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**ENJOY YOUR STUDY VISIT!**

*'Study Visits are a rich learning and rewarding experience'* – I bet many first time organisers may have heard this quote prior to organising their first study visit. However, some may wonder that this may be said just to ease any lingering fears; others may just ask, 'Maybe, but is it worth the hassle?'

I remember that before organising my first visit, I was afraid that the participants would not enjoy their experience and that they will not leave Malta satisfied with the study visit. Perhaps, some first time organisers will feel the same way. To ease such fears, after the composition of the groups were finalised, I sent an email to each participant to introduce myself and asking them what there expectations from the study visit were (obviously, by keeping the description provided in the catalogue in mind).

As soon as I received my first reply from a participant telling me that she was really excited to come to Malta and learn about new innovative ideas, good practices, etc., my initial fears disappeared. That is why I recommend to all first time organisers to **contact the participants well before the start of the study visit** because not only will they thank you for taking an interest in getting to know them, but as soon as you will 'see' their excitement for the study visit, you, as an organiser, will automatically become more motivated in organising the visit.

On the eve of the visit, I organised **an ice-breaking session** for the participants, which I believe will be the cornerstone of a successful visit. One has to keep in mind that study visits do not involve only presentations, on-site visits and just feeding participants information but discussing, reflecting and sharing knowledge with one another. Therefore, the more 'comfortable' participants are with one another, the more they will discuss with one another. This will also come in handy when trying to appoint the group reporter!

However, do not make the same mistake I made, which was feeding them an excessive amount of information on the first day. Yes, the participants are there to learn but keep in mind that they are still human. This means that eventually they get tired (especially on the first day!), partly because they will have just arrived on the eve of the visit and partly because their brain can only process a certain amount of information. Therefore, always **keep it simple and create a well-balanced programme**. Remember also to include in the agenda leisure activities, which are also crucial for a successful study visit. For example, what I did was to organise a guided tour towards the end of the study visit.

Another important thing to keep in mind is to **leave some time at the end of each day for group discussion**. As I mentioned before, study visits involve also discussions and reflections on the findings of each day. Organisers may take up our idea, which is to book a meeting room in the hotel the participants are staying for the week where they can sit and discuss among them.

Finally, perhaps the most crucial advice I can give to first time organisers is **to enjoy your visit!** If you, as an organiser, do not enjoy the study visit, participants will pick that up and consequently will not enjoy the experience either. I am sure that if you stick to the description in the catalogue, keep it simple and follow the instructions and guidelines in the [Handbook](#), which will be provided by CEDEFOP, you would be aching to organise another study visit in the future.

Remember, **there is no 'perfect' visit**; we are humans, therefore, we are susceptible to make mistakes. However, the more visits you organise, the less mistakes you will make and the more you will enjoy your study visit.

**GOOD LUCK!**