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# Setting up a Blue Culture Technology Research Hub: Opportunities and Challenges

*Dr Simon Caruana, Institute of Tourism Studies, Malta*

The Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) is one of the partners within the BCThubs project. The main aim of this project is to build up the research and innovation capabilities associated with the Blue Economy, of the on the Widening countries participating in this project. In particular, focusing on how Blue Culture Technologies (BCT) will support Underwater Cultural Heritage, scientific research and tourism valorization.

European Seas such as the Mediterranean are rich in underwater cultural heritage sites, yet only a few are being exploited sustainably and there is little contribution towards social welfare, cohesion and growth. As a remedy, the BCThubs project proposes the establishment of BCT Excellence hubs Bulgaria, Greece and Malta.

The aim is that these hubs become regional centres of research excellence and innovation within the Blue Economy, attracting other entities from the Mediterranean and beyond to take part in research, training and outreach activities.

This paper will attempt to explore the work that has been done so far towards the establishment of the Maltese BCT Excellence hub at ITS, the challenges faced and the opportunities that arise with doing so.