Report on National Seminar – Testing the ARENA Toolkit

23 November 2021

Embassy Hotel

Valletta

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

The purpose of the national seminar was to present the results of the testing of the toolkit to an audience of stakeholders and to solicit further opinion and ideas of implementation of the toolkit on a wider and expanded basis in Malta (as well as submission of results to the project coordinator (NOKUT – Norway). Also, an additional goal is the approach to a fourth cycle of Toolkit projects. Stakeholders attending included (in addition to MQRIC and MCAST), registrars from the Institute for Tourism Studies (ITS) and the University of Malta as well as various migrant oriented non-governmental organisations (NGO's), the Migrants Commission of the Malta Archdiocese and government entities dealing with migrants including the Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers (AWAS) and the Human Rights Directorate (HRD). AWAS and the HRD are operated by the Ministry for Home Affairs and the Ministry for Research, Innovation, and the Co-Ordination of the Post-Covid-19 Strategy respectively. Also attending were members of the migrant units of the national public employment service (Jobsplus) as well as the local head of the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) who coordinated attendance of members from the migrant communities to attend (particularly the Sudanese and Eritrean communities). Finally, business was represented by representatives of the Malta Chamber of Commerce as well as Grant Thornton. Primary presenters included the Project Coordinator, Erlend Bern Aaser of NOKUT Norway (ENIC NARIC of Norway) as well as MCAST – who presented the results of the testing and the processes involved. Also presenting were the Head of Validation (VINFL) at the MFHEA as well as several members of the migrant community regarding their own experiences of education in Malta. An online survey requesting any additional feedback was also delivered to the participants the following day soliciting any additional feedback they may have.

This report is organized as the agenda was organized and summarises the points made by the presenters (and includes the associated Power Points presentations in the appendices). The agenda, as presented during the seminar is contained in the following two pages.

National Seminar – Testing the ARENA Toolkit

Date: **23 November 2021**
Time: **08:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.**
Location: **Embassy Hotel Valletta, Ambassador Suite**

Agenda

08:00 – 09:00 a.m. Registration

09:00 – 09:15 a.m. Introduction

    Dr. Stefan Sant (Head, MQRIC) MFHEA

09:15 – 09:30 a.m. NOKUT Presentation

    Presenting the International Context of the Project

    Mr. Erlend Bern Aaser (NOKUT) and Kristina R. Aardal (NOKUT)

09:30 – 10:00 a.m. MCAST Presentation

    Results, Challenges and Recommendations Concerning the Project

    Mr. Josef Buttigieg (MCAST), Ms Roberta Gatt (MCAST) and Ms Roberta Zammit (MCAST)

10:00 – 10:15 a.m. VINFL and the Validation Process

    Mr. Lawrence Azzopardi (Head, Licensing and Accreditation) MFHEA

10:15 – 10:30 a.m. Coffee Break

10:30 – 11:00 a.m. Presentation (by Refugee Communities)

    Presentation of their experience and expectations concering the ARENA toolkit and education opportunities in their communities.

11:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. Discussion and Question and Answer

Presentation of the experience and expectations concering the ARENA Toolkit and education opportunities in refugee communities (Moderated by MQRIC and MCAST).

What problems do you foresee in introducing the Toolkit (logistics, communications, or understanding) for the refugee population?

What can be done to facilitate the use of the Toolkit (for stakeholders, education institutions, and refugees)?

Are there any additions that can be added to the present Toolkit?

What further measures can be introduced to make the Toolkit more accessible and user-friendly?

What do you think will be the main challenges in implementing the Toolkit?

12:15 p.m. – 12:30 p.m. Conclusion and Wrap Up

This seminar will be followed up with a survey on the following day for submission of any further recommendations or ideas concerning the ARENA project (and the National Seminar). An electronic final report will follow assimilating results of the seminar as well as those of the survey.

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Chapter 2 – Introduction - Dr. Stefan Sant (Head, MQRIC) MFHEA

Dr. Sant introduced the programme from its genisis (in a national sense) to its eventual roll-out in the national context and what expectations are or may be. He also introduced the speakers and the aims of the seminar.

Chapter 3 – NOKUT Presentation – Mr. Erlend Bern Aaser

3.1 Introduction

Mr. Aaser presented that the ARENA programme is designed to coincide with and satisfy legal obligations as contained in the Lisbon Convention[1] and that work had already been done on the EQPR (led by the Council of Europe). This also includes work on the qualification passports (for refugees and vulnerable migrants outside of Europe). Many refugees have already received the passports, and NOKUT was the content coordinator and provided the responsibility for methodology.

3.2 Evolution of the Toolkit

Began in 2016 lasting through 2018 (the Refugees and Recognition Toolkit), moving on to the Refugees and Recognition – Toolkit 2 (REACT) from 2018 – 2020; and then to the ARENA project "Refugees and Recognition – Toolkit 3 (ARENA)" from 2020 – 2022.

3.3 Toolkit 3 (ARENA)

Involves NARIC's, HEI's and other stakeholders and expanded the cooperation and testing in new countries (with pilot testing in Greece and Malta). It is designed to test the sustainability of best practice from REACT[2] (at the University of Utrecht) and to establish a pathway for refugees with the EQPR in Italy (at the University of Brescia). The goal is to gather more knowledge on implementation of methodology at HEI's and address challenges specific to national contexts.

3.4 National Seminar in Malta

The goals of the national seminar are to:

- Initiate dialogue on the national level, based on the experiences from the project.
- Raise awareness of the Toolkit methodology.
- Present the results from testing the Toolkit at MCAST.
- To receive feedback for broader implementation of the Toolkit in Malta and beyond.
- The approach to take for the fourth cycle of Toolkit projects.

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[1] "The Council of Europe, in co-operation with UNESCO, drafted the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, more briefly referred to as the "Lisbon Recognition Convention" because it was adopted in Lisbon in 1997. This Convention is the main legal instrument on the recognition of qualifications in Europe. It has, to date, been ratified by more than 50 states. It promotes fair recognition of academic qualifications." (COE, https://www.coe.int/en/web/higher-education-and-research/lisbon-recognition-convention.)

[2] REACT was the second cycle of the Tookit with an "overall goal of the project is to enhance the mobility, employability and access to further studies for refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation – including those without official documentation of their educational background." (NOKUT, 2020).

Chapter 4 – MCAST Presentation – Results, Challenges and Recommendations concerning the Project

4.1 Recruitment of Prospective Learners

MCAST (the Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology) was the testing site for the Toolkit. Regarding the ARENA process, they explained that they liasoned with two refugee-centric institutions to work on recruiting candidates for participation. These institutions compiled a list of individuals and their CV's (detailing their education history but not including their qualification documents). The list was used by MCAST for the initial screening.

4.2 Adaptation of the Toolkit for the Maltese Context

The toolkit recommendations were adapted by MCAST into an "all-inclusive" form used during:

- The initial screening of the student profile
- The face to face structured interview with the student
- The language skills screening
- MCAST recommendations and final offers of studies.

The form includes a detailed profile of the applicants' education background, work experience and languages and to confirm the information they provided through their CV's. The form (as adapted) follows:

Language Skills

What is your native language?
What other language/s do you speak/write?
Have you studied English Language? (yes/no comment)
Have you ever studied a subject in English? (yes/no comment)
Have you ever had exams in English? (yes/no comment)
Are you currently participating in an English Language Course? If yes, in which Level? (yes/no comment)
Have you completed a language proficiency test? (yes/no comment – attach any copies of language proficiency test)

Overview of Your Highest Achieved Qualification

General Information About Your Education

Title of the awarded qualification	Educational Institution
Period of study (year started - year completed)	Place and country

Scope and Level of your education

What is the nominal length of study? (Years? Months? Hours?)	Did you study full time or part time?	What was the language of instruction?

Have you completed the programme within the normal time'? (Explanation of any delay or interruption of education)

What was the entrance requirement for this education?

Does this education give access to further study?

Purpose of Education

Did you have a specialization?

Was this education aimed at working within a particular profession? Which one?

...mponent? (If No, Skip question. If Yes – Was job practice a mandatory component of the asks were you assigned? In which period of the programme? Duration of the job practice?)

Work Experience

Have you had work experience after you finished your education? (If No, Skip question. If Yes – Give details: Period of work, year started — year finished, Employer, Country, Position, Tasks. Attach CV if available)

In what way could you make use of your education?

Have you had membership in a profession organization?

Further Education/Course

Have you completed any further education /courses? (If No, Skip question. If Yes – Give details: Period of study, year started — year finished, Institution / Organization, Qualification/Subject area, Place/Country. Attach certificates if available)

What kind of plans/ambitions do you have with regards to further studies? What are your aims? What is your motivation? How to you plan/envisage to achieve your targets?

What would you say are your Strengths and Weaknesses with regards to studying? What help would you need?

Checklist and Post-Interview Comments/Notes			
Section (Sub-section)		Complete	Comments/Notes
Personal Information			
Contact Information (in Malta)			
GDPR Consent Form			
Language Skills			
Overview of Highest Achieved Qualification	General Information About Education		
	Scope and Level of education		
	Purpose of Education		
	Thesis		
	Reconstruction of the Course Descriptions		
Work Experience			
Further Education/Course			
Other			

4.3 The Initial Screening of Prospective Students

This was accomplished by the MCAST Registrar's Office where the CV's were analysed, and information obtained was inputted in the form for confirmation during the interviews. In this, MQRIC provided support concerning programmes of study, awarding bodies, and referencing.

4.4 Interviews

The NGO/institution notified the applicants regarding the interview date and time and the interviews were accomplished virtually due to the COVID contingencies. Logistics (including computer access) was provided by the NGO/institution (for the applicants). Interviews were approximately 30 minutes long with MQRIC attending as a non-intervening partner. The interview goals were to confirm the information contained on the CV's and to assess the level of spoken English.

Interviews included the following elements:

- Introducing the evaluators functions (providing an overview of the interview)
- Prompts for the interviewee to provide a brief introduction of themselves (i.e. "Tell me something about yourself")
- Confirmation of questionnaire information.
- Questions regarding their education; what type of education, what is missing, and why.
- Questions regarding work experience and memberships in professional organisations.
- What to expect post-interview (English and Mathematics placement tests).
- Wrap Up using a checklist to ensure all required information was obtained.

Post interview actions included:

- Applicants invited to take an Initial Assessment Test for Mathematics and the English Language.
- Finalisation of the testing process – guiding the candidate to the level which is best for them.
- Corresponding with the applicant as to their acceptance or not.

4.5 Limitations and Recommendations

The Post-Interview was a challenge as the tests required candidates to take schedule time from work to attend. Candidates also may not have the time to attend a full-time course as based upon employment.

MCAST recommended increasing the awareness of the free use of resources (further explained in the Migrant remarks), which can help interested candidates improve their knowledge of the subject. Introduction of English courses would help improve English language skills – specifically targeted for the individuals.

Chapter 5 - VINFL (Validation of Informal and Non-Formal Learning) and the Validation Process - Mr. Lawrence Azzopardi (Head, Licensing and Accreditation) MFHEA

5.1 Definitions

VINFL was included in the agenda as it provides a template for the Toolkit to base itself upon wherever instances of missing procedures where identifies. Drawing on the experience of VINFL would be a good practise in the local context so that the users of the Toolkit would not be operating in a vacuum in so far as process where concerned.

Validation is the process identifying, assessing, and formally certifying the knowledge, skills, and competences which individuals develop throughout their lives by means of participation in non-formal and informal learning. This process involves the use of Occupational Standards which describe what an individual in a particular occupation should know and be able to do to be formally recognised as competent in that occupation. It also involves the use of Sector Skills Units which are industry focussed units established by the Commission to develop occupational standards and design qualifications to improve the skills of the workforce.

5.2 Evolution of VINFL

Council recommendation and subsidiary legislation regarding Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning was published in 2012.

Pilot projects in Childcare, Automotive, Building and Construction and Printing and media began in 2013 (extending to 2016).

New staff was employed specific to VINFL in 2016.

The 1st ECVET project dedicated to VINFIL and dissemination began in 2017.

2016 – 2020 – Steady increase in the number of SSU's and NO's.

Publication of Subsidiary Legislation S.L. 607.02 put validation under the Remit of the MFHEA and provided a regulatory framework. It also pegged the VINFL awards to the MQF and gave definitions.

5.3 Organisation of VINFL

VINFL is overseen and approved by the Ministry for Education and is managed and implemented by the MFHEA. Underneath these institutions are the Sector Skills Units and the Validation Assessment Bodies.

5.3.1 SSU's

There are 9 SSU's including Automotive, Building and Construction, Hair and Beauty, Hospitality and Tourism, Health and Social Care, IT, Printing and Digital Media, Education Support, and Science Communication. – the SSU's contain 7 members including from the economic sector, the education sector, a government representative, and a worker's representative.

An SSU is set up to develop the National Occupation Standards; to propose Validation Mechanisms; to propose QA measures, to disseminate information on VINFL and to meet once monthly.

5.3.2 Occupational Standards

These are reviewed by and External Expert, reviewed by the MFHEA, reviewed by the SSU, and published on the database.

Occupational Standards are divided into modules; published on the MFHEA database and are used to help guide curriculum development. They also help in the validation of non-Formal and Informal learning. The standards are guide employers and are compiled on the "Learning Outcomes Approach". Currently there are over 90 published standards on our database in 8 sectors.

5.4. VINFL Journey

Candidates query at MFHEA where it then flows to the Validation Assessment Body. Following this is the application and guidance followed by the Validation Assessment and results. Finally, the applicant receives a certificate from the MFHEA.

The Validation Unit has published information leaflets (contained on the MFHEA website) for the process.

Future plans include increasing the number of sectors and to increase the number of Occupational Standards and their quality. Other plans include setting up the Sectoral Skills Committee (as required in the subsidiary legislation) and amend the legislation to give MFHEA more autonomy. Finally, plans include increasing the number of staff working in validation.

Chapter 6 – Presentation (by Refugee Communities) – Experiences and Expectations concerning the ARENA Toolkit and Education Opportunities in their Communities

6.1 Format

This section of the seminar proposed four questions for three volunteers from the refugee/refugee like communities to speak of their own experiences as related to the Toolkit (and the possibilities the Toolkit may open for them). This section was moderated by Dr. Stefan Sant.

Questions proposed included:

- Have you found your access to education resources in Malta easy or difficult?
- What made this access easy/difficult?
- Do you feel this programme (ARENA) will benefit your community (as the programme is currently constructed)?
- What suggestions do you have to make this programme more accessible?

The questions were addressed to the speakers who had some leverage to include other observations from their experiences. The audience also was invited to address questions to the speakers as well.

6.2 Main Points Raised

Toolkit is evidence of a person's education and language.

It is issued by the tester of the Toolkit therefore it is not binding on third parties.

Toolkit is to filter out occupations covered by the SSU's.

The Jesuit Refugee Service and the migrants both noted the need for laptop or IT hardware (resources) so to make the Toolkit effective in the medium term, so that students can effectively carryout their studies.

Refugees reported substantial dropout from programmes because they are employed, no stipends, no mentors (mentors being official guidance counsellors or consultants).

In the final toolkit to be published by MQRIC, it will also list the NGO's supporting this ecosystem. In other words, the Toolkit (as published on the website) will contain services offered by various entities in terms of support as well as roles of entities and suitable points of contact.

It was recommended and there was general consensus that the toolkit should indicate if the applicant may require mentoring. This is again to ensure the Toolkit is successful in the medium term.

6.2 Conclusion

Many of the above points in 6.2 are further explained in the Conclusion (and recommendations).

Chapter 7 - Results of Survey "Testing the ARENA Toolkit"

7.1 Format

The survey – in which all participants from the Seminar were invited to participate – tackled the following questions:
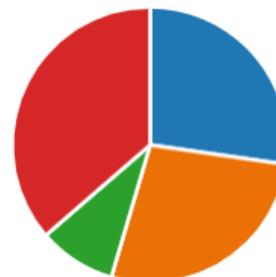
- What problems do you foresee in introducing the Toolkit (logistics, communications or understanding) for the migrant population?
- What can be done to facilitate the use of the Toolkit?
- What do you recommend adding (as an addition) to the present Toolkit?
- What further measures can be introduced to make the Toolkit more accessible and user-friendly?
- What do you think will be the main challenges in implementing the Toolkit?

7.2 Responses

The survey was open from the 24th of November through the 30th of November and ten responses were received. These included (demographically); 3 Migrants, 3 Education Providers, 1 Employer and 4 respondents who marked "other". The "Other" category included 1 each from Employment Services, HRD Representative, an Intern and a Case Worker.

7.3 Question 1 – Identify Yourself

🔵 Migrant	3
🟠 Education Provider	3
🟢 Employer	1
🔴 Other (Kindly Specify Below)	4

7.4 Question 2 – If you selected "Other" kindly specify below

1	anonymous	Employment Services
2	anonymous	Human Rights Directorate Representative
3	anonymous	Intern
4	anonymous	Case Worker

7.5 Question 3 – What problems do you foresee in introducing the Toolkit (logistics, communications, or understanding?

2 respondents mentioned logistics, earlier spoken of as making time to attend interviews or to devote time to physically sitting for the examinations.

Responses to this question included pay attention to "Language barriers." The "Toolkit should be translated to different languages and the use of interpreters is required." Two of the responses received noted "logistics" as an issue for application of the toolkit.

Another respondent noted, "When I learnt about the Toolkit, I was imagining a system whereby the knowledge and level of the migrant will be acknowledged in some way. From my understanding, it seems that this toolkit will mainly be used for MCAST vis-à-vis the application and acceptance to their courses." This response is further addressed in the "Conclusions".

Another respondent spoke of the tests, that if they are "held physically, I do not envisage any problems. The only barrier could be the language." Another echoed this response, "The main difficulty foreseen is migrants being unable to successfully complete the pre-enrolling Math and English tests."

Finally, communications were highlighted in increasing understanding of the toolkit for the stakeholders (including its purposes and how it might work). One respondent mentioned that when he "learnt(sic) about the toolkit I was imagining a system whereby the knowledge and level of the migrant will be acknowledged in some way. From my understanding it seems that this toolkit will be mainly used for MCAST vis-à-vis the application and acceptance for their courses." Further to this, another respondent mentioned, "Understanding the process of the Toolkit and its benefit for the migrant population." Finally, a further respondent summarised, "Explaining the use/process of the toolkit – I think because it is such a long process, there might be confusion as to what the "point" of it is (looking through the lens of accessing education). We had a client who was confusing the toolkit process with an actual course."

7.6 Question 4 – What can be done to facilitate the use of the Toolkit?

Reflecting the first question and confusion as to aims and purposes, one respondent mentioned that "services to help migrants fill in toolkit needed." However, this response should be addressed given there is no actual "toolkit" for the migrants to complete (as in the Maltese context they complete a CV. There was no mention throughout the course of the seminar as to who was providing the initial assistance for the CV, however. The second respondent also referred to this in stating the need for (quoted directly) "More communications with the stakeholder to share the knowledge to help the challenging element use and benefit of those interested toolkits."

Another respondent recommended mutual cooperation between institutions in developing a general toolkit (the toolkit itself must be explained that this is still being formulated) however, the statement is valid for the future of the toolkit. "As a second phase, all educational entities need to first join up forces and develop a general toolkit which can be used across the board with all institutions. As a follow up, MQRIC, together with sectoral experts may use the toolkit together with practical assessments to determine the level of proficiency/knowledge and expertise in a particular area of study and may determine the comparable level that the migrants may have (informal assessment).

Two respondents mentioned that migrants "who require English Language Skills" should be referred "to English Classes before using the toolkit." Also, another respondent recommended providing "short preparatory courses for the Math and English language exams."

Finally, communications also were mentioned again in the context of "Giving a lot of information on social media and handouts (which) maybe can help people to get to know more about the project." Also, another respondent recommended "Better communication tools. The booklet handed out at the national seminar does not provide sufficient explanation of the toolkit. It presents an overview of the project and how it might work, but in the logic of the creators, not of the users. For me, the two approaches are unclear, they are not well explained at all."

7.7 Question 5 - What do you recommend adding (as an addition) to the present Toolkit?

Virtually all responses referred in one way or another to communications (referencing earlier responses to questions).

One respondent recommended further seminars or meetings concerning migrant education stating, "Address the challenges to stakeholders to find solution for it to Asylum Seekers and Migrants." Related to this, another respondent mentioned "Adding more language(s), translate/interpreter, employee staff from migrant communities will help your project and also will create a better path to help these migrants to benefit successful (sic)."

Another, while not responding directly to the Toolkit recommended having "Induction courses in different languages." This was followed up by another respondent (who recommended setting the Toolkit in a context the migrants might understand and how it may impact them). "Perhaps publishing explanations of the point of the Toolkit in the most common languages spoken by migrants so that there can be full understanding of 1. The process in its' entirety, 2. What they will get out of it in the end. They can be given these info sheets when told about the Toolkit and can then make informed decisions on whether they would like to through the process. I would add a section that talks about the things that might hinder someone from following education (in the toolkit profile). I believe that its' all well and good to go through this process with the goal of recommending further studies and suitable courses (in the case of MCAST) but I think it's' important to note that that's not the only barrier that migrants face. So, with the recommendations of courses, I think there should be a discussion of "what are your goals, how will you support yourself, what is your access to resources (laptop, printing, internet, quiet study spaces, etc.)? To get a fuller picture of what the individual students are able to commit to. In that way, they can be supported in the pertinent ways in order for them to be successful in their studies. Follow ups for the people that used the toolkit – have they managed to access employment/education since using it? Has it helped?

Finally, another recommended expanded guideline for migrants explaining education (during induction or integration processes). "This should include not only the recognition of qualification, but also the broader context of education and employment, as it was discussed in the seminar. This means to set up the toolkit in the context, so that users know what they should do step by step to get their qualifications and better job opportunities." The final

respondent echoed this by stating "To let our people know more about how studies is(sic) in our community."

7.8 Question 6 - What further measures can be introduced to make the Toolkit more accessible and user-friendly?

One respondent recommended implementing the Toolkit first, and then to see (quoting directly) "what kind of measures need to be added for it to be more accessible, if can possible, can use social media to be more seen first and accessible for the final user." Another respondent stated, "Identify the potential of individual weakness and strength, supported with resources need to monitor them" (which is part of the Interview process). However, individual strengths and weaknesses (self-identified) may be an element to add to the Toolkit.

Another respondent referred to communication mentioning "effective outreach and clear information in different languages.". Another recommended a "link directly with MQRIC so that there will not be the need for a lot of "bureaucratic" procedures for the migrant/user." Speaking further on this subject, another respondent recommended, "A graphical explanation of the procedure (of the toolkit). As well as the creation of a stable communication line with the migration .communities. This means involvement of community leaders, so that they can work as providers for the Toolkit. This also needs the use of other languages apart from English."

Finally, another recommended training in the migration/asylum world (the education institutions). "I think anyone that is using the Toolkit should be given training around the topic of migration/asylum. To be aware of the context in which these students/employees are using the Toolkit and to be sensitive to their situations. I think it would also help people administering the toolkit to truly understand the importance of it. I believe that being aware of the rights of this population and using the Toolkit from this informed perspective can only make it stronger and more successful as a resource."

7.9 Question 7 - What do you think will be the main challenges in implementing the Toolkit?

This questions' responses elicited a variety of responses which cannot really be coded or grouped although language and communication again were the most popular responses including "language, technological barriers" (referring to electronic resources – computers, etc.). "For us communication languages as well explain and give more information to final user to know about these tools."

Another respondent referred again to communication (but obliquely) in that the respondent anticipated "Lack of participation from the migrant community. In my opinion, without generalizing, the immediate need of earning money is more important than investing in their education because there is no one proper system which does this. I am very disappointed to see that an Integration Unit within the Human Rights Directorate was specifically created to ensure a centralised way forward, but there's a lot to be done. Everyone want to do his bit, even though this might be a duplication of resources."

Others spoke of logistics, referencing "communication with the individual and motivate, encourage flexible time I know maybe it's' hard because everyone needs to work, so give

chance how people can sustain themselves will be good." (referring to other earlier responses). Another respondent referred to language barriers and adjusting to a different education system". Finally, another respondent referred to the Interviewer's skills, "there could be issues of how one is interpreting the skills of a person during or before the interview." And "Migrants in Malta have a number of obstacles they have to overcome before even considering full time education or employment, so I thin commitment to a long process is always going to be an issue. Especially, because nothing is really "guaranteed" by the end of it."

Finally, referring to context "The reality of the migrant population is complex and a Toolkit which focuses only on one specific issue will be difficult to implement if it (does) not takes care about other parts of the reality (lack of job opportunities and income, housing, integration….) It will also be challenging to change common institutions structures if there is no political interest to go this way. The coordination with political leaders is crucial to get a sustainable implementation."

7.10 Conclusion

In summary, the survey results mentioned language barriers in almost all questions, including induction courses in other languages. Several mentioned English courses prior to even using the Toolkit (although such courses do exist in English and Maltese) which may be reflective of the need for further communication.

In terms of communication, several respondents were confused about the goals and aims of the programme (which means more explanation is required). In order to reach the broadest audience, they also recommended increased use of Social Media and other electronic means. Respondents also mentioned putting the setting of the programme in context (which it means for the migrants, step by step to encourage participation).

Several respondents also mentioned increasing educational services for the migrants (particularly in Induction). MQRIC notes that during the process of selecting candidates for the Toolkit testing, circulating the information and getting participation was particularly onerous.

To make it more universal, other respondents recommended mutual cooperation between the institutions and the competent authority (MQRIC) and the institutions participating (particularly ITS, MCAST and UOM) in order to devise a toolkit that is national in scope and can be used by all institutions (which is a goal at the end of the project).

Finally, other participants recommended that the policy/strategy implementers (the schools) be educated in the Migration and Asylum seeker context understanding the obstacles (for example the need for employment and making money over education)

Chapter 8 – Conclusion, Summary and Recommendations

8.1 Introduction

The seminar as a comprehensive whole raised many points not originally covered in the project proposal. Additionally, other logistics problems were not identified in the seminar, but which merit inclusion in the report. Many of these points also can contribute to the next update for the project.

8.3. Communications

As mentioned during the online survey, the official ARENA booklet may not provide enough information for either the refugee or for the employer/educator to understand the aims of the project. Although in the testing phase, MQRIC may understand (as do MCAST) of the difficulty of presenting the message to the stakeholders (this is a project dedicated to improving access to those who may have attended education in their home countries but who have travelled without their academic documents and may not be able to obtain them).

MQRIC can attest to the difficulty in identifying the best possible points of contact for refugees (and which requires a "gatekeeper"). UNHCR in Malta assisted greatly in organizing and publicizing the seminar and its objectives to the population in Malta. However, the Refugee Platform at University of Malta was invited, but did not elect to attend. Given the number of agencies handling refugee matters, it was more of a "snowball" procedure wherein the Human Rights Directorate recommended individuals as did AWAS and others (whilst identifying the appropriate individuals at Jobsplus was a matter of reading the description of the employees on their website and inviting the appropriate individuals). As this matter is extensive and involves business as well as NGO's and education, MQRIC identified the Malta Chamber, unions, and the afore mentioned Jobsplus for attendance (as well as other private companies which have extensively studied post-Pandemic procedures and business in Malta) such as Grant Thornton and Ernst and Young.

Finally, language was mentioned. Refugees generally organize among the countries where they came from and identification of a Community Leader who can spread the word to those in the community lacking the language skills is important. In the future, publicizing this project or similar projects might take place in an induction process.

When the project is completed, it would be recommended that another national seminar is held for these stakeholders to explain and endorse procedure (for education and employment).

8.4 Validation of Formal and Non-Formal Learning

Validation is somewhat linked to the goals of the project in that it offers another avenue to those seeking access to employment or education, but do not have the requisite documents. This service was recommended to be added to the seminar as there may some migrant take-up. However, again, from a communications perspective, many of the attendees and the NGO's/migrants were not aware of the programme.

As the programme offers an award which is level rated, this programme can be offered to enter education with a level rating (albeit in a vocation). However, this also is another avenue to enter education.

Logistically, this involves a trade test, but requires further explanation to the migrant as to the procedures (and even that the programme exists). Many migrants are unable to take a trade test based on working, however, many of the migrants who are unemployed may also be interested in the programme.

The information is accessible on the MFHEA website; however, even some of the NGO's were unaware of the programme.

8.5 Migrant Comments

Many migrants mentioned that their context (the logistical constraints) must be understood when devising policy and strategy.

8.6 Results of the Online Survey

Language barriers are mentioned in almost all questions, including induction courses in other languages. Several mentioned English courses prior to even using the Toolkit (although such courses do exist in English and Maltese) which also reflects the necessity of understanding the migrant context and which may be reflective of the need for further communication.

Several respondents were confused about the goals and aims of the programme (which means more explanation is required) and didn't understand how to explain it to their communities. In order to reach the broadest audience, they also recommended increased use of Social Media and other electronic means. Respondents also mentioned putting the setting of the programme in context (which it means for the migrants, step by step to encourage participation).

Other respondents recommended educational and career services for the migrants (particularly in Induction). MQRIC notes that during the process of selecting candidates for the Toolkit testing, circulating the information and getting participation was particularly onerous.

Other respondents recommended mutual cooperation between the institutions and the competent authority (MQRIC) and the institutions participating (particularly ITS, MCAST and UOM) in order to devise a toolkit that is national in scope and can be used by all institutions (which is a goal at the end of the project). Other participants recommended that the policy/strategy implementers (the schools) be educated in the Migration and Asylum seeker context understanding the obstacles (for example the need for employment and making money over education)

8.7 Recommendations for Fourth Cycle of Toolkit Projects

As there seems to be a need for a central place for career guidance/educational guidance in the migrants' communities, MQRIC recommends involvement (in the education aspect) of the Malta Career Guidance Association which although involved in Compulsory and Further

Education may be in a good position to offer advice (they have a Facebook page as well as an email address).

Euroguidance should also be involved as a stakeholder for recommendations on dissemination (not content) of the programme.

Many NGO's serve different purposes, but their varied audiences require standardized information (as illustrated in the 8.3 article). Offering career, education guidance the goals of the ARENA programme. As it is now, the same information must be sent to several organisations with someone dependable to disseminate the information.

MQRIC also recommends (in addition to the Migrants education passport) that the migrants complete the Europass CV, Cover letter and Language Passport to standardize their accomplishments.

8.2. MCAST and Recruitment/Testing

MCAST's design of the toolkit fits the local context and is adaptable by other institutions for use in screening, notably, ITS and the University of Malta; however, when requesting access to employment (not only education) the form also could be used. Employers and other institutions will always refer to MQRIC as the authority on qualifications, so MQRIC's endorsement of such an initiative is likely to work. However, MCAST's presentation did not outline the logistic problems initially encountered, which are likely country specific.

As noted by many of the seminar participants, responsibilities are spread among several NGO's and entities with no central authority taking "the lead" in migrant/asylum seeker matters. This was illustrated in the recruitment process for volunteers to test the toolkit. Initially, MQRIC contacted the Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS) for publicizing the need for volunteers for interested parties. Out of the entire community, 2 individuals were identified who volunteered. One showed up for the interview, while the other did not. Following the interview process, MCAST notified that they could not follow up with the interviewees as they could not be located.

This illustrates two problems identified in the course of the seminar; logistics may be difficult as many of the refugee/refugee like status volunteers work during the day and may not desire to ask for additional time off for an interview or may not be allowed time off for an interview (not to mention a placement test). Secondly, although the JRS is helpful in identifying individuals – being unable to locate individuals after the initial contact indicates a need for the testing centre to have either an email (which can be easily obtained by telephone) or phone number to contact the individual.

With the adapted toolkit, a standardized approach to interviews can be maintained (asking the same sorts of questions); however, as mentioned in the seminar (and in this section) logistics are a problem indicating a need for the employer or educator to be aware of the particular context the migrant may find themselves in. This includes being aware that migrants may not want to ask for the additional time off or may require more flexibility in the interview process.