

MIA promotes profession in students' careers fair

At fifteen, possibilities look confusingly wide. The countdown to the last day of compulsory schooling suddenly feels real, and you are not sure whether the thought fills you with relief or dread.

The Malta Institute of Accountants took part in the 2020 edition of the I Choose Careers Fair to introduce Form IV and Form V to the world of the accounting profession. Organised by the Education Ministry, the annual fair gives students a view of the options ahead of them and puts them in touch with the people who can help them start their own career path. This year's edition had to be scaled down in terms of school participation and routes offered as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak, but it was nevertheless a rewarding experience for the MIA and students.

“As the voice of the profession, we believe it is important to propose accountancy and finance as a fulfilling career to young people early on in their study journeys,” explained MIA Education Officer Analise Sammut. **“The I Choose fair is a good opening for the Institute to present a compelling and accurate perspective of the accountancy profession, attracting new talent by showcasing the diverse career choices available to accountants.”**

The Institute held a flowing panel discussion with practitioners in different areas of the profession to give students a taste of a career in finance. The event was moderated by Gabriella Borg, MIA Technical Officer, who asked the guests about their day-to-day experience as professionals, the opportunities the career brings and what students can expect if they follow this path.

The panel members were Lindsey Vella, a financial accountant within the insurance sector; Stephen Mamo, an audit partner from a big four firm; Maria Shaw, an audit



senior from a small-medium sized firm; and Dean Micallef, CFO at a local firm and also managing director at an advisory firm.

Ms Vella was the first guest to speak and she gave students the lowdown on a career in accounting, describing the assignments and responsibilities that professionals face in a typical day at the office. She took the time to dispel common misconceptions surrounding accountancy, emphatically telling participants that the job goes far beyond boring number-crunching and opens exciting new doors.

This led moderator Gabriella Borg to turn to Ms Shaw and ask her about the opportunities she personally came across as an auditor in Malta and abroad. Students were clearly interested when both Ms Borg and Ms Shaw spoke about their projects with internationally-known brands in other countries, highlighting the flexibility the profession offers in comparison with other jobs.

Steve Mamo took a look into the future of accountancy and spoke about the world in which today's students are expected to grow in as professionals. He described how automation technology and digitalisation are transforming accountancy but argued that the human professional now has a more crucial role to play, particularly on the advisory side. Mr Mamo drew on his personal experience to outline the breath of industries that accountancy touches upon directly.

It was then Mr Micallef's time to explain how the function of professionals has evolved over time to form leaders that shape companies, sectors, and even legislation. He advised students that learning does not stop with the last exam, but ongoing re-skilling and upskilling is the key to success.

Mr Micallef also spoke about the collegiality among professionals through their membership of the Malta Institute of Accountants.

The four panellists closed the session by each offering a piece of advice to students which they wished they had themselves been given in their early teens.

The engaging discussion gave participants an alternative perspective into the life of a professional and all practitioners on the platform encouraged students to seriously consider this dynamic career path.

Gabriella Borg said that the MIA's participation in the I Choose fair gave students a broader understanding of what a career in finance entails in practice: **"The panel presented students with the diversity of the profession and showed how accountancy opens up multiple opportunities in a wide range of industries."**

The event presented the right occasion for the students to learn more about the practical steps that lead to the profession, after the completion of secondary education. They asked professionals directly about study options, employment possibilities and specific areas of work.

The I Choose fair was an excellent opportunity for the MIA to promote the profession with young people in line with its mission to nurture the best talent. The event was a valuable experience not only for the students, but for the representatives and members of the Institute as well.