

ACADEMIA 2005

***A GUIDANCE EXCHANGE PROGRAMME
ORGANISED BY CAREERS EUROPE,
LEONADO DA VINCI &
EUROGUIDANCE MALTA***

***MALTA
May 9 – May 14 2005***

***Claire Dhaffir
Training and Development Adviser
Birmingham & Solihull Connexions***

Guidance Exchange Malta 2005

Careers Europe, Euroguidance Malta and Leonardo Da Vinci Project

Sunday 8 May 2005

- Arrive at the hotel in St George's Bay with 10 minutes to spare before the first meeting, many thanks to the break neck speed of the taxi driver (this seems to be a universal trait!).
- Meet Brian Borg and Joseph Lynn Micallef, our hosts for the week, and it is also an opportunity to meet the other participants who are from Czech Republic, Belgium, Norway, Sweden and Portugal.
- We then have a presentation about the education system.
- The meeting is followed by a delicious welcome dinner.

Introduction to the Maltese Education System

- Compulsory education in Malta is between the ages of 5 and 16.
- Pre-primary education is between the ages of 3 and 5 and is not compulsory.
- Secondary education is between the ages of 11 and 16, and at age 11 young people take the 11 plus examination to determine whether they will continue their education in a junior lyceum (for the high achievers) or a secondary school (for the low achievers). It is also at this stage that boys and girls are educated separately until they enter post 16 education.
- As well as state schools Malta has church schools and independent schools.
- With post secondary education young people choose between an academic and a vocational route.
- The Junior College (17-19) provides a 2 year preparation for university.
- Vocational post 16 colleges include
 - Institute of Health Care
 - Malta Centre for Restoration
 - Institute for Tourism Studies
 - MCAST (Malta College of Arts, Sciences and Technology)
- University of Malta is the only higher education institution on the island.

Monday 9 May 2005

Visit to the Guidance and Counselling Services, Floriana

- Meet Stephen and Josephine who give an introduction to the services offered by the unit.
- These services include:
 - school social work section
(eg: follows up absenteeism/truancy)
 - 'Good Shepherd Project'
(eg: checks that the aged 5s are attending and are registered at school)
 - Education Medical Section
(has a doctor and health assistant)
 - School Psychological Service
 - Schoolgirl Mother Unit
 - Safe School Programme
(deals with child safety/child protection)
 - Art Therapy Service
(mostly primary)
 - School Library Service
- In secondary school there is one guidance teacher for every 300 pupils. Their workload is split 50% subject teaching and 50% guidance work in personal, educational and emotional development. They are not formally trained in guidance, they undergo in-service training. They are not paid any extra salary.
- Visit to the Career Guidance Room, careers education is delivered here to class size groups of young people who are transported from school for careers lessons.
- We are able to sit in on a lesson about gender stereotypical careers.

Visit to the Institute of Tourism Studies

- Presentation by Jackie Drury. ITS aims to provide high level vocational education in the field of tourism. It incorporates guidance programmes which are person centred and focus on enabling the students to develop the skills for self development and career management.
- Courses offered include Hospitality Management, Hotel Operations, Accommodation Operations, Tourism Studies, Hospitality Trades, Craft and Technical Programmes and ESTS Hospitality Trades (apprenticeships).
- It is a post 16 institution and operates on a modular system.
- We are treated to an immense 4 course lunch in the training restaurant complete with Maltese wine and to prevent us from having a nap we are whisked off to the Junior College in the afternoon.

Visit to the Junior College

- The Junior College was opened in 1995 to prepare students post O level, for university. They follow a Matriculation Certificate which involves studying a wide range of subjects including English, Maths and Science, 2 at A level and 4 at Intermediate level.
- Students receive €160 per month whilst attending college.
- There are 2 guidance counsellors on site, Gina and Charles – a major part of their work is personal problems although they do undertake some vocational guidance.
- No need for supper this evening, still full up!!

Tuesday 10 May 2005

Visit to the University of Malta

- The only higher education institution on the island.
- Attracts some overseas students.
- As Malta is so small, all local students tend to live at home.
- There is a counseling services department with 9 staff who are trained Psychotherapists to deal with students' personal problems.
- The Student Advisory Service is a separate department which has 2 staff, Albert Debono and Noel Caruna who focus on course and career guidance.
- After a tour of the campus we are taken to Rabat for lunch (I'm beginning to wish more of my clothes had elasticated waists), followed by a sight seeing tour of Mdina, the old capital Malta.
- Buildings are constructed from limestone which ages to a beautiful sand colour not dissimilar to Cotswold stone. The Arab, Italian and Baroque influences are very marked and evident in the architecture.

Wednesday 11 May 2005

Visit to Gozo

- Up earlier than usual to catch the ferry to the neighbouring island of Gozo (it's a hard life!).
- Learn very quickly to refer to the inhabitants as Gozitan and **not** Maltese.
- Meet the Regional Assistant Director for the Department of Education, Carmel Attard, who gives us an overview of the education system on Gozo and how it differs to Malta.
- We visit the 3 different schools making up the only state school complex on the island.
- Girls and boys are still educated separately but the junior lyceum and secondary school are combined simply because pupil numbers are so much smaller than on Malta.
- Students have to go across to Malta to attend university.

- Teachers pay on Gozo is different, they don't tend to have Maltese teachers teaching there.
- We have a tour of the boys' school and I am struck by how quiet it is in class throughout the school.
- Before we know it, another 3 course lunch at the Gozitan campus of the Institute of Tourism is upon us and I am much relieved that I planned my wardrobe that morning and wore a stretchy skirt!!!!
- Again, determined not to let us doze off in the heat, we have a cultural visit to a heritage centre and a bus ride to the coast to see the Azure Window, a spectacular, quite symmetrical rock formation reflecting the beautiful turquoise sea – stunning. I spend rather more time than I should waiting for a lizard to emerge from a rock as my Swedish colleague has never seen one and I feel obliged to take a photograph for her!!
- We board the ferry to return to Malta, and I get the chance to speak with Stephen, one of the guidance counsellors in Floriana. He informs me that Malta has the highest incidence of teenage alcohol problems in the whole of Europe, and that drug problems are also quite a big issue. Students often find that the pressure from having to sit an exam at 11 can cause a lot of stress for both them and their parents, resulting in a range of social problems.

Thursday 12 May 2005

Visit to Employment and Training Corporation in Hal Far and Valletta

- ETC provides equitable access to training programmes and employment services.
- Main office is in Hal Far with a branch in Gozo and four job centres on Malta.
- ETC holds a database of all people who are working, if any person is not on the database, then they are deemed to be working illegally.
- The Employment Services Division offers:
 - vocational guidance
 - job matching
 - employment schemes
 - employment database
- The Training Services Division offers
 - Apprenticeships (Technician/Craft level, maximum 4 yrs duration)
 - Traineeships (short term apprenticeships, maximum 1 yr duration, lower level than apprenticeships)
 - Short competence based courses
 - Entrepreneurship programme
 - Night Institute for Further Technical Education
 - Training grants

- Job seekers register for work and join the unemployed register via an electronic finger print system. To remain on the register they must use a finger print machine at an area office each fortnight otherwise benefits will be stopped.
- Services to employers include:
 - receiving job vacancies
 - short listing candidates
 - assisting in interviews
- After a delicious (thankfully light) lunch of traditional Maltese snacks we are taken to the Job Centre in Valletta which is very small and I am interested to see that there are a range of job vacancies available in the UK.
- After a visit to the European Union Programmes Unit, where we have a discussion with Adrian Tonna, the National Co-ordinator, about the various systems in our respective countries and the value of such exchange visits, we are let loose in Valletta. I am pleased that I will get the chance to have a ride on Malta's legendary buses for the princely sum of 20 cents.

Friday 13 May 2005

Visit to Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST)

- MCAST is one of the institutions offering a vocational choice to post 16 students.
- Josephine Cilia gave us an overview of the college which opened in 2001. Vocational education did exist in Malta prior to this but I needed restructuring and upgrading.
- It began with 6 Institutes
 - Electronics Engineering
 - Building and Construction Engineering
 - ICT
 - Business and Commerce
 - Art & Design
 - Maritime
- In 2003 MCAST became 9 institutes
 - Mechanical Engineering
 - Community Services
 - Agribusiness
 - Electrical & Electronic Engineering combined
- As well as full time students there are Apprentices from ETC who attend day and block release.

- Small centre on Gozo which has a taster function.
- Qualifications offered include:
 - HND
 - BTEC Nat
 - BTEC First
 - Foundation
 - City & Guilds
- Guidance and Counselling at MCAST is carried out by 2 counsellors, Roseanne and John who operate on 3 levels:
 - vocational
 - personal
 - group

The afternoon was fabulous, we had a boat trip to the Grand Harbour in Valletta, it was a decidedly small boat and extremely large waves, more exhilarating than Alton Towers!!!! Although I don't think the other members of the group thought so.....

Observations

- The education system in Malta, which is still selective, is very similar to how the education system was in the UK prior to the comprehensive system.
- Guidance and counselling is different in Malta, school counsellors and guidance teachers provide a degree of vocational guidance, but the system and the training is not the same as Personal Advisers/Careers Advisers in this country. Counsellors focus more on personal issues and the role of a guidance teacher's role is similar to that of the Careers Co-ordinator role here.
- Despite it being such a small country with a strong Catholic tradition, social problems in Malta are very similar to here and other European countries.
- Malta has a well established general guidance service within education, however it is recognised that there is a lack of policy steering, and that related training for staff needs to be developed and improved.