



Work-Based Learning Conference

KEY FINDINGS REPORT

From insights to impact — pioneering Work-Based Learning and digital transformation in Malta's skills ecosystem

[WBL-CHAMPION.EU](https://wbl-champion.eu)



MORGAN PARNIS, CEO & CHANCELLOR AT KNIGHTS COLLEGE, INTRODUCING THE CONFERENCE AGENDA

This report synthesises the findings of the Work-Based Learning (WBL) conference hosted by Knights College in Malta on 28 May 2026 under the Erasmus+ WBL Champion project. The Summit convened over 80 participants representing a deliberately broad cross-section of policymakers, regulators, social partners, higher and further education leaders, employers and learners around a single question: why is Work-Based Learning still treated as the exception rather than the norm, and what must change for it to deliver at system level. Drawing on the conference agenda, speaker contributions and observations gathered during the conference, this report distils ten strategic findings and their implications for national policy, regulation, quality assurance and European cooperation. It is written to be read independently by stakeholders who did not attend, and to inform the decisions that will determine whether WBL becomes a structural feature of Malta's and Europe's skills systems over the next three to five years.

Hosted by

Knights College Malta

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Executive Summary

The Summit mattered because it highlighted a shift that policy has been circling for years: Work-Based Learning is no longer a pedagogical preference but a strategic response to a widening gap between what education produces and what a digitalising and increasingly globalised labour market requires.

For Malta, that gap is an economic risk in a small, talent-dependent system; for Ireland, it speaks to the need to strengthen awareness, promotion and structured implementation of WBL opportunities within a higher education system already closely connected to employability and applied learning. For Italy, it reinforces the importance of making WBL more visible, accessible and systematically embedded within education pathways, particularly where regional disparities and limited awareness still affect uptake. For Portugal, it points to the need for stronger employer engagement, clearer support mechanisms and better use of WBL as a bridge between education, skills development and labour market needs. For the European agenda on skills and digital transformation, WBL is one of the few levers that simultaneously addresses employability, productivity and social inclusion.

In this respect, the conference confirmed the key findings of the WBL Champion Final Country Report. Across the discussions, participants repeatedly returned to the same issues identified in the report: the need to raise awareness of WBL opportunities, strengthen collaboration between education providers and employers, especially SMEs, embed WBL more structurally into higher education curricula, improve quality assurance and support systems, and make better use of digital tools to coordinate placements, track learning and support feedback. The conference therefore validated the report's central message: WBL can help bridge the gap between education and the labour market, but only if it is treated as a coordinated, quality-driven and digitally supported ecosystem rather than as a fragmented set of individual placements.

Three messages ran through every theme of the day and frame this entire report:

Work-Based Learning is a strategic organising principle, not an add-on — the way modern higher education and workforce development should be structured, not a feature bolted onto a classroom-first model.

European collaboration is a genuine differentiator — cross-country partnership through Erasmus+ is what turns isolated local pilots into credible, comparable and scalable WBL models.

Impact depends on sustained collaboration among stakeholders — government, regulators, education providers, employers, learners and European partners aligning policy, regulation, curricula, assessment, quality assurance and funding around a shared goal.

The ten findings

WBL is a strategic imperative, not an optional add-on. Treated as the organising principle of provision, it changes what national systems and institutions must fund, design and assess.

“Human Power skills” are now the core employability currency. Curiosity, adaptability, communication, critical thinking and collaboration are developed through application and reflection, which policy and curricula must enable.

Structured, mentored WBL beats passive exposure. Value comes from meaningful tasks and trained mentors, which requires learning agreements and minimum quality standards.

Embedding WBL is a leadership and change-management task. It requires winning academic hearts and minds and the courage to relinquish controls that no longer serve the strategic aim.

European collaboration is Malta’s and Knights’ differentiator. It separates what is essential in WBL from local habit and provides the standards and tools to scale credibly.

Industry is signalling a competence gap, not a knowledge gap. The problem is increasingly an education–design challenge rather than a labour-market failure, with direct implications for assessment and quality assurance.

AI and digital transformation are resetting the graduate baseline. Curricula and national skills frameworks must evolve faster, embedding responsible AI literacy as a core competence.

WBL works only when education and industry share power. Employers need a voice in curriculum, assessment and quality decisions — co-design, not annual consultation.

Quality assurance and regulation must enable, not brake, WBL. Frameworks need to be agile and robust to recognise work-based academic output and reassure all parties of its integrity.

Systemic impact requires all stakeholders to pull the same rope. A national WBL strategy must align policy, regulation, curricula, assessment, employer practice, QA and funding.

WBL is a strategic imperative, not an optional add-on.

✓ What the Summit Showed

Speakers across every theme converged on the view that Work-Based Learning is the organising principle of modern provision rather than a finishing experience tacked onto a classroom-first model. The Master of Ceremonies framed the workplace not as a supplement to education but as its engine; institutional leaders described WBL as a strategic imperative that must be visible in graduate attributes, programme learning outcomes, teaching and assessment, not merely named in a strategy document.

✓ Evidence from the conference

Knights College's Principal characterised WBL as "the organising principle of Knights College" and "not a fashionable add-on"; TU Dublin's Head of School argued that "WBL is a strategic imperative for Higher Education to ensure that graduates have an impact on the economy and society" and that having it in the strategy is not enough unless academic and professional services own it and partner with industry. From the early-years and industry vantage points respectively, contributors insisted WBL "cannot be an add-on or an afterthought" and must be "integral, present and unmistakably visible across every stage of education." The recurrence of this claim across HE leadership, industry and the opening keynote marks it as a settled premise of the day, not a single speaker's position.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND SYSTEMS

- Treat WBL as a system-level design principle in national education and skills strategy, not as a discretionary programme feature.
- Ensure policy and funding instruments reward institutions for embedding WBL in learning outcomes and assessment, not merely for offering placements.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTITUTIONS AND EMPLOYERS

- Write WBL into institutional strategy, graduate attributes and programme learning outcomes, with senior ownership and dedicated resource.
- For employers, treat hosting WBL as a strategic talent activity rather than corporate goodwill — and scaffold it correctly with the right internal support.

Industry is signalling a competence gap, not a knowledge gap

✓ What the Summit Showed

The conference reframed the much-discussed “skills gap” as a gap between knowing and doing. Graduates are not short of knowledge; they lack the lived, applied, transferable competence that only real work under real conditions develops. Several contributions explicitly noted the requirement for education design to adapt to allow for this skills gap to be met — an important shift for the education system to act on.

✓ Evidence from the conference

The opening keynote’s surgeon analogy — a clinician fully read on a procedure but never having performed it — captured the distinction between knowledge and competence that ran through the day. Conference observations record that employers “struggle to find graduates with the right mix of technical and transferable skills” and that this is “increasingly seen as an education challenge rather than a labour-market issue.” The labour-market fireside reinforced that technical skills can be taught, while attitude, adaptability and willingness to learn are the true differentiators employers now select for.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND SYSTEMS

- Recognise applied competence as a legitimate, assessable learning outcome within national qualification and quality frameworks.
- Direct skills funding toward provision that demonstrably builds workplace competence, not only credential completion.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTITUTIONS AND EMPLOYERS

- Redesign assessment to evidence what learners can do in authentic settings, alongside what they know.
- Employers should articulate competence expectations early and co-define them with providers rather than diagnosing the gap after graduation.
- Employers to put in place correct scaffolding internally to support WBL.

“Human Power skills” are now the core employability currency



What the Summit Showed

What were once called soft or transferable skills were repeatedly reframed as “human power skills” — curiosity, flexibility, adaptability, communication, problem-solving, collaboration and, increasingly, critical thinking. These were presented not as desirable extras but as the central currency of employability, and as capabilities that develop primarily through application and reflection rather than instruction.



Evidence from the conference

The labour-market contribution placed professional communication, relationship-building, problem-solving, digital literacy and critical thinking at the centre of employer demand, noting that information overload and misinformation have made critical thinking a core employability skill. TU Dublin framed these as “human power skills” whose real development happens through application and reflection, a point echoed in industry feedback that the future workforce needs communication, adaptability and lifelong-learning human capacity. The consistency of this list across education and industry speakers is itself a finding.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND SYSTEMS

- Embed human power skills explicitly in graduate attributes and national skills taxonomies so they are planned for, not assumed.
- Support assessment approaches that can credibly evidence transversal skills, that is human power skills, developed in the workplace.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTITUTIONS AND EMPLOYERS

- Design teaching, learning and assessment strategies that develop human power skills through structured application and reflection.
- Employers should treat workplaces as deliberate development environments for these skills, not incidental exposure.

AI and digital transformation are resetting the graduate baseline

✓ What the Summit Showed

Digitalisation — and AI in particular — is moving faster than education can adapt, raising the baseline of what employers expect from graduates and changing what curricula must contain. The conference treated AI literacy as an emerging core competence which requires critical thinking, amongst other human power skills, and stressed that technology amplifies human capability rather than replacing the need for it.

✓ Evidence from the conference

The digital-education keynote put a figure on the pressure — that a large majority of employers expect AI to reshape their workforce — and asked directly whether graduates are ready, calling for curricula to be updated to include AI. Industry voices urged education to understand “the toolkit for tomorrow,” while the STEAM contribution reminded the room that “technology alone doesn’t innovate, people do; technology is merely the tool.” Conference observations record AI literacy and the responsible use of AI as essential future graduate competences.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND SYSTEMS

- Update national curricula and skills frameworks to embed responsible AI literacy as a baseline competence across disciplines.
- Build mechanisms that let curricula respond to technological change on a shorter cycle than traditional review timelines allow.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTITUTIONS AND EMPLOYERS

- Integrate AI and digital competence into programmes and into WBL placements, so learners apply them in authentic settings.
- Employers should surface evolving digital expectations to providers early, informing curriculum design rather than reacting to shortfalls.

Structured, mentored WBL beats passive exposure

✓ What the Summit Showed

The conference drew a hard line between meaningful Work-Based Learning and passive placement. Real value comes from active participation in genuine tasks supported by a capable mentor; exposure alone — the proverbial photocopying internship — does not build competence and can discredit WBL with both learners and employers.

✓ Evidence from the conference

Industry comments stressed that placements “ought to be meaningful, as real value comes from active participation, not passive exposure,” and that a WBL learner should always be accompanied by a mentor who provides meaningful tasks rather than routine paperwork. The project’s own response is instructive: three [CPD courses](#) were developed to equip industry mentors, academic supervisors and HE coordinators, alongside a quality-assurance toolkit — a recognition that mentoring quality is the mechanism through which WBL delivers, and that it must be built deliberately.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND SYSTEMS

- Establish minimum quality standards and robust learning agreements for WBL placements at national and framework level.
- Recognise and, where possible, resource mentor development as part of the WBL infrastructure.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTITUTIONS AND EMPLOYERS

- Invest in mentor training, coordination capacity and problem-solving support so WBL relies on a system, not a few committed individuals.
- Employers should design placements around meaningful, supervised tasks tied to defined learning outcomes.

WBL works only when education and industry share power



What the Summit Showed

A recurring and uncomfortable theme was that genuine WBL requires institutions to share authority with employers. If WBL is real, workplace mentors and employers must have a voice in curriculum decisions, assessment conversations and quality reviews — not a seat on an advisory board that meets once a year. Equally, industry identified its own barrier: not unwillingness, but uncertainty about how to engage and whom to contact. What is needed is a dialogue that enables academic institutions to understand how WBL fits into industry recruitment strategy and industry to understand how the correct design and assessment of WBL and the correct scaffolding provided by the employer enables a transformative learning experience for the student, while adding value to the employer. Education is not just for employment but also to ensure that graduates have an impact on society and the economy. Balancing academic integrity with employability needs is therefore essential.



Evidence from the conference

Knights College's Principal was explicit that employers and mentors "must have a voice in curriculum decisions, assessment conversations and quality reviews," which means sharing power and listening when industry says something does not work in practice. TU Dublin reported that industry partners are often "surprised by what is possible" and that a main barrier was simply how they could be supported and whom to contact — arguing for a senior institutional sponsor for partnership. The EduAlliance contribution tied curriculum design, quality assurance and strong employer partnerships together as the three interdependent conditions for success.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND SYSTEMS

- Create standing industry–education structures (for example sectoral WBL councils) that give employers a genuine role in design and quality, beyond consultation.
- Lower the threshold for employer engagement with clear, single points of contact and supported entry pathways.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTITUTIONS AND EMPLOYERS

- Appoint senior partnership sponsors and resource the relationship function; co-design programmes with industry rather than consulting after the fact.
- Employers should commit to sustained partnership — co-design, mentoring and feedback — not one-off placements.
- Manage expectations and balance academic integrity and employability needs.

Embedding WBL is a leadership and change-management task



What the Summit Showed

The barriers to WBL are less about evidence than about institutional change. Embedding it requires leadership that can win the hearts and minds of academics, create momentum through action, and — critically — find the courage to relinquish long-standing controls, such as time-based examinations, that no longer serve the strategic aim. The discomfort that live workplace issues bring into the classroom must be reframed as evidence of learning rather than a threat.



Evidence from the conference

The change-management keynote centred on “the cost of not changing,” arguing that inaction is often riskier than transformation, and that “the power of persuasion is important to share your vision.” TU Dublin spoke of attracting “the hearts and minds of academics,” while Knights College named the courage to pivot and the willingness to give up academic content that does not meet the strategic imperative as the habit hardest, and most necessary, to change. Leadership was repeatedly linked to consistency, accountability and leading by example.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND SYSTEMS

- Support leadership and change-readiness capacity within institutions through policy levers and professional development.
- Pair top-down enablers (policy, resources, frameworks) with space for bottom-up, academic-led adoption.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTITUTIONS AND EMPLOYERS

- Invest in change management: bring academics on the journey, protect space for WBL, and treat productive discomfort as a sign of learning.
- Be prepared to retire practices and content that conflict with the WBL strategic aim.
- Industry leadership to support the scaffolding of WBL enabling mentorship and meaningful WBL activities that support learning outcomes to be met.

Quality assurance and regulation must enable, not brake, WBL

✓ What the Summit Showed

For WBL to scale, quality assurance and regulation have to evolve from gatekeeping toward enabling. Several contributions argued that QA offices and national frameworks must become agile enough to recognise the academic value of work-based achievement, while still guaranteeing assessment integrity and programme effectiveness — the assurance that gives learners, employers and regulators confidence.

✓ Evidence from the conference

TU Dublin argued that the regulatory QA system can be “agile and robust to recognise the academic output” of WBL, that QA offices provide policies that support it, and that national quality frameworks are able to support WBL. The regulatory perspective on the synthesis panel placed quality assurance, system coherence and enabling innovation at the centre, and the EduAlliance contribution identified QA frameworks — confidence in learning outcomes and assessment integrity — as one of three pillars of successful WBL. The project’s QA toolkit was offered as a concrete instrument to help institutions act on this.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND SYSTEMS

- Develop agile QA and regulatory frameworks that explicitly recognise and assure work-based academic output.
- Provide regulators and QA bodies with shared standards and tools (such as the project QA toolkit) to reduce divergence.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTITUTIONS AND EMPLOYERS

- Adopt QA policies and learning agreements that safeguard integrity while accommodating workplace learning.
- Employers should engage with assessment and quality conversations so that workplace evidence is credible and comparable.
- Institutes and employers understand the balance needed to meet the learning outcomes, maintain academic integrity and support employability skills development.

European collaboration is Malta's and Knights' differentiator



What the Summit Showed

Cross-country collaboration through Erasmus+ emerged as a distinctive advantage rather than a procedural requirement. Working with partners who structure WBL very differently forced Maltese and Irish institutions to understand what is essential for successful WBL — clear outcomes, robust supervision, meaningful assessment — from what is merely local habit. Shared analysis, common standards and comparative learning are what move WBL beyond isolated pilots toward credible, scalable models.



Evidence from the conference

VITECO underlined that, in order to collaborate effectively across countries, the project first needed a common basis for comparison and dialogue. This is why it began with a comparative analysis of WBL policies and practices across Ireland, Italy, Malta and Portugal. The contribution highlighted how a strong European framework can act as a “guiding light”, providing common principles and quality standards while recognising that there is no one-size-fits-all model. In this sense, it reflects a living expression of “united in diversity.” Knights College credited Erasmus+ with letting it stress-test its model against other systems and upgrade its policies on learning agreements, mentoring, assessment and quality assurance so that its pathways are credible “not just in Malta, but across the EU.” Scalability and transnational design were named as central themes by the INOVA+ contribution.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND SYSTEMS

- Fund and prioritise transnational cooperation as core skills-policy infrastructure, not as discretionary project activity.
- Use shared European standards, tools and comparative evidence to align national WBL frameworks and enable cross-border pathways.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTITUTIONS AND EMPLOYERS

- Use European partnership to benchmark and upgrade institutional WBL policy, distinguishing essential practice from local habit.
- Position Malta and Knights College as a test-bed contributing to, and drawing from, European WBL standards.

Systemic impact requires all stakeholders to pull the same rope

✓ What the Summit Showed

The strongest cross-cutting message was that WBL delivers impact only when actors act and work together. Education cannot close the gap alone; industry, government, regulators, further and higher education, learners and European partners must align around a shared goal centred on the labour market of tomorrow. The industry block made the cost of misalignment concrete, naming coordination failures and execution gaps as the binding constraint — not a shortage of ambition.

✓ Evidence from the conference

The early-years contribution issued a direct call for “a far wider, far deeper collaborative strategy” bringing early years, formal, further and higher education and industry to the table together. A learner reflection observed that effective solutions “cannot happen in silos” and that the best insights come from sharing across borders, industries and systems. The industry panel surfaced the system-level barriers precisely — governance constraints on agility, EU ambition versus national execution gaps, and coordination failures in aligning education with labour-market needs — while the Minister’s reminder that “our country depends on the quality of people” framed the stakes for a small economy.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND SYSTEMS

- Develop a national WBL strategy that aligns policy, regulation, curricula, assessment, employer practice, quality assurance and funding under shared governance.
- Close the gap between EU-level ambition and national execution through clearer coordination roles and accountability.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTITUTIONS AND EMPLOYERS

- Engage actively in cross-stakeholder structures rather than optimising within institutional or sectoral silos.
- Employers and industry bodies should commit to shared talent development — developing talent with education, not separately from it.



MORGAN PARNIS, CEO & CHANCELLOR AT KNIGHTS COLLEGE, EMPHASISING THE IMPORTANCE OF ACADEMIA-INDUSTRY ALIGNMENT ON WORK-BASED LEARNING BEST PRACTICES

Synthesis and next steps

When read together, the ten findings tell a single, coherent story. A digitalising, global, AI-shaped labour market has shifted the premium from knowledge to applied competence and to the “human power skills” that WBL develops in partnership between academic programmes and the workplace. Work-Based Learning supports the development of these skills — which is why the conference treated it not as a programme feature but as a strategic organising principle for education and workforce development. The barriers to scaling it are not evidential but systemic: they sit in leadership and change management, in quality assurance and regulation, and in the willingness of education and industry to share power and act together towards a shared goal. In addition, it was also noted at the conference that education which integrates WBL enables students to have an impact on the economy and society.

This is where the two further messages of the report become decisive. European collaboration is the differentiator that turns a strong local model into a credible, comparable and scalable one, by separating what is essential in WBL from local habit and supplying the shared standards and tools to do it well. Impact is delivered only when stakeholders pull the same rope, aligning policy, regulation, curricula, assessment, employer practice, quality assurance and funding around a common goal. Knights College, having built its identity around the workplace as the primary laboratory of learning and tested that model through Erasmus+, is positioned to act as a pioneer and a partner: a national test-bed for WBL policy and practice within Malta’s evolving skills ecosystem and the wider European Higher Education Area. Hosted in Malta and attended by a large number of Maltese stakeholders, the conference had a particularly strong impact on the Maltese WBL ecosystem; while the priorities set out below are framed for Malta, they build on the shared challenges identified across Ireland, Italy and Portugal in the project’s national and Final Country Reports.

Cross-cutting priorities for Malta (next 12–24 months)

-  Develop a national WBL strategy and governance structure that aligns policy, regulation, curricula, assessment, employer practice, quality assurance and funding around a shared goal.
-  Make quality assurance and regulatory frameworks agile enough to recognise and assure work-based academic output, using shared European standards and the WBL Champion project QA toolkit.
-  Create standing industry–education structures, with clear contact points and senior sponsors, that give employers a genuine role in design, mentoring and quality.
-  Invest in WBL mentoring and power–skills development, embedding responsible AI literacy as a baseline graduate competence.
-  Treat European cooperation as core skills infrastructure: pilot cross-border WBL pathways and align national frameworks with Erasmus+ partners.



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT – THE WBL PROJECT REPRESENTATIVES:
ASSUMPTA HARVEY (IRELAND); NADJA DOKTER (ITALY); MARCIO COUTO (PORTUGAL), PATRICK FLOOD (IRELAND);
MICHELE AGIUS (MALTA).

A call to action

The conference was, by design, an action-oriented dialogue rather than a celebration, honest about what works, direct about what does not, and specific about what needs to change and who must do it. Its closing invitation is the one this report extends to its readers.

Policymakers, regulators, employers and European partners are asked to pull the same rope alongside Knights College and the WBL Champion consortium: to align the frameworks, share the power, and resource the change that Work-Based Learning requires to move from the exception to the norm. Knights College stands ready to act as a laboratory and partner for systemic WBL innovation in Malta and across Europe.

In addition, the WBL Champion project offers a practical suite of resources and tools, to help policymakers, educational institutions and employers strengthen the design, implementation and quality assurance of WBL. These include **four national reports** covering Ireland, Italy, Malta and Portugal, as well as a consolidated **Final Country Report** that identifies common challenges, policy trends and best practices across the partner countries. Three dedicated **Continuous Professional Development (CPD) courses** are also being finalised to support academic coordinators, academic supervisors and industry mentors in delivering high-quality WBL experiences. Complementing these resources, the **WBL Champion Quality Assurance Toolkit** provides a structured framework for the development, implementation, monitoring and continuous improvement of WBL programmes, helping institutions and employers ensure that learning remains relevant to labour market needs while maintaining high educational standards.

ANNEX



wblchampion



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From Insights to Impact: Pioneering Work-Based Learning and Digital Transformation

WBL Champion Education Summit

28 May | 08:30 - 15:00

The Brewhouse, Central Business District, Malta

In partnership with:



INOVA+



VITECO
elearning solutions

Registration & Welcome

08:30 – 09:15 | Welcome Coffee & Registration

09:15 – 09:30 | Opening & Framing the Day

Master of Ceremonies: Morgan Parnis, Knights College CEO & Chancellor

THEME I – GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

09:30– 09:40 | National Education & Skills Priorities 2030

Minister for European Funds, Hon. Stefan Zrinzo Azzopardi

09:40 – 09:55 | Keynote: Digital Education at System Scale

Alessandro Di Lullo, Co-Founder, SuperCharger Ventures

On behalf of the Digital Education Council

THEME II – THE LOCAL CONTEXT

09:55 – 10:15 | Strategic Intervention: Creativity at the Core of Digital

Transformation Mary Anne Cauchi, National STEAM Engagement Taskforce

10:15 – 10:35 | Keynote: Rethinking Change Management in Education Systems

Prof. Patrick Flood, Dublin City University

10:35 – 10:55 | Fireside Chat with Lara Camilleri, CEO at Konnekt

Moderator: Morgan Parnis

10:55 – 11:25 | Coffee Break

11:25 – 11:35 | WBL in Action: Connecting Education to Labour Market Needs

Michele Agius, Manager International Partnerships & EU Funding, Knights College

THEME III – INDUSTRY BLOCK

11:35–12:05 | Industry Panel: Where Strategy Meets Labour Market Reality

| Moderator: Joe Tanti

Contributions from:

- **Gavril Flores, Chief Strategy, Policy & Governance, Malta Digital Innovation Authority** | *Digital capability gaps, regulatory frameworks, and governance constraints limiting system agility*
- **Larisa Panait, Head of Skills & Jobs, Eurochambres** | *EU ambition versus national and local execution gaps across skills ecosystems*
- **Clayton Micallef Grimaud, Senior Director (People, Culture & Public Engagement), National Skills Council** | *Coordination failures and systemic bottlenecks in*
- *aligning education with labour market needs*
- **Nick Spiteri Paris, CEO, BigBon Group** | *Employer expectations, hiring realities,*
- *and the disconnect between training outputs and business demand*
- **Michelle Vassallo Pulis, Senior Manager, Deloitte & Senior Teaching Associate, University of Malta** | *Applied insights on Work-Based Learning (WBL) and the gap between theory and scalable practice*

12:05–12:10 | Video Intervention from Industry Collaborative Partner, Dublin

THEME IV – ERASMUS+

12:10–12:40 | Erasmus+ Panel: Translating European Collaboration into Practice

Moderator: Michele Agius

Contributions from:

- **Assumpta Harvey, Head of School, Technological University Dublin** | *Institutional leadership in embedding WBL and aligning academic structures with industry needs*
- **Nadja Dokter, Senior EU Project Manager, VITECO** | *Implementation experience from EU-funded projects and managing cross-country delivery challenges*
- **Marcio Couto, European Projects Manager, INOVA+** | *Innovation in project design, scalability of WBL models, and transnational collaboration frameworks*



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Contributions from (cont.):

- **Kristina Galea Borg, Principal & Vice-Chancellor, Knights College** | *Strategic integration of WBL within higher education and translating EU collaboration into institutional impact*

12:40 – 12:50 | Video Montage

THEME V – EDUCATION

12:50 – 13:20 | Synthesis Panel: From Strategy to Practice

Moderator: Alexia Stafrace

Contributions from:

- **Prof. Alexandra Vella, Associate Professor, University of Malta** | *Institutional readiness, curriculum adaptation, and academic–industry alignment*
- **Assumpta Harvey, Head of School, Technological University Dublin** | *Linking Erasmus+ Opportunities with developing trends in education and work-based learning applications in modern industry*
- **Martin Borg, CEO, EduAlliance** | *Partnership-led models, delivery innovation, and strengthening the practical interface between education and the world of work*
- **Prof. Patrick Flood, Full Professor & Author, Dublin City University** | *Leadership, organisational capacity, and driving change within education systems*
- **Charlot Scicluna, Honorary MBA Student from Knights College** | *Learner experience, expectations, and perceived gaps in employability outcomes*
- **James Perry Maia, CEO, MFHEA** | *Regulatory perspective on quality assurance, system coherence, and enabling innovation*

13:20 – 13:30 | Audience Q&A & Practical Reflections

Moderator: Master of Ceremonies

13:30 – 13:35 | European Keynote Address

Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament

13:35 – 13:45 | Final Takeaways & Close

13:45 – 15:00 | Standing Networking Lunch at Kettles, The Brewhouse



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