750 foreign/exchange students from nearly 80 different countries, following full-time or part-time degree and diploma courses, many of them run on the modular or credit system. Over 2,500 students graduate in various disciplines annually. The degree courses at the University are designed to produce highly qualified professionals, with experience of research, who will play key roles in industry, commerce and public affairs in general. There are further 3,000 pre-tertiary students at the [Junior College](#) which is also managed by the University. This year (academic year 2008-2009) the international students hail from 70 different nations worldwide. For the full-time courses, 203 overseas applicants have been accepted, while 270 applicants were accepted as visiting (Exchange, Transfer and Erasmus) students. They will be following courses in a number of areas, the most popular being within the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy. Most of the visiting students will be in Malta for one semester.



### **Activities, developments and role of the Bologna Reforms**

The Bologna process has influenced the way that Higher Education has evolved in Malta. The main important developments had an impact mainly on the University of Malta as the major provider of Higher Education in Malta. However, as other institutions in Further Education (Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology – MCAST, and Institute of Tourism Studies – ITS) are either providing or aiming to provide qualifications at Levels 5 and 6, the Bologna Process is also influencing reforms in these institutions. Since the start of the Bologna Process in 1999, Malta has experienced structural changes in working towards fulfilling requirements being promoted by the Bologna Process. For further details on key elements on the Bologna process the two-cycle system and the use of ECTS; the issuing of the Diploma Supplement; legislative reforms; quality assurance; student participation; validation of informal and non-formal learning; the social dimension; and the Internationalisation of Higher Education in Malta, please see the attached case study from Gatt, S. Case study for Beflex+2009).

Malta has worked hard to try and have all the structural reforms within Higher Education ready for the 2010 target of establishing the European Higher Education Area. This is considered of national importance as Malta has always strived to be present among International players and with several centres of Excellences. Future challenges identified in the Malta national report 2009 (in preparation of the stock-taking exercise for the 2009 Ministers' meeting) included, in short term: 1. increasing research at the University of Malta by tapping possible funds from all resources, 2. in view of the increasing number of students, the University of Malta needs to strike a balance between research and teaching duties of staff.

Having achieved so much paves the way for further developments to rise to the challenges that the European Higher Education will pose. To implement reforms in a smooth way Malta needs to invest time and effort to inform key players as well as in implementing new structures and procedures either on both an institutional and at national level.

### **Lifelong Learning**

The Lifelong Learning dimension of the University of Malta is viewed mainly with respect to the professional development of its graduates. This means that the main type of part-time learning offered by the University of Malta involves mainly post-graduate studies at Levels 7 and 8. So whereas the University provides opportunities for lifelong learning of graduates, it offers much fewer opportunities to those who would like to follow part-time studies as level 5 and 6.

Lifelong learning is further seen as; Post-graduate learning which grants access to students not necessarily of university identity, Degree+ studies gives added value to students, but no credits and is on voluntarily base and aims mainly to personal development, Part-time studies, Courses like English for foreigners (just one example), Sometimes it is difficult to separate adult learning from LLL, In Valetta at the University of Malta there is the University of the third age, which also is seen as LLL, there is also the Junior College, education is free up to the first degree, so some so called LLL can be seen in regular courses, actually most Master programmes are on part-time so they are for LLL.

ULLL has priorities due to funding, but mainly it is a strategy and the philosophy of the university. The University plays an important role as a stakeholder in the Maltese society and for the country as such. Further priorities are to have Satellite Universities (foreign universities) such as London, Maastricht and the European University (private) for psychology, IT and business. In the future the target is to get 80% to the university. In 2015 Malta will be Centre of Excellence



in education. Other centres of Excellences are planned in the same time and even the Smart Learning Initiative, Malta's National eLearning Strategy 2008-10 becoming the Smart Island (like Dubai) The National e-Learning Strategy will accelerate development of innovation and Malta's knowledge economy <https://secure2.gov.mt/SmartIsland/Pages/Initiatives/Initiative.aspx?Id=2>, see more below. There is a national strategy for LLL [www.gov.mt](http://www.gov.mt) and as such it has to be followed, however there is no explicit University strategy and a lot of work is still to be done, to implement the strategy all over. However there is a philosophy based on the national strategy. Please refer further to the NQF of Malta <http://www.mqc.gov.mt/activities.aspx?nid=2>. Changes in the LLL provision are made on demand of individuals, organisations and on regional demands (local, regional, national and international) and due to the National strategies.

## Some interesting cases from Malta

### *From the Faculty of Education*

Each of the six departments within the Faculty offers a variety of undergraduate and postgraduate courses aimed at meeting the ever-changing demands and challenges within our society. Postgraduate certificates, short courses, in-service training, seminars and public presentations are further aspects of the rich portfolio of activities members of staff are constantly engaged in.

*The Let Me Learn* (LML) Malta Centre has been set up thanks to a joint initiative between the University of Malta and the Education Directorate and it is a very interesting and successful initiative. The LML Centre is situated at the University of Malta in the Faculty of Education Department of Primary Education. Let Me Learn is a process and advanced learning system that helps to understand who we are as learners and helps teachers and trainers to create a learning environment that truly respect diversity learning processes. The Let me learn process focus and reveals the importance of the social dimension in CPD. [www.Letmelearnmalta.com](http://www.Letmelearnmalta.com). Once there is a clear understanding of this, Let Me Learn provides with strategies which can be used in order to reach full potential and become more successful in the learning process. Let me learn runs regularly and offers training courses to all educators at different levels, from kindergarten assistants to lecturers in post-secondary colleges and university academic members of staff. As well as for subject coordinators, assistant heads, heads of schools and education officers.

Other examples to be mentioned to reach special groups is *courses for prisoners* and *23+ teachers* who can use non-formal validation to start again to study at University.

## Regional development

**Smart learning** is Malta's national eLearning Strategy 2008-2020 and aims to the overall goal "Smart Island" (to become "as Dubai, but smarter"). The outcomes that the Government wants to attain through this vision are:

1. All learners will have access to personalised, flexible learning content and opportunities;
2. Through access to technology, children and young people will be able to develop and use independent learning skills that will support them in employment and throughout life-long learning;
3. Educators and administrators will have the skills and support to deploy technology for the benefit of all learners; in addition, educators and administrators will have opportunities to use technology to support their own career development;
4. Pedagogical use of technology will support and encourage sharing, collaboration, creativity and be a driver of innovation;
5. Parents will have opportunities to support and play a part in their children's learning;
6. Public-Private partnerships will support development and delivery of the National e-Learning Strategy; and
7. The National e-Learning Strategy will accelerate development of Malta's knowledge economy.

Strategic aims related to skills, infrastructure and content:

**Skills: Learners Skills** – "focus on learning skills that are essential for independent learning throughout life", **Teachers Skills** - "To develop all teachers' ICT skills such that they become using technology and they use ICT to support learners in all subjects across the curriculum"



*Leaders' Skills* - "To build the capacity of leaders in education to develop a vision for their organisation and lead their staff in achieving it"

Infrastructure: Computers and Connectivity; Standards; Learning Platform; Enabling Management Information

Content: Learning Resources, Maltese Content and Content Markets

Other examples to be mentioned about regional development can be described as with industry, NGO:s, people from private agencies, local companies mainly in ICT, engineering, art (the Caravaggio Studies Programme) and the educational sectors (Let me learn) and further there is a lot of EU programmes, also dual programmes with EU universities and International programmes, co-operation with tertiary education institutes, co-operation local, regional, national and international, international examples can be mentioned such as European Joint Degree Masters Programmes and several co-operation on all levels with USA.

### **Main objective of regional collaboration**

- \*Broaden the potential market for the courses/services developed
- \*Participation in regional economic development
- \*Share resources
- \*Address specific issues

Malta benefits from being in the middle of European and African countries. As it had been said above all levels of co-operation are important and also the international level, but maybe main collaborators are on national level. As the country is rather small, maybe national level is more important than local and regional, there is also just one University in the country and due to this the University has to act and is responsible for the whole country.

### **Summary of the university role of the collaboration:**

Creditability, Funds, Access information, Networking, Educational achievements, European masters and joint programmes and Development of centre of excellences.

### **Success factors of regional collaboration**

- Strategic position between Europe/Africa, being a Mediterranean country with English as second language is a success factor to a large extent.
- There are several areas where Malta has excellences in Europe; e.g. ICT, Medicine Mediterranean Law, IMO (International Maritime Ocean Institute)
- The culture and history of Malta (see above)
- Vision 2015 (mainly on ICT and Smart learning) [www.gov.mt](http://www.gov.mt)
- EU fundings are crucial

### **Obstacles to successful regional collaboration**

- Bureaucracy in EU and member states
- Other countries prejudice concerning the Mediterranean countries reputation
- Culture can be a success factor as described above, but can also be an obstacle

### **Publications:**

*The Impact of the Bologna Process on Higher Education Institutions in Malta: An overview of the achieved targets and future challenges*, (2009), A Working document prepared for the BOLOGNA EXPERTS GROUP 2006-2009.



Attard Tonna, M. (2009). A Maltese approach to the Bologna Process: insights, strategies and challenges. Case Study for BeFlex+.

Gatt. S. (2009). The implementation of the Bologna Process in Malta.

**Websites:**

<http://www.um.edu.mt>

<http://www.mcast.edu.mt/>

<http://www.its.edu.mt/>

<http://www.mqc.gov.mt/>

<http://www.nche.gov.mt/>

<https://secure2.gov.mt/SmartIsland/Pages/Helper/Downloads.ashx?id=bf0ffdbc-72b5-4078-919b-8792db634246>

[www.letmelearnmalta.com](http://www.letmelearnmalta.com)

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Lund 23 January 2009

Ebba Ossiannilsson, Lund University, SE