

ALMAIta

ALMAIta

Date of creation

2023

Description

As Malta's Public Employment Service, Jobsplus is committed to delivering excellent services that address the evolving needs of the labour market. Jobsplus empowers people in their employment and career development journeys by supporting job seekers in finding suitable employment, assisting individuals in exploring alternative career paths, helping employers connect with qualified candidates, offering training to enhance skills aligned with market demands, and managing diverse schemes.

The programme was split into three main phases:

1. An intensive tailored training in their home country (preparatory phase)
2. A supervised work-related experience with accompanying mentoring services for a period of 2 to 6 months in another EU country (mobility phase)
3. On their return, continued support will guide them in using the newly acquired skills to gain employment or further education in their home country (follow-up phase)

Beneficiaries

 **NEETs in recent search**

NEETs aged 18-29 residing in Malta or Gozo who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) at the time of application.

Countries

 **Malta**

Education level and sector

 **Adult education**

Level of implementation / Scope

 **National level**

02/10/2023 – 02/04/2025

Aims of policy/initiative

'Aim, Learn, Master, Achieve', ALMA aims to promote inclusion and employment for participants in their home country by improving their skills, knowledge, and experience, and giving them an opportunity to create new connections across Europe. It is implemented by EU countries and supported by the European Commission at EU level.

ALMA is building on a social inclusion initiative implemented by Germany since 2008 (IdA, *Integration durch Austausch*), taken over in 2012 by an ESF-supported transnational network of 15 EU countries (TLN Mobility Network), and, since 2015, through a transnational call for proposals under the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+).

A pilot call was launched late 2022 (indicative budget €15 million) to help EU countries integrate ALMA in their ESF+ programmes, by piloting or scaling up an ALMA type of activity.

In line with its strategic objectives, Jobsplus successfully piloted the innovative project, ALMAIta, following the acceptance of its proposal under the ALMA call in October 2023. This transformative initiative has been designed to complement Jobsplus' extensive services for young people, particularly NEETs. Through ALMAIta, 38 NEETs aged 18 to 29 were provided with a life-changing opportunity to develop essential life skills through non-formal education methods.

Features and types of activities implemented

The ALMAIta project commenced with a Preparatory Phase focused on establishing partnerships and a promotional strategy. A dedicated committee was formed, and a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed with the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research, and Innovation, aligning the project with national policies. Partnerships with Jobsplus and the Malta Chamber for Small and Medium Enterprises were also established to identify employment opportunities for participants. Transnational partnerships with Tempo Libero Società Cooperativa Sociale (Italy) and Nexes Interculturals SCCL (Spain) were formed to support disadvantaged youth, ensuring a structured international experience. During the first phase, participants engaged in comprehensive training (indoor and outdoor setup) that focused on building soft skills, fostering independence, and encouraging personal growth. They explored their strengths, addressed challenges, and enhanced their overall self-awareness.

Following the training phase, two groups of participants embarked on a two-month work exposure experience in Italy and Spain. This unique opportunity allowed them to develop self-confidence and resilience while navigating shared living, independence, diverse cultural environments, and a 30 hour per week work placement.

Participants were supported and accompanied throughout the project by Jobsplus mentors in full collaboration with the transnational partners and other professionals, so as to guarantee them the necessary skills for employment and daily life, and the necessary guidance to help them define their future paths - whether entering the job market or pursuing further education. By empowering these young individuals to unlock their full potential, ALMAIta has demonstrated a meaningful impact, reinforcing Jobsplus' mission to support Malta's workforce, job retention and youth development.

Target group

- VET providers
- Employers and employers' networks
- Employees' organisations
- Public Employment Services (PES)

Resources

Budget €320,000 – co-funded by the European Union (Social Innovation Initiative +)

Evaluation of the measure

The evaluation of the benefits of the ALMAIta programme may be broken down as follows:

- **Enhanced Employability**

A key component of ALMAIta was the two-month work exposure in Brescia (Italy) and Barcelona (Spain), which offered participants invaluable professional experience. This hands-on work placement enhanced their employability through building practical skills, expanding their professional networks, and exposing them to real-world workplace environments. By equipping participants with the tools to thrive in a competitive labour market, the project helped bridge the gap between education and employment.

- **Mobility and Cultural Exposure**

The international mobility aspect of ALMAIta allowed participants to immerse themselves in a new cultural and geographic setting. This exposure enhanced their open-mindedness, cross-cultural understanding, and adaptability. Living and working in a foreign country challenged participants to navigate diverse environments and shared living arrangements, promoting independence, and linguistic and cultural intelligence, that are fundamental in today's globalised world.

- **Career Guidance and Advisory**

Following the mobility, ALMAIta entrusted participants to Jobsplus employment advisors to help them plan their future. Whether they chose to enter the job market or pursue further education, the programme equipped them with the clarity and confidence to make informed decisions about their career paths. This personalised support ensured that participants left the programme with actionable goals and a clearer sense of direction.

- **Strengthened Independence and Resilience**

Living independently in a foreign country for two months provided participants with a unique opportunity to develop resilience and problem-solving skills. Through shared living arrangements and adapting to new environments, participants built independence and learnt to manage challenges effectively. These experiences helped prepare them for both personal and professional obstacles they may face in the future.

- **Broader Societal Impact**

The benefits of ALMAIta extend beyond the individual participants, positively impacting society as a whole. By equipping young people with enhanced employability and life skills, the programme has positively contributed to reducing social inequality and fostering a more inclusive workforce in Malta. Participants returned to their communities as confident, skilled individuals, ready to contribute to the economy and society, creating a ripple effect of positive change.

Evidence of effectiveness of the measure

During the Activation Phase, the project aimed to engage 48 disadvantaged youth aged 18 to 29 who were disconnected from the labour market. Despite extensive promotional efforts, only 38 participants were enrolled in the training phase. A follow-up phase involved ongoing

support from mentors and Jobsplus Employment Advisors, with a target of 30% of participants showing a positive change in occupational status. This target was exceeded, as 52% of participants secured full-time employment, whilst the remaining 48% either pursued further training (16%), or tertiary education (16%) or is being offered employment advisory services by Jobsplus (16%).

A counterfactual analysis assessed the project's effectiveness by comparing the status of NEETs who participated in ALMAIta, tracking their status over time. 70% of the 6290 eligible NEETs outreached and who did not express an interest in ALMAIta, retained their NEETs status after the first month, decreasing to 66% after 3 months. From the 130 eligible applicants who did not start training, 78% were NEETs after the first month, but this decreased to 63% after three months. Furthermore, from the 38 participants who participated in ALMAIta, 60% were still NEETs after the first month post-project, decreasing to 50% after 3 months. The 21 participants who completed the training but not the mobility, showed a decrease in NEET status from 67% after the first month to 57% within three months post-training. The 41% of the participants who completed the mobility retaining their NEETs status 3 months after the mobility, dropped to 16% by the end of the project.

Overall, the ALMAIta project demonstrated significant impacts on participants' occupational status, with a notable increase in employment and educational engagement, highlighting the effectiveness of targeted support for disadvantaged youth.

The ALMAIta project assessed the impact of a mobility phase on 17 participants through a quantitative survey revealing significant personal development in areas such as confidence, resilience, and teamwork. Results indicated that 73.3% of the participants rated their overall experience as excellent. The project aimed to support NEET youth by enhancing soft skills and providing tailored mentorship, with a focus on independent living skills and social integration. A counterfactual analysis tracked the status of NEETs, showing improved outcomes for participants compared to non-participants. By early 2025, NEET rates decreased, and employment rates increased among those who completed the mobility phase, demonstrating the project's effectiveness.

Success factors

The ALMAIta project successfully empowered young people through a holistic support approach, personalised mentorship, strong stakeholder collaboration, inclusive opportunities, and structured mobility programmes.

- By providing a safe environment, professionals facilitated self-awareness and skill identification, while collaboration with the psychological services was deemed necessary to address personal challenges that could lead to NEET status.
- Mentors offered tailored support across various aspects of life, ensuring participants received guidance throughout their training and mobility experiences.
- The initiative emphasised emotional and social support, financial literacy, and career guidance, even for those not selected for mobility.
- Collaboration among stakeholders was vital, fostering a multi-disciplinary framework that addressed issues like challenging social dynamics and mental health, while promoting personal growth and educational progress.

ALMAIta prioritised inclusivity, creating a diverse environment that connected young people with essential resources and opportunities, ultimately reducing the risk of NEET status.

The mobility programme was meticulously structured, aligning with participants' aspirations and needs, while continuous monitoring ensured quality implementation and adaptability. The involvement of experienced professionals facilitated smooth transitions into employment or further education and training, promoting sustainable integration.

Overall, ALMAIta aimed to cultivate a resilient workforce by empowering youth and addressing systemic inequalities, creating a society where every young person has the chance to thrive.

The ALMAIta project has proven to be a transformative and socially innovative initiative, fostering social inclusion and cultural exchange for NEETs. By providing hands-on experience through international mobility, participants gained invaluable life skills, personal growth, and professional development, equipping them for future employment and education.

Beyond its impact on participants, ALMAIta has enriched and expanded the services offered by Jobsplus, strengthening its role in supporting young people's career paths.

The project has also contributed to the growth of professionals within the organisation and facilitated meaningful collaborations with local and international stakeholders.

Most importantly, ALMAIta has served as a stepping-stone for future mobility projects, paving the way for broader opportunities under the ALMA initiative and reinforcing the importance of inclusive, experience-based learning in shaping a more resilient and skilled workforce.

Contact details for further information

Contact name

Juan Gambina

Contact telephone

+356 22201210

Contact website

<https://jobsplus.gov.mt/funding/alma>

Contact email

juan-anton.gambina [at] gov.mt