

MCAST hosts Dutch students for sustainable building project meeting

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The learning group of the Sustainable Building project

The first project meeting of 'The Sustainable Buildings' (SUB) was held in Malta from February 6 to 20. SUB is a Comenius-funded project in which the partners are the Institute of Building and Construction Engineering (IBCE), one of the vocational institutes of the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), and Alfa College, a major centre for vocational education and training in Groningen, in the north of The Netherlands.

Thirty students and five lecturers form the learning group for this project. The Maltese members of the group is composed of students who are currently in the second year of the BTEC National Diploma in Building Construction, while myself, a lecturer in Applied Sciences, Godwin Caruana, lecturer in Building Services and Reginald Galea, lecturer in Architectural Drawing, are co-ordinating the project.

During the project meeting visit a number of activities were organised by the Institute of Building and Construction Engineering with the collaboration of the Housing Authority, Bank of Valletta and Heritage Malta.

The project's central learning theme revolves around the issue of sustainability with direct focus on buildings. Dr Vincent Buhagiar and **Charles Yousif** delivered a number of lectures on sustainability, BiPV (Building integrated photovoltaics) and solar heating at the Institute of Building and Construction Engineering.

The whole group also visited the housing project in Birkirkara, which is an example of energy-saving buildings.

The learning group also visited the Bank of Valletta building during the project meeting in Malta. Henry Portelli and Professor Alex Torpiano explained the design features, and ensuing energy saving aspects of the new building in St Venera.

With the help of Heritage Malta, a number of cultural activities were also organised, including visits to heritage sites such as Ggantija, Ghar Dalam and the Tarxien temples. The Dutch students were accommodated with Maltese families.

A number of end products were also produced for the project. The learning group developed several multimedia presentations in international groups.

The presentations focused on specific features of sustainability including energy, building regulations, construction, materials, building services and water usage in Malta. A glossary of key technical terms in construction in Maltese, English and Dutch was also drawn up.

The project equips the learners following respective diplomas in Building Construction with further skills in their area and helps the lecturers at the institutes to keep updated with new developments in the area of construction, most notably in the area of sustainability.

The Maltese learning group will be travelling to The Netherlands in June for the second part of the project. Apart from investigating concepts of sustainability, specific content lectures will be held during the project.

The learners involved in the project are currently working with their respective employers within the ETC apprenticeship scheme.

The institute is grateful to the respective employers and the ETC for their support on this matter by supporting such projects.

This project is another initiative being undertaken between MCAST and the Association of Colleges in Northern Netherlands, namely Alfa College, in Groningen, Landstede in Zwolle and ROC FriesePoort in Leeuwarden.