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Employers Information Session – VASTE Programme

Institute of Tourism Studies – Gozo

22nd January 2020

Dear all, I welcome you for today's event, and for accepting our invitation to attend. First of all a special word of thanks goes to Jobsplus for accepting upon our request to hold this event here in Gozo, thus making it more possible for employers here on the island to attend this session.

This information session will surely provide valuable insights on support services available, and assist employers to build the internal capacity needed to professionally assist vulnerable individuals, and disabled persons at the workplace. Moreover, it will also provide worthwhile information to capitalise from fiscal and other incentives linked with the employment of new/current vulnerable individuals and disabled persons.

Surely, as society is becoming more complex the notion of vulnerable groups has widened. It is often very difficult to arrive at a firm definition of what is a vulnerable group. Vulnerable groups do not comprise only people with physical, psychological, intellectual, visual and hearing impairments, but include also other segments of society such as ex substance abusers, and social cases. According to one definition vulnerable groups are groups that “experience a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion than the general population” (**Source:** Social Protection and Social inclusion Glossary. DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (online) : <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=750> [22 January 2020]). Ethnic minorities, migrants, disabled people, homeless people and those struggling with substance abuse for example often face difficulties that can lead to further social exclusion, such as low levels of education and unemployment or underemployment. In this sense employment must not be seen only in providing financial remuneration to the person concerned, but must also be seen as providing a worthwhile road for social inclusion.

We need to create an environment where the employment of people coming from vulnerable groups is not seen as an obstacle but as an opportunity. This however, does not come on automatically, and the first step is to raise awareness. And that is

the scope of this information session. Awareness is necessary to understand the complexities and challenges that society today is offering to us, and to turn obstacles into opportunities. I wish you all a fruitful and beneficial session.
