

Business English in Malta

Daniel Xerri gives us some background information about the ELT situation in Malta in advance of BESIG’s annual conference there in November.

Malta’s ELT Industry

The 30th IATEFL BESIG Annual Conference takes place in Malta in November 2017. As an ELT destination, Malta’s history stretches back to the 1960s when the first private language school started running courses for adult students coming from Italy. Over the decades, the industry has grown exponentially and there are now almost 50 schools catering for the needs of more than 75,000 students from around 40 countries.

One of Malta’s unique selling points as an ELT destination is the fact that it was the first country in the world to regulate its language teaching industry. This happened by means of a legal notice published in 1996 which was updated and expanded in 2015. Regulations cover the entire gamut of roles and activities that form part of the industry. Schools are issued with a licence if an application meets all the requirements concerning premises, ethos and personnel. Teachers are issued with a permit if they hold certain qualifications. Individuals are approved as Directors of Studies and teacher trainers if they are suitably qualified and possess a specific amount of experience. Regulations also cover such areas as home tuition, distance learning and ESP. In addition to enforcing legal requirements, the regulator is also responsible for policies addressing pre-service teacher education, continuing professional development, student welfare and teacher portfolios. One of its duties is to regularly visit schools to monitor their performance in line with academic and non-academic standards.



Growth of business English

The fact that the BESIG Conference is going to be held in Malta seems fitting given the developments that have taken place in the area of business English in the country’s ELT industry. Despite the fact that general English courses are the most popular form of content offered by the industry, ever since the opening of the first private language schools in Malta, business English has been part of the repertoire of courses on offer to international clients. Over the years a number of teachers have specialised by following courses leading to such qualifications as the LCCI Certificate in English for Business. Moreover, a few schools have long identified themselves as specialists in this particular niche.

While for many years clients have

travelled to Malta to learn business English over the span of a few days or weeks, the growth of a number of sectors on the island is leading to an expanding pool of local and imported talent that communicates in English in a business environment on a daily basis. Large international companies specialising in finance, gaming and other services have opened offices in Malta. This seems to indicate that there is a pressing need for more business English practitioners and courses on the island.

The ELT industry as a whole is expected to continue developing to meet the demands of an increase in the number of English language learners around the world. As Malta becomes ever more attractive as an ELT destination and the home of a number of business sectors, the growth of business English in the country is likely to be commensurate.



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