



## **Youth Wiki national description**

# Youth policies in Malta

# 2020

The Youth Wiki is Europe's online encyclopaedia in the area of national youth policies. The platform is a comprehensive database of national structures, policies and actions supporting young people. For the updated version of this national description, please visit <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/youthwiki>



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# Malta

## OVERVIEW

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### Youth Policy in Malta

Youth Policy in Malta falls under the responsibility of central authorities. The core responsibility lies with the Ministry of Education and Employment and the Parliamentary Secretariat for Youth, Sport and Voluntary Organisations. However, due to its transversal nature different Ministries are responsible for particular policy fields that affect young people.

Up to the early 1990s Malta had no coherent youth policy, it had education policies, health policies, culture policies and other policies that directly or indirectly affect young people, but a standalone youth policy was missing.

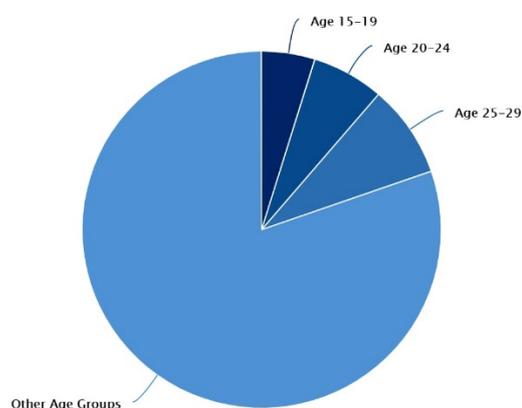
In 1991 the National Youth Council – Kunsill Nazzjonali Żgħażaġh (KNŻ) – was set up. A year later, in 1992, the Institute for Youth Studies was established at the University of Malta. The following year in 1993, the then newly established Ministry for Youth and Art published the first youth policy document. Since then the document has been revised five times, each time reflecting more the realities of young people's lives at the time.

In 1998 the Maltese Association of Youth Workers (MAY) was set-up.

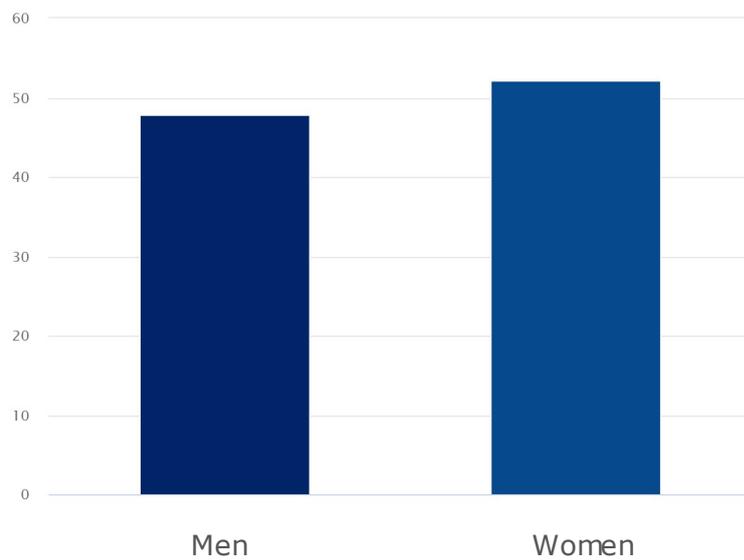
In 2010 Aġenzija Żgħażaġh, the Maltese National Youth Agency, was set up and has since been the implementing arm of the Parliamentary Secretariat for Youth. One of main aims of the agency is the coordination of the implementation youth policy.

The latest version of the National Youth Policy entitled Towards 2020: A shared vision for the future of young people, was published in 2015. Catering for all young people between 13 and 30 years old the document has two main aims. First to support and encourage young people in fulfilling their potential and aspirations while addressing their needs and concerns. Second to support young people as active and responsible citizens who fully participate in and contribute to the social, economic and cultural life of the nation, Europe and beyond.

### Ratio of young people in the total population on 1st January



## Ratio of men and women in the youth population



### Statistic references

#### References:

Ratio (%) of young people in the total population (2017): Eurostat, yth\_demo\_020 [data extracted on 4/09/2018].

Absolute number of young people on 1 January for the age group 15-29 (2017): Eurostat, yth\_demo\_010 [data extracted on 4/09/2018].

Ratio (%) of men and women in the youth population (2017): Eurostat, yth\_demo\_020 [data extracted on 4/09/2018].

Young immigrants from non-EU countries (2016): Eurostat, yth\_demo\_070 [data extracted on 4/09/2018].

# 1. YOUTH POLICY GOVERNANCE

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Youth policy in Malta is primarily administered at a central level. In 2015 the Government issued the document '[National Youth Policy Towards 2020: A shared vision for the future of young people](#)'. Youth policy falls under the main responsibility of the Ministry for Inclusion and Quality of Life. However its transversal nature requires cross-sectoral support from other relevant Ministries.

Youth Policy in Malta looks at the young person as a resource and as such it strives to both support and encourage young people in fulfilling their potential and aspirations while addressing their needs and concerns. The National Youth Policy also supports young people as active and responsible citizens who fully participate in and contribute to the social, economic and cultural life of Malta, Europe and beyond.

## 1.1 Target population of youth policy

Youth policy in Malta is primarily administered at a central level. In 2015 the Government issued the latest version of the document entitled '[National Youth Policy Towards 2020: A shared vision for the future of young people](#)'. The main responsibility for youth policy falls within the Ministry for Inclusion and Quality of Life, through the Parliamentary Secretary for Sports, Recreation and Voluntary Organisations. However due to its transversal nature the implementation of the youth policy requires cross-sectoral support from other relevant Ministries.

National youth policy in Malta looks at the young person as a resource and strives to both support and encourage young people in fulfilling their potential and aspiration while addressing their needs and concerns. It also supports young people as active and responsible citizens who full participate in and contribute to the social, economic and cultural life of Malta, Europe and beyond.

The main policy document that defines which age group can be considered as youth in Malta is the Maltese National Youth Policy. The latest revision of the national youth policy document that was issued in 2015 entitled '[National Youth Policy Towards 2020: A shared vision for the future of young people](#)' states that youth is the cohort of all persons between 13 and 30 years old.

This age group has been the same since 2010, when the [third](#) revision of the National Youth Policy was launched. Previous National Youth Policy documents targeted different cohorts. The 1993 National Youth Policy, which was the [first ever National Youth Policy document](#), defined youth as the cohort between 16- 30 years; the 1999 and 2004, which were the [first](#) and the [second](#) revision of the National Youth Policy documents respectively, defined youth as the cohort between 14- 30 years.

There are also other official documents that define which age group can be considered as youth or young people. Among such documents there is the [National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion \(2014-2024\)](#) issued by the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity that defines young people as the cohort between 18 and 24 years old. The [National Employment Policy](#) issued by the Ministry of Education and Employment defines young people as the cohort between 15 and 24 years old.

Other relevant policy documents do not define youth or young people by age.

## 1.2 National youth law

### Existence of a National Youth Law

Currently there is no comprehensive Youth Law in Malta. A number of special provisions for young people can be found in different laws, that target the whole population. These

laws make reference to young people, using terms such as young persons, minors or persons under 18 years of age.

## 1.3 National youth strategy

### Existence of a National Youth Strategy

In 2015 the Maltese Government revised its National Youth Policy for the fourth time. This document is entitled '[Il-Politika Nazzjonali taż-Żgħażaġħ Lejn l-2020 Vizjoni Komuni għall-Futur taż-Żgħażaġħ](#)' – '[National Youth Policy Towards 2020 A Shared Vision for the Future of Young People](#)'.

### Scope and contents

The National Youth Policy is underpinned by three separate but interlocking pillars. The first pillar is the reality of the lives of young people in Malta; the second pillar relates to the development of youth policy over the past 20 years at both European and national levels; and the third pillar concerns greater democratic participation, equitable economic and social progress for all, and inclusive change.

The policy intends to effectively support and encourage young people in fulfilling their potential and aspirations while addressing their needs and concerns. It intends to support young people as active and responsible citizens who fully participate in and contribute to the social, economic and cultural life of Malta, Europe and beyond.

This document aims to achieve this through two different but interrelated strategies.

Strategy 1 focuses on the 'core' services and activities such as youth work and services for young people including non-formal education, participation, mobility and youth information.

Strategy 2 relates to cross-sectoral support for young people which include the areas of education and training; health and well-being; employment and entrepreneurship; arts and culture; social inclusion; voluntary and community activities and sport and recreational activities.

The document focuses on all young people between 13 to 30 year olds.

Young people and youth organisations were directly consulted in the formulation of this document. The National Youth Council - [Kunsill Nazzjonali taż-Żgħażaġħ](#) (KNŻ) - was part of the Policy Advisory Group appointed by the [Ministry of Education and Employment](#) during the drafting of the document. Also [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#), the National Youth Agency, after the publishing of the first draft document held a seminar for Youth Organisations and organisations working with youth to gather their feedback on the document. Concurrently the [Ministry of Education and Employment](#) had launched the draft for public consultation, before the finalised version was published.

### Responsible authority for the implementation of the Youth Strategy

The Ministry for Inclusion and Quality of Life and the [Parliamentary Secretary for Sports, Recreation and Voluntary Organisations](#) have the overarching responsibility for the coordination and the implementation of the National Youth Policy. [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#), the National Youth Agency, which is the operating arm of the Parliamentary Secretariat is responsible for the strategic planning and day-to-day operational matters of Strategy 1.

All other relevant Government Ministries and entities are responsible for the Strategy 2 depending on the area, for instance, Health and Well-being falls under the main responsibility of the Ministry for Health; Arts and Culture fall under the responsibility of the Ministry for Justice, Culture and Local Government. In both cases [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#), the National Youth Agency, has the responsibility of promoting, coordinating and facilitating such cross-sectoral approaches.

The implementation of the National Youth Policy over the period 2015-2020, will be monitored on an ongoing basis by the Ministry for Education and Employment and the Parliamentary Secretariat for Youth and Sport and Voluntary Organisations. Aġenzija Żgħażaġh will employ its Annual Reports to record progress in relation to Strategy 1, while an inter-Ministerial group, led by Aġenzija Żgħażaġh, will be established to report annually on progress in relation to Strategy 2.

This document has a timeframe of 6 years. At the end of the period 2015-2020, an independent evaluation will be conducted on the overall impact of the policy and the benefits accruing for young people, the voluntary youth sector and the wider society.

The Government is committed to ensure that youth policy is evidence-based and outcome-focused. Priority will continue to be given to research as the Government believes that this provides all those working with and for young people with an invaluable tool and source of relevant and up-to-date information. The research programme for the period 2015-20 will target the main areas that concern young people today, such as education (including the digital divide and skills gaps), employment, environment, rights and responsibilities, health and well-being, and justice.

The National Youth Policy is a standalone document, however it gathers the vision of all the relevant Ministries as through its 10 Action plans it sets out the Government's vision for young people. This frames this document as an integral part of the overall national development.

## Revisions/updates

The very first Parliamentary Secretariat for Youth in Malta was appointed in 1990. Two years later in, 1992 the [Kunsill Nazzjonali taż-Żgħażaġh](#) (KNŻ) and an Institute for Youth Studies at the University of Malta were set up. The former was established as a non-governmental organisation to represent the interest of young people through its member organisations while the latter was established to provide professional training for youth workers (Teuma, 2014). During that same year the Parliamentary Secretariat was elevated to the level of a Ministry and riding on that momentum it launched the [first National Youth Policy document](#) in 1993. The document recognised the value of young people as a major human resource and provided a framework and objectives for those working with young people. It highlighted youth information, education, employment, health, culture, family and mobility as policy priority areas.

The policy document was revised and in 1999 a [second updated version of national youth policy](#) was issued. This version increased the targeted cohort by including young people between the age of 14 and 30 years old. The new document aimed at providing young people and policy makers with clear objectives in the political, social and economic development targeting a wide range of policy areas such as education, employment, health, housing, culture, intergenerational communication, sport, leisure and enterprise.

At this point Malta had representation on the European Steering Committee for Youth and this led to a successful application for a youth policy review by a group of experts appointed by the Council of Europe. The Review Team visited Malta in 2003, and later that year presented a report to the Parliamentary Secretariat ([Ciorbaru, 2005](#)). Following this report the [national youth policy document was revised and updated for a third time](#) in 2004. The priority areas for this policy documents were Education; Employment; Health; Culture; Environment; Leisure; Mobility; Participation; Information Technology and Youth at Risk. The document also called for the establishment of a national youth agency that would replace the Youth Services Department within the Ministry of Education in monitoring the policy implementation.

Another [revision of the national youth policy](#) was published in 2010. This was the first revision since Malta's accession to the European Union and as such it was rooted and reflected European Youth Policy documents. The definition of youth was again extended to include young people between the ages of 13 and 30 years old. This document intended to target the holistic development of young people and highlighted a wide range

key areas, namely, education, employment, health and wellbeing, youth justice, transition, culture and arts, community cohesion and volunteering, sports, leisure, environment and information technology. Most importantly it established an instrument for policy implementation – [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) – the National Youth Agency (Teuma, 2014; [Legal Notice 522/2010](#)).

In 2014, the Parliamentary Secretariat for Research, Innovation, Youth and Sport set up a youth policy advisory group to update the 2010 document and in 2015 a new youth policy document entitled '[National Youth Policy – Towards 2020. A Shared Vision for the Future of Young People](#)' was published. The document highlights priority areas such as education and training, employment and entrepreneurship, health and well-being, voluntary and community activities; sports and recreational activities.

The next revision of the National Youth Policy is envisaged for 2021.

## 1.4 Youth policy decision-making

### Structure of Decision-making

Youth policy-making takes place primarily at a central government level. The main responsibility for youth policy lies within the [Minister for Inclusion and Social Wellbeing](#) mainly through the [Parliamentary Secretary for Sports, Recreation and Voluntary Organisations](#).

However there are other institutional actors that are formally involved in youth policy making such as the [Office of the Prime Minister](#); [Ministry for Health](#); [Ministry for Gozo](#); [Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security](#); [Ministry for Justice, Culture and Local Government](#); [Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion](#) and the [Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity](#).

Within these Ministries there are a number of important stake holders in youth policy-making such as the [Parliamentary Secretary for Equality and Reforms](#); [Parliamentary Secretary for European Funds and Social Dialogue](#); the [Parliamentary Secretary for Citizenship and Communities](#); the [Parliamentary Secretariat for Social Accommodation](#); and the [Parliamentary Secretariat for Persons with Disability and Active Ageing](#).

In addition to these Ministries and Parliamentary Secretariats other entities also play an important role in youth policy decision making:

[JobsPlus](#) is the public employment service in Malta, providing a service for employers to search for employees, and for jobseekers to apply for different jobs. Jobsplus also offers various training opportunities, ranging from basic skills to more technical and advanced courses. Jobsplus strives to enhance employability by recommending policies and implementing initiatives aimed at empowering, assisting and training jobseekers to facilitate their entry or re-entry into the active employment market, promoting workforce development through skills and competency development, and by assisting employers in their recruitment and training needs.

The Faculty of Social Wellbeing within the University of Malta has a [Department of Youth and Community Studies](#) that was set to carry out research within the areas of youth and community studies. It also sets up and delivers courses in youth and community studies which lead to academic qualifications. The Department of Youth and Community Studies also strives to engage in public debates on issues that concern young people through the organisation of conferences and fora with the aim of contributing to the identification of efficiencies and lacunae in legislation and in the youth service and to challenge dominant discourse on youth.

The office of the [Commissioner for Children](#) was set up in 2003, to promote the welfare of children (0- 18 years old) and the compliance with the UN Convention on the rights of the child, as ratified by Malta, and such other international treaties, conventions or agreements relating to children as are or may be ratified or otherwise acceded to by

Malta. Rather than simply acting on adult assumptions regarding the needs of children, the Commissioner promotes children's rights by being informed directly of the experiences of children themselves. The Office acts as a focal point which monitors the current social and cultural situation in relation to children in the Malta, such that it can contribute substantially in the co-ordination that needs to take place across all sectors in order to have family-friendly policies that are also child oriented.

The [Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability \(CRPD\)](#) was established in to monitor the [Equal Opportunities \(Persons with Disability\) Act](#). It also provides the independent mechanism for the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Together with fighting for disabled persons' rights and dealing with cases of discrimination on the grounds of disability, CRPD also develops policy recommendations, conducts research and undertakes other initiatives with the aim of enhancing the quality of life of disabled people and their families and their full inclusion in society. Furthermore, it organises awareness-raising campaigns with the aim of increasing knowledge about disabled persons, about their rights and needs, and about their potential.

The [National Commission for the Promotion of Equality \(NCPE\)](#) is an independent, government funded body whose primary task is to monitor the Equality for Men and Women Act; Equal Treatment of Persons Order; Access to Goods and Services and their Supply (Equal Treatment) Regulations and the Procedure for Investigation Regulations. The Commission works to ensure that Maltese society is free from any form of discrimination based on sex, gender and family responsibilities in employment, and racial and ethnic origin and gender in the provision of goods and services and their supply.

The [Social Affairs Committee](#) within the Maltese Parliament deals with all matters relating to social policy, including social assistance and family matters, which may be referred to it by the House or by the Standing Committee on House Business. It is responsible of youth issues.

The [Foundation for Social Welfare Services \(FSWS\)](#) offers prevention and treatment services, both on community and residential settings within the fields of substance abuse; children, families and communities; and disability. The foundation incorporates Aġenzija Appoġġ, Aġenzija Sedqa and Leap.

[Aġenzija Appoġġ](#) has as its ultimate aim the enhancement of the lives of people in need, through the provision and availability of professional care and support. It offers a wide range of community-based and specialised social welfare services, Appoġġ is the central national agency for children and families in need.

[Aġenzija Sedqa](#) is the national agency against dependencies, offers health promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation services to persons with drug, alcohol, and/or compulsive gambling problems, and to their families. Sedqa is made up of two divisions, namely Care and Prevention. Each of the said divisions contributes in a specific manner to the issue of dependencies.

[Leap](#) is made up of 11 centres around Malta and Gozo aiming to empower people to take control of their lives and make the necessary changes to finally take the 'Leap' forward towards a better future. Leap combats social exclusion and poverty through employment, capacity building, social integration and social mobility to reduce poverty amongst vulnerable families through employment and education.

[Aġenzija Support](#) provides social work services; community, day and residential services and works with persons with disability and their families to secure the means, opportunities and services whereby they can execute their right to fully participate in community life.

The [Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector](#) aims to support the development of a more effective and efficient voluntary and community sector in Malta and Gozo. In this regard the Council delivers a range of support and capacity building services including information, advice and training. The Council also aims to support the development of a more influential and cohesive voluntary and community sector in Malta and Gozo by

facilitating networking and partnership within the sector, and between the same sector and the private and public sectors.

The role of the [Social Care Standards Authority \(SCSA\)](#) as a Regulatory Body is to improve quality and standards in social welfare services to protect and enhance the dignity, safety and welfare of all service users. This vision is to be achieved through support and regulation. Both service users and service providers will be actively involved in the ongoing process of standard development and improvement. The process of regulation is intended to be a positive experience, which is carried out through consultation, collaboration and dialogue. It is envisaged that through its operations, the Authority will positively influence social welfare practices and the qualitative development of services in the sector. The Social Care Standards Authority was established under [ACT No. XV of 2018](#).

## Main Themes

The [National Youth Policy](#) is informed and built upon by 3 separate but interlocking pillars. These are:

- the reality of lives of young people in Malta today;
- the development of youth policy in the past 20 years (both on a European and national level);
- Government's policy for greater democratic participation, equitable economic and social progress for all, and inclusive change.

The policy was developed on the notion that the social and cultural boundaries that have long distinguished childhood, youth and adulthood are now blurred. Children are developing faster and facing a much more complex reality. Traditional transitions from education to employment and from family home to independence are becoming much more complex. Such transitions are also changing in terms of personal lives, the idea of the traditional family is in itself changing. However, while young people in Malta today do have more choices and personal freedom than any other previous generation, the challenges and the pressures they face are also significant.

This policy is the first to be framed within the EU Youth Strategy framework and as such it took into consideration the strategy's goals and aims but also kept the development and experience of youth policymaking in Malta over the past 20 years. In the light of the Government's policy for greater democratic participation, equitable economic and social progress for all, and inclusive change the [Ministry of Education and Employment](#), through the Parliamentary Secretary for Research, Innovation, Youth and Sport, set up a Policy Advisory Board drafted a National Youth Policy in consultation with young people. The Policy Advisory Board presented the draft discussion document following further consultations with number of other entities, namely the Church, the National Youth Council, Youth NGOs, youth workers, youth work professional bodies, stakeholders in the youth field and the broader general public. The updated version of the draft discussion document was again presented to all stakeholders for consultation and [National Youth Policy](#) - Towards 2020: A shared vision for the future of young people.

The [National Youth Policy](#) is implemented through two strategies, which comprise of a number of Action Plans.

**Strategy 1:** Youth work and services for young people - Services, programmes, projects and activities in support of young people and youth organisations

*Action Plan - New spaces at local community level for young people and youth organisations.*

Create new spaces and facilities at local community level to support the development of young people through their active involvement and participation in non-formal learning opportunities

*Action Plan - Awareness raising, listening to and supporting the voice of young people.*

Create initiatives and opportunities that enhance young people's social and political awareness and that enable their voices to be heard on issues that impact on their lives.

*Action Plan - Initiatives for the active engagement, empowerment and participation of young people and youth organisations.*

Develop and implement initiatives, programmes and activities that actively involve young people and youth organisations in developing young people's competences and skills that enhance their future learning and employment prospects.

**Strategy 2:** Cross-sectoral supports for young people - Cross-sectoral supports for young people that enhance their social participation and their learning and employment prospects.

*Action Plan - Education and training.*

Develop and implement initiatives that utilise both formal education and non-formal learning, as mutually reinforcing agents, with a view to enhancing young people's educational attainment levels and progression.

*Action Plan - Health and well-being.*

Develop and implement initiatives that seek to improve the physical, mental and emotional health and well-being of young people and address issues that impact negatively on such well-being.

*Action Plan - Employment and entrepreneurship.*

Develop and implement initiatives with a view to enhancing young people's participation in the labour market and their future employment, occupational or professional prospects.

*Action Plan - Arts and Culture.*

Develop and implement initiatives with a view to enhancing young people's artistic gifts and promoting cultural and artistic awareness and participation in and attendance at cultural and artistic pursuits and events.

*Action Plan - Social Inclusion.*

Develop and implement initiatives with a view to the active participation of young people with fewer opportunities and those from a migrant background.

*Action Plan - Voluntary and Community activities.*

Develop and implement initiatives to enable young people to be active members of their local communities and take responsibility for the quality of community life and the local environment.

*Action Plan - Sport and recreational activities.*

Develop and implement initiatives to support young people's active participation in sports that enhance their physical and mental well-being, competitiveness and social relationships.

## **The National Agency for Youth**

The [National Youth Agency - Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) - was established in February 2011 by [Legal Notice 522/2010](#). Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ was established to mainstream youth related issues and further develop youth services in Malta. Its overall objective is to provide a coherent, cohesive and unified governmental approach to youth related policy issues.

For young people, it aims to enhance participation, empowerment and dialogue as well as expand supports and services. For policy makers, it aims to bring about a change in attitudes and work culture, to include a youth perspective, greater coherence in

policymaking and better data and information on youth issues. The mission statement of Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ is to coordinate the implementation of the National Youth Policy to promote and safeguard the interests of young people.

The agency falls within the responsibility of the Minister responsible for Youth affairs and is under direct supervision of the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry responsible for Youth. The Agency is governed by the provisions of the Financial Administration and Audit Act.

The budget for the National Youth Agency for 2018 is €1,150,000.

The Agency has the following functions:

- to liaise and ensure the necessary coordination between Government departments and other agencies in the implementation of youth policy and measures or initiatives proposed by Government or the Agency from time to time;
- to undertake and co-ordinate research into specific issues aimed at assessing the state of play with respect to youth affairs;
- to formulate, co-ordinate, manage and evaluate youth work programmes which promote active youth participation and the empowerment of young people;
- to provide local and EU information to youth on any matters which may be of interest to their development and facilitate the participation of youths and youth organisation in EU and Euromed programmes;
- to liaise with the National Authority and National Agency of the Youth in Action programme for a coherent operational programme;
- to act as a focal point for the involvement of youth in the decision-making process;
- to promote the role of youth in local Government;
- to assist and support national and regional voluntary youth organisations and other organisations working in the youth field.

The Agency shall assume the following duties:

- to coordinate, evaluate and monitor the implementation of the National Youth Policy;
- to ensure that all Government programmes concerning the affairs and interests of young people are implemented in accordance with the National Youth Policy;
- to keep direct and continuous contact with local and foreign bodies working in the field of youth, and with other groups, agencies or individuals as the need arises;
- to ensure the highest standards in youth work; and
- to keep under review the workings of this Order, and where deemed required, at the request of the Minister or otherwise, submit proposals for the Order's review.

### **Policy Monitoring and Evaluation**

The implementation of the national youth policy over the period 2015-2020, will be monitored on an ongoing basis by the Ministry responsible for Youth. [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) uses its [annual reports](#) to record progress in relation to Strategy 1, while the inter-ministerial group reports on progress related to Strategy 2.

It is envisaged that at the end of the period 2015-2020, an independent evaluation will be conducted on the overall impact of the policy and the benefits accruing for young people, the voluntary youth sector and the wider society.

## 1.5 Cross-sectoral approach with other ministries

### Mechanisms and actors

The idea of a cross-sectoral approach to youth policy was first introduced in the [second revision of the national youth policy](#) in 2004. This was again emphasised in the [third revision of the document](#) in 2010. The two documents however made no reference to any specific mechanisms other than a National Youth Agency that would coordinate the collaborative efforts.

Following the setting up of [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#), the National Youth Agency, in 2011 efforts for a more cross-sectoral youth policy were made. Coordinated collaborative efforts were made for instance with the Ministry for Education and Employment, the Ministry for Health, the Ministry for Gozo, and the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity. However, this was all on an ad-hoc basis depending on specific policy issues, and no explicit legal framework or specific political commitment that underpinned cross-sectoral youth policy existed.

The ad-hoc approach started to change [National Youth Policy Towards 2020: A shared vision for the future of young people](#). This fourth revision of the National Youth Policy was developed and formulated taking on a cross-sector approach. The document is based on two strategies. The first relates to core youth work services and falls directly under the responsibility of [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#). The agency started to facilitate a more approach to coordinated partnerships with different entities within other Ministries to coordinate a smoother implementation of the National Youth Policy. Such partnerships are particularly prominent in the Culture and Education field. As for the Culture field [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) together with [Arts Council](#) and [Spazju Kreattiv](#) and has a number of Empowerment projects that provide a space where young people can grow artistically. On the other hand in a collaborative effort with the Ministry for Education and Employment, [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) is coordinating a youth work programme in secondary schools in Malta as part of the curriculum with Social Studies, European Studies, and Personal, Social, Career Development with an emphasis on civic and political participation.

The second strategy, 'Cross-sectoral supports for young people' tackles the cross-sectoral dimension of youth policy. The 7 action plans that make up the strategy, Education and Training; Health and Well-Being; Employment and Entrepreneurship; Arts and Culture; Social Inclusion; Voluntary and Community Activities and Sport and Recreational Activities, were developed and formulated together with the relevant Ministries, Departments, and Agencies responsible for the implementation of the particular action plan.

The document also proposed the establishment of an inter-ministerial group on youth policy intended to harmonise the implementation and monitoring of youth policy. The group which is set to be coordinated by [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#), is to report bi-annually on the state of play of youth policy in relation to the cross-sectoral supports as indicated in Strategy 2. The group comprising of representatives from all relevant Government Ministries, including the [Office of the Prime Minister](#); [Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Ministry for Health](#); [Ministry for the Economy, Investment and Small Businesses](#); [Ministry for Education and Employment](#); [Minister for Foreign and European Affairs](#); [Ministry for Justice, Equality and Governance](#); [Ministry for Gozo](#); and the [Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity](#), met for the first time in November 2018.

After a parliamentary reshuffle, the groups include entities with the [Parliamentary Secretariat for European funds](#); [Ministry for Health](#); [Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs](#); [the Ministry for National Heritage, the Arts and Local Government](#); [the Ministry for Social Justice and Solidarity, the Family and Social Rights](#); [the Ministry for Education](#); [the Ministry for Gozo](#); [The Ministry for Inclusion and Social Wellbeing](#); [the Parliamentary Secretariat for Sport, Recreation and Voluntary Organisations](#) and the [Ministry for Finance and Employment](#).

The mandate of the inter-ministerial group is to monitor and report on the implementation of a cross-sectoral approach to youth policy. The group met in 2019 and in 2020 was instrumental in contributing to the formulation of the draft National Youth Policy: Towards 2030.

Members from the Inter-Ministerial Committee highlighted the importance of cross-sector collaboration and proposed that 2 out of the 8 strategic goals in the draft document focus on collaboration and cohesion between the different entities that provide services for young people. Strategic Goal 6 in the draft document recommends to promote and facilitate cross-sectoral initiatives with the voluntary, state and private sector that adopts an integrated and cohesive approach to meeting young people's needs and fulfilling their aspirations. Strategic Goal 8 in the draft document recommends to ensure effective coordination and cohesion in the implantation of the national youth policy and maximise its potential for supporting young people.

In this regard, the Inter-Ministerial Committee is set to keep meeting for the newly drafted policy framework period 2021-2030 and has proposed a focus on mainstreaming through a system of 'Youth Proofing' to be implemented through which while enacting legislation and formulating national policies and strategic plans and initiatives, the interests of young people are recognised and taken into account.

## 1.6 Evidence-based youth policy

### Political Commitment to Evidence-Based Youth Policy

The Government, through the [National Youth Policy Towards 2020: A Shared Vision for the Future of Young People](#), has proposed a commitment to a youth policy that is evidence-based and outcome-focused. Within this document, there is no explicit definition of evidence-based youth policy. However, priority is given to research as it believed that this provides all those working with and for young people with an invaluable tool and source of relevant and up-to-date information. In this regard, [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) continuously monitors research reports concerning Maltese young people and also finances research itself so as to increase its evidence and knowledge base.

The research programme for the period 2015-20 targets the main areas that concern young people today, such as education (including the digital divide and skills gaps), employment, environment, rights and responsibilities (particularly the political participation of young people), health and well-being, and justice.

### Cooperation between policy-making and research

In 1992, following an approach from the then Ministry of Youth and the Arts, the University of Malta set up an Institute of Youth Studies. This was later developed into a Programme within the Department of Educational Studies. This was later developed into the [Department of Youth and Community Studies](#) and now it forms part of the [Faculty for Social Wellbeing](#). During this time, it has developed extensively both in vision and range of activities.

Today, the mission of the [Department of Youth and Community Studies](#) at the University of Malta is to carry out research within the areas of youth and community studies on its own and in collaboration with other interested bodies. It also engages in public debates on issues that concern young people through the organisation of conferences and fora with the aim of contributing to the identification of efficiencies and lacunae in legislation and in the youth service and to challenge dominant discourse on youth.

In 2017, [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) commissioned a national youth research, focusing on the participation of young people in society, in particular, the Structured Dialogue aptly entitled "[Survey Among Young People on the Structured Dialogue](#)." With this research, the agency now has a clear understanding of what political participation means for young

people in Malta and how young Maltese people would like to be involved in the Structured Dialogue in the future.

In 2018, [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) commissioned another national youth research called “Mirrors and Windows 2” as part of a project called Polifest, co-financed through Erasmus+. This national research was specifically designed so as to gather an evidence-base on a number of major issues that would eventually facilitate the policymaking process.

Also, in 2018 [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) formally acknowledged the collaboration with The University of Malta, through its Department of Youth and Community Studies, Faculty for Social Wellbeing by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Both Parties agreed that all collaborative initiatives undertaken by them in the context of this MOU shall be guided by the aims and strategies of the National Youth Policy Towards 2020. Through this agreement, which is valid for three years, amongst other things it is intended to consolidate and increase collaboration in research. This in turn resulted in a study conducted by the Department of Youth and Community Studies. This research provisionally entitled “Insights on Modern Youth Activism: The Case of University of Malta Students” provides an insight on the prevalence of youth activism, as well as understanding factors that act as motivators or barriers for such involvement will be published in 2021.

As yet no evaluations were carried out through systematic reviews, randomized controlled trials.

## **National Statistics and available data sources**

National statistics are collected by the [National Statistics Office](#). This office does not produce any documents specifically on young people. However, some of its documents do have sections relating to young people. In the [Labour Market Statistics](#), the [Registered Unemployed](#) and the [Unemployment Rate](#) are issued monthly, the [Labour Force Survey](#) and the [Registered Employment](#) are issued quarterly, and [Accidents at Work](#) are issues every six months, all offer statistics on young people. As part of the [Education and Information Society Statistics](#) the [Students Enrolment survey](#), the [Graduate Student survey](#) and the [Absenteeism in Schools survey](#), which are issued yearly, also make reference to young people. Issued yearly as part of the [Living Conditions and Cultural Statistics](#) is the [Statistics on Income and Living Conditions](#).

There is no regular youth report produced at a national level. However, Aġenzija Żgħażaġh in 2012 has produced the following research report on a national level entitled: [Mirrors and Windows: Maltese Young People's Perception of Themselves, their Families, Communities and Society](#). This research aimed to construct social and cultural characteristics of young people, their views, opportunities and also the difficulties encountered.

This was then followed up in 2019 by [Mirrors and Windows 2: Maltese Young People's Perceptions, Experiences and Expectations of Education, Employment and Lifestyles](#). The agency is committing to keeping issuing the Mirrors and Windows youth report generates an evidence-based picture of young people in Malta. The survey focused on young people's experiences, expectations and views on education, employment, and lifestyles.

Also, Aġenzija Żgħażaġh has issued a number of national reports and survey, amongst which are the following:

[Leisure Trends among Young People in Malta](#). This report, issued in 2013 presents the most common types of leisure activities older children and young people engage in, as well as the amount of time they spend on such activities. The study also identifies barriers that hinder wider participation in leisure activities and how the issue of greater accessibility could be addressed.

[Democratic Participation – Having your voice heard in Europe- through the ballot box](#). This survey was issued in 2014 and it looked into young people's views on the electoral

process and the European Parliament intending to promote European citizenship and strengthen the information and knowledge base of young people in Malta through their active engagement and participation in the democratic process.

[Democratic Participation – Listening to the voices of young people](#). This survey was published in 2014 asking for young people’s opinions in relation to lowering the voting age in local elections and other matters relating to electoral change and democratic participation.

[The Participation of Maltese Young People in the Voluntary Sector](#). This report unearths the level of participation and contribution of Maltese youth in voluntary work both in Malta and abroad.

[Developing Detached Youth Work in Malta and Romania](#) Published in 2016 this report was set about by the aspirations of the of Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ, which initiated and coordinated a project to expand and strengthen the services it provides for young people in Malta, while also fulfilling a commitment in the national youth policy, “Towards 2020 - A shared vision for the future of young people” to provide "outreach and detached youth work services to address, in particular, the needs of socially excluded and at-risk young people".

[The Voices of The Young and Vulnerable in Malta: A Qualitative Study](#). This report was commissioned by Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ and issued in 2018. The study highlights the main challenges that vulnerable young people, between 17 – 28 have to face in the course of family and community life as well as in accessing welfare and other state and voluntary support systems.

In 2019 [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#), in collaboration with the National Youth Council and commissioned a research entitled “[Young people’s Views on the use of cannabis](#)”, looked into young people’s views on recreational use of cannabis. This was done in view of the public debate that was happening on a national level involving the idea of decriminalising cannabis consumption.

The latest 2 national youth research documents “Young People’s Perspectives on Housing” and “Youth Activism” will be published in 2021.

## **Budgetary Allocations supporting research in the youth field**

The Government has no line of funding for research on youth explicitly supporting evidence-based youth policy-making or evidence-based evaluation of its youth-related programs or of policy outcomes. However, youth research as per [Legal Notice 522/2010](#) is part of Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ’s mandate as and in this regard, the agency always commits part of its annual budget to youth research.

## **1.7 Funding youth policy**

### **How Youth policy is funded**

There is a specific budget for the Agency that is charged with the coordination of youth policy. The budget for 2020 was EUR 1,155,000. For 2021 the budget is EUR 1,330,000.

Apart from these line votes youth policy is also funded ad hoc from several other budget lines within the different Ministries that provide services for young people. No information on such budget lines is available.

### **What is funded?**

The policy priorities that are being funded are the following:

1. Extending and increasing Quality Youth Work (including detached youth work).
2. Social Inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities.
3. Develop the 4 regional centres

4. Expand youth information
5. Include more facilities for mobility projects through Erasmus+ in the Youth Village.

### Financial accountability

In order to access public funds, any youth organisation must be enrolled with the [Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations](#). The enrolment necessitates the youth organisation has a Statute or Deed that are in line with the [Voluntary Organisations Act](#). To qualify for enrolment the organisation has to be non-profit; autonomous; voluntary; that no part of the income, capital or property of the organisation shall be available directly or indirectly to any promoter, member, administrator, donor or other private interest and must have a dissolution clause whereby upon winding up the organisation any remaining assets should be applied in favour of another organisation/s with similar aims. Also, the Act states that the youth organisation must produce annual accounts which need to be authenticated by at least 2 authorised persons and an annual administration report that needs to be authenticated by at least 1 authorised person.

### Use of EU Funds

Erasmus+ Programme

Erasmus+ 2019	EUR 1, 850 397	EUR 2.76 million
European Solidarity Corps 2019	EUR 909 488	
Erasmus+ 2020	EUR 2,327 554	EUR 3.40 million
European Solidarity Corps 2020	EUR1,070 762	

The MT NA is part of the +: The MT NA is involved in the RAY network - [Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of European Youth Programmes](#) – is an open and self-governed European research network. Currently, 36 National Agencies of the Erasmus+ Youth in Action & European Solidarity Corps programmes and their research partners are involved. Currently the MT NA is supporting the following studies:

- RAY MON - explores how the youth programmes contribute to strategies that frame and guide the sector and programmes.
- RAY LEARN - follow the trajectory of youth organisations/groups/ networks involved in programmes over time, with a focus on approaches and methods to support the organisational learning and development of these organisations/ groups/networks.
- RAY PART is a research project to explore approaches to participation and citizenship education, in E+ YiA projects which approaches are particularly effective in developing participation and citizenship competences and how the competences necessary to implement these approaches can be developed.
- RAY SOC MON explores a broad scope of aspects of the European youth programmes to contribute to the development and implementation of the European Solidarity Corps.

The table below shows the type and number of activities supported in 2019 to date.

Activity (prj)	Activities Contracted
Youth Exchanges - Programme Countries	44

National youth meetings	31
Mobility of youth workers - Programme Countries	24
Mobility of youth workers - Partner Countries	21
Advance Planning Visit – Youth Exchange	17
Project Management and Implementation	10
Transnational Project Meetings	10
Intellectual Outputs	9
Multiplier Events	8
Short-term joint staff training events	8
Blended mobility of young people	3
Youth Exchanges - Partner Countries	3
Exceptional Costs	2
Blended mobility of adult learners	1
Exceptional Costs for Expensive Travel	1
Transnational youth meetings	1

## European Social Fund (ESF) Programme

### Activities funded include:

Training, counselling and job exposure to young NEETs under the age of 25 to equip them with the necessary skills and competences to either access educational/training paths or re-enter the labour market.

The Youth Guarantee is funded by the European Social Fund with a budget of EUR 5,909,329.

The Work Exposure Scheme is funded by the European Social Fund with a budget of EUR 2,439,254

The Traineeship Scheme is funded by the European Social Fund with a budget of EUR 4,883,424. This budget covers the period 2016 till 2023.

## 1.8 Cross-border cooperation

### Cooperation with European countries

A collaboration programme between Italy and Malta came into effect in 2014. This collaboration programme promoted cooperation between universities and higher education institutions of culture.

## International cooperation

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Malta and China in the field of Sport in 2014. This was intended to promote invitation to athletes from the two countries as well as exchange of information on sport and physical education.

An agreement between China and Malta was signed in 2013 intending to facilitate the mutual recognition of higher education degrees, diplomas and certificates awarded to students in the two countries.

An Intergovernmental Joint Committee between Palestine and Malta came into being in 2015. This Intergovernmental Joint committee amongst other things promotes the cooperation of scholarships and the exchange of undergraduate and graduate students.

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) represents Malta on the [Council of Europe CDEJ](#) which coordinates and promotes youth related issues among Member States and where the policy focus is on young people's access to fundamental human and social rights. Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ has also been proactive in promoting the Council of Europe's No Hate Speech Campaign and in the Youth Mobility Platform.

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) represents Malta in cooperating with the [Partnership between European Commission and the Council of Europe](#) in organising seminars and projects that aim to promote European cooperation in the youth field and in contributing to the Partnership's Youth Knowledge publication on the History of youth work in Europe and in working with the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCY) in building the research base on youth related issues.

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) represents Malta in cooperation initiatives under the [Commonwealth Youth Programme](#) and in promoting the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment its strategic policy framework, the Commonwealth Youth Civil Activism Network and initiatives to professionalise the youth work sector

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) is a member of [European Youth Information and Counselling Agency](#) (ERYICA) a non-profit association and network of members and affiliated organisations working in 31 countries that provide young people with general information under the principles of the European Youth Information Charter.

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) is a member of the [European Youth Card Association](#) which comprises 38 organisations in 36 different countries across Europe. Over 4 million young people make use of the card annually. [Karta Żgħażaġħ](#) is available for free in Malta to young people aged from 13 to 30 years and offers discounts on a wide range of products and services relating to culture, travel, accommodation, shopping and other services that are of interest to young people.

## 1.9 Current debates and reforms

### Forthcoming policy developments

The new National Youth Policy Towards 2030 is set to be launched in 2021. As part of the policy formulation process, the newly appointed Parliamentary Secretariat for Sport, Recreation and Voluntary Organisations and the Ministry for Inclusion and Social Wellbeing published a draft document and launched an exercise of policy consultation. A good number of youth organisations and government entities have sent their feedback and exercise of re-drafting is now in progress.

The document has been drafted to be in line with a number of European and international policy documents including The EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027; The CoE Youth Sector Strategy 2030; The Commonwealth Youth Programme; The UN Youth Strategy 2030 and the Union of the Mediterranean Youth Strategy 2030.

The document is expected to continue with the current document's main aims i.e. to effectively support and encourage young people to fulfill their potential while supporting

them through their transition to adulthood by giving a new impetus to innovative youth work services, focused youth research, and quality youth information.

### **Ongoing debates**

Agenzija Zghazagh is currently in the process of formulating a new Life Skills Programme for young people in Malta. This programme based on non-formal learning methodologies using a youth work approach will be available for all young people between the age of 16-24. These life skills are a set of personal and social skills that can be acquired through education and training, youth work, and non-formal and informal learning and can be used to address issues, questions, and problems commonly encountered in the course of daily human life. The programme will be based on 4 different thematic areas including Interpersonal life-skills (such as Leadership, conflict resolution, and teamwork); Communication life-skills (such as expressing (and listening to) views and opinions, discussing and debating); Cognitive life-skills (such as Critical thinking, reasoned analysis, problem-solving and decision making) and Personal life-skills (such as self-confidence, self-esteem, and resilience).

Various stakeholders are being consulted to come up with a strategy that ensures that the life skills acquired by young people through youth work can be identified, and documented, in order to facilitate their assessment and certification through mechanisms for the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

## **2. VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES**

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Youth Volunteering falls under the responsibility of the Ministry for Inclusion and Social Wellbeing and the Parliamentary Secretary for Sports, Recreation and Voluntary Organisations. The national programme for youth volunteering entitled 'Youth Voluntary Work Scheme' offers the possibility to young people, between the age of 16-30 years old, to do some volunteering both in-country and abroad.

### **2.1 General context**

#### **Historical developments**

In their extensive sociological study of Malta, Sultana and Baldacchino (1994) identify the Church of Rome as one of the most decisive influences on contemporary Malta. This is reflected in the Maltese historical culture of volunteering. According to a [national report](#) submitted as part of Study of Volunteering in the European Union, volunteering in Malta has a relatively long established tradition, which is especially rooted in the activity of the Church organisations, particularly their missionary work. The report also notes that the teaching profession also played an important role in establishing volunteering and subsequently civil society. Since the beginning of teacher training in the 1940s, there has been a continuous practice among teachers over the following decades to become strongly involved in sector activities – such as setting-up organisational structures and offering voluntary services.

Traditionally youth organisations seemed to mirror such reality with church-based / affiliated youth organisations being among the most active, together with political parties' youth organisations. During the last decade this seems to be changing. Young people's involvement in traditional voluntary organisations (political parties, religious associations and church bodies) has declined, but membership has increased markedly in other organisations like trade unions, sports, health and third world development groups (Council of Europe, 2005).

Historically, on a youth policy level, the notion of youth volunteering first appeared in the [first revision of the National Youth Policy](#) in 1999. This document called for young people to take up volunteering while also highlighting a statutory commitment to recognise the

importance of youth volunteering in the development of young people and pledging to offer assistance to organisations that work with and for young people.

The interest in youth volunteering also continued to manifest in all the other revisions of the National youth policy. The [second revision of the National Youth policy](#) in 2004. The document clearly noted that the State should recognize, encourage and support young people who are involved in voluntary work. The [third revision of the National Youth Policy](#) went a step further. This document presented 11 vertical policy thematic statements including Community Cohesion and Volunteering. Amongst other things the document noted that through volunteering initiatives, the community benefits from the resource of young people's creativity and innovation and appealed for the safety and well-being of volunteers as well as the recognition of the achievements of the young volunteers. This approach was also adopted in the [current formulation of the National Youth Policy](#). This documents emphasised a cross-sectoral approach to youth policy and identified youth volunteering as one of its 7 main action plans. The document emphasises a statutory commitment to encourage and facilitates young people's engagement in volunteering on both a National and European level.

Further to this, another historical landmark came about in 2007 when the [Voluntary Organisations Act](#) was enacted in the Laws of Malta intended to regulate voluntary organisations and their administration in Malta.

Moreover, the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector, set up through the Voluntary Organisations Act of 2007. As part of its remit this Council is charged with the promotion of a culture of volunteering and participation in especially children and youth, as an aspect of personal and social development, established a Youth Voluntary Work Scheme on a national level. The intention behind this scheme is to help young people improve their skills and employment prospects by giving them an opportunity to take up volunteering as part of their formal and informal learning process. The scheme also enables young volunteers to discover the value of voluntary service and helps to foster a sense of community and active citizenship. The second goal of the Youth Voluntary Work Scheme is to support Voluntary Organisations in attracting young people to volunteering, enabling them to enhance their capacity with new volunteers and fresh ideas.

In 2016 a national survey conducted by the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector showed that 15% of the respondents between 18 -24 years old and 16% of 25 – 34 years old were actively involved in the voluntary sector.

## Main concepts

Malta has no official definition of youth volunteering. However, the [Voluntary Organisations Act](#) defines a 'volunteer' as a person who provides unremunerated services through or for voluntary organisations. However, the act does not exclude the possibility that members of a voluntary organisation receive remuneration from the organisation when they are engaged or are an employee of the organisation under a written contract or when they are the providers of any goods or services to the organisation.

Voluntary organisations are then defined as foundations, trusts, associations of persons or temporary organisations which are independent and autonomous of the Government and such organisations shall have their status respected by the Government at all times.

In addition, the [third revision of the national youth policy](#) that had been published in 2010 stated that volunteering contributes to a cohesive society creating bonds of trust and solidarity as well as social capital and so youth volunteering not only contributes to personal development, but also to a cohesive society. Building on this the [National Youth Policy Towards 2020: A shared vision for the future of young people](#) looks at youth volunteering as initiatives to enable young people to be active members of their local communities and take responsibility for the quality of community life and the local environment.

## 2.2 Administration and governance of youth volunteering

### Governance

Although voluntary organisations, included those ran by young people, are governed by the [Voluntary Organisations Act](#), this framework does not directly provide for individual volunteers. The Act addresses the institutions responsible for volunteering and voluntary organisations in general and makes no reference to volunteers as individuals.

Anyone interested in taking up volunteering is not required to obtain specific permits to engage in voluntary activities and there are no specific restrictions which limit participation in volunteering activities. In this regard, volunteering happens both formally and informally.

Formal volunteering is governed centrally and the main governmental authority responsible for volunteering and hence youth volunteering in Malta is the Parliamentary Secretariat for Youth, sport and Voluntary Organisations within the Ministry for Inclusion and Quality of Life. Both the [Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations](#) and the [Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector](#) fall under this Ministry. The [Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations](#) is the regulatory authority responsible for this sector with the aim of monitoring and supervising the activities of voluntary organisations as well as supporting them. The [Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector](#) sees over the development of an effective and efficient voluntary sector through the delivery of a range of support and capacity building services.

### Main actors

With the introduction of the [Voluntary Organisations Act](#) in 2007, two key institutions were established to ensure coordination, support and monitoring within the voluntary sector. These institutions are the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations and the Council for Voluntary Organisations.

Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations

The [Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations](#) is responsible for establishing appropriate communication systems to support Maltese citizens engaged in voluntary activities, whether in Malta or abroad. The first Commissioner was appointed in 2007. The term of office runs for three years and a Commissioner can be reappointed at the end of the period.

The Commissioner must follow a set of guiding principles:

- Recognise, encourage and promote the value and importance of voluntary activities and voluntary organisations, whether operating independently of government institutions or in a supporting role, and the benefit deriving to the social and cultural life in Malta;
- Recognise the contribution of voluntary activities and voluntary organisations, as expressions of participation, solidarity, pluralism and subsidiarity, towards the continued enjoyment and enrichment of democratic life in Malta;
- Recognise the direct economic benefit of voluntary and unremunerated activities and of initiatives undertaken by voluntary organisations and volunteers;
- Recognise the importance of the co-ordination of efforts by voluntary organisations with similar purposes so as to achieve a greater concentration of resources and the benefits of economies of scale, whilst avoiding any duplication of efforts and always acting in the interests of their beneficiaries; and
- Recognise the importance of the creation of federations or of associations of members in order to regulate member organisations and their activities in order to achieve the benefits of self regulation in the voluntary sector.

The main duties of the Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations are to:

- provide enrolment facilities for organisations;
- monitor the activities of voluntary organisations to ensure observance of the Act;
- provide voluntary organisations with information about the benefits and responsibilities as a result of enrolment;
- provide information and guidelines to individuals engaged in voluntary activities and to members of voluntary organisations;
- make recommendations to the Minister responsible for social policy on legislation and policies in support of voluntary organisations, volunteers and voluntary activities;
- assist the government, government departments, public agencies and entities controlled by the government in preparing and reviewing policies in support of the voluntary sector;
- investigate any complaints relating to voluntary organisations and to take such action as is in their power to redress any justified grievance that may come to their notice;
- monitor the promotion of voluntary organisations and the behaviour of their administrators so as to ensure the observance of high standards of accountability and transparency and cooperate with and support the Council for the Voluntary Sector in developing policies which will be of benefit to the voluntary sector.

#### Council for the Voluntary Sector

The [Council for the Voluntary Sector](#) is composed of a Chairperson and an additional ten members. Of these eleven members, one is appointed by the Minister to represent the Government, a second is the Commissioner ex officio and the remaining nine members are appointed from the voluntary sector to represent the voluntary sector. The Council is appointed for a two year term – after this period it can either be reappointed or changed.

One of the Council's primary aims is to represent the voluntary sector and promote its interests. While serving as a consultative body to the Commissioner when developing policies in relation to this sector. The Council is also meant to counterbalance the power of the Commissioner.

The key tasks of the Council include overseeing the volunteer sector; representing the interests of the voluntary sector as a whole; assisting the voluntary sector capacity building and training; helping with troubleshooting; creating programmes and projects for the voluntary sector; administering a voluntary organisations fund to promote voluntary activities.

In general, the Council for the Voluntary Sector acts as a platform from which co-operation is developed between voluntary organisations and the government and between voluntary organisations themselves.

#### European Union Programme Agency

Also established in 2007 the [European Union Programme Agency](#) is responsible for the management of the Erasmus+ programme of the European Commission. Within Erasmus+ there is the European Voluntary Service, through which young people can commit to volunteering for up to 12 months in a foreign country.

Also the new European Solidarity Corps will provide opportunities of volunteering for young people.

#### Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#), the National Youth Agency, is the entity charged with the coordination of youth policy within which there are a number of action plans. One of these action plans is Voluntary and Community Activities.

## 2.3 National strategy on youth volunteering

### Existence of a National Strategy

In Malta there is no national Strategy on Youth Volunteering. However the principles of youth volunteering are incorporated in the [National Youth Policy Towards 2020 A shared Vision for the Future of Young People](#) that came into effect in 2015.

### Scope and contents

This document proposes a set of cross-sectoral supports for young people that enhance their social participation, their learning and employment prospects. These cross-sectoral supports are made of a number of Action Plans. One such Action Plan is called Voluntary and Community Activities. This action plan is intended to develop and implement initiatives to enable young people to be active members of their local communities and take responsibility for the quality of community life and the local environment. It proposes actions that:

- create opportunities for inter-generational awareness and dialogue through the active involvement of young and older people;
- increase participation in Youth Local Councils;
- increase awareness in historical, architectural and cultural heritage
- engage more young people in the Youth Voluntary Scheme and the European Voluntary Service.

### Responsible authority

The Governmental authority responsible for this action plan is the Ministry responsible for the Voluntary Sector – currently the [Minister for Inclusion and Social Wellbeing](#) under which the entities that regulate voluntary activities fall. [Aġenzija Żgħira](#) – the National Youth Agency - has the overarching responsibility for promoting, coordinating and facilitating this Action Plan.

### Revisions/ Updates

The concept of youth volunteering has always been part of the National Youth Policy Documents and was always given its due importance. However it was since the [third revision of the national youth policy](#) published in 2010 document that volunteering as a standalone concept was really highlighted. This is evident as in this [third revision document](#) 'Community Cohesion and Volunteering' became one of the main themes in the document. Volunteering started to be seen as a means of engaging young people and instill in them a sense of community. Also the experience gained through volunteering started to be recognised as an asset when such young people would enter the world of work. Such a direction was maintained in the [latest version of the national youth policy](#) published in 2015 within which Voluntary and Community Activities is one of the main Action Plans.

## 2.4 Youth volunteering at national level

### National Programme for Youth Volunteering

The national programme was launched in 2015 and it is called [Youth Voluntary Work Scheme](#). The scheme is managed by the [Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector](#). The national programme intends to achieve two main goals. The first goal is to help young people improve their skills and employment prospects by giving them an opportunity to take up volunteering as part of their non-formal and informal learning process. The programme also enables them to discover the value of voluntary service and helps to foster a sense of community and active citizenship. The second goal of the scheme is to

support Voluntary Organisations in attracting young people to volunteering, enabling them to enhance their capacity with new volunteers and fresh ideas.

In 2016 the Scheme started supporting voluntary experiences abroad for young people through locally registered voluntary organisations to carry out an international volunteer service in Europe, Africa, Asia or South America.

The Youth Voluntary Work Scheme is open for young volunteers between the ages of 16-30 who would want to do volunteer work in Malta and from 18-30 years old for young volunteers who would like to do volunteering abroad.

Interested young volunteers submit an online application indicating the period of volunteering (up to 12 months) and the number of hours of work per week (8 hrs, 15 hrs or 30 hrs) they would like to commit themselves to and the Voluntary Organisation where they would like to volunteer.

Upon receiving the application, the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector will contact the indicated Voluntary Organisation to see if they are willing to host voluntary workers under the scheme. There is a maximum of 4 volunteers per organisation. Should the indicated voluntary organisation accept the offer, they are given the details of the young volunteer to set up an interview. If accepted, the young person signs a contract, and starts receiving a monthly stipend.

The scheme pays a stipend of Eur 2 per hour up to a maximum of Eur 60 per week.

The specific objectives pursued by the Youth Voluntary Work Scheme are to:

- Promote the participation in the community as an active citizen;
- Improve the level of key competences and skills of young people, including those with fewer opportunities;
- Foster quality improvements in youth voluntary work;
- Promote an intercultural dimension with a non-formal approach.

The policy priorities pursued through the Youth Voluntary Work Scheme are:

- Promoting active citizenship to young people by fostering social inclusion and the active participation of young people in society;
- Promoting young people's social inclusion and well-being, mainly through the empowerment of young people, to combat youth unemployment;
- Raising awareness about voluntary work;
- Developing basic skills, such as entrepreneurship, working in a team and leadership skills;
- Increase the skills of young people through the practical experience of volunteering abroad;
- Encourage the learning of another language;
- Develop the ability to interact with persons of different language and culture;
- Spread tolerance among young people.

In 2015, 71 young people participated in the Youth Voluntary Work Scheme. In 2016 50 young people volunteered in Maltese organisations while 16 went to do their volunteering abroad.

## **Funding**

The funding for the Youth Voluntary Work Scheme comes from a specific central national fund. For the years 2015 and 2016 the budget was EUR 200,000 per year.

## Characteristics of youth volunteering

Apart from the data on the Youth Voluntary Work Scheme, there are no official statistics that specifically target the level of participation of young people in volunteering. The only data available comes from [National Statistics Office](#) that publishes a yearly [International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development](#) survey. Within such data the National Statistics Office publishes the level of participation for the 12-24 year old cohort. Since 2012 the average number of participants between 12-24 years was that of 4,000 which make up an average of about 13% of whole cohort of volunteers in Malta.

Young people participating in the Youth Voluntary Work Scheme chose very different areas for their volunteering. The most popular organisations however are those who deal with animal welfare, emergency and rescue and scouting.

## Support to young volunteers

Youth Volunteers participation in the [Youth Voluntary Work Scheme](#) are given the opportunity to contribute to the daily work of voluntary organisations according to the particular nature of the same organisation. Youth Volunteers will be allocated a monthly stipend by the Scheme which will be paid to them directly by the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector. In the case of the volunteer experience taking place overseas, the Scheme shall also cover 75% of the travel and accommodation.

The financial assistance for the stipend under this Scheme will last for not more than twelve months from date of engagement of the eligible person/s with the accredited Voluntary Organisation. The Youth Volunteers will be required to work with the organisation for either 8, 15 or 30 hours weekly placements. The financial assistance given in the form of stipends is fixed at an hourly rate €2.00 to cover travel expenses and food. (Example: €30.00 per week for Youth Volunteers undertaking a 15 hr week placement).

In the case of the volunteer experience taking place overseas, the Scheme shall also cover the following:

1. A per diem allowance as per established list for each country, which shall cover accommodation, food and local transportation;
2. 75% Travel expenses (flight);
3. Travel and health insurance.

Youth volunteers under the Youth Voluntary Work Scheme are covered by a health insurance. Those participating in the Overseas part of the scheme are also covered by a travel insurance.

## Quality Assurance (QA)

A formal monitoring and evaluation mechanism to assure the quality of the Youth Voluntary Work Scheme is set in place and is managed by the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector and Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ.

This happens through a system of accreditation that is required for Voluntary Organisations to host Youth Volunteers under the Youth Voluntary Work Scheme. It is designed to ensure consistently high standards in the Scheme and to help Youth Volunteers find placement in Voluntary Organisations and vice versa.

All accredited Voluntary Organisations must show they have the capacity and structure to be able to engage, train, manage, monitor and support Youth Volunteers.

The accreditors' assessment of an applicant Voluntary Organisation will be based on the following:

- Motivation and experience, in particular the motivation for taking part in Scheme;

- Previous experience with similar placements of such as The European Voluntary Service (EVS), international projects and working with full-time volunteers.
- The organisation's aims, activities and capacities, in particular the organisation's aims and objectives; regular activities;
- Organisational and administrative capacity, particularly in order to have assurance regarding the number of volunteers the applicant Voluntary Organisation has capacity to host or coordinate at the same time
- Risk, safety and well-being, in particular capacity on how to prevent risks and crisis management; how to manage conflicts and cultural shock and how to guarantee safe working conditions
- The management of volunteers, in particular the training and managing Young Volunteers; the monitoring, mentoring and supporting Young Volunteers, especially those working in Voluntary Organisations in the areas of Health, Social and Humanitarian Action.
- Ideas for future placements, in particular the possible themes and activities;
- The relevance to Youth Voluntary Work Scheme objectives and priorities;
- The inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities;
- The plans for evaluation during and after a placement and ideas concerning visibility of Youth Voluntary Work Scheme.

Accredited host Voluntary Organisations are listed in the Youth Work Voluntary Scheme [database](#) of accredited organisations in . The database is the main tool for Youth Volunteers to find host Voluntary Organisations.

### Target groups

The [Youth Voluntary Work Scheme](#) does not specify any particular target group to be recruited as a volunteer. In this regard any young person between the ages of 16 - 30 can apply for volunteering in Malta and any young person between the ages of 18 - 30 can apply for volunteering abroad.

However, the [Youth Voluntary Work Scheme](#) states that if the placement targets young volunteers with fewer opportunities, facilities and capacity in providing tailor-made preparation, support and follow-up have to be in place prior to the placement.

## 2.5 Cross-border mobility programmes

### EU programmes

Malta participates in Erasmus+ programme: Mobility of Young People (Youth Exchanges and European Voluntary Service [EVS]) and Mobility of Youth Workers (Youth workers' training and networking).

The [European Union Programmes Agency](#) uses statistics to measure the number of participants taking part in the different activities in terms of gender, young people with special needs and those with fewer opportunities.

The [European Union Programmes Agency](#) is in charge of organising and monitoring these EU programmes at national level.

### Other Programmes

In 2016 the [Youth Voluntary Work Scheme](#) started supporting voluntary experience abroad for young people through locally registered voluntary organisations to carry out an international volunteer service in Europe, Africa, Asia or South America.

## Legal framework applying to foreign volunteers

If the voluntary work to be conducted will be less than 3 months in total, a Visa will suffice. If the voluntary work will be longer than 3 months the following forms and documents are also needed:

**Forms** (can be downloaded from [Identity Malta](#))

- Form O – Application for a temporary residence permit
- Form ID 1A – Identity Registration Form
- Rental Declaration Form (applicable for applicants who are renting property in Malta)

### Additional documents

- Copy of the full passport, showing valid Visa stamps;
- Original covering letter from an NGO to verify that they will host the young person (NGOs registered with the Voluntary Organisations Commissioner are given priority);
- Proof of means of subsistence in the form of a recent local/foreign bank statement (Volunteers can be sponsored by family members or given a stipend by the NGO itself);
- Evidence of a comprehensive health insurance policy which covers the applicant for any type of medical assistance or hospitalization which could be needed during the applicant's stay in Malta.
- Lease agreement showing the residential address of the applicant (the address will be visible on the residence permit which also serves the purpose of an identity document).

## 2.6 Raising awareness about youth volunteering opportunities

### Information providers

The Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector in 2016 has undertaken a Volunteer Awareness National Campaign, and one of the three main target audiences of this campaign are young people. As part of this campaign The [National Volunteer Award](#) is held annually in December. The awards include the Youth Volunteer of the Year. This award shall have the same aims as the National Volunteer Award and has the main scope to promote volunteering among young people. The aim of these awards are to:

- To give broad recognition to the service done by the nominees;
- To create awareness of the exemplary values displayed by the models for youth and wider society;
- To recognise the important contributions made in various fields.

The National Volunteer Award shall be awarded to an individual volunteer between the age of 16 and 30 years who has contributed in any field, such as social, humanitarian, health, ecological, cultural, education, sports, etc. The voluntary work must have had a positive contribution towards a particular field and should ideally have served as an inspiration to others.

Information on volunteering can also be accessed online. Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ hosts an online [Youth Information Portal](#). Information provided is continually updated and includes detailed contact information of various institutions, agencies and organisations together with embedded hyperlinks to access further details directly from the source. Youth Information Malta provides also a showcase of news, events and activities pertaining to the youth field and aims to be a common meeting place for young people, institutions,

organisations, and youth workers. One section in the portal is dedicated directly to [volunteering](#).

Also, the [Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector](#) manages three [Volunteer Centres](#), the North Hub, the South Hub and the Central Hub. These centres serve as volunteer hubs and resource centres, where voluntary organisations, including those of young people, may use as their base and meeting points. These centres also hold training programs addressed to administrators and members of voluntary organisations. These facilities are open 24/7 and intended to support networks of volunteering organizations, assisting newly founded volunteers organisations and promoting volunteering opportunities.

### **Key initiatives**

The [Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector](#) in 2016 is undertaking a Volunteer Awareness National Campaign, and one of the three main target audiences of this campaign are young people.

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) also send information to youth organisations on volunteering opportunities in its monthly newsletter.

## **2.7 Skills recognition**

### **Policy Framework**

The responsible authority for validation and recognition of skills is the [National Commission for Further and Higher Education](#). [Subsidiary Legislation 327.432](#), aptly entitled, the 'Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Regulations' establishes a process which identifies, assesses and formally certifies the knowledge, skills and competences which individuals develop throughout their lives by means of participation in non-formal and informal learning.

[Subsidiary Legislation 327.432](#), which regulates the validation of informal and non-formal learning in Malta, states that any individual with a minimum of three years' experience in a particular occupation is allowed to apply for validation. Volunteering in particular occupations and sectors for which validation is already taking place in Malta would count towards the required years of experience.

### **Existing arrangements**

As per subsidiary Legislation 327.432, the [National Commission for Further and Higher Education](#) (is to set up and coordinate the work of Sector Skills Units (SSUs) for different sectors. Through these SSUs, national occupational standards are developed to ensure the proper set up of the validation process.

As of December 2018, the [National Commission for Further and Higher Education](#) has set up SSUs for 8 different economic sectors. These are: Hospitality and Tourism, Automotive, Education Support, Health and Social Care, Hair and Beauty, Printing and Digital Media, Building and Construction, and Information Technology. This means that individuals who have three years' experience in occupations in any of these sectors, are eligible to apply for validation of their learning. The three years' experience may also include voluntary work.

## **2.8 Current debates and reforms**

### **Forthcoming policy developments**

On a national level the main current debate on volunteering are the amendments to the [Voluntary Organisations Act](#) that are currently being scrutinised by the Parliament and will be enacted end 2018. One of the main amendments to the act is the fact that all voluntary organisations, including youth organisations, will be obliged to notify the

Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations of their existence. Moreover, those organisations that make public collections, receive Governments or sponsorships, or any organisation with an income of over €25,000 or had an income of over €5,000 for 3 consecutive years annually will be obliged to enrol with the Office of the Commissioner. The Commissioner will also be vested with the power of investigation on money laundering and the financing of terrorism.

The amendments will also make possible for minors who attained the age of 16 to establish a Voluntary Organisation and also to vote in Annual General Meetings.

Also, the [Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector](#) will be reorganised and shall have representatives from 6 sectors one of which is Youth. In this regard youth organisations will be having an elected representative on the Council.

### Ongoing debates

The [Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector](#) has issued a discussion paper entitled – National Strategy on Volunteering 2018. This would be the first time Malta would have a volunteering strategy. This National Volunteer Strategy intends to provide connection and co-ordination across both National and Local Government to support better on all dimensions the volunteer sector and make better use of all available resources. The Strategy would focus on coordinating research, consultation with the sector and implementation of reforms to support the sector at an organisational and individual level. A truly national strategy must provide an opportunity for coordinated policy development and decision-making at the national and local levels that will be reflected in specific national and local actions. In this regard the Discussion paper is proposing a number of recommendations:

- That all levels of government make a commitment, in principle, to the development of a National Volunteer Strategy with a long term vision to strengthen volunteering in Malta;
- That an appropriate level of government funding be allocated to support the development and ongoing viability of a National Volunteer Strategy;
- That a National Volunteer Strategy be sector-driven with input and support from all stakeholders – community, government and business;
- That the development of a National Volunteer Strategy would serve to expand volunteering infrastructure of national, regional and local organisations avoiding duplication of resources in the creation of parallel infrastructure.

The current debate on Youth Volunteering circles around the newly introduced European Solidarity Corps through which young people will be able to do voluntary work both in-country and abroad. The current debate revolves around the issue of how such a programme will affect volunteering in Malta both as hosts and volunteers.

## 3. EMPLOYMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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Jobsplus is the Maltese public employment service and falls under the responsibility of the ministry for Education and Employment. In this regard Jobsplus deals with issues of youth employment and traineeships in Malta. The main employment programme for young people offered through Jobsplus is the Youth Guarantee. One particular scheme under the Youth Guarantee is called the youth Activation Scheme within which young people receive personalised attention as they go through a process that includes profiling, education and work exposure and a traineeship.

Apprenticeships are dealt with at the Malta College for the Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST). Apprenticeships are a requirement for any course at MCAST that offers an Apprenticeships as part of its syllabus.

## 3.1 General context

### Labour market situation in the country

Malta has been exhibiting a positive economic performance with low unemployment rates. As illustrated in the table below, the unemployment rate in Malta in 2015 stood at less than five per cent, as opposed to the EU average of over nine per cent. Moreover, its employment rate has continuously risen throughout the last decade. The employment rate in Malta significantly increased from 61.6 per cent in 2011 to almost 68 per cent as of the end of 2015. These increases are backed up by the positive economic growth, which is further enhancing the demand for expanding the local labour market.

#### Unemployment rate: Age 20 to 64 years (Eurostat)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
EU28	10.0	9.2	8.4	7.5	6.7
MT	5.3	4.9	4.3	3.6	3.6

#### Employment rate: Age 20 to 64 years (Eurostat)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
EU28	69.2	70.0	71.0	72.1	73.1
MT	66.4	67.8	71.1	73.0	75.5

The Maltese government has in place several projects that aim at enhancing work opportunities while upskilling and reskilling the current working age population in order to equip said individuals with the necessary tools and transversal skills to enter the world of work. Such initiatives under the active labour market policies include schemes such as the [work exposure](#), [traineeships](#), [work placement scheme](#), [youth guarantee](#), [investing in skills](#), [access to employment](#) and a [free childcare service for parents/guardians in education or employment](#). All these schemes are administrated by [Jobsplus](#), the Maltese Public Employment Service. Additionally there have been various changes to the welfare system which promotes the concept of Making Work Pay. The concept focuses on rewarding people who find employment by making participation in the labour market more attractive through initiatives such as the Tapering of Benefits and In-work Benefits.

#### **Current youth employment situation within the labour market**

With an unemployment rate of 9.1 per cent in 2018, Malta is placed among the countries with the lowest unemployment rate within the EU. The EU28 unemployment rate in 2018 stood at 15.2 per cent, representing a 6.1 percentage point difference from Malta. Compared to 2011, when the unemployment rate was 13.3 per cent, Malta saw a decrease of 4.2 per cent.

#### Unemployment rate: Age 15 to 24 years (%) (Eurostat)

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
EU28	23.6	22.2	20.4	18.7	16.8	15.2
MT	13.0	11.7	11.8	10.7	10.6	9.1

Various initiatives have been introduced to encourage youth participation in education, training and employment. Through the [Youth Guarantee](#), a second chance at education, work exposure and traineeship, as well as counselling and guidance on how to transit from inactivity into the labour market, is offered.

Apart from the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, a research project, the [Employability Index](#), was conducted to determine vertical and horizontal mismatches experienced by graduates when entering the labour market.

This information can be used by both prospective tertiary students and local authorities as a means of career guidance: while in the process of choosing the right career path, one can evaluate the risk of vertical and horizontal mismatches for each course. Through this means, students can analyse and determine which courses have the lowest chances of leading to job mismatch.

## Definitions and concepts

**Young people:** Young people are categorized as persons aged between 15 and 24 years old.

**NEETs:** NEETs is the abbreviated form of the label given to young people who are neither in employment nor in education and training. In practice, it corresponds to the percentage of the population of a given age group and gender who are currently [not employed](#), and not involved in any form of [education](#) or training.

**Active groups and inactive groups:** Active population, includes both [employed](#) (employees and self-employed) and [unemployed](#) people, but not the economically [inactive](#), such as pre-school children, school age children, students and pensioners, provided that they are not working and not available or looking for work even if of working-age.

**Registering/Unemployed groups:** Registering groups includes people who are not working but actively seeking to find employment by registering with Malta's Public Employment Services - [Jobsplus](#).

An unemployed person, according to [Eurostat](#) is defined as someone who is currently aged between 15 to 74 years old; is without work during the reference week, who is available to start working within the next two weeks (or has already found a job to start within the next three months) or was actively seeking employment at some time in the last four weeks.

**Vulnerable groups:** Vulnerable groups, according to the [Inclusive Employment Services](#) at Jobsplus, are persons who, at present, fall within the socially disadvantaged categories of former substance abusers, former prison inmates or who are experiencing other socio-economic difficulties, and are therefore in need of customized care and support vis-à-vis training and guidance towards employment and job retention.

In addition to the above definitions, Malta's [Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan](#) also defines what constitutes good-quality offers. A good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship refers to the opportunity given to young people through the Youth Guarantee during the four months period of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. For each type of offer, whether it is employment, training or education, criteria are established on whether or not the activity is applicable for the young person to participate in.

If a job opportunity is offered, it needs to last for at least six months. Moreover, if the employer is engaging the participant through the Youth Guarantee, the employer is legally bound to complete an engagement form and needs to submit it to the Public Employment Services.

If the young person is provided with an offer of traineeship, the traineeship needs to be set on a limited period of work practice and whether or not the trainee is paid, the traineeship needs to offer learning and training components. Thus, the young person needs to be engaged on the basis that he or she is gaining practical and professional experience which will in turn facilitate their transition into regular employment.

If an offer of education is provided, the course needs to be issued from a recognised training institution (public or private). Furthermore the course should lead to an

educational attainment of minimum Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) Level 2. Short courses are not considered 'quality' offers. Programmes targeted at early school-leavers and low-skilled young people meeting quality requirements of curricula, assessment and validation of learning outcomes, and which lead to a recognised qualification, are also considered to be 'quality' offers.

For young people with a disability, an offer of supported or sheltered employment providing practical employment training in various sectors of the labour market, and including the assistance of job coaches is deemed to be a 'good quality' offer.

Self-initiated traineeships, education or employment opportunities are also considered as an offer subject to participants demonstrating that the criteria for assessing a 'quality' offer as established in other forms of 'offers' are met. This means that a traineeship offer needs to be accompanied by a written agreement between the employer, participant and the Public Employment Services; an education initiative needs to lead to a qualification from a recognised institution; and an employment offer needs to be regulated by an engagement form submitted to the Public Employment Services.

The NEET Activation Scheme is part of the youth guarantee and it starts off with profiling, behavioural training, guidance on employment, development of communication skills, CV writing and interview skills. Following the initial phase, young people are requested to either further their training through continued education or participate in a work exposure which would eventually lead to an offer of traineeship.

## 3.2 Administration and governance

### Governance

Following the Council Recommendation establishing the Youth Guarantee, Member States issued National Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans detailing the approach to implementation, the roles of public authorities and other actors, sources of funding, arrangements for monitoring and evaluation and the envisaged timetable. In parallel, the Commission together with the Employment Committee (EMCO) developed an Indicator Framework for monitoring the Youth Guarantee implementation.

[The Ministry for Education and Employment](#) was entrusted with the responsibility for the overall co-ordination of the Youth Guarantee. Malta's Public Employment Services - [Jobsplus](#) is the main entity responsible for the profiling, assessment of registering youths who are currently unemployed and providing other services. These services include the setting up of a personal action plan for each individual, offering them advisory services with regard to the labour market, guidance on the development of employability skills and introducing active labour market measures such as traineeships.

Additionally, Jobsplus, in collaboration with the Ministry for Education and Employment, monitors the implementation of the Youth Guarantee through the Indicator Framework for Monitoring the Youth Guarantee.

### Main actors

Malta's main governmental authorities responsible for youth employment consist of the [Ministry for Education and Employment](#) and [Jobsplus](#). Although both authorities do not exclusively deal with young people, this cohort forms part of the entities' responsibilities and priorities.

### Cross-sectorial cooperation

Malta recognizes that for the Youth Guarantee programme to be effective, partnership approaches with key stakeholders are essential. To this effect, an inter-agency approach is adopted where multiple actors collaborate to provide a holistic service to these young people. Such stakeholders include [Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology \(MCAST\)](#) and [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) - Malta's National Youth Agency.

MCAST, is Malta's leading vocational education and training institution which covers MQF Level 1 to MQF Level 6 courses and encourages and supports students to progress to higher levels through a continuous pathway. Aġenzija Zgħażaġh is the entity entrusted with mainstreaming youth issues into national policies and has a central role in bringing together the interests of youth with government policies.

Another important stakeholder is the Directorate for Lifelong Learning and Early School Leavers which is the contact point established within the compulsory education structure to capture early school leavers from the education stream.

### 3.3 Skills forecasting

#### Forecasting system(s)

In 2016, the [National Commission for Further and Higher Education \(NCFHE\)](#), [Jobsplus](#) and [Malta Enterprise \(ME\)](#) launched the [Employee Skills Gap Survey](#). The objective was to gauge the extent of the existing skills gap, to contribute effectively to improvements in the educational system in Malta, to make it more responsive to the needs of the labour market and to provide policymakers with the information necessary to identify potential shortcomings in the Maltese labour market that could be hindering companies from finding employees with adequate skills. The population for this study included all employers in Malta's Public Employment Services' database excluding the self-employed (without employees). The sample size was 500 employers sub-divided by NACE classifications and employer size.

The stakeholders involved in this survey grouped together to carry out the study in a complete and comprehensive manner. Jobsplus focused on recruitment difficulties, employability skills and labour market needs fluctuations. The National Commission for Further and Higher Education put more impetus on education and skills gaps whereas Malta Enterprise provided knowledge and experience regarding employers' skills needs. Following the presentation of findings, representative bodies and industry players were invited to participate in sector-specific focus groups to discuss selected skills-related issues in more detail. A [summary](#) of the main results and findings of this research were published in 2017.

#### Skills development

The [Employee Skills Gap Survey](#) is a research project aimed at identifying shortages in skills, while gaining insight on supply and demand in different sectors of the labour market in Malta. Moreover, apart from gauging the extent of the existing skills gap, the survey also aims to contribute effectively to improvements in the educational system in Malta. The survey will help to make the education system more responsive to the needs of the labour market. It will also provide policymakers with the information necessary to identify potential shortcomings in the Maltese labour market that are hindering companies from finding employees with adequate skills. This exercise is deemed particularly important in light of the relatively strong and sustained growth recorded by the Maltese economy in recent years, which requires an increasingly diversified set of skills to enable companies to meet market demand.

As highlighted in various publications such as CEDEFOP's [Skills Panorama](#), which serves as a forecasting tool of the skills needed, skills are crucial for the economy to reach new heights. Such insights have shown that although machines are 'doing jobs' which used to be conducted by humans, this does not really mean that machines replace the need to have people in employment. This development has undoubtedly replaced how one looks at the work dimension and the skills needed but it has not changed the need for people to perform tasks. Furthermore, the digital revolution in itself was a source of job creation.

This need for skills has also been evident in other studies such as the [Employability Index](#) which consisted of a study on the employment of graduates. Although not a forecasting

exercise, the Employability Index provided fruitful insight into areas related to tertiary-level education courses where graduates are least likely to be underemployed (both horizontal and vertical underemployment). This in turn indicates the specific skills and areas of specialisation which are in high demand in the Maltese labour market. When taken together, all these tools provide an evidence-base for employment, training and education institutions, especially when designing programmes and measures.

## 3.4 Career guidance and counselling

### Career guidance and counselling services

In 2019, the Maltese Government launched the Policy on [Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion in schools](#). The Policy is in line with the education strategy of the [Ministry for Education](#) (MFED) since it promotes the setting of an inclusive school environment that ensures that all learners have the opportunity to obtain the necessary skills and attitudes to be active citizens and to succeed at work and in society. The Policy adopts a wide definition of inclusion which covers:

- learners with special needs;
- learners with different sexual orientations;
- learners from ethnic minorities and different religions;
- high ability learners.

The [National Inclusive Education Framework](#), also launched in 2019, builds upon the [Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion in schools](#); and strives to create clarity around the concept of inclusive education and synergy among the various services dealing with diversity issues in schools. Moreover, the themes entrenched within the framework ensure that the concept of equity is upheld in all College and School Development Plans (SDP). The SDPs are supported through the provision of specialized training to College Principals and Heads of Schools.

The career guidance service under the remit of the [National School Support Services](#) (NSSS) within the [Ministry for Education](#) holds a number of initiatives in State colleges in order to entice students' attendance and guide them on how to see the relevance of schooling with the world of work. Professionals work in a multi-disciplinary team in order to make schooling attractive for students and develop tailor-made programmes to reduce the risk of early school leavers. All students are encouraged towards further education in order to better equip themselves and acquire the necessary skills for the world of work.

Practitioners within the Safe Schools Program, which incorporates

- the Child Safety Services (dealing with potential and actual child abuse cases);
- the Anti-Bullying Service;
- Anti-Substance Abuse Service.

provide support to learners attending State and non-State schools (schools in the Church and Independent sectors) to support young people at risk of becoming early school leavers.

The National School Support Services (NSSS) offers other educational opportunities for students with a disability who have finished compulsory school, namely the [Dun Manwel Attard Young Adult Resource Centre](#) and the [Helen Keller Resource Centre](#).

The career guidance service within the Ministry for Education contributes towards the career development as well as personal and social development of students, within a holistic approach. This includes initiatives to support students' subject/career option choices and transitions from primary to secondary education and from secondary to post-secondary education and/or work. Career guidance services are delivered in schools by

Principal Education Support Practitioners (Career Advisors), and guidance teachers through a variety of face-to-face provisions, such as on a one-to-one basis as well as in small and large groups. Career guidance services are also offered at the [Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology](#) (MCAST), [Institute of Tourism Studies](#), [Junior College, Higher Secondary](#), and the [University of Malta](#).

The transition co-ordinator support Year 11 students with Individual Educational Needs on the different opportunities that meet the needs of the student. This will ensure that the best possible choice of provisions is made for each student. The transition co-ordinator helps in the transition programme from secondary mainstream to post-16 provision or from [Education Resource Centres](#) to other post-16 provisions, Adult Services or employment opportunities. The Transition co-ordinator organises orientation visits to the different provisions and prepare profiles and action plans for each student's transition programme.

The career guidance platform, [www.exploremoreproject.eu/mt](http://www.exploremoreproject.eu/mt) provides all the information needed, such as careers within specific sectors by means of videos, a quiz/personality test which determines one's career aptitudes and a description of several post-secondary courses and the respective entry requirements for students to decide on which career path they will choose.

Other services include:

- Talks by employers, career orientation visits and one-week career exposure experiences for students at the place of work.
- [I Choose Fair](#) - a public event where all post-secondary educational institutions and entities are represented under one roof, with the aim of helping students to overcome difficulties and doubts related to their future career paths.
- [Euroguidance Malta](#) - which organises continuous professional development opportunities for career guidance practitioners within the education and employment sectors ensuring that practitioners are better equipped to guide students or adults accordingly. This falls under the remit of the National Schools Support Services within the Ministry for Education in collaboration with other entities such as the [Malta Career Guidance Association](#).
- Interactive career websites aim of addressing the information given to young people aged 11- 15 about their future career choices.

The following are initiatives being taken from an employment perspective:

- The Jobseekers' Advisory Services Unit within the Maltese Public Employment Service, Jobsplus, offers career guidance services to both jobseekers and job changers.
- The Maltese Public Employment Service, Jobsplus, offers both:
  - Individualised Career Guidance
  - Support in developing a Personalised Action Plan (PAP) for employment

The career guidance provided varies according to the needs and level of the individual. The intervention may involve face-to-face meetings (where together with the advisor the jobseeker will discuss the current situation, options and develop a Personalised Action Plan), or else opt for advice over the phone or by e-mail.

Amongst other things the advisor can help a jobseeker:

- Choose their career
- Plan and set goals
- Search for a job
- Apply for a job
- Prepare for a job interview

As part of a general PAP, the initial session would also involve the provision of information on where to search for jobs, local training opportunities and relevant Jobsplus services such as short courses, work exposure schemes, traineeships and any other Jobsplus initiatives. In addition to these mainstream services, Jobsplus also offers specialized Inclusive Employment Services which are specifically designed to help disadvantaged individuals who have a harder time finding work. These include:

- Individuals with disability
- Former substance abusers
- Former prison inmates
- Other people with different social problems

Apart from providing career guidance, employment advisors play an important role in matching [Youth Guarantee](#) participants with employers. Youths who are registering with the Public Employment Service meet with the youth employment advisors so that a profiling exercise is conducted. Following the profiling phase, a personal action plan is designed, and training services are offered to assist the young person in developing the skills and competences needed in a fluctuating labour market.

The [Jobseekers Advisory Unit](#) within the Maltese Public Employment Service, [Jobsplus](#), keeps contact with several educational entities, agencies and non-governmental organisations that work with youths. Through these stakeholders, Jobsplus offers several services to young people, including; information sessions, workshops, career tests, tailor made mock interviews and short training sessions amongst others to youths coming from different educational attainments and backgrounds. Jobsplus also participates in several activities, such as career days, which are organised by other entities. Due to the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Jobseekers Advisory Unit had to bring to a halt the information and training sessions amongst youths in educational institutions. However, staff members are working and adapting the sessions in order to be able to carry them out online, however this is still a working in progress.

The [Youth Guarantee](#), while providing counselling and guidance on how to transition from inactivity to gainful employment it provides a second chance of education, work exposure and traineeship. [Jobsplus](#) was entrusted with the responsibility for the overall co-ordination and implementation of the Youth Guarantee, including profiling, assessment of registering youths who are currently unemployed and providing other services. These services include the setting up of personal action plan for each individual, offering them advisory services with regards to the labour market, guidance on the development of employability skills and introducing active labour market measures such as traineeships. Moreover, Jobsplus, also monitors the implementation of the Youth Guarantee through the Indicator Framework for Monitoring the Youth Guarantee.

In response to the effects of covid-19, enhanced digital tools have been provided through the Youth Guarantee as an effective response to a number of priorities, including:

- engaging youths who are at risk of becoming Early School Leavers and falling within the NEET category;
- Connecting educators and learners with each other when in separate locations;
- Providing vulnerable participants and their families with limited financial resources, with an additional source of income.

The list of training modules has been expanded to include a wider range of industry related courses at different MQF levels. In addition to offering training and mentoring offline in a traditional format, a bespoke digital platform has been built specifically for the [Youth Guarantee](#). All training modules have been converted online and the digital modules developed are being used to strengthen the participants digital skills. Enhanced youth mentoring has been put in place throughout all phases of the scheme. Outreach

activities have also been enhanced to include partnerships with youth NGO's in different localities across Malta.

Additionally, [EURES](#) (European Employment Service) Malta provides advice and guidance to all EU/EEA/Swiss nationals including youths regarding mobility. The EURES unit within Jobsplus advises interested individuals on how to search for a job in another country. Interested individuals are put in touch with the EURES network in the country they wish to move to as it is the EURES advisers in the country of destination that are best placed to assist them about procedures and processes. EURES Malta also directs persons to the EURES Portal ([www.eures.europa.eu](http://www.eures.europa.eu)) where they can find job opportunities and living and working information for all member states. Jobsplus also advises people on the appropriate administrative processes to be undertaken locally before someone relocates (i.e. inform tax department, transfer of social benefits, etc). EURES Malta also provides assistance to any incoming EU/EEA/Swiss nationals including youths in order to help them find a job in Malta, how to register as unemployed, and provides information about living and working conditions in Malta.

## Funding

All compulsory education services mentioned above are public-funded for state schools.

Residential school – Addressing children's holistic needs in a safe environment: (as at 23 November 2020):

- 0.000028% over recurrent budget amounting to €347,308,000;
- 0.00045% over capital budget amounting to €88,771,000.

Furthermore, youth initiatives in Malta including schemes such as the [Youth Guarantee](#) are funded by both EU and national funds. Initiatives targeting youths undertaken by the Maltese Public Employment Service, [Jobseekers Advisory Unit](#) are however directly funded through national funds.

## Quality assurance

At the [Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology](#) (MCAST) and [Institute of Tourism Studies](#) (ITS), there are counselling and career guidance policies and procedures which are adhered to so that quality is ensured. At the University of Malta, the Health and Wellness Centre at the University of Malta offers services aimed at enhancing the wellness of University of Malta staff and students.

Furthermore, Malta's Public Employment Service, [Jobsplus](#), has additionally instilled a number of additional quality checks within its Jobseekers Advisory function. The respective Unit Managers are now accessing samples of jobseeker profiles for each Employment Advisor in order to check that the data was inputted correctly. Another check is also being carried out on the outcome of the Personal Action Plan appointments and the agreement reached between the Employment Advisor and the jobseeker. Following these checks, feedback is given to the respective Employment Advisor. These checks are documented in Quality check forms.

## 3.5 Traineeships and apprenticeships

### Official guidelines on traineeships and apprenticeships

Until 2014 both Traineeships and Apprenticeships in Malta fell under the responsibility of the Employment and Training Corporation (now Jobsplus), however since 2014, Traineeships have fallen under the responsibility of Jobsplus, while the Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) is responsible for Apprenticeships.

Traineeships are offered in accordance with the [Employment and Training Services Act Cap 343](#). The Act outlines that a participant (trainee) is to attend both off-the-job (formal

training provided by Jobsplus or another institution approved by Jobsplus) and on-the-job training (placement with an employer).

When a person is enrolled in the [Traineeship Scheme](#), Jobsplus issues an agreement which is signed by the employer, the trainee and a representative of the Corporation. This agreement outlines the obligations of all parties (including the duration of the traineeship and the facilities and amenities that need to be provided by the employer to safeguard the health and safety of the trainee).

Apprenticeships are managed and coordinated by the [Apprenticeships Department](#) at Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST). Up to now, the framework that regulates apprenticeships has been the [Employment and Training Services Act Cap 343](#). However, a new law that will regulate apprenticeships was issued for public consultation and will then be tabled in Parliament to be enacted. When a young person enrolls in a course that requires an apprenticeship, the young person signs the [Apprenticeship Workplace Regulations Agreement](#) that details the apprentice duties, rights and responsibilities.

Since a trainee taking part in a traineeship is not considered an employee, s/he is not entitled to any social security coverage. Moreover throughout the traineeship, a trainee receives a training allowance, which is based on the National Minimum Wage, paid by Jobsplus. The trainee is paid for each hour attended.

During an apprenticeship offered through MCAST, the apprentice benefits from social security coverage as listed in the [Apprenticeship Workplace Regulations Agreement](#). These include:

- National Insurance (NI) Contributions: Weekly rate of NI contributions payable by the employer and the apprentice: Under 18 years: 10% of weekly wage up to a maximum of €4.38 (Category E) Over 18 years: 10% of weekly wage up to a maximum of €7.94 (Category F)
- Bereavement Leave: two days bereavement leave if the deceased is the wife, husband, mother, father, guardian, son, daughter, sister or brother of apprentice  
Marriage Leave: three days
- Injury leave: One year full pay
- Vacation Leave: Upon completion of the observation-probationary period apprentices are entitled to two working days' vacation leave for every 20 days attendance at the place of work.
- Sick Leave: Upon completion of the observation-probationary period apprentices are entitled to 15 days full and 15 days half pay sick leave pro-rata.
- Statutory Bonuses: Apprentices are entitled to half of the statutory bonuses (€67.55 in June and €67.55 in December).
- Overtime: Apprentices are eligible to work overtime provided the necessary consent is provided by MCAST which will ascertain that the extra hours do not influence badly the time the apprentice needs to either rest or study. Overtime rates are those applicable to full-time employees performing the same job. No overtime rate is to be worked out on a wage below the National Statutory minimum wage.

Apprenticeships are a requirement for any course offered at MCAST that has an apprenticeship as part of its syllabus. Such courses amount to approximately 50 per cent of all courses offered at MCAST. On the other hand, within Jobsplus, traineeships form part of the labour market initiatives aimed to assist jobseekers in acquiring formal training as well as hands on training to facilitate their transition from unemployment to employment.

Before launching new traineeships, Jobsplus seeks feedback from different stakeholders to ensure that the traineeships offered meet the demands of the labour market.

Feedback is also sought from employers with respect to the knowledge, skills and competences to be incorporated into the formal training provided by Jobsplus.

Persons who are either unemployed or inactive are eligible to join the [Traineeship Scheme](#) offered by Jobsplus. Any student that enrolls at MCAST and chooses a course that has an apprenticeship is obliged to follow the apprenticeship.

Traineeships are covered by articles 29 to 45 of the Employment and Training Services Act. Traineeships are offered to those young people participating in the Youth Guarantee as well as adults registered with the Public Employment Services. As a result of the Youth Guarantee, investment on work exposure and traineeships has been strengthened as they are considered to be a very effective means for individuals to enter the labour market following a definite period on-the-job and off-the-job training. The traineeship offered as part of the Youth Guarantee implementation is offered as the last phase, following motivational training and a period of work exposure.

MCAST has no programme that is directly linked to the Youth Guarantee.

## **Promoting traineeships and apprenticeships**

### **i. Traineeships**

Traineeships have become an increasingly important way for young people to gain work experience and enter the labour market. Through the implementation of MT's Youth Guarantee, Malta boasts of an effective service which is highly personalised and appropriate to the concerned individual through the extensive and effective profiling which is carried out. One of the schemes under the Youth Guarantee umbrella is the NEETs Activation Scheme II. The NEET Activation Scheme II offers tailor-made interventions to youths facing difficulties affecting their work integration prospects. There are three phases to the scheme. The initial phase is individual profiling of participants. The second phase is a 240 hours work placement either in a simulated or actual work place and the third phase consists of a traineeship whereby participants will be able to put into practice what they have learnt during the previous two phases.

The Traineeship scheme aims at training individuals to find and retain employment by equipping participants with the initial vocational training (i.e. pre-employment training) to help them obtain the knowledge, skills and competences required by employers. Traineeships are based on a combination of on-the-job and off-the-job training; the programmes offered by Jobsplus are labour market driven, whereby the job preferences of the jobseekers are matched with the requests made by employers participating in the scheme. During the scheme, the trainee must attend 300 hours within a maximum period of 12 weeks, consisting of 282 hours as on-the-job training and 18 hours as off-the-job training. It is important to note that on-the-job training takes place at the employer's premises while off-the-job training is conducted at Jobsplus training complex. Additionally, participants are paid a training allowance, payable by Jobsplus for every hour attended, which is calculated on the national minimum wage. In order to monitor the process and ensure that the training provided matches the needs of the labour market, Jobsplus is committed to ensure that regular contact is made with the various employers participating within the traineeship programme. Furthermore, during the Traineeship Scheme Jobsplus' representatives carry out monitoring visits. The scope of these monitoring visits is to ensure that both employers and youths get the support needed during the scheme. Information on the traineeship scheme can be obtained from the following [link](#).

The unemployed registrants are the main prospective participants of the Traineeship schemes. In view that Jobsplus possesses data of unemployed registrants, these persons are invited by Jobsplus to meet the schemes administrators on a one-to-one basis. The schemes administrators who meet unemployed registrants on a daily basis explain in detail the benefit of such scheme during these one-to-one meetings and assist in the filling of the application.

Unemployed individuals who are not on Jobsplus unemployment register are also eligible to participate in the scheme; hence on a regular basis Jobsplus opts to market the scheme through social media (mainly [facebook](#)). Facebook targets the prospective participants and parents of unemployed and inactive youths who can encourage their children to participate in such initiatives. These facebook adverts can also encourage employers to participate in these schemes by offering a placement opportunity to a trainee with the prospective of job retention after completion of the scheme.

As indicated above, the NEET Activation Scheme II offers a portal for those youths who would like to engage in traineeships by means of collaboration and effective partnerships with employers. Jobsplus liaises with these employers in order to build customer relationships and find placements. What is crucial here is an effective line of communication with employers and also with other stakeholders to guarantee assistance which is personalised to individual needs and well-functioning partnerships. Furthermore, the [Employer Relations Unit](#), within Jobsplus, is set to assist employers in all matters pertaining to the entity and offers one-to-one meetings. During these meetings, employers are informed about all relevant Jobsplus services. The unit assists employers in the filling of vacancies online and applications for Jobsplus scheme including the Traineeship scheme. In Addition Jobsplus also participates in different national fairs to promote its services. Apart from social media marketing, from time to time these initiatives are promoted on newspapers, magazines, through radio and television interviews, automailers and employment and career fairs.

The Youth Guarantee Office also undertakes multiple social media promotion and awareness campaigns in the form of posts and videos. These take place throughout the year on the [Youth Guarantee Malta Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages. The content shared is clear, concise and visually engaging, in an attempt to communicate a message which resonates and motivates.

Radio, TV and billboard advertising are used to effectively increase reach. Initiative-specific newsletters are sent to a growing database of education institutions and employers, among others. Information letters and application forms are also sent to registered jobseekers. In addition, all relevant information pertaining to the project's initiatives is accessible on the [Youth Guarantee website](#) which also houses applications, reports and other downloadable informative materials.

To complement the targeted online approach, the Youth Guarantee Office regularly attends and organises information meetings and conferences, and actively participates in targeted student events and fairs, during which information and custom merchandise are disseminated. As a result, valuable connections have been established with the schools' psychosocial teams. The Youth Guarantee Committee has also helped forge collaborative relations with educational and employment professionals, business organisations and other related entities, which are now part of the project's network.

#### ii. Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) initiatives on Initial VET

In May 2019, MCAST launched the [Strategic Plan 2019-2021](#) as a means of incentivising a more inclusive, equitable and excellence in vocational provision in Malta. The strategy for the College sees vocational education as a driving force behind the quality labor force in Malta by preparing learners to be flexible, specialists in vocational industry areas as required, but also in possession of transversal skills, behavioral skills and appropriate attitudes.

In 2019/20, the [Skills Kit Programme](#) was again relaunched at MQF/EQF Level 1 covering various vocational areas as well as personal and employability skills intended for students who prefer to study at their own pace. The Skills Kits are Level 1 short courses which are available to the public with the aim of having the opportunity to enhance own skills and become more employable. The Skills Kits are also designed to offer the opportunity to learners to be exposed to new skills which might interest them and eventually attract them to further education.

Through the ongoing ESF Project : Adding Value: Nurturing Learning Journeys at the MCAST Foundation College - MCAST aims to provide flexible teaching approaches, innovative technologies and mentoring to engage vulnerable students and allow them the chance to learn in an enjoyable manner. The project will identify barriers to training encountered by socially excluded individuals, allowing the creation of long-term structures that can provide immediate support to vulnerable students at the Foundation College. The project will empower the most vulnerable to increase their skills and competences, thereby allowing them to become economically independent. This will be done by providing tailor made education, training & support to vulnerable groups.

MCAST is also working on gamifying parts of the curriculum as well as building elements of Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) within particular components of study programmes up to MQF Level 3. The aim is to attract and retain young learners in the Education and Training process, and modernise vocational education even at MQF Levels 1-3, so that learning becomes more engaging. Students will become familiar with the process of learning and working through new technologies, thus starting to build the foundations for future labour market needs.

In order to provide a holistic experience to international VET learners, including migrants, during the last year there were an increase in a number of activities through the MCAST outreach and integration offices. MCAST is also providing lectures in Maltese, English and cultural orientation through the [I-Belong Programme](#). Additionally, on a yearly basis, MCAST organises a [Diversity Day](#) with the involvement of international students.

In 2019/20, MCAST also launched its [Corporate Social Responsibility \(CSR\) programme](#). The aim of the programme is to provide MCAST learners with the opportunity to enhance their studies with life-enriching experiences that add value to their holistic knowledge base. The programme will bring MCAST together with non-governmental stakeholders to form key partnerships in an effort to develop and cultivate skills, attitudes and values that enhance society and the environment. Areas of cooperation include entrepreneurship, creative and performing arts, sport, and voluntary work in the cultural sector. MCAST Corporate Social Responsibility will also provide a framework for all college learners to have the knowledge and skills acquired through the programme, recognised and accredited within their formal programme of studies. MCAST is committed to empowering its young and adult learners to become active and employable citizens that contribute to Malta's dynamic democratic society and economy. From academic year 2020/21, students will be asked to carry out 20 hours of community work with the different NGOs as part of their course. Furthermore, MCAST will be signing a number of protocols with local councils and also with sport federations.

### iii. Apprenticeships

With regard to apprenticeships, students who enrol at the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) can choose from courses that offer an apprenticeship according to their preferences and academic achievements and qualifications. Professional guidance is offered to students on an individual level and an annual prospectus with all courses, and their respective entry requirements, syllabi and MQF level is issued.

Apprenticeships providers interested in offering apprenticeship opportunities are dealt with on a one-to-one by the Apprenticeships Department at MCAST.

In 2019, MCAST launched a new suite of MQF Level 6 Degree Apprenticeships in Biomedical Engineering, Construction Engineering, Software Development, Multimedia Software Development, Computer Systems and Networks and Fashion. Students following such degree apprenticeships will be able to achieve a recognized qualification while simultaneously getting paid for gaining valuable work experience.

The European Structural Fund (ESF) project '[Achieving Vocational Excellence through enhanced Work Based Learning](#)' with Project reference No: ESF 3.081 aims to consolidate MCAST's Work Based Learning with the aim of making VET more attractive to students, whilst providing a more competent workforce that can cater for current and future

industrial requirements. This project will include a number of partners which include the [Chamber of Commerce](#), [the National Skills Council](#) and [the Ministry of Education and Employment](#). The project will involve the development and delivery of a mentoring training programme to MCAST lecturers and staff. Furthermore, training and information sessions will also be organised for industry sponsors. MCAST will map out the number of apprenticeship per area and the learning outcomes which can be offered by each participant employer. This monitoring will be achieved through the development of a comprehensive competency framework and use of an analysis tool. In addition, six centres will be set up with the main aim to tackle labour market mismatches and provide students with innovative work-based competences by simulating real working environments. It is estimated that around 600 MCAST students who follow an apprenticeship programme will benefit from the project during its whole Implementation period. The Project implementation phase has started in 2019 and it is expected to be completed by 2022.

#### iv. Partnerships between education providers and employers

MCAST has remained actively involved to increase the number of industry partners to enable work-based learning in the form of apprenticeship, internship and work placements. To date, around 1300 employers are registered with MCAST as industry partners in a wide variety of economic sectors including engineering, transport, applied sciences, creative arts, community services, business and commerce, agribusiness, and information technology. Over the last year, 300 new employers have been registered with MCAST as industry partners.

Additionally, there is a drive to involve industry directly in education by employing the students and then offer them the possibility to study while they are in employment. Given the high employment rate this could be more enticing for youths and non to continue education. With this in mind, MCAST has just launched the following initiatives with HVAC and aviation employers.

The Maintenance and Repair Organisations (MROs) every year are invited to interview new students who enrol for aviation maintenance courses. This is done on the request of the MROs themselves so that they recruit the new students and give them a full pay as full-time employees. The students follow the two-year full-time course at MCAST that also includes apprenticeship at the MRO. This system provides the students motivation to do well in their studies knowing that they have job security at the end of their studies. It also shows commitment from the part of MROs who commit themselves to sponsor the students' training in order to secure a stream of new recruits into their expanding business. Students will do their apprenticeship at their sponsor's place of work. This academic year 2019-2020 about a hundred students will get into the scheme.

Recently, the importers of air conditioners have set up an association. They have contacted MCAST to see how we can cooperate in order to attract more students to the Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) courses. MCAST proposed to the association to set up a scheme similar to aviation. They agreed and as from this year they are offering a number of sponsorships to students who take up HVAC courses. Students in this scheme will get a salary from their sponsor and have also security of employment at the end of the course. Students will do their apprenticeship at their sponsor's place of work. The association offered to offer 25 sponsorships for students taking MQF level 3 and level 4 courses in HVAC.

The Curriculum and Student Affairs Department within MCAST is currently supporting GOV entities in projects that target the upskilling of individuals within industry and/or the community. Working with the Human Rights and Integration Directorate on an AMIF project Sustaining Management of Migration Flows. Training is offered in Maltese, English and Cultural integration. Collaboration with [Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity](#) – L3 and L4 Awards were designed in Financial Literacy and Benefits Management respectively to upskill employees in Social Services Centres to equip them with the necessary knowledge, skills and competences to be able to give better provision

to the clients in the community. Collaboration with industry in the security printing business (following national strategic investments) to provide trained and employees and upskill employees already within the sector. The latter training was developed with industry and is being offered directly in industry.

v. Other important MCAST initiatives in VET :

During February 2019, MCAST launched the [Masters in Vocational Education Applied Research](#) 4.0 which provides its own lecturers with a pedagogical training qualification in VET at Masters level. The Masters is a three-year qualification of 120 ECTS with three exit points, either after one year with a Post-Graduate Certificate or after the second year with a Post-Graduate Diploma or after the third year, which is the dissertation year, with a Masters.

MCAST also organised during 2019 various continuous professional development (CPD) sessions for its staff members, both for lecturers and administrative staff. Participation in CPD workshops exceeded 300 registrations.

MCAST established an Applied Research Unit which works specifically on vocational and applied research that is carried out either by researchers and professionals or collaborative partners, towards creating innovative knowledge and exploring the feasibility of new or improved technology, products, processes, services or solutions. Research within professional higher education at MCAST will serve to provide new knowledge and addressing real-life problems, a process of learning and translating into new teaching, and a cycle of collaborating and disseminating findings, solutions and new knowledge, skills and competences.

In 2019, MCAST also launched the [research framework](#) which is built on three main important pillars:

- A focus on key, select research thrusts leading to smart specializations.
- Creating and working within one or more Knowledge Centre / R&I Ecosystem, Centres for Smart Specialization, and peer learning through international networks such as ASEF, Eurashe and UAS4Europe.
- Developing and propagating new research, innovation and pedagogical and andragogic methodologies and technologies

During 2019, MCAST also launched a new series of Masters programmes as part of an ESF project – MCAST is offering eight additional Masters Programmes in the following topics: Environmental Engineering, Exercise and Sports Science, Water Resources Management, High-Performance Buildings, Mechatronics, Lean Enterprise, Information Technology and Systems, and Product Design. One of the most important objectives of these programmes is to build a high level of expertise among VET students in vital areas such as water, energy, infrastructures, health innovative design solutions and many more. This will be accompanied through industry-driven impact research.

## **Recognition of learning outcomes**

Trainees participating in traineeships are awarded two certificates: a certificate to cover the theoretical component delivered during the off-the-job training (in this case, if the courses offered are accredited trainees are awarded a certificate pegged between EQF/MQF level 1 to 4 depending on the traineeship) and another certificate to recognize their participation in the on-the-job training (Apprenticeship review Malta).

MCAST offers two year apprenticeship programmes at EQF/MQF Levels 3 and 4, depending on the particular courses (Apprenticeship review Malta).

Trainees participating in a traineeship are requested to fill in a handbook, whereby they need to include all the competences acquired throughout their on-the-job training.

Students following an apprenticeship at MCAST are requested to fill in a vocational competence logbook that needs to be verified by the employer.

The formal qualification provided by Jobsplus is accredited and based on the ECVET system. On the certificates issued to those who successfully complete the formal training, one can find the EQF/MQF level of the course as well the number of ECVET points.

All apprenticeships offered by MCAST are formally accredited and students obtain ECTS and ECVET credits.

## Funding

During past years, the funding of traineeships was organized through the European Social Fund. Jobsplus has applied for ESF funding for the programming period 2014-2020. During this period (2014-2020) the percentage of co-financing will be 80% through ESF and 20% through Malta National Funds. Funding will be used to cover the training allowance payable to trainees. Trainees receive a training allowance, which is based on the National Minimum Wage. The maximum amount that a trainee can earn ranges from €2,352 to €2,688 depending on the duration of the traineeship (currently between 14 to 16 weeks).

Employers are entitled for a tax rebate whenever they offer a placement to a trainee for a period of six months as per [Legal Notice 179 of 2014](#). By means of such an initiative, a tax deduction equivalent to €600 for each work placement shall be allowed provided that such placements are of at least six months in duration.

Apprenticeship providers pay the apprentices' wages and part of the apprentices' National Insurance. They are also entitled for a tax rebate whenever they offer a placement to a trainee for a period of six months as per [Legal Notice 179 of 2014](#). By means of such an initiative, a tax deduction equivalent to €600 for each work placement shall be allowed provided that such placements are of at least six months duration.

## Quality assurance

Trainees enrolled on traineeship are monitored by Jobsplus. During the monitoring visits that take place to evaluate the on-the-job training, Jobsplus staff seek feedback from both trainee and employer to gather additional information on their experience throughout the Scheme.

During the off-the-job training, quality visits are performed by the Quality Assurance Unit, whereby the role of the latter is to ensure that the delivery of the off-the-job training is in accordance with the accredited course; the trainer uses different delivery methodologies to meet the needs of all trainees and the tools and facilities used by trainers to deliver the course are in line with standards established by the Corporation.

When it comes to the funding of the training allowance, trainees are requested to fill in attendance sheets that must be endorsed by the employer. These attendance sheets are vetted by Jobsplus officials. Trainees are only paid for attended hours, meaning deductions are automatically made before payment is issued.

The Apprenticeship Department at MCAST have developed a Monitoring System where lecturers who are VET experts are monitoring in the industry. This ensures that the people who are actually monitoring the students know both the industry and the competences that the students should be gaining. Once a student is placed in an internship, they are assigned to a lecturer, and an online report is completed by the lecturer. The report can be flagged by both the employer and also by the student. At the end of each month, a report on the particular placement is compiled. The monitoring lecturers also provide feedback to the apprenticeship provider.

## 3.6 Integration of young people in the labour market

### Youth employment measures

Work-based vocational competences are integrated in Malta's educational and training programmes emphasising quality qualifications whilst: increasing economic

competitiveness and ensuring that the skills gap between education and work is addressed, producing a skilled labour force that responds better to the labour market needs.

At compulsory education level:

The [Ministry for Education](#) (MFED) launched '[My Journey: achieving through different paths](#)', a secondary school reform aiming to tackle early school leaving further and to provide a system for all learners by addressing their different learning aptitudes, intelligence and patterns.

The reform, both comprehensive and inclusive, was introduced in the first year of secondary schooling (year 9, age 13) during school year 2019-20. Hence since September 2019, through the My Journey reform, secondary school students are allowed to choose from academic, vocational and/or applied subjects in addition to the core curriculum. A [national careers web portal](#) and events such as [I Choose](#) were developed. Students and parents/guardians are guided through the subject choosing process and have access to all information on the different subject options through the 3 routes.

Lower secondary learners have an opportunity to select options/subjects (general/academic, vocational and applied) alongside their compulsory lessons. The following nine vocational subjects and their corresponding applied ones are available:

- agribusiness, engineering technology;
- health and social care;
- hospitality;
- information technology;
- media literacy;
- hairdressing and beauty;
- retail;
- textiles and fashion.

All these subjects lead up to EQF/MQF level 3 qualification, with no dead-ends. The rationale is that vocational education supports the educational engagement of learners who may struggle with the learning pedagogy of mainstream academic subjects. The progress of learners in the vocational subjects is not assessed through formal examinations but through ongoing assessment by the subject teacher, verified internally by a second subject teacher, and evaluated by an external verifier from the national assessment board. School-based information sessions were organised for learners, their parents and teaching staff. Teachers already in service who opted to teach the new vocational and applied subjects attended ongoing professional development sessions in the learning content, vocational pedagogy and assessment procedure. In addition to the investment in human resources, the Ministry and the ESF jointly financed 78 vocational spaces, equipping them with the latest material and teaching resources.

The [My Journey](#) reform includes vocational and applied subjects as a measure to reduce early school leaving and, potentially, increase tertiary education attainment. This involves moving from a 'one size fits all' system to a more inclusive and equitable programme. The aim is to respond to different education needs and give parity of esteem to general, vocational and applied subjects. The new system builds on the current one but ambitiously moves forward in democratising academic, vocational and applied learning for all students within a framework of parity of esteem. It retains key competences and sustains traditional academic learning programmes. Complementarily, vocational subjects and applied learning programmes leading up to MQF Level 3, are also made available to all students and are provided within the same school and in all secondary schools. Applied learning is comparable and equivalent to the academic and vocational education and accredited up to MQF Level 3. Following compulsory education, students may opt to

continue their studies at the [University of Malta](#) (UoM), [Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology](#) (MCAST), [Institute of Tourism Studies](#) (ITS) or another higher education institution of their choice.

The introduction of equitable learning programmes enables more quality time for in-depth learning whilst increasing learning opportunities, eliminating dead ends and easing labour market entry. [My Journey](#) seeks to promote increased links between education and industry. Close cooperation between schools and workplaces assures the currency of subject learning outcomes (SLOs), provides real-life work environments thus warranting the assimilation of the aims of work life, establishes fruitful relationships with companies and facilitates the learning of entrepreneurship competencies. These processes contribute to their development of expertise in the occupation that cannot be simulated in a school-based environment. By offering the possibility to choose vocational and/or applied paths at the age of 12, the reform is implemented in a manner which avoids the possibility of later exclusion. In order to avoid that students may leave compulsory education not being well equipped with those key competences that could allow later re-skilling and up-skilling, the My Journey reform will also include new learning programmes in the core subjects (Mathematics, English, Maltese and Science) targeted at students following applied programmes. In this regard, a new certification is being introduced. The Secondary Education Applied Certificate (SEAC) run by the [MATSEC board](#) will certify 9 applied option subjects and 5 core subjects.

At post-secondary education level:

In March 2018, the [Work-based Learning and Apprenticeship Act](#) came into force, providing regulations and governance and administration of accredited training programmes for work-placements, apprenticeships and internships for VET purposes.

The Work-based Learning and Apprenticeship Act aims at strengthening work-based learning by:

- setting definitions and operational parameters for work placements, apprenticeships and internships;
- outlining responsibilities and governance structures;
- defining rights and obligations for VET providers, employers and learners;
- highlighting the role of employers as responsible learning partners;
- setting a compulsory minimum number of hours for all forms of work-based learning and linking remuneration to the minimum wage;
- using ECVET/ECTS in all forms of work-based learning;
- introducing a single EQF-based apprenticeship qualification replacing the dual certification currently in place;
- launching a training agreements register to support data collection and policy-relevant analysis by the national skills council

As Malta's leading vocational college, the [Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology](#) (MCAST) is the VET institution responsible for governing and managing the Apprenticeship system at national level in Malta, and has been working to raise the quality of apprenticeships so as to strike a balance between theoretical and on-the-job training and hence enable the apprentice to obtain long-term employability. The Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship Act provides regulations and governance and administration of accredited training programmes for work-placements, apprenticeships and internships for VET purposes.

Through this Act, Malta has now introduced a system where apprentices get first-hand knowledge of how the industry works, and are able to see clearly, what they would like to pursue as a career. All apprentices now have the opportunity to obtain the qualifications they need in the specific field chosen, while being able to put the skills they learn into

practice at the same time, with the assistance of experts who are always be on-hand to show them how things are done.

Furthermore, work-based learning is an essential part of curricula at the [Institute of Tourism Studies](#) (ITS). The ITS internship department is responsible for assisting students in finding work within the tourism and hospitality sector thus helping to integrate students into the labour market.

From a public employment service perspective:

Through the Youth Guarantee, young people who are within the NEET category can benefit from initiatives that are specifically targeted at youth. Both registered jobseekers and inactive youth can benefit from the [Youth Guarantee](#) measures, administered by the Maltese Public Employment Service. These include the NEET Activation Scheme, ICT courses, and the SEC revision classes.

Through the different phases of the [NEET Activation Scheme II](#), young people receive personalised attention. The phases include:

- Profiling, Behavioural and Employability Courses;
- Continued Education or Work Exposure;
- Traineeship (following work exposure).

The NEET Activation Scheme II which succeeded the NEET Activation Scheme focuses more on the psychosocial services offered to young people. Furthermore, as a result of the findings of the NEETs Census, NEETs participating in the new scheme were classified into three categories (Transition NEETs, Floating NEETs CORE NEETs), with the aim of ensuring that the intervention provided is targeted to their needs. To this effect, the services are provided according to three methods of intervention:

- Normative method (addressing the category of youths who generally cope well with stressful situations): youths will undergo training focusing on Budgeting Skills and Advanced communication skills;
- Internalising method (addressing the category of youths who tend to be emotionally unstable): youths will undergo training focusing on Social Anxiety Management and personal care and hygiene;
- Externalising method (addressing the category of youths with impulse control difficulties): youths will undergo training focusing on Anger Management and Improving Attention.

IT Courses are offered throughout the year and aim to help young people who are inactive or students who in their last year of compulsory schooling had indicated that they will not further their education, to improve their digital skills. The option for the participants to undergo either the Practical ICT course or the ECDL at MQF Level 3, allows the project to reach a broader spectrum of students having diverse abilities, attitudes, behavioural issues and objectives. As a result, the eligibility criteria were widened to also include youths referred by the school guidance teams, and inactive youths aged between 16-25 who are not in education, employment, or training. Participants are obliged to attend a minimum of 80% of the course and upon successful completion, they gain a qualification and receive an allowance equivalent to the minimum wage. To address deficiencies in social skills, non-obligatory psychological services are also provided. Following completion of the ICT Course, young people are encouraged to either enrol in an educational institution or participate in the NEET Activation Scheme II.

The SEC Revision Classes are aimed at young people who do not attain a passing grade 1 to 5 (1 being the highest) in the SEC mandatory subjects. Revision classes are provided in core subjects such as Maltese, English, Mathematics, Physics and Biology and students can apply for up to three subjects. These classes are provided free of charge during the summer period and last for five weeks. At the end of the classes, participants sit for an exam and are encouraged to enrol in a post-secondary educational institution.

The [Work Exposure Scheme](#) is intended to facilitate transition into employment by providing jobseekers with initial hands on training that will help individuals obtain the knowledge, skills and competences required to find and retain employment. This scheme is designed to meet contemporary labour market demand, whereby the job preferences of the jobseekers are matched with employers' requests. The Work Exposure Scheme consists of 240 hours of placement and trainees have a maximum period of 12 weeks to complete these hours. The on-the-job training takes place at the employer's premises. Throughout the scheme, trainees receive a training allowance for every hour attended. The training allowance, which is paid by Jobsplus through an ESF funded project, is calculated on the National Minimum Wage.

The [Traineeship Scheme](#) is intended to provide jobseekers with initial vocational training (pre-employment training) that will help them attain the knowledge, skills and competences required to find and retain employment. Traineeships are based on combination of on-the-job and off-the-job training. The programmes offered are labour market driven, whereby the job preferences of the jobseekers are matched with the requests made by employers participating in the scheme. A Traineeship is of 300-hour duration over a maximum period of 12 weeks, consisting of 282 hours as on-the-job training and 18 hours as off-the-job training. The maximum number of placement hours in any given week is 40 hours. Throughout the scheme trainees receive a training allowance for every hour attended. The training allowance, which is paid by Jobsplus through an ESF funded project, is calculated on the National Minimum Wage.

In 2019, a total of 1,134 youths (15-24 year old) entered into one of the Youth Guarantee schemes, of which, 745 participated in the SEC Revision Classes and 389 participated in the NEET Activation Scheme. During the same year, 1075 exited from the Youth Guarantee with 66% exiting into a positive destination. From those who exited into a positive destination (707), 83.5% exited to education, 10.6% exited to employment, 5.2% into Traineeship and the rest (0.7%) to Apprenticeships.

Additionally, the [Access to Employment \(A2E\)](#) scheme seeks to provide employment aid to enterprises in Malta and Gozo to promote the recruitment of the more challenged amongst jobseekers, unemployed and inactive persons. From 1 October 2020 the A2E Scheme included also those unemployed persons of age between 15 and 24 who previously participated and completed either the Youth Guarantee or Work Exposure Scheme or the Traineeship Scheme and is recruited for the first-time following completion of such initiatives. The scheme is demand driven and grants are awarded on a first-come first-served basis, subject to the annual ceilings and total budget which is of EUR 12 million. Employers applying for the A2E Scheme from 1 October 2020 onwards will be eligible to receive a subsidy of EUR 104 per week per new recruit engaged for 40 hours, for a period of either 52 weeks or 104 weeks depending on the target group. In the case of registered disabled persons, a subsidy of EUR 155 per week for 40 hours for a maximum of 156 weeks is provided.

In addition to the above-mentioned schemes, job coaches within Jobsplus offer important services at different phases of the job search, transfer to schemes or employment. Most cases followed by a job coach are triggered by the Employment Advisor who asks specifically for the assistance of the job coach once potential issues are identified either during the initial profiling of the client or subsequent reviews.

There are other cases whereby the client would be following a scheme and either the trainer, or the course co-ordinator, client himself, or any other professional such as a Youth/Social worker identify the need of a job coach and thus the job coach will conduct the Readiness Assessment. This is one of the tools that the job coach uses to be able to build a relationship and establish a way forward how to help the client to overcome the obstacles hindering from employment. Eventually, the client can also point out what kind of job s/he are looking for and this is put to test through any of the schemes mentioned above.

The job coaches can intervene at different stages of the case, depending on when the need for the job coach is identified. Eventually, the client is on a placement and the job coach follows throughout. There are instances when the need of a job coach is identified by a monitoring officer and thus the process of job coaching starts at that point.

The job coaches liaise with the employer throughout the placement and if need be even once the client is employed in order to focus also on the retention of employment. Thus, the job coach continues to monitor the individual so if a problem arises, such job coach will intervene and implement job crafting. The aim remains the employability of the client and the retention in the open labour market.

The job coach can eventually refer to other professionals as well, such as social workers, psychologists or psychiatrists when deemed necessary. Surely, this will not create any dependency of the client on the job coaches but will help the client to become as independent as possible, by building self-confidence and becoming a problem solver in his/her own capacity.

Malta places a lot of effort into encouraging individuals to register and apply for the initiatives that target their needs. The NEET Census, which was an outreach project aimed at ensuring that all future initiatives concerning youths reflect their needs. The [NEET Census](#) targeted the identification of youths who are neither in employment, education or training and to analyse through one-to-one interviews their needs, aspirations and the challenges they faced. The questionnaire covered several topics including personal information and social demographics, education and training, work experience and interests, feedback on their choice to dismiss the [Youth Guarantee](#) and suggestions on how youths who are detached from the labour market and from the education spectrum can be motivated to participate in the scheme. Such a close intervention provides insight on the young persons' perception of Government intervention and the awareness of Government programmes.

Moreover, unemployed registered youths with Jobsplus who are assigned an employment advisor are referred to the [Youth Guarantee](#) initiative which corresponds to their needs. The Youth Guarantee administrators have enhanced their outreach mechanisms to minimise the numbers of youths neither in education nor in employment. As such, the Youth Guarantee Office has substantially increased in outreach activities, ranging from informative sessions with educators and psychosocial teams to full-blown national events such as the 'I Choose' fair which sees the participation of Malta and Gozo's entire school-leaving cohort. At every school-based or nation-wide educational event attended, participants are not only provided with comprehensive materials and custom Youth Guarantee merchandise, but are also given the opportunity to engage in focus-group style motivational sessions with the team.

An employers' FAQ booklet which was designed and made available to interested employers in both printed and digital versions, and an online version of the employers' application form which has been created through servizz.gov and is available in both Maltese and English. Furthermore, a team was set up to brief the employer and participant at the initial phase of the work exposure. This briefing is done at the place of work and includes an overview of how to fill in documents, including attendance sheet etc. Such measures have contributed to the smooth running of the Work Exposure scheme facilitating the transition from inactivity to work placements for both employers and trainees. As the process has been simplified it has in conjunction become more attractive to the target population and the employers.

Targeted initiative specific newsletters are sent out to a database including educators, school psychosocial teams and senior management schools' staff. These newsletters are in turn uploaded to the schools' internal platform and disseminated to parents and students alike. NEETs are also sent a personal invitation which encourages them to engage in the Youth Guarantee Programme. These letters are sent out every year between Q1 and Q2 to all inactive youths depending on the availability of the lists. Each invitation is sent together with an application form. To increase the engagement rate for

NEETs, social media campaigns across the Youth Guarantee Facebook and Twitter pages, newspaper and YouTube channels and radio advertisements are used in conjunction with the invitation to increase visibility and participation. As a result of a warmly received and successful presence, a solid network of educators and event organisers was established, promising further activities throughout the scholastic year.

### **Flexicurity measures focusing on young people**

Currently, there are no flexicurity measures focusing on young people.

### **Reconciliation of private and working life for young people**

Currently, there are no specific measures that address the reconciliation of private and working life for young people. Still, reconciliation measures that are applicable to adults are also applicable to young people.

### **Funding of existing schemes/initiatives**

The initiatives targeted at youths are funded through both the [European Social Fund](#) and other national funds. The [Youth Guarantee](#) is funded by the European Social Fund with a budget of EUR 5,909,329.

Moreover, the training allowance payable to youth participating under the Work Exposure Scheme and the Traineeship Scheme is part-financed by the European Social Fund. The co-financing rate is set at 80% through EU and 20% through the National Funds. For these two schemes, which form part of ESF.01.001 – Training for Employment Project, there is a budget allocation of €2,439,254 and €4,883,424 respectively. This budget covers the period 2016 till 2023.

### **Quality assurance**

The Maltese Public Employment Service is responsible for the monitoring of all initiatives falling within the Youth Guarantee framework. The data gathered is subdivided in three levels:

- Information on participants;
- Duration of intervention;
- Follow-up.

To supplement this data, a number of evaluation exercises are carried out. These include exit questionnaires as well as feedback from professionals intervening with youth and employers involved in the work exposure and/or traineeship phase. Programmes are assessed by the Maltese Public Employment Service. During the work exposure and traineeship monitoring visits feedback from the trainee and employer is sought to gather additional information on their experience throughout the scheme. During the off-the-job training, quality visits are performed to ensure that the delivery of the off-the-job training is in accordance with the course; the trainer is using different delivery methodologies to meet the needs of all trainees, and the tools and facilities used by trainers to deliver the course are in line with the standards established by the Maltese PES.

To ensure the effectiveness of the training being given to trainees by employers, each trainee is visited at least three times for the [Work Exposure Scheme](#) and two times for the Youth Guarantee Scheme by the Maltese Public Employment Service, Jobsplus, Monitoring Officers. Due to the current situation, imposed by the global pandemic, some visits are being held online. During the on-the-spot check, Monitoring Officers are assisted through a checklist to ensure the publicity material is adequately displayed in a prominent place, that the employer has retained copies of documentation, documentation is complete, and that the current attendances are being recorded on a daily basis. Monitoring Officers attach photographic evidence of the publicity material as displayed, as well as photographic evidence of the participant's presence to the first checklist, whilst

in subsequent visits, attach only the participant's photo on the day, whilst ensuring that the publicity material is still present, recording the same on the checklist. Both the employer and participant are questioned about the progress up to that point. Answers are recorded on the checklist, and feedback to project implementation staff at the Maltese Public Employment Service, Jobsplus, is provided as and where necessary. During the visits, Monitoring Officers also ask questions related to the placement to ensure that the exposure offered is in line with what was originally promised by the employer through its application. In those instances, where it is deemed that the quality of exposure provided is not up to the required standard, Jobsplus reserves the right to terminate the placement and to find an alternative placement for the trainee.

The impact of the scheme is measured by assessing the employment status of the trainee within six months following end date of scheme.

Following the experience gained in implementing these schemes and the feedback received from the Monitoring Officers, the Maltese Public Employment Service, Jobsplus, implements changes to the scheme. Moreover, the Maltese Public Employment Service, Jobsplus, monitors closely the uptake of the schemes and the employment prospects offered by employers. To this end, the Maltese Public Employment Service, Jobsplus, incorporated further checks to limit the potential abuse by employers (for example: number of trainees enrolled with an employer depends on the number of employees). In addition, for every placement, the Maltese Public Employment Service, Jobsplus, enters into an agreement with the employer and the trainee to enlist the roles and responsibilities of each party.

### **3.7 Cross-border mobility in employment, entrepreneurship and vocational opportunities**

#### **Programmes and schemes for cross-border mobility**

No programmes or schemes that are managed by EURES are aimed at young people going abroad for a traineeship, apprenticeship or for work. Your First EURES Job is an EU run mobility programme whereby young people are given financial assistance when moving abroad for work. However, [EURES Malta](#) has never participated in the running of this project. This is not to suggest that Maltese young people do not have access to financial assistance under this project but it would not be EURES Malta receiving the application. What Jobsplus does with any young people who are interested in moving abroad is to advise them of this project and the option of obtaining financial assistance (if their employment sector fits within one of the funded sectors – this changes and is dependent on the different YFEJ projects currently open and the focus areas that have been selected).

[EURES Malta](#) provides advice and guidance to all persons including young people regarding mobility. Jobsplus advises them on how to search for a job in another country. Interested participants are put in touch with the EURES network in the country they wish to move to as it is the EURES advisers in the country of destination that can assist them in regard to procedures and processes. Jobsplus also directs people to the [EURES Portal](#) where they can find job opportunities and living and working information for all member states. Jobsplus also advises people on the appropriate processes locally (i.e., inform tax department that a participant is moving abroad, transfer of social benefits, etc.). Jobsplus has in the past held information sessions and training for people interested in moving abroad to live and work. Jobsplus also promotes recruitment events abroad that are organised by EURES in other countries.

The EURES office in Malta operates with National funds.

## Legal framework

No specific legal framework exists for the cross-border mobility of young workers, trainees/apprentices and professionals/entrepreneurs. However, EU Nationals have access to the Maltese Labour Market and can work in Malta without restrictions (with the exception of Croatian Nationals where transitional arrangements still exist).

Irrespective of age, the rights and obligations of non-EU citizens depend mainly on their conditions of entry. Third Country Nationals (TCN's) who obtain a single permit application or TCN's who have obtained long-term residence can enjoy the same equal treatment as nationals in regards to access to employment and self-employed activity, and access to education and vocational training.

However, there is an exception for youths who come from Australia and USA due to bilateral agreements between Malta and Australia/the USA, whereby there is an opportunity for young people under the age of 30 years old to obtain a working/holiday visa. This authorises them to work in Malta without being subject to any labour market testing.

## 3.8 Development of entrepreneurship competence

### Policy Framework

Malta has no specific national strategy for the development of entrepreneurship competence and of an entrepreneurial mind-set among young people.

The [National Youth Policy: Towards 2020](#), features an action plan on supporting youth in employment and entrepreneurship. Many of these activities within the action plan are training opportunities and individual supports such as coaching and mentoring. Also, the [National Curriculum Framework](#) (2012) lists 'Education for Entrepreneurship, Creativity and Innovation' as one of six cross-curricular themes that are deemed to be crucial for the education of all students. This therefore calls for entrepreneurship education to be infused throughout the curriculum of mandatory schooling and proposes a whole school approach to fostering an entrepreneurial mind-set.

### Formal learning

The [University of Malta](#) (UoM) aims to foster socio-economic development in Malta by transforming entrepreneurial initiatives into real-world activities, such as the creation of enterprises. Entrepreneurial education (EE) at UoM aims to promote entrepreneurship in general, and also more particularly seeks to foster a knowledge-intensive entrepreneurial culture, i.e. the process of transforming scientific advancements into marketable goods and services. Entrepreneurial education is integrated into the curriculum through curricular and extra-curricular offers.

Courses and study units such as 'Entrepreneurship and Business Venturing' and 'Entrepreneurship and Innovation' are taught at the [Department of Management](#) within the [Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy](#), and the [Edward de Bono Institute](#), as part of a Masters programme in 'Creativity and Innovation' at the University of Malta.

The [Centre for Entrepreneurship and Business Incubation](#) (CEBI) at the University of Malta offers a Master programme in 'Knowledge-based Entrepreneurship' which is an intensive training programme (ITP) for graduates. It is taught in four week-long bursts over two semesters, using traditional teaching methods such as lectures and seminars. The programme consists of seven study-units, and mentored feasibility and business planning projects.

The [Ministry for the Economy, Investment and Small Business](#) together with the [Ministry for Education and Employment](#) offer the [Entrepreneurship Through Education Scheme](#), which provides funds of up to €5,000 to schools and colleges wishing to implement

projects related to entrepreneurship education, such as training programmes for teachers and school-based mini-enterprises.

Maltese schools and colleges may also be eligible for the [National Enterprise Support Awards \(NESA\)](#), which are held every year by the [Ministry of Economy, Investment and Small Business](#) to reward entities which support entrepreneurship and enterprise growth. NESA winners receive cash prizes of up to €48,000. These financial incentives open up opportunities for local service providers to collaborate with schools and colleges in promoting entrepreneurship education. For example, St Nicholas College was the runner-up in the 2012 NESA Awards and used the funds to collaborate with The Edward de Bono Institute at the University of Malta to publish a book entitled *Fostering Entrepreneurship through Education: A Handbook for Teachers* (Baldacchino & Pulis Xerxen, 2013).

Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology has introduced entrepreneurship as a core subject to students from the various institutes who are following Level 4 courses with the intention to eventually spread it to other levels. It also set up its own Entrepreneurship Centre using four units available at the [Kordin Business Incubation Centre \(KBIC\)](#), as an incubation centre for students with entrepreneurial ambitions.

The [Ministry for Economy, Investment and Small Business](#) in collaboration with the [Ministry for Education and Employment](#) issues an annual scheme called Entrepreneurship through Education that gives a grant to secondary education institutions to fund projects related to entrepreneurship education. The scheme aims to address the promotion of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial qualities through education, by sponsoring projects submitted by educational institutions through a competitive call for proposals.

### **Non-formal and informal learning**

[Take Off](#) is a non-formal education initiative which complements the degree courses that related to entrepreneurship at the [University of Malta](#). Take Off works closely with [Malta Enterprise](#) and [Business First](#) acting as a business incubator that gives young people the know-how, tools and mentoring to turn a good idea into a great business. The aim is to help young people achieve their true potential by growing a truly sustainable enterprise. [Take Off](#) helps budding entrepreneurs to start-up, grow and sustain their commercial or social enterprise through provision of training programmes ranging from short courses for those new to business, in any business sector to more intensive courses for programme for businesses seeking significant finance and international growth; guidance and mentoring through a network of mentors, guides and coaches drawn from the University of Malta and the Maltese business community that give practical, hands-on support and guidance and also financing through seed funding by a network of public and private funding organisations that provide the people and resources needed to fund the venture.

### **Educators support in entrepreneurship education**

A book called *Fostering Entrepreneurship through Education: A Handbook for Teachers* (Baldacchino, L. & Pulis Xerxen, S. 2013) was distributed to all schools in Malta. The book consists of almost 200 suggestions, activities and strategies for embedding entrepreneurship across the curriculum at all levels of compulsory education.

As part of its recent restructuring, the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta has set up a Department of Technology & Entrepreneurship Education which caters for Initial Teacher Education for subjects related to the area of Entrepreneurship Education.

Continuous Professional Development courses on entrepreneurship education are organised in Malta and are available for all teachers up to upper secondary education level, including school-based IVET teachers. [Junior Achievement Young Enterprise \(JA – YE\)](#) Malta also plays a role in the development of CPD in the field. No Continuous Professional Development activities on entrepreneurship education form part of the official undergraduate or post-graduate education courses given by the University of Malta, which is the only gateway to qualified teacher certification at this level. However,

Junior Achievement Young Enterprise (JA–YE) Malta may be invited to provide Continuous Professional Development activities for educators to familiarise themselves with the JA – YE Malta educational programmes on offer, as well as with methodologies to implement entrepreneurship education activities in classrooms.

Various schools and colleges have obtained funds through the Entrepreneurship through Education Scheme to provide training for teachers as part of their continuous professional development. These programmes however are not mainstreamed and take place on the initiative of particular schools and colleges.

### 3.9 Start-up funding for young entrepreneurs

#### Access to information

[MCAST Entrepreneurship Centre](#) was set up in collaboration with [Kordin Business Incubation Centre \(KBIC\)](#) and [Malta Enterprise](#). The Centre offers a framework for ideas to thrive and encompasses a series of activities that address the needs of [MCAST](#) students and alumni. Through this close collaboration, MCAST students and alumni who demonstrate an entrepreneurial flair are provided with space within KBIC where they can nurture, grow and launch their business ideas. The possibility of developing further ideas is also made available to alumni of the College.

[MITA Innovation Hub](#) forms part of the [Malta Information Technology Agency](#), which is responsible for the implementation of the Government's ICT policy, programmes and initiatives in Malta. The Hub supports students, start-ups and innovators and creates the environment to transform their ideas into products or services through digital technologies. It supports start-ups by presenting them with a problem that requires solutions and financing the start-up which comes up with the best proposition.

The [Takeoff](#) program, based at the University of Malta, delivers a tailored package of benefits and guidance to entrepreneurs, most of whom are young people, from inside and outside of the University of Malta. The programme aims to help entrepreneurs transform their ideas into market and investor-ready ventures. The programme is specifically designed to help innovators and aspiring entrepreneurs create successful science, technology, engineering, creative media and knowledge-based start-up business. Takeoff brings together innovators, entrepreneurs, mentors and investors and aims to close the skills and resources gap experienced by entrepreneurs as they embark on their start-up ventures.

[Microsoft Innovation Centre](#) supports students and start-ups through its facilities and offers training courses ranging from development to gaming. The MIC start-up programme is targeted towards start-ups in the early stages of business and offers incentives such as office space, hardware and technology skills. Students are encouraged to explore and develop their interest in technology and build technology-related skills.

The [Junior Chamber International Malta](#) organises an annual '[Hack-it-on bootcamp](#)', where keynote speakers and trainers help young people to generate their business ideas and validate them. They organise competitions for the best business idea/plan and incentivise them with support and cash grants. The winning idea receives 1,000€ together with consultancy hours with a European funding consultancy agency and branded stationery.

[Junior Achievement-Young Enterprise](#) (JA-YE) complements classroom learning by offering learning-by-doing programmes at primary, secondary, post-secondary and tertiary levels. The most popular are the Company Programme (post-secondary level) and Start-Up Programme (tertiary level). JA-YE also offers group coaching and mentoring for youths through these programmes.

The [Business First](#) service provides information and assistance regarding administrative procedures. The service also offers information for those seeking to improve their

business or even close their business. Young people can have access to this information, which is made available via the 'Business First' website, telephone number, email, and one to one meetings.

The [Business Advisory Scheme](#), which includes one-to-one coaching and mentoring is designed to provide businesses operating in Malta with advisory services that suit their specific circumstances. Business advisory services are provided to support undertakings, identify strengths and overcome weaknesses in specific areas. A range of business advisors services are available and every effort is made to match the right advisor to the specific needs of the applicant. This is available to the general public including all the social target groups.

The [Dun Manwel Attard Resource Centre](#) offers the 'Hands-On' project for people with disabilities. The project helps develop entrepreneurial skills. It involves an initial tailor-made training programme in entrepreneurship skills for the Resource Centre's educators, followed by the transfer of the acquired entrepreneurship skills from the educators to their students through a process of coaching, mentoring and hands-on workshops where the students produce and later sell hand-made items.

## Access to capital

There are no funding programmes that are offered specifically to young entrepreneurs. However, young people can benefit from schemes that are open to the general public including:

The [Ministry for Economy, Investment and Small Business \(MEIB\)](#), and the [Centre for Entrepreneurship and Business Incubation \(CEBI\)](#) of the University of Malta, together offer the [TAKEOFF Seed Fund Award \(TOSFA\)](#) at the TAKEOFF Business Incubator, situated at the University of Malta. The award distributes up to 100,000€ in seed funding to groups of innovators and entrepreneurs.

Innovative start-ups in specific sectors may benefit from the [B.Start](#) scheme offered by Malta Enterprise, which offers a seed fund of up to 10,000€ and an additional fund of up to 15,000€ calculated upon the full time employment with the start-up.

Malta Enterprise offers a [Micro Invest Scheme](#) which mainly supports self-employed individuals registered with the Employment and Training Corporation and small enterprises that employ less than 30 employees who either undertake new investments in their own operations and/or increase their workforce.

Malta Enterprise also offers the [Micro Guarantee Scheme](#) which provides eligible undertakings with a guarantee of up to 80 per cent on loans of up to 100,000€ which may be used to finance projects leading to business enhancement, growth and development.

The [ZAAR Crowdfunding Platform](#) is a crowdfunding platform, aimed as an alternative access to finance for start-ups, business projects and ideas. Aspiring entrepreneurs in Malta can crowdfund their business ideas through ZAAR. ZAAR is a project spearheaded by Promotion of Entrepreneurial Initiatives (PEI) Limited, which was set up jointly by the Malta Business Bureau (MBB) and the University of Malta (UoM). This initiative is also supported by the Ministry for Economy, Investment & Small Business and the Arts Council Malta.

[Go Beyond](#) offers early stage business angel investment to start ups in five industry categories, including technology, internet and cellular phones.

Bank of Valletta offers two financing packages for entrepreneurs in Malta:

The [BOV Start Plus](#) package is a business loan aimed at start-ups and micro-enterprises that require funding of up to 25,000€ for investment purposes and initial related working capital requirements. This package offers advantageous interest rates, involves no advance related fees and, most importantly, requires no collateral as it is secured by a

guarantee issued under the European Commission's Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme.

The [BOV JAIME](#) (Joint Assistance Initiative for Maltese Enterprises) Financing Package provides SME with up to 50,000€ for capital investment and related working capital at advantageous interest rates and reduced collateral obligations.

The annual [National Enterprise Support Awards \(NESA\)](#), which offer cash prizes of up to 48,000€ in recognition of initiatives which support entrepreneurship and enterprise growth in six categories, including in 'Responsible and Inclusive Entrepreneurship'. Although these prizes are awarded to entities supporting entrepreneurship and not directly to entrepreneurs, the latter still benefit indirectly from the projects and initiatives being recognised.

In addition, a small number of initiatives are targeted at specific groups. There are two funding schemes that are targeted at female entrepreneurs:

Malta Enterprise offers a [Micro Invest Scheme](#), which was recently amended so that self-employed women (including young women) and businesses owned in their majority by females are granted a maximum tax credit of up to 50,000€ instead of 30,000€.

[Malta Microfinance Ltd.](#), which is a non-profit financial institution, offers loans to people struggling financially. Three main types of loans are offered, one of which is a Business Loan to provide funding and support to start or expand one's business.

## 3.10 Promotion of entrepreneurship culture

### Special events and activities

For the past eight years, [Malta Enterprise](#) has been organising the [Malta SME Week](#). Its aim is to promote entrepreneurship so that more people, in particular young people, seriously consider becoming entrepreneurs. Malta SME Week also provides insight on what is offered to support start-ups and micro, small and medium-sized businesses. Each year, one specific activity focuses on youth entrepreneurship. These activities have either been carried out through simulation exercises, workshops, discussions and business pitching by young people themselves or through conferences involving tertiary education students.

The University of Malta's [Centre for Entrepreneurship & Business Incubation \(CEBI\)](#) has been set up to put knowledge intensive entrepreneurship at the top of the University of Malta's outreach agenda. Its aims are to promote the development of a knowledge-intensive, entrepreneurial culture in Malta, with the wider aim of fostering the socio-economic development of the Maltese Islands. The Centre is currently targeting knowledge intensive sectors such as science, technology, engineering and creative media at the University of Malta and in the wider Maltese context.

The [National Enterprise Support Awards](#), which are organised by the Commerce Department and the Enterprise Policy Directorate and Schemes within the Ministry for the Economy, Investment and Small Business, are intended to foster awareness of the importance of entrepreneurship. One of the award categories concerns 'Responsible and Inclusive Entrepreneurship' to recognise initiatives to promote entrepreneurship among under-represented or disadvantaged groups including people with disabilities, the unemployed, migrants and people from ethnic minority backgrounds.

A number of organisations are active in promoting youth entrepreneurship, including [JA-YE Malta](#), [Junior Chamber International Malta](#), [Young Business Entrepreneurs](#) and [Young Entrepreneurs and Leaders](#). JCI promotes business and entrepreneurship among its members through networking events, training and competitions. Young Business Entrepreneurs, which targets young, aspiring entrepreneurs by working on five strategic priorities, namely scientific research, education, entrepreneurial programmes, policymaking and raising awareness about entrepreneurship with young people and

Maltese society. Young Entrepreneurs and Leaders aims at encouraging youths to enhance their entrepreneurship and leadership skills.

There are also a large number of initiatives and organisations that promote an entrepreneurial culture in Malta. For example, there are a number of radio programmes, including the 'Fi Kliem Iehor' programme on the national Radio Malta - the Maltese National Radio Station and 'Entrepreneur Clinic', which aired in 2016 on Campus FM, the local radio station broadcasting from the University of Malta. The Malta Chamber of Commerce and Industry also actively promotes entrepreneurship.

### **Networks and partnerships**

Activities organised during the [Malta SME Week](#) have provided the space to young people to consider entrepreneurship as a career option and allow them to meet and network with Maltese entrepreneurs who can share their stories and best practices.

[Global Entrepreneurship Week](#), which is held in November. The Edward de Bono Institute collaborates with various partner organisations to put together programmes of activities to celebrate Global Entrepreneurship Week (GEW). This initiative, which takes place in 160 countries around the world, is designed to connect aspiring and inspiring entrepreneurs, helping them embrace originality, imagination and ingenuity through local and global activities.

Global Entrepreneurship Week also has activities for youth including the [Budding Rockstars Conference](#). This entrepreneurship and innovation conference was targeted at Malta's brightest young minds. It used panel discussions, presentations and group activities to promote entrepreneurship and to get young people to work together and with experienced entrepreneur. This helps them develop their networks. This conference was organised by The Malta Communications Authority (MCA) in collaboration with other entities.

[Takeoff's](#) incubation programme focuses on exposing and connecting entrepreneurs and start-ups to an expanding community of mentors who have a desire to share their business and technology development experience, knowledge and networks. Experienced innovators, serial-entrepreneurs, domain experts, professional advisers help Takeoff entrepreneurs get on the right path and succeed.

## **3.11 Current debates and reforms**

### **Forthcoming Policy Developments**

From the Entrepreneurial perspective, the Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) has in place the Malta Entrepreneurship Center (MEC) which was launched in 2014 with the aim of providing MCAST students and alumni with the opportunity to transform their creative and innovative ideas into profitable and sustainable business ventures. A number of alumni have been provided not only with a space where they can develop their start-up business ideas, but are also being mentored throughout their experiential learning endeavour. The center is also being utilised to host adhoc entrepreneurship activities for students and interested individuals.

It is also pertinent to note that MCAST has also consolidated the entrepreneurship-related tuition that students receive. Indeed, Entrepreneurship has been introduced as a key skill at across the Foundation, Technical and University Colleges. Students are not only receiving knowledge in relation to the typical operations of an enterprise but are also being trained to think like an entrepreneur and foster an entrepreneurial mindset. They are encouraged to turn their ideas to business proposals which are subsequently evaluated. Promising ideas are nurtured and developed further within the MEC.

## Ongoing Debates

At present, with reference to labour market initiatives targeted at young people, from Jobsplus' end there are no new planned initiatives or reforms to existing initiatives.

## 4. SOCIAL INCLUSION

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Social Policy falls under the responsibility of the Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity. In 2014 the Ministry had published the National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion. This document aims to reduce poverty by taking on a cross-sectoral approach.

Also one of the action plans in the National Youth Policy Towards 2020: A Shared vision for the future of young people is Social Inclusion. The document strives to develop and implement initiatives with a view to enhance the well-being and active participation of young people with fewer opportunities and those with a migrant background.

### 4.1 General context

#### Main challenges to social inclusion

Income, education, employment, access to social services in areas such as housing, access to health services and health literacy, the environment, as well as cultural and leisure involvement, all impact on the social inclusion prospects of young people. These pose a challenge to general well-being and can lead to poverty and social exclusion. Hence barriers include social background, dependency on welfare benefits, psycho-social situations and the cultural traditions of young people.

Other issues such as having a migrant background, LGBTIQ and drug abuse also impact on a young person's social inclusion prospects. Young people experiencing inequality or disengagement since their early years are more likely to become entrapped in a system of disconnection from society and its institutions.

#### Definitions and concepts

In 2019, the Maltese Government launched the Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools: [Route to Quality Inclusion in schools](#). The Policy is in line with the education strategy of the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) since it promotes the setting of an inclusive school environment that ensures that all learners have the opportunity to obtain the necessary skills and attitudes to be active citizens and to succeed at work and in society. The Policy adopts a wide definition of inclusion which covers: learners with special needs; with different sexual orientations; from ethnic minorities and different religions; and high ability learners.

The [National Inclusive Education Framework](#), also launched in 2019, builds upon the Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion; and strives to create clarity around the concept of inclusive education and synergy among the various services dealing with diversity issues in schools. Moreover, the themes entrenched within the framework ensure that the concept of equity is upheld in all College and School Development Plans (SDP). The SDPs are supported through the provision of specialized training to College Principals and Heads of Schools

In 2014, the Government of Malta launched the [National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion \(2014-2024\)](#) aiming to address poverty and social exclusion through a comprehensive, long-term, results-oriented, participatory approach. The strategy is based on the values of solidarity, equality, dignity and respect for fundamental human rights and social justice. While this strategy aims to provide a policy

framework that promotes the well-being and improves the quality of life for all vulnerable groups, children and young people were one of the cohorts given additional attention. This policy refers to children as all those aged 0-17 years, and to young people as all those aged 18-24 years.

While giving weight to the main varying indicators of poverty (absolute poverty and relative poverty – at-risk of poverty, material deprivation, social exclusion, and at-risk of poverty or social exclusion) and Malta's social realities identified from the public consultations undertaken during its drafting, this strategic policy adopts the following as its working definition of poverty and social exclusion:

"People are living in poverty if their financial, material, social and personal resources preclude them from having a standard of living that is generally regarded as the average norm by the Maltese society." (pg.17).

This strategic policy also specifies what is considered as the average norm:

"Average norm is considered as having the opportunity to exercise the right of: • developing one's potential and capacity through education, vocational training and stable and quality employment; • accessing basic medical services in an equitable manner and enjoying a healthy environment, both of which contribute to a good quality of life; • accessing quality and sustainable social welfare services particularly social security benefits, social assistance and housing; and • participating actively in the socio-cultural life of the community." (p.17).

The proportion of young people aged 18-24 years old and living in households at-risk of poverty or social exclusion stood at 15.0% in 2018, while 10.7% and 3.5% respectively faced material and social deprivation and severe material deprivation. Currently, the at-risk of poverty or social exclusion rate among young people (18-24 years) is the lowest among the four main target groups of the [National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and for Social inclusion 2014-2024](#), which also targets children (0-17 years), elderly persons, unemployed persons and the working poor. The at risk of poverty or social exclusion among young people primarily derives from high school absenteeism, early school leaving and lack of vocational training leading to inappropriate or insufficient skills to enter the labour market, as well as due to socio-emotional difficulties, such as addictive behaviour.

Furthermore, the [National Children's Policy](#) presents Malta's way forward for safeguarding and promoting the rights and general wellbeing of children. For the purposes of this policy, children have been defined as "... every human being below the age of eighteen years", as per [Article 1 of the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#).

While placing the child at the centre of its attention, this Policy considers investment in children as a precondition for the welfare and advancement of society. Whilst acknowledging children as a specific social group which demands specialised attention, this Policy highlights the uniqueness of each child. This Policy places the child within the context of his/her personal background and wider environment, by taking into account one's informal network of family, friends, communities and the natural and social environment. This Policy also adopts a life-course approach to wellbeing, by considering the various opportunities and challenges associated with different developmental stages and the dynamic and multiple needs experienced by children throughout their lives.

Whereas the term children refers to all those under eighteen years of age, the National Children's Policy adopts the EU definition of young people referring to all those persons aged 13 to 30 years, also in line with the [National Youth Policy Framework 2015-2020](#). The National Youth Policy – Towards 2020: A shared vision for the future of young people provides a comprehensive strategic framework for the well-being and development of young people. This policy also engaged in an extensive consultation with all the relevant stakeholders, and has been designed for and with young people. Investment in young people through a participatory and partnership approach as manifested in this policy, should result in realizing this policy's aim of greater democratic participation, equitable

economic and social progress for all, and inclusive change. In this regard, the inclusive scope of the strategy is central. Indeed, throughout the document, various references are made to social inclusion through the use of such terms as 'inclusiveness' and 'inclusive change'. Furthermore, through the various action plans proposed under the two specific but interdependent strategies to provide 'youthwork and services' and 'cross-sectoral supports', the strategy should have far reaching impact on various sectors in society, leading to higher quality of life for all young people, including those coming from vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. In view of its wide-ranging impact, social inclusion issues are mainstreamed across the policy. In particular, the introductory chapter highlights social inclusion as one of the main fields of action in which initiatives are to be taken, leading to an action plan on social inclusion in the latter part of the policy.

Malta has a hybrid social welfare model built upon a wide range of universal and targeted benefits. This model offers 'a set of programmes, benefits and supports designed to ensure that people do not lack the basic necessities of life' ([Mims, 2011](#)). It also offers specific measures for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. Social policy has been developed on 'the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity, participation, decentralisation, prevention, empowerment and self-reliance with a special focus on the family' ([Abela, 1999, para. 2](#)) ([Vella & Gauci, 2016](#)).

## 4.2 Administration and governance

### Governance

The main responsibility for the provision of social welfare services lies within the [Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity](#), which is responsible for social policy in general including family and child policy, social housing, social security, pensions and other solidarity services, as well as issues concerning disability, the elderly and community care. The establishment of [Local Government](#) in 1993 gave greater powers and autonomy to local communities, however such powers tend to be significantly limited in terms of social welfare provision which continues to be the prerogative of central government (Vella & Gauci, 2016).

### Main Actors

The [Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity](#) is responsible for social inclusion in general and is Malta's main social welfare service provider.

The [Foundation for Social Welfare Services \(FSWS\)](#) which incorporates two agencies, namely [Appoġġ](#) and [Sedqa](#), provide services to families and individuals, including young people.

Appogg Agency

The main services offered by the foundation through [Appoġġ](#) fall under the main pillars providing for:

- family services
- children services

Appogg provides different services such as:

- [Health services](#)
- [Children and Youth services](#)
- [Intake and family services](#)
- Adult protection services
- [Court services](#)
- [Programm Uljed Darna \(PUD\)](#)

- [Homestart](#)
- Residential Homes
- [Supportline 179](#)

Health services focuses on provision of social work interventions in health settings such as [Mater Dei](#), [Benniena](#), [Samoc](#), [MCH](#) and other health areas. The Intake and family services incorporate the intake system for drop-ins and a generic service which monitors and provides care plans for families in vulnerable situations. Children and youth services incorporate issues related to adoption, looked after children, child protection, adolescent support services, youth specialised programmes and fostering. Adult Protection Services includes the provision of a highly specialised social work service at Domestic Violence, a group of professionals providing risk assessments 24/7, Managing Abusive Behaviour, a women's shelter and dedicated service on child to parent violence. Court services work exclusively with court cases where social work assessments are held as ordered by court and supervised access visits provided.

### [Therapeutic & Community Services](#)

The Community Services aim to work closely with the local community to facilitate and encourage a process of change within the community they operate in, through local participation. These services strive to enhance the local potential, offer optimal individual and family social work services that are aimed especially at the most vulnerable in the community, whilst taking into consideration the context, culture and everyday life of the residents. The first community service was opened in Cottonera and was set up in 1994. The service was known as the Community Development Unit at the time. It then moved to Access Centre in 2002. Birkirkara, Valletta and Qawra Services were set up in 2009 and the Msida in 2012 which was amalgamated with the Birkirkara Service. In 2019, two new services were set up in Zabbar and Mosta.

In 2015, the planned pilot service 'the home-based family therapy' (now known as Home Based Therapy Service) commenced with a number of families who were also followed by the social workers in Qawra. The service targeted families whose children were at risk of being removed from home. The service complimented the social work interventions already being carried out. This was a pilot project which developed into a new service. This service is offering therapeutic service to multi-stressed families within the community. The beneficiaries of this service are experiencing multiple problematic issues which are related to poverty. These include drug abuse, violence within the families, mental health problems and risks of potential care orders which in a number of cases could be considered as imminent.

### [Sedqa Agency](#)

Besides the above services, FSWS through the Sedqa agency, provides services to help people with addictive behaviour. These include prevention and early intervention, as well as care services.

Apart from the support rendered by these three agencies, the [Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity](#), through the Support agency, offers services to individuals, including young people, with disability. These include:

- [Social Work Services](#)
- [Community Services](#)
- Residential Services
- Resource Services
- [Day Services](#)

## Cross-sectorial cooperation

It should be noted that given the wide range of issues which impact upon social protection and social inclusion, a large number of other Government entities contribute to the well-being of society including young persons, such as the [Ministry for Health](#) (MfH), [The Ministry for Education and Employment](#) (MEDE), [The Ministry for Justice, Culture and Local Government](#) (MJCL) and the [Minister for European and Foreign Affairs](#)

There are also a number of non-public actors that contribute to the social inclusion of young people such as:

- [Rainbow Support Services](#) provide information, consultation and psycho-social welfare services through an approach that considers an LGBTI identity as equally valid
- [Inspire](#) provide people with disabilities and their families with educational, therapeutic and leisure services. They also advocate for inclusion, educate the general public and raise awareness among peers
- [Jesuit Refugee Service](#) in Malta seeks to accompany, serve and defend the rights of asylum seekers and forcibly displaced persons who arrive in Malta
- [SOS Malta](#) advocates for the introduction and implementation of local measures aimed at the integration and social inclusion of regular migrants in Maltese society
- [Mid-Dlam ghad-Dawl](#) helps prisoners and their families undergo the prison experience with more dignity and self-esteem
- [Caritas Malta](#) strives to alleviate poverty and promote human development and social justice, witnessing to the Christian faith and Gospel values
- [The St Jeanne Antide Foundation](#) offers support and self-empowerment of socially excluded persons, families and minority groups.

## 4.3 Strategy for the social inclusion of young people

### Existence of a National Strategy on social inclusion

The main official document that relates to the social inclusion of young people is the [National Strategic Policy for the Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion](#) (2014- 2024). This document addresses the whole population but regards young people as a cohort that require particular attention.

The document was introduced in 2014 and has a time-frame of ten years, up to 2024.

### Scope and contents

This document recognises three overarching challenges that underpin Malta's success in effectively addressing poverty and social exclusion, namely:

- Increasing national sustainable development
- Promoting empowerment and social solidarity
- Consolidating social services.

It focuses on six key dimensions that can determine or alleviate poverty and social exclusion, namely:

- income and social benefits
- employment
- education
- health and environment
- social services

- culture.

The document proposes various strategic policy actions that should be undertaken on each of these dimensions with a view to enhancing prospects for all citizens in general and vulnerable groups in particular. These proposals range from enhancing social protection systems and promoting activation measures to creating more employment opportunities and facilitating mobility and de-segmentation in the labour market. Additionally, there is an addressing of educational inequalities, ensuring equal access to quality healthcare, the promotion of an environmental health friendly approach, decentralisation and integration of social services at community level, development of evidence-based policies and practices that address emerging needs and challenges and the enhancement of the potential for equality and social inclusion through everyday culture.

Hence, the key political objectives of this policy are to provide a policy framework that promotes the well-being and improves the quality of life for all. In particular, it targets persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion, based on the values of solidarity, equality, dignity and respect for fundamental human rights and social justice.

Among young people, this policy targets in particular those who have high levels of school absenteeism, early school leavers and those who lack of vocational training leading to having inappropriate or insufficient skills to enter the labour market. It also highlights young people who have compound disadvantages, such as inter-generational poverty and other structural factors that serve to increase alienation, leading to social exclusion.

### Responsible authority

The top-level authority responsible for the implementation of this policy is the [Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity](#). However, the strategy has a cross-sector approach and other actors are involved, such as the Ministry of Education and Employment and the Ministry for Health.

The [Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity](#) monitors the policy's implementation through an inter-ministerial committee that regularly compiles reports on the progress achieved in the realisation of strategic policy actions laid down in the [National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion \(2014-2024\)](#).

### Revisions/Updates

The Strategy was launched in 2014 and has not yet been revised.

## 4.4 Inclusive programmes for young people

### Programmes specific for vulnerable young people

[Appoġġ](#) agency offers the programmes [Youth in Focus](#), the [Adolescent Day Programme](#) and [Embark for Life](#).

Before 2011, there were two separate services for challenging young people which were run separately by [Agenzija Appogg](#) (Youth Outreach) and [Agenzija Sedqa](#) (Teen Support Service). In 2011, these two services were amalgamated in one service (Youth in Focus). This Service fell under the remit of Agenzija Appogg. Youth in Focus provides social work interventions to children and young people aged between 13 and 18 years old, with the scope of assisting them throughout their adolescence through addressing their needs and empowering them to reach their full potential. While the focus is on the adolescent/young person, the social worker maintains close collaboration with the parents/carers and other significant people in the lives of the young person. There is a wide range of presenting problems that the team encounter and deal with. These may include: anger management, involvement in vandalism, turbulent relationships with parents, partners and others, alcohol/drug abuse, promiscuity, coming out, self-identity crisis,

experimentation with substances, time management, bereavement, employment, petty crime, emotional abuse on parents, past traumas, computer addiction, difficult past health traumas, problems with self-esteem, poverty & homelessness and money management. During 2015, 280 young people made use of Youth in Focus. 223 young people made use of the service up to June in 2016.

Year	Number of individuals worked with by Youth in Focus
2015	280
2016	233
2017	211
2018	167
Jan-Jun 2019	179

The Adolescent Day Programme started in July 2015. The programme runs for 12 consecutive weeks with participants attending for four days a week for a span of four hours each day. This three-month intensive programme provides non-formal therapeutic and educational sessions, which assist young people to develop the necessary coping mechanisms that will help them throughout their lives, and aide in preventing their exploitation. The programme covers various life skills and also gives young people (aged between 14 and 18 years old) the opportunity to spend two weeks with the [Armed Forces of Malta](#). Upon completion of the programme, participants are awarded the Bronze, Silver or Gold level depending on their participation. Between 2015 and 2016, there were three programmes of eight participants in each group. Three participants reached the Bronze Level, five reached the Silver Level while 12 completed the Gold phase. In 2018, the Programme became affiliated and accredited under the [Prince Trust International Achieve Programme](#) and the center is licensed to implement this programme which gives international certification to the young people who finish the programme.

Year	Number of individuals worked with by the Adolescent Day Programme
2015	13
2016	15
2017	14
2018	20
Jan-Jun 2019	12

Embark for Life started in 2013 yet it was previously an EU co-funded project under the [European Social Fund](#). In 2013, it became a national project funded through national funds. Embark for Life (E4L) contributes towards the community strategic guidelines by matching project participants to avail of the already existing schemes and educational/vocational training in the country, whilst supporting them in finding suitable employment. Disadvantaged young people are often likely to fall into the social benefit trap. Thus, by supporting them to lead a sustainable healthy lifestyle and have job security, their dependence on social assistance and the revolving syndrome of attaining support from various public services is minimised.

Year	Number of individuals worked with by the Embark for Life
2015	197
2016	177
2017	186
2018	190
Jan-Jun 2019	175

Further information on these three programmes can be found on the [Appogg](#) website. Agenzija Appogg, which forms part of the [Foundation for Social Welfare Services](#), is the responsible authority for the implementation and coordination of these programmes and projects.

The aim of Youth in Focus, the Adolescent Day Programme and Embark for Life is to provide structure in the lives of young people who are at risk and require support by developing and maintaining healthy relationships with young persons' support networks, helping them in becoming independent by being actively involved in different activities, delivering specialised professional social work services and supporting the young people concerned within their own environment. This is enabled through adhering to the following principles:

- Working in partnership with the service user on all aspects of service delivery
- Linking service users to other resources or services when deemed appropriate and necessary
- Ensuring ongoing training for staff members in order to enhance and maintain optimum standards of service delivery
- Developing and maintaining an accessible, realistic and user-friendly service
- Developing the existing strengths of service users
- Referring adolescents to psychological sessions when deemed beneficial and necessary
- Introducing and developing the concept of youth and outreach work with this particular service user group
- Working with other outside entities to ensure the availability of accommodation for young people facing homelessness or difficult living situations.

These programmes are in line with prioritised goals as they address skills training, employment and social inclusion.

Apart from the above programmes, Appogg offers five Community Services – programmes for young people.

The Alternative Youth Entertainment (AYE) is a group of young people (aged between 16 and 19 years old) committed to organising alternative healthy activities for other young people in their community, with the purpose of preventing them from engaging in excessive alcohol use and other risky behaviour. They plan a number of activities throughout the year, and invite other young people to attend. To this effect, they build networks with stakeholders in the community, and their activity includes obtaining sponsorships for their activities. The group is supported by the community development worker of the Msida Community Service. The project is ongoing. The group takes between 10-15 participants.

The Youth 12-14 targets young people (12-14 years of age) residing in Valletta and Floriana. The young people are targeted through various outreach exercises, giving

particular attention to those young people who are at risk and who are not able to engage in other healthy activities.

The sessions provide a space for the young people to develop life skills in a non-formal and informal setting. They usually run through the scholastic year, that is, between October and May. There are some recreational activities organised during the summer months.

The sessions are facilitated by the community development worker, who is assisted by a community social worker (Valletta Community Services). The group takes between 10- 15 participants.

The [Youth 16+](#) is a continuation of the group which had participated in the early teens project in the past (Valletta and Floriana). The group decided to continue to meet on a monthly basis. Some of the members are being supported to engage in voluntary work with younger age groups from the same community.

This group is also facilitated by the community development worker and the community social worker, and takes between 10- 15 participants.

[iTeens](#) sessions are organised for adolescents aged between 12 and 16 years old. They are provided with activities that touch upon social themes, thus providing the space for personal and social development. Although the sessions are co-ordinated by community development workers (Cottonera Community Services), the participants take an active role in developing the programme of activities. There are two schedules: one for winter and one for summer, with the summer schedule including more recreational outdoor activities. The group takes between 10- 15 participants.

The [Community Workshop](#) is a workshop which is equipped to provide a non-formal setting for young people to develop manual skills (such as basic carpentry and stone work). The aim is to help the participants test their skills and interest in such trades and to eventually enrol in formal courses in the trades. The workshop provides space for informal social skills training. It is run by the community development worker who is assisted by a tutor provided by MCAST. The group takes up to eight participants.

The aim of the sessions in community projects is to provide a space for young people to develop life skills in a non-formal and informal setting. Each Community Service has its catchment area. Participants are recruited through the social work service, outreach or through other projects the participants may be attending that are provided by the Community Service.

## Funding

Budget Per Year	Youth in Focus	Adolescent Day Programme	Embark for Life
2015	€310734	€56949	€88994
2016	€332305	€80022	€60765
2017	€320781	€74026	€109578
2018	€317619	€82709	€114674
2019	€174258 (as at 30.06.19)	€37634 (as at 30.06.19)	€90084 (as at 14.11.19)

Disclaimer: the above budgets are the actual costs per year and include all the costs in relation to the service such as salaries and running costs per service. Any changes in budget were/are due to cost of living or fluctuation in remuneration to professionals.

## Quality assurance

Evaluation of programmes is held on a regular basis and the service concerned makes sure that FSWS policies are implemented. The aim of the evaluations is to always improve service delivery.

FSWS has an Audit and Quality Assurance Service which was set up two years ago but this Service has not yet audited the concerned services.

No formal evaluation of these Services has as yet been carried out by the Research Department within FSWS.

## 4.5 Initiatives promoting social inclusion and raising awareness

### Intercultural awareness

Malta believes that breaking down cultural barriers, building a society on inclusion that values diversity, sets us in considering the other person as equally valuable, thus, putting us in a background of an ongoing learning process that provides the possibility of mutual understanding and the need for mutual recognition of cultural identities. To this effect, Malta continuously evaluates and monitors the needs of learners to ensure that the education system promotes a culture of dialogue and democratic values, creating a space for community building at the national level, through a number of best practices.

Malta has undertaken numerous measures in connection with the implementation of [Malta's Migrant Integration Strategy and Action Plan - Vision 2020 "INTEGRATION = BELONGING"](#):

- [The Ministry for Education and Employment](#) (MEDE) set up a [One Stop Shop](#) within MEDE. The One Stop Shop provides dedicated services and a focal point for Migrants services on Education and Employment.
- Personal, Social, Career Development (PSCD) continues to be given paramount importance in the Maltese educational system, that promotes a human rights culture. Students develop skills and attitudes necessary for a complete integration of human rights. PSCD educators offer holistic learning that promotes the development of students' intellectual, emotional, social, physical, artistic and creative potentials. PSCD also touches upon values clarification where students are given opportunities to identify, clarify and express their own beliefs and values and to confront them with others in a safe framework based on the dignity of every human being, freedom of thought and expression, and the respect for others' opinions.
- With regard to compulsory education, the setting up of the [Migrant Learners' Unit](#) has strengthened the provision for inclusive support for children from a migrant background. The programme enacted focuses on the learning of Maltese and English which are the languages of schooling in Malta. Other academic subjects are taught adopting a Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach. This programme focuses on each learner's well-being offering a holistic educational experience while focusing on the acquisition of linguistic and socio cultural competences. The programme is offered in 28 schools in Malta and Gozo. A newly introduced induction provision for secondary aged learners is running as of the start of this scholastic year.
- Also with regard to compulsory education, since 2011, the Ministry for Education and Employment has been involved in the [Language Learning and Parental Support for Integration](#) (LLAPSI and LLAPSI+) Projects, a series of EU-funded projects mainly through the [Integration Fund](#) (IF), the [European Refugee Fund](#) (ERF) and currently the [Asylum and Migration Integration Fund](#) (AMIF). Most of the projects focused on the

upskilling of teachers, procurement of teaching materials and the development of learning and assessment tools.

- The current LLAPSI+ project also includes the recruitment of a team of Community Liaison Staff with the main objective of school outreach to support parents and guardians whose children are in schooling. This initiative contributes to consolidating the home-school links and works towards building a more cohesive society even within the school communities. The Migrant Learners' Unit also has the services of a social worker and a counsellor who work in the different schools and hubs.
- Through the LLAPSI+ project, the Migrant Learners Unit has also offered a summer intensive language course – the Language 2 Go! – with the aim of supporting newly arrived learners who are still struggling with learning the languages of schooling. The courses have been offered annually in four different sites in both Malta and Gozo.
- Apart from substantial language training components, the current LLAPSI+ project includes components such as 'Making Friends-Bringing Friends Clubs', an afterschool creative club with the aim of providing an opportunity for newcomer learners to work together and strengthen the relationship between different cohorts including EU nationals and the hosting community.
- From the side of the [Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology](#) (MCAST), there was the setting up of the Integration Unit at MCAST within the Students' Outreach Department. In recent years, the number of international students has constantly increased and thus the Integration Unit will seek to co-ordinate and streamline new and existing activities related to integration of students, such as Diversity days.
- To assist the [Integration Strategy](#), MCAST has and will continue to deliver language courses to migrants in both Maltese and English through its Learning Support Unit and its Six Thematic Institutes. Moreover, MCAST has been commissioned by the Ministry for European Affairs and Equality (MEAE), [Human Rights and Integration Directorate](#), to develop and deliver 3 particular Skills Kits as part of the Stage 1 Pre-Integration Certificate as outlined in the Migrant Integration Strategy and Action Plan 2020. These 3 Skills Kits will be pegged at MQF Level 1 and will cover 20 contact hours for Maltese, 20 hours of English and 20 hours of Cultural Orientation focusing on basic services available which participants find useful in their everyday life.
- Also from the side of MCAST, there were structured meetings with international students; participation in continuous professional development (CPD) sessions for staff members, together with one-to-one meetings with individual students.
- The [Department of Inclusion and Access to Learning](#) of the University of Malta has been commissioned to design, deliver and oversee the implementation of an important part of the migrant integration process. The Directorate for Human Rights and Integration within the Ministry for European Affairs and Equality has commissioned the department to provide the Stage 2 integration courses in Maltese (MQF 2) and Cultural Orientation. Stage 2 courses inter alia fulfil the integration requirements laid down in law for long-term residence applicants. The same agreement includes for the first time prior training in adult education for integration, for the educators who will be delivering the Stage 2 courses.
- As part of the University of Malta's internationalisation programme, the [University of Malta](#) is seeking to attract a number of non-EU/EEA nationals to read for Masters and Ph.D. programmes in different areas of study, to strengthen the research and innovation dimensions of the University of Malta. The University of Malta continues to develop new postgraduate courses in diverse areas of study, a number of which are launched each year.
- Within the [Ministry for Tourism](#) (MOT), the [Institute for Tourism Studies](#) (ITS) is also supporting the Integration Strategy on the ground. ITS enrolls numerous foreign

students and the Institute makes it a priority to make them feel welcome by encouraging also other national students to help them and make them feel that they belong at the Institute.

- The [Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability](#) within the [Ministry for Education and Employment](#) pursues a policy of inclusivity. Lifelong learning courses are open to both Maltese and non-Maltese nationals. The Directorate has developed courses in Maltese-as-a-foreign-language (MFL) and English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL). At enrolment stage, asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection are given the same rights as Maltese and EU citizens. Courses in English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) and Maltese-as-a-foreign-language (MFL) offered by the Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability within the Ministry for Education and Employment are accredited and lead to the awarding of a General Education Award at Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) levels 1 and 2.
- The [Institute for Education's](#) initial teacher training courses include modules on the subject to ensure that the new teaching workforce is capable of creating the inclusive environment conducive to learning required by all learners. It also offers accredited short courses on multiculturalism in education, how to include international learners in the learning experience classroom and courses that empower senior management teams in schools to create a multicultural environment. The Institute for Education will also be organising a symposium on multiculturalism in education around June 2020. Foreign keynotes will be addressing the audience to discuss issues that schools and the community are facing on a daily basis. Experts researching in the area will be given the platform to share their findings so that schools may have the opportunity to adopt and adapt to their own particular situations. The Institute for Education is also creating supporting resources for schools to pick and choose from according to their particular needs and demographics.

In addition to the above, the [Inclusive Employment Services](#), a Division with [Jobsplus](#), the Public Employment Services, provides targeted assistance to vulnerable people which amongst others include youths, persons with disability, former prison inmates and substance abusers. The division aims at facilitating the transition to employment of these groups by equipping them with the transversal skills and knowledge required to enter the labour market and retain gainful employment.

The [Directorate for Learning and Assessment Programmes](#) within the [Ministry for Education and Employment](#) is highly committed to engage students and educators in Global Education matters. Indeed DLAP launched the [GENE](#) (Global Education Network Europe) programme on a national level during scholastic year 2018/19.

During this first year of GENE, schools were invited to take an active role in GENE by planning and implementing school-based projects addressing one or more of the following themes: Human Rights, Global Citizenship, Multiculturalism and Interculturality and Peace and Conflict Prevention. Each project was allocated GENE funding for implementation. Participating schools will present their project outputs in June 2019.

The 9 educational institutions participating in GENE addressed directly Multiculturalism and Interculturality. The theme promoted among students and educators was the appreciation of cultural diversity, peaceful cohabitation and collaboration between multi-national citizens towards a more just and equitable global community.

The theme of Multiculturalism and Interculturality was addressed through a number of measures that include: i. Embedding in the formal curriculum through literacy, supported by teaching aides financed through GENE funding. ii. National Kafe Kultura initiative. This initiative provided students and educators the opportunity to plan, organise and participate in school-based informal dialogue sessions with multi-national citizens. iii. Student-led expo initiatives addressing multiculturalism and Global Citizenship. The schools in collaboration with DLAP have embarked on another initiative related to SDG 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions through the ARTMILE initiative. This initiative

commenced in May 2019 and will proceed throughout the next scholastic year 2019-2020.

The learning programmes within these schools spanned over scholastic year 2018 – 2019. These efforts will be extended over to the coming scholastic years.

The [UNESCO Art Camp initiative](#) was also recently held in the local context. During this event artists of different nationalities collaborated to create artwork promoting peace and cultural diversity. Students from three schools, namely, [St Ignatius College Middle School Handaq](#), [The Malta Visual and Performing Arts School](#) and [San Andrea School](#) participated in visual and performing arts workshops moderated by the international artists.

Moreover, 3 schools participated in the Traditional Games across Europe initiative organised by the Centre for Physical Education and Sport. This initiative that took place during scholastic year 2018/19 promoted sport as an instrument for dialogue and peace across nations.

The Directorate for Learning and Assessment Programmes in collaboration with GENE during this scholastic year also coordinated a 16-hour training course in Global Education for educators across all cycles and sections and school Senior Management Teams. The course entitled: Introduction to Global Education aims to provide participants an opportunity to:

- Develop an understanding of the fundamental concepts underlying GENE and Global Education.
- Appreciate the importance of responsible global citizenship.
- Discuss education strategies, on how to include Global Education in the school experience of learners, to emphasis regional diversity and inequality.
- Discuss strategies, on how to address educational barriers to provide quality education.
- Discuss the role of education in a neo-liberal economy.
- Explain the causes of education inequalities and discuss strategies on how these can be addressed both within the classroom and the school structure in general.
- Analyse the education barriers within the school structure and discuss ways how to foster inclusive school policies

A second GENE-funded training module entitled: Global Education for Social Justice is planned to for scholastic year 2019/2020.

## Young people's rights

The [Office of the Commissioner for Children](#), which falls under the Ministry is established by law to promote and advocate for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity, rights and interests of children. The Office carries out various initiatives to create awareness about rights. These initiatives include research projects on various issues concerning children.

Advocacy work on children's rights is done through activities carried out in the community and schools, as well as through the dissemination of publications and the media. The Office also disseminates publications on children's rights and organises activities for children and young people. The Office also promotes child participation and has a Council for Children consisting of children themselves and representatives from various Ministries to discuss matters relevant to the work of the Office.

The Office also makes use of its website and its social media, mainly [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) page to create awareness. It is also part of the [BeSmartOnline!](#) project to raise awareness and educate children and teens, parents/carers and educators on the safer use of the Internet.

One of the main initiatives is the annual [Rights 4U live-in](#). This yearly activity consists of an interactive programme which includes various activities in which is the Rights 4U live-in, where young people attending not only learn about their rights, but also actively explore and engage in discussions on these rights. The aim of the Rights4U live-in is for participants to develop critical thinking skills, build social ties and implement concepts such as respect, responsibility and inclusion.

The main target groups are children and young people under the age of 18 years old as well as parents/carers, educators and other professionals working with children.

The implementation of young people's rights can be effectively analysed through the provision of various policies and strategies as well as benefits and services.

In Malta, access to education, healthcare and social welfare services are free for all (including young people). A number of universal and targeted measures are in place to enhance the income of families and individuals. [The Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity](#) (MFCS) provides social benefits as well as measures aimed at improving employability and inclusion prospects through activation and social welfare services. These social benefits and welfare services not only provide social protection, but also act as activation measures to encourage the entry, re-entry and retainment in the labour market. Apart from the provision of financial benefits payable by virtue of the [Social Security Act \(Chapter 318 of the Laws of Malta\)](#) and other in-kind benefits, as explained above, MFCS also offers housing arrangements and social welfare services to help young people overcome inequalities and have a better quality of life. Some of these main initiatives or measures which impact young people include: i) universal benefits and services such as social assistance, unemployment benefits, children's allowance and subsidised life-long learning; and ii) targeted benefits and services such as the [Youth Guarantee Scheme](#), the [tapering of benefits](#), the [in-work benefit](#), the [Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived](#) (FEAD) and the [State Funded Food Distribution](#) (SFFD), projects by the community-based [LEAP Centres](#), as well as housing schemes and residential settings.

Universal benefits and services:

[Social assistance](#): It is provided to each person aged 18 years or over, being a head of household who is deemed unfit for employment due to physical or mental illness; being a single parent or separated person who is unemployed because of family responsibilities; being a single person living alone or with anyone else not being his/her parents who is unemployed due to illness and; or persons considered as being unable to enter the labour market by Jobsplus. In addition, persons in receipt of social assistance are entitled to an energy benefit, while those living in privately rented accommodation are also entitled to a rent allowance.

[Unemployment benefits](#): Persons who are 16 years of age or over, register with Jobsplus and satisfy a minimum of 50 paid social security contributions from their first employment and an average of 20 contributions in the two years prior to date of registering as unemployed, are entitled to the unemployment benefit. This benefit is intended to be a short-term measure lasting for a maximum period of 156 days, whilst a person is actively seeking employment. Following this period, the unemployed person may apply for long-term social assistance in the form of unemployment assistance which is means tested. In order to qualify once again for the unemployment benefit, the person has to work for 91 continuous days (13 weeks) beginning from the 156th day of his/her previous unemployment benefit entitlement.

The unemployment benefit, which is not means tested, is flat rated and subject to a yearly percentage raise according to the cost of living allowance (COLA) granted in the national annual budget. Entitlement to this benefit is computed on a 6 day week basis.

If a person under 18 years of age satisfies the contributions tests (50 and 20) will be entitled to unemployment benefits. Young people benefit from social welfare benefits through custodial care benefits, such as children's allowance, disabled child allowance, and foster care allowance, which are paid up to the age of 16 years. Youths aged 16 years and over who are certified by a Medical Panel appointed by the [Minister for the Family and Social Solidarity](#) (MFCS), as suffering from a disability as listed in the [Social Security Act Chapter 318 \(section 27\)](#), are entitled for the disability pension (14 years old in case of persons who are visually impaired). As from January 2015, all youths up to the age of 24 who are not engaged in studies or work are encouraged to join the [Youth Guarantee Scheme](#) offered by the [Ministry for Education and Employment](#) which provides

a work placement or a training programme to enhance their skills, together with support from psychologists, occupational therapists and job coaches.

Persons who are unable to continue working due to medical reasons, are awarded an invalidity pension at a rate which is based on the number of social security contributions paid. A contributory invalidity pension is awarded to those persons who paid 250 contributions, completed a minimum of six months of uninterrupted employment or a year of Jobsplus's Part 1 registration, and are found by the Social Security Department's medical board to be permanently unable to work due to physical or mental illness. Eight different rates of invalidity pension are available, depending on the applicant's civil status and his/her paid/or credited social security contributions.

**Children's Allowance:** All parents entrusted with the care and custody of their children (until children are aged less than 16 years) are given the Children's Allowance as income benefit according to yearly income. Different rates apply depending on the family's income earned. Additionally, apart from the Children's Allowance, parents of children having physical and/or mental disability receive the [Disabled Child Allowance](#).

**Lifelong learning: lifelong learning opportunities** are provided at a low cost aimed at improving the educational and employment prospects of everyone, including young people.

Targeted benefits and services:

The social inclusion of certain groups of young people, such as young parents and young people aged below 23 years, are also promoted through the [maternity benefit](#), the [free childcare services](#) (0-3 years) and the [after-school care services](#) (3-16 years), as well as the targeted [Youth Guarantee Scheme](#), [Tapering of Benefits](#), [In-Work Benefit](#), [Servizz Għożża](#), [FEAD](#) and [SFFD](#), [Child Participation Assessment Tool](#) (CPAT), as well as projects by the [LEAP Community Centres](#):

**Maternity Benefit:** The Maternity Benefit is given to both unemployed and employed (including self-occupied) pregnant women. Unemployed pregnant women receive €94.35 per week, while employed pregnant women receive €175.84 per week. Those women who request an extension of the maternity leave will continue to receive this benefit up to four weeks under the Maternity Leave Benefit.

**Childcare services:** As from April 2014, parents/guardians of children aged from 0 to 3 years who are engaged in employment or in education are provided with free childcare services.

**After-school care services:** An after-school care service named Klabb 3-16 is provided from Monday to Friday to children between the ages of 3 and 16 years, attending State, Church or Independent schools. During school holidays, the service is available for children whose parents are following a course or are in employment. In addition, students whose parents are in employment have the opportunity to enjoy a healthy breakfast before school starts through the Breakfast Club which operates in State Schools on a daily basis.

**Youth Guarantee Scheme:** Through the Youth Guarantee Scheme, after their youngest child is one year old, single parents under 23 years of age can undertake employment, education or training, whilst securing their receipt of the social assistance benefit and free childcare. Furthermore, single parents receiving social assistance and who enrol in full-time education or equivalent vocational courses, are entitled to a credit of between €200 and €1,000.

**Tapering of Benefits:** The tapering of benefits aims at introducing persons in receipt of social assistance or unemployment assistance to the labour market, after having registered for work for more than a year. When these persons engage in employment, the unemployment benefit or social assistance is not fully terminated but decreases over a period of three years (65%, 45% and 25%).

**In-Work Benefit:** In-work benefit was introduced to parents (including single mothers) with children under the age of 23 years residing in same household. Where both parents are in employment, and earn a combined income between €10,000 and €24,630 per year are eligible and the maximum rate per child per year is €1300. In the case of single parents, earning between €6,600 and €17,130 are eligible and the maximum payable rate per child per year is €1350. In case of one parent in employment earning between €6,600 and €17,130 are eligible and the maximum payable child per year is €550.

**Servizz Għożża** provides services and educational programmes to pregnant minors, with the aim of adopting a positive attitude towards motherhood.

**Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) and the State Funded Food Distribution (SFFD):** food packages distributed to the most vulnerable, including households with young people.

**The Child Participation Assessment Tool (CPAT):** Since November 2018 till present, the Ministry for the Family, Children’s Rights and Social Solidarity (MFCS), in collaboration with the Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society (MFWS), has been working on the implementation of the Council of Europe Child Participation Assessment Tool (CPAT). This is in line with [Article 12 ‘the right of children to be heard’ of the UNCRC](#), as well as with three Council of Europe Recommendations and its [Strategy for the Rights of the Child \(2016-2021\)](#). The said joint project will end soon in November 2019, and shall capture the reality of child participation in different sectors and at various levels in Malta, with a view to improving this access to participation. Towards this purpose, a wide range of stakeholders, including Government, NGOs and children themselves, were asked to provide their feedback on the 10 indicators of the CPAT. This project will lead Malta to: - undertake a baseline assessment of current implementation of child participation; - help identify measures needed to achieve further compliance; - provide benchmarks to measure progress over time; as well as - strengthen monitoring and accountability.

Various projects within the LEAP Community Centres aim at skilling and empowering young people in Malta, especially in the most disadvantaged areas.

Malta also provides a number of housing services and initiatives from which young people may directly or indirectly benefit. Some of these schemes and services offered by the Housing Authority, which also falls within the remit of MFCS, include: - Grant to assist owners in the construction and/or completion or rehabilitation of their first home; - Installation of lifts in Government owned residential blocks/entrances; - Rent Subsidy in private rented residences; - Scheme for persons with disability; - Sir Sid Darek 2014; - Subsidy on adaptation works in residences occupied by owners or tenants; and - Incentives to families and young couples that enable them to become home-owners, through for example the First Time Buyers Stamp Duty Relief Scheme whereby first time buyers can benefit up to €5,000 in stamp duty on the purchase of immovable property.

For further information, access [housingauthority.gov.mt](http://housingauthority.gov.mt).

Malta provides a number of special housing facilities and residential settings for children and young people at risk of social exclusion, particularly those requiring out-of-home care (mainly run by the Catholic Church). Apart from a number of residential homes for children, such as the [Creche](#) run by the Ursuline Sisters, there are also a number of residential facilities for adults and young people, for example:

- [Fejda](#) provides shelter and a safe environment for female adolescents who suffer from emotional and/or behavioural difficulties;
- [Dar Osanna Pia](#) provides professional intervention and shelter for young men aged 18 years and over who are experiencing various forms of crises and social difficulties;
- [Suret il-Bniedem Foundation](#) offers holistic residential care through its four homes: Ø Dar Tereza Spinelli welcomes homeless, single women, girls aged between 15 and 18 and women with children; Ø Dar Patri Leopoldo welcomes homeless men and boys; Ø Dar Victoria and Dar Franġisk welcome people who suffer from mental health problems.
- [Sedqa agency](#) and [Caritas](#) offer a number of residential settings for the rehabilitation of people with addictive behaviour.
- [Appoġġ](#)

[agency](#) also provides residential care to children and young people in need by: Ø offering a therapeutic programme to cater for children and young persons who require semi-secure residential accommodation; Ø providing adequate placements for children and young people who require out-of-home care and experience socio-emotional difficulties. - Support agency provides various residential facilities for persons with disability as well as a temporary residential programme to support these young people in their transitional phase to more permanent accommodation.

In addition to measures and initiatives, Malta commits to certain national policies which aim at promoting the social inclusion prospects of young people:

- [National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion \(2014-2024\)](#): This policy is a commitment to reduce poverty and social exclusion through the promotion of well-being and improving the quality of life. It targets four population groups: (a) children and young people, (b) elderly, (c) unemployed, and (d) working poor. This document is based on six dimensions: Income and social benefits, employment, education, health and environment, social services and culture, where several strategic policy actions are proposed under each dimension to enhance the prospects for all citizens, particularly vulnerable groups.

[National Strategic Policy for Positive Parenting \(2016-2024\)](#): This policy aims to build and sustain a positive culture and infrastructure for parents as well as their children. It emphasises the strengthening of existing services while suggesting new parenting programmes.

[The Strategy for Retirement and Financial Capability \(2017-2019\)](#): This strategy focuses on long term planning giving importance to the saving aspect with the aim of having a decent living during the retirement phase. In view of this, the strategy proposes various communicating messages as well as programmes segmented to different specific population and employment cohorts which include, amongst others, teenagers (13-19 years) and young adults (20-30 years).

[National Children's Policy](#): This policy reflects Malta's commitment to promote and safeguard the rights of all children (persons aged less than 18 years), through the three pillars of protection, provision and participation of children. Particular reference is made to issues which hinder or facilitate the wellbeing and social inclusion of adolescents, such as risky and addictive behaviour, and the transition from adolescence to adulthood, respectively. In this policy, certain groups of adolescents are specifically targeted, such as those leaving institutionalised care which are to be appropriately prepared and supported in their transition to independent living through education, training and/or employment by the development of an after-care plan and follow-up. Based on five dimensions: (i) home environment, (ii) social wellbeing, (iii) health and environment, (iv) education and employment, and (v) leisure and culture, this policy puts forward 110 actions. The monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of this policy has been entrusted to the Office of the Commissioner for Children.

[The National Alcohol Policy 2018-2023](#): Whilst seeking to address the important issues of underage drinking as well as irresponsible and excessive drinking by adults, including young adults, this policy provides for various actions to address the supply and demand of alcohol. In this case, the law makes it illegal to sell or procure alcohol to minors. The Alcohol Policy stresses measures to enforce further legislation, and harsher penalties against sellers and distributors who are found guilty of contravening the law. This policy is seen as particularly safeguarding the rights of adolescents, which age is crucial for initiation and development of substance use.

[A Mental Health Strategy for Malta 2020-2030](#): This strategy gives particular attention to the wellbeing of young people.

## Key initiatives to safeguard democracy and prevent radicalisation leading to violent extremism

Both the [National Children's Policy](#) and the [National Youth Policy](#) put forward policy actions in this regard. For example, the National Children's Policy sets out the following policy actions:

- Promote empowerment, inclusion and active involvement of children within society, whilst also generating awareness among children to be responsible citizens and to respect all members of society.
- Recognise and promote children as active citizens by engaging them in democratic processes, social participation, environmental activism and innovation, volunteering and social entrepreneurship.
- Ensure that the views presented by children through participation in forums and consultations are duly considered by policymakers.
- Ensure that views presented by children are taken into account through democratic participation by extending voting rights to young people aged 16 and over for all State, Local and European elections and referendums.
- Provide children with access to remedy if there has been a breach of their rights as provided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and promote the functions of the Office of the Commissioner for Children.
- Combat all forms of discrimination and intolerance primarily among groups that are at greater risk of marginalisation (e.g. children with mental health challenges and addictive behaviour or children living with persons experiencing such challenges or behaviour, children of imprisoned parents or children having imprisoned siblings, migrant children, children with a disability, children in care, LGBTIQ+ children and children from ethnic and religious minorities).

Malta considers the promotion of respect for human rights and overcoming intolerance, discrimination, racism and xenophobia as forming the basis of an integrated and multi-cultural society. In this regard, Malta has embarked on a series of policies which value inclusion, social cohesion, opportunities for all and active and responsible citizenship in order to foster respect for all and thus enhance skills for life.

Malta's education system seeks to imbue values that respect diversity. This encompasses that an individual is unique and recognises individual differences whether these stem from dimensions of race; ethnicity; gender; sexual orientation; socio-economic status, age; physical, mental or intellectual abilities; religious beliefs; political beliefs; or other ideologies. Some of the measures related to safeguarding democracy against and prevent radicalisation which lead to violent extremism include:

- The Ministry for Education and Employment is a member of the [Radicalisation Awareness Network Malta](#) (RAN –MT) which was formed in 2018. RAN-MT was setup in February 2018 as a multi-agency task force to monitor, prevent and act on any issue of radicalisation within the country. No single service can provide the necessary holistic response that is needed. The objective of RAN-MT is to design a national response approach towards individuals, families and social needs of children. RAN-MT has the aim to work together with international agencies so as to learn, adapt and use existing RAN practices for the benefit of the country.
- Hate Crime/Speech Unit within the remit of the [Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security](#)
- Malta is doing its utmost to continue fighting radicalisation and violent extremism through prevention. With this in mind, [the Ministry for Home Affairs](#) together with [the Malta Police](#) and the Office of the National Counter Terrorism Coordinator set up the Radicalisation Awareness Network Malta (RAN-Malta) with the aim of creating a common understanding of radicalisation at national level and establishing an all-

government approach in countering radicalisation leading to terrorism and violent extremism. This Network brings together representatives from a number of entities across government who need to be aware of signs of radicalisation and violent extremism and who can collaborate with each other on this matter. Such entities include the education and youth sectors, among others, and they are receiving training on radicalisation and encouraged to attend relevant meetings and conferences abroad. The Network is meeting regularly and provides a forum for the exchange of information among the network members as well as the exchange of best practices and knowledge acquired. A Hate Crime/Speech Unit within the remit of the Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security has been set up in October 2019. This is a multidisciplinary unit that is dedicated to supporting the victims of hate speech and hate crime but will serve also to impart the right message to the general public namely that hate crime and hate speech, and even more so that with intent to incite violence against another person or group, will not be tolerated. The launch of the Unit also constitutes a public awareness campaign in order to reach the victims of such crimes as well as to educate the public.

- Making Friends-Bringing Friends Clubs'
- The [Migrant Learners' Unit](#) (MLU) within the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) organises "Making Friends Bringing Friends" clubs. These clubs are part of the [LLAPSI+](#) (Language Learning and Parental Support for Integration) Project.
- The clubs target young migrant learners attending both mainstream classes as well as Induction Classes and Maltese students. The objective of the clubs is to encourage a process of inclusion between Maltese and newcomer learners. This is achieved through a process of socialisation outside school hours. Those applying for the clubs are provided with the opportunity to attend a total of ten sessions. Each session is of two-and-a-half hours. During the first hour, the participants are provided with an environmentally friendly multi-ethnic meal. Through this activity, awareness is raised about diversity in relation to different cooking styles. While the participants are enjoying this meal the participants are supervised by staff from the [Foundation of Educational Services](#) (FES). During the second part of each session, the applicants are provided with various learning experiences through a variety of fun-activities. The activities focus on encouraging those taking part to form friendships through active collaboration. The advantage that the Clubs have embedded in their approach is that they are not subject to the pressures that a school environment is usually exposed to, such as achieving pass marks in relation to the curricular subjects. The focus of the Clubs is exclusively on friendship and the benefits that friendships generate through a collaborative approach. An added advantage of the Club is that it helps to create multiplier effects in the sense that friendships/inclusion synergies between children also help adults to be more understanding towards each other. It will also help to widen the circle of friends that participants in the Clubs have since the Clubs could serve as an introduction to 'friends-of-friends'. This philosophy is reflected in the title of the Clubs themselves – Bringing Friends Making Friends.
- Personal, Social and Career Development (PSCD)

Personal, Social, Career Development (PSCD) is given paramount importance in the Maltese educational system, that promotes a human rights culture. Students develop skills and attitudes necessary for a complete integration of human rights. PSCD educators offer holistic learning that promotes the development of students' intellectual, emotional, social, physical, artistic and creative potentials. PSCD also touches upon values clarification where students are given opportunities to identify, clarify and express their own beliefs and values and to confront them with others in a safe framework based on the dignity of every human being, freedom of thought and expression, and the respect for others' opinions.

With regard to knowledge and understanding, PSCD touches upon freedom, justice, equality, human dignity, non-discrimination, democracy, universality, rights,

responsibilities, interdependence and solidarity; and that human rights provide a framework for negotiating and agreeing modes of behaviour in the family, at school, in the community, and in the wider world.

With regard to skills, PSCD promotes: active listening and communication: being able to listen to different points of view, to advocate one's own rights and those of other people; critical thinking: finding relevant information, appraising evidence critically, being aware of preconceptions and biases, recognising forms of manipulation, and making decisions on the basis of reasoned judgement; the ability to work co-operatively and to address conflict positively; the ability to participate in and organise social groups; the ability to recognise human rights violations;

With regard to attitudes and values, PSCD promotes: a sense of responsibility for one's own actions, a commitment to personal development and social change; curiosity, an open mind and an appreciation of diversity; empathy and solidarity with others and a commitment to support those whose human rights are under threat; a sense of human dignity, of self-worth and of others' worth, irrespective of social, cultural, linguistic or religious differences; a sense of justice, the desire to work towards the ideals of universal human rights, equality and respect for diversity.

During PSCD, students celebrate diversity. When organizing extra-curricular activities on a voluntary basis, PSCD educators take up issues related to intercultural and anti-racist education in order to develop an understanding between cultures and to build on the assertion that one lives in a multicultural and democratic society. One explores similarities and differences between cultures and peoples.

In PSCD, peace education is also given prominence, whereby awareness on domestic violence and bullying, including cyber-bullying, together with other forms of violence, are underlined.

- Supporting educators to deal with diversity

Malta also issued two major policies that address the key topic on supporting teachers – 1) [Addressing Attendance in Schools Policy](#) and 2) [Managing Behaviour in Schools Policy](#) which adopt a whole school approach philosophy. This approach is defined as a unified collective and collaborative action by educators, administrators, parents and students that have been strategically constituted to improve student learning behaviour and well-being.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is offered to educators in schools in order to raise further sensitization and awareness issues such as social cohesion and anti-radicalization.

Schools as well as entities such as the Institute for Education and the Migrant Learners' Unit (MLU) within the Ministry for Education and Employment are undertaking significant steps to provide high level Continuous Professional Development to improve the level of preparedness of the educational staff in tackling the need to safeguard democracy against and prevent radicalisation which lead to violent extremism and to ensure that the education system promotes a culture of dialogue and democratic values, creating a space for community building at the national level.

Furthermore active steps are being taken to adequately train individuals to deal with multi-cultural fora. [The University of Malta](#) offers its students a [Master of Arts in Transcultural Counselling](#) by the [Faculty of Social Wellbeing](#) in collaboration with the University of New Orleans. The mission of the M.A. in Transcultural Counselling is to train world counsellors who are able to serve diverse populations worldwide.

- Other measures:

The Ethical Education programme addresses topics including: promoting students' critical and independent thinking; respect for and safeguarding the environment; promoting knowledge of citizens' rights and responsibilities; developing students' skills and competencies in conflict resolution; and developing healthy and respectful relationships.

The Ministry for Education and Employment provides an [Anti-Bullying Service](#), which forms part of the '[Safe Schools Programme](#)'. Its aim is to ensure that schools are providing a safe and secure environment where students are able to develop and acquire social and academic capacities. Schools have also been supported to develop an ethos, which promotes pro-social behaviour and mutual respect. In line with the requirements of the '[Addressing Bullying Behaviour in Schools policy](#)', schools have been expected to draft and implement tailor-made anti-bullying guidelines. The anti-bullying service has helped schools and the students' councils in the drafting and implementation of such guidelines and to form part of the working committee of each school.

Initiatives such as clubs (e.g. Stop Hate clubs) that seek to empower young people and encourage them to actively participate in a school's efforts to foster a positive school community, are outlined in the strategy document of the '[Addressing Bullying Behaviour in Schools](#)' (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014).

Moreover, Malta has been committed to provide high-quality education, which caters for all individuals in an equitable and inclusive manner. These policies and strategies include; [The National Curriculum Framework for All \(2012\)](#), [the Framework for the Education Strategy 2014 - 2024 \(2014\)](#) which is a comprehensive strategic framework that brings together and aligns all strategies, policies and plans under the Ministry from early childhood education and care to adult learning, from employment to research and innovation, and [the Respect for All Framework \(2014\)](#). Moreover, Malta has also set up the [Education for All](#) structures which through dialogue, works and supports all stakeholders within the educational setting to ensure high quality education for all learners where each and every one will learn to know, learn to do, learn to be and learn to live together. [The Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex Students in Schools Policy](#) has also been developed in Malta where the Policy aims to: Foster a school environment that is inclusive, safe and free from harassment and discrimination for all members of the school community, students and adults, regardless of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and/or sex characteristics. It promotes the learning of human diversity that is inclusive of trans, gender variant and intersex students, thus promoting social awareness, acceptance and respect. It also ensures a school climate that is physically, emotionally and intellectually safe for all students to further their successful learning development and well-being, including that of trans, gender variant and intersex persons.

Additionally, Malta believes that the aftermath of the Holocaust and of subsequent genocides continues to raise challenging questions for individuals, communities and nations. Schools are encouraged to commemorate the Holocaust annually through a letter circular, which is issued to all schools. In the circular, there are web links that schools can access to obtain information and ideas for the commemoration.

In light of the above, Malta believes that priorities and concrete actions with regards to promoting common values, inclusive education, integration and acceptance at all levels of society is vital. The transmission of knowledge within the school environment may play a key role to contribute to bringing about further inclusivity and prevent social exclusion and marginalisation which leads to social inequalities, disengagement, unemployment and the emergence of radicalization. Citizenship education has to be designed and implemented to be as effective as possible to all students by fundamentally building its framework on the foundations on which the EU is built. In Malta, citizenship education is being implemented through learning programmes on European Studies, Social Studies and Environmental Studies; students' participation in the National and European Parliament debates; students' participation in students' councils; and students' participation in Eco-School Committees.

## 4.6 Access to quality services

### Housing

A number of housing services and initiatives are offered through the [Housing Authority](#) from which young people may directly or indirectly benefit. Some of these schemes and services offered by the Housing Authority include:

- A [grant](#) to assist with the Construction and/or completion or rehabilitation of a first dwelling
- [Installation of lifts](#) in Government owned blocks to render them more accessible
- [Rent subsidy](#) to tenants on rents paid for their ordinary residence leased from the private sector
- [Scheme for persons with disability](#) to provide financial aid and technical advice to persons with disability to carry out adaptation works related to their disability in their residence
- [Sir Sid Darek](#) to encourage residents of apartments/terraced houses and maisonettes owned by the Housing Authority and the Government Property Department to become owner occupiers and continue using the property as their ordinary residence
- [Subsidy](#) for adaptation works in owner occupied, privately rented or government rented residences. Landlords of private dwellings rented to tenants can apply for assistance to eliminate dangerous structure only and on just one property. This aid helps to render premises in a habitable and acceptable standard
- Young people were enabled to become home-owners through, for example, the [First Time Buyers Stamp Duty Relief Scheme](#) whereby first time buyers can benefit up to €5,000 in stamp duty on the purchase of immovable property.

Malta also provides a number of special housing facilities and residential settings for children and young people at risk of social exclusion, particularly those requiring out-of-home care. Aside from a number of residential homes for children, such as the [Crèche](#) run by the Ursuline Sisters, there are also a number of residential facilities for adults and young people which include:

Fejda provides shelter and a safe environment for female adolescents who suffer from emotional and/or behavioural difficulties

[Dar Osanna Pia](#) provides professional intervention and shelter for young men aged 18 years old and over who are experiencing various forms of crises and social difficulties

Dar Niki Cassar welcomes homeless young people

[Suret il-Bniedem Foundation](#) offers holistic residential care through its four homes. Dar Tereza Spinelli welcomes homeless, single women, girls aged between 15 and 18 and women with children

Dar Patri Leopoldo welcomes homeless men and boys

Dar Victoria and Dar Frangisk welcome people who suffer from mental health problems

[Sedqa agency](#) and [Caritas Malta](#) offer a number of residential settings for the rehabilitation of people with addictive behaviour

[Appoġġ agency](#) also provides residential care to children and young people in need by offering a therapeutic programme to cater for children and young persons who require semi-secure residential accommodation, and providing adequate placements for children and young people who require out-of-home care and experience socio-emotional difficulties

[Support agency](#) provides various residential facilities for persons with disability as well as a temporary residential programme to support these young people in their transitional phase to more permanent accommodation.

## Social services

Malta offers a number of social benefit provisions and in-kind which directly or indirectly assist young people experiencing poverty and social exclusion. The main social benefit provisions and in-kind benefits include:

### Social assistance

Social assistance is provided to each person aged 18 years old or over, who being a head of household who is deemed unfit for employment due to physical or mental illness; being a single parent or separated person who is unemployed because of family responsibilities; being a single person living alone or with anyone else not being his/her parents who is unemployed due to illness and; or persons considered as being unable to enter the labour market by the [Jobsplus](#), Malta's Public Employment Service.

In addition, persons in receipt of social assistance are entitled to an energy benefit, while those living in privately rented accommodation are also entitled to a rent allowance.

Persons who are 16 years of age or over, registered under Part 1 of the [Jobsplus](#) and who satisfy a minimum of 50 paid social security contributions from their first date of employment and an average of 20 contributions in the two years prior to date of registering as unemployed, are entitled to unemployment benefit. This benefit is intended to be a short-term measure lasting for a maximum period of 156 days while a person is actively seeking employment. Following this period, the unemployed person may apply for long-term social assistance in the form of unemployment assistance which is means tested. In order to qualify once again for unemployment benefit, the person has to work for 91 continuous days (13 weeks) beginning from the 156<sup>th</sup> day of his/her previous unemployment benefit entitlement.

Unemployment benefit, which is not means tested, is flat rated and subject to a yearly percentage raise according to the cost of living allowance (COLA) granted in the national annual budget. Entitlement to this benefit is calculated on a six day week basis.

No benefits are allocated personally to unemployed persons of less than 18 years of age. Young people benefit from social welfare benefits through custodial care benefits, such as children's allowance, disabled child allowance and foster care allowance, which are paid up to the age of 16 years old. Young people aged 16 years old and over who are certified by a Medical Panel appointed by the [Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity](#) as suffering from a disability as listed in the [Social Security Act Chapter 318](#) (section 27) are entitled to a disability pension (14 years old in the case of people who are visually impaired). As from January 2015, all young people up to the age of 23 years old who are not engaged in studies or work are encouraged to join the [Youth Guarantee Scheme](#) offered by the [Ministry for Education and Employment](#), which provides a work placement or a training programme to enhance their skills, together with support from psychologists, occupational therapists and job coaches.

People who are unable to continue working due to medical reasons, are awarded an invalidity pension at a rate which is based on the number of social security contributions paid. A contributory invalidity pension is awarded to those who have paid 250 contributions, completed a minimum of six months of uninterrupted employment or one year of the [Jobsplus'](#) Part 1 registration, and are found by the [Social Security Department's](#) medical board to be permanently unable to work due to physical or mental illness. Eight different rates of invalidity pension are available, depending on the applicant's civil status and his/her paid/or credited social security contributions.

## Non-Financial Benefits

Apart from the provision of financial benefits payable by virtue of the [Social Security Act](#) and other in-kind benefits, as explained above, the [Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity](#) also offers housing arrangements and social welfare services to help young people overcome inequalities and have a better quality of life.

Throughout these last few years, various reforms have been undertaken in the area of social welfare provision in order to promote a more integrated and holistic service. Following the successful implementation of the EU co-financed [LEAP pilot project](#), locally-based Family Resource Centres and Regional Development Centres are currently being set up with the aim of providing a point of reference within the community through the provision of various forms of social support. Specifically aimed at combatting poverty and social exclusion through a more grassroots outreach-oriented and integrated approach, these Centres are designed to foster more inclusive communities through the empowerment and participation of disadvantaged groups, and collaborative networking among stakeholders. Indeed, they offer a one-stop shop approach through multiple services and support in a number of areas including training, employment, social benefits and childcare service, as well as a wide range of social work and community services to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion. These Centres offer services to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups which are often at risk of poverty, such as single parents, people with disabilities, ex-offenders, migrants and the working poor, which populations also include young people.

The type of service provided depends on the specific target groups. Apart from a wide range of universal services, the [Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity](#) also provides a number of targeted and specialised services, particularly for vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people, such as those with disabilities, those experiencing abuse and violence, and those residing in out-of-home care.

## Health care

The [Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate](#) promote healthy lifestyles through initiatives in various settings including community, schools and the workplace through various mediums including social media. The main focus is on well-being, healthy eating, weight management, physical activity, tobacco prevention, oral health and smoking cessation, infectious disease prevention and sexual health. This is done in collaboration with various entities including the Ministry of Education and Employment, Ministry for Family and Social Solidarity, Workplaces, Local Councils, Agenzija Zaghzagh, Sport Malta, NGOs and youth clubs. The opportunity is available for all to ensure accessibility to all.

Various strategies have been outlined including the [Healthy Weight for Life strategy](#), [Food and Nutrition Policy and Action Plan](#), [Sexual Health policy and strategy](#), and the draft Health Enhancing Physical Activity Strategy.

Some examples of specific initiatives include Schools on the Move, 360° Project, Peers Training on Sexual Health and Tobacco Cessation.

Research projects are also carried out including the Health Behaviour Study in School Children, targeting young people aged 13 and 15 years, national food consumption survey, national physical activity survey across all age groups including a representative sample of youths.

Training is carried out to health professionals and educators to ensure a consistent message is transmitted.

Mental Health Services have specifically designed services for young people.

A [Crisis Intervention Service](#) for children and adolescents is available from seven am to five pm at the Accident & Emergency at Mater Dei Hospital. Through this service, children and adolescents who are experiencing mental health related issues can drop in and be

reviewed by a psychiatric specialist and by a child and adolescent psychiatric nurse. If required the client can be referred further to a psychologist or social worker.

Regular psychological services can also be accessed through the [Child and Young People's Services](#).

In addition, for those young people requiring inpatient treatment, a new unit 12 bed unit has been set up just outside of the perimeter of [Mount Carmel Hospital](#). This [Youth Residence](#) provides a 24-hour protective, therapeutic environment with professional assessment and stabilisation of acute mental health issues. It provides both inpatient care facilities as well as therapeutic day programmes as part of a patients care plan. Access to on-going education at the appropriate developmental level also forms an essential criteria of the service.

Professional development for health care mediators is provided through training such as '[Cultural Mediators in Health Care](#)'. This is delivered to interested candidates by the Migrant Health Liaison Office within Primary Health Care. Two of the present Cultural Mediators working at the Primary Health Care took part in the LEAP Project where they received training and a skills passport. Individuals interested in this role are also encouraged to attend courses to improve their English and computer skills.

The cultural mediation service is a collective effort between Mater Dei Hospital and the Primary Health Care Department. This method would be beneficial if adopted in other health and social care settings.

### **Financial services**

See Social Services.

### **Quality assurance**

The [Department for Social Welfare Standards](#) (DSWS) is responsible for drawing up national standards of care and for issuing codes of conduct and practice for social care workers and their employers. On the basis of these standards, the DSWS licenses, registers and monitors care services.

DSWS has developed a number of standards to assess the quality of social services such as the out-of-home child care, social services delivered to persons with disability, and child day care services.

The DSWS monitors social welfare services in accordance with these established standards so as to continually improve service provision.

## **4.7 Youth work to foster social inclusion**

### **Policy/legal framework**

The main policy framework designed for youth work to foster social inclusion is the [National Youth Policy Towards 2020](#). This document sets two main strategies. One of these strategies is Youth Work and Services for Young People. The Ministry for Inclusion and Quality of Life and the [Parliamentary Secretary for Sports, Recreation and Voluntary Organisations](#) have over-arching responsibility for implementing this strategy. [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) is responsible for strategic planning and day-to-day operational matters in implementing the strategy. The focus of this strategy is on supporting the personal development and well-being of young people through projects, initiatives, and activities based on youth work and non-formal education.

## Main inclusive Youth-Work programmes and target groups

There are five main youth work programmes delivered towards vulnerable young people. These are the [Youth.Inc Programme](#), Youth Cafes, [Detached Youth Work Programme](#); Youth Work in Youth Hubs and Youth Work Programmes in Schools.

The [Youth.Inc Programme](#) targets young people between 16 and 21 years old and not in Education Employment or Training. The programme is designed in a way to up-skill young people to facilitate their engagement in further education, training or employment. The Youth.Inc Programme has an annual budget of €400,000.

Youth Cafes cater mainly for young people between 14 and 20 years of age and at risk of poverty. The programme strives to create inclusive and tolerant spaces in the heart of the community. The Youth Café Programme has an annual budget of €30,000.

The [Detached Youth Work Programme](#) targets young people between 15 and 25 years of age at risk of social exclusion. The Detached Youth Work Programme has an annual budget of €30,000.

The Youth Work in Youth Hubs programme targets post-secondary students aged between 16 and 20 years of age who are attending Foundation Classes (MQF Levels 1 and 2) and the Pathway to Independence Programme, a programme designed to give life skills to young people with different learning difficulties. The Youth Hubs Programme has an annual budget of €150,000.

The Youth Work in Schools programme targets 13 to 16 year old students with challenging behaviour. The Youth Work in Schools has an annual budget of €120,000.

Young people who participate in these programmes do not have direct involvement in the design and delivery of these programmes.

[Youth.Inc Programme](#) can be cited as an example of good practice in existing cooperation between youth workers, teachers, and trainers. Youth.inc is an inclusive education programme, based on applied learning, for young people between the ages of 16 and 21 years old. These young people have completed full-time compulsory education, often without qualifications, and were not in education, training or employment before entering the programme. The aim of the programme is to help young people to improve their standard of education and gain more knowledge, values and skills to enable them to enter the labour market or gain qualifications to continue in further education and/or training.

The number of course options available to young people at Youth.inc is quite broad. While core curriculum subjects such as English, Maltese and Applied Maths and Basic IT Skills remain in place, along with the development of core competences, there is a range of optional courses for young people including animal care, auto electric, beauty care, cooking, fretwork, electronics, entrepreneurship, hairdressing, social care, home cooking, cake decoration, nutrition and health, building and construction, fashion design, music production, photography, web design, upholstery, art, customer care and sales techniques.

With this wide range of course options being delivered by outside professionals/practitioners and a more personalised and individualised learning programme, the youth worker has become a go-between, facilitator, mediator and negotiator between young people seeking knowledge and professionals/practitioners who have such knowledge. The focus of the youth worker's work is on building supportive relationships between these two parties, engaging with them to help young people discover their strengths and weaknesses and encouraging them to map and pursue future career and learning paths. The youth worker role within Youth.inc exists in the demanding, difficult and often uncharted landscape between young people, often socially and economically excluded, at risk, with poor levels of educational attainment, and the realities, demands, disciplines and responsibilities of the world of education, training and work.

## Youth work providers in the field of social inclusion for young people

There are no other Youth Work providers. The main Youth Work programmes are all provided by the State.

## Training and support for youth workers engaged in social inclusion programmes

Youth Workers are offered three courses at the [University of Malta](#). Two of these are provided by the [Faculty of Social Well-being](#) through the [Department of Youth and Community Studies](#). Another one is provided by the [Faculty of Theology](#) in collaboration with the [Department of Youth and Community Studies](#) and [Diocesan Youth Commission](#).

The [Faculty of Social Well-being](#) offers a [Bachelor of Arts \(Honours\) in Youth and Community Studies](#). The course is offered both on a three-year full-time programme or a five-year part-time programme. This faculty also offers a [Master of Arts in Youth and Community Studies](#) through a three-year part-time programme. The [Faculty of Theology](#) in collaboration with the [Department of Youth and Community Studies](#) and Diocesan Youth Commission offers a [Master of Arts in Youth Ministry](#) through a three year part-time programme.

All of these three courses the Bachelor and the Masters programmes lay the foundation for any prospective youth worker to continue on the path to becoming a professional youth work. Upon termination of any of these 3 courses, the prospective youth worker must undergo a further 2 years on the job practice to finally apply for a professional warrant.

The University of Malta offers 2 more programmes with a specific focus on young people: A [Masters of Arts in Youth Justice](#), which is mainly a research-based part time programme over five semesters and a [Masters of Art in Community Action and Development](#) offered over a three-year part time programme are delivered by the Faculty of Social Wellbeing. Students following these two programmes can enrol themselves in a number of youth service provision job opportunity related to young people, however they cannot apply for a youth work warrant.

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#), the national youth agency, acts as a youth work foundation. [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) signed a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) with the [University of Malta](#). In this MOU the agency agreed to promote and resource youth workers in supervision skills and students following the above-mentioned courses can have their fieldwork placements, which is the practicum component of these courses, with professional youth workers at the agency. The agency also provides for an annual training programme for its youth workers in the form of Continuous Professional Development. Such training is offered to each youth worker as per their individual role within the agency.

## Financial support

There are no other publicly funded programmes.

## Quality assurance

Four of the main inclusive Youth work programmes in Malta fall under the direct responsibility of [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#), the National Youth Agency. The other, that is, the Youth Work Programme in Schools, falls under the responsibility of the [Student Services Department](#) within the Ministry for Education and Employment. The [law](#) that established the agency states that the agency has the responsibility to ensure the highest standard of Youth Work in Malta. The Agency was set up under the [Public Administration Act](#), Article 36. There are a number of Key Performance indicators to ensure quality in the delivery of programmes including the actual number of young people participating in the programmes and the number of tailor made programmes and initiatives targeting young people. The Chief Executive of the agency is liable for these Key Performance indicators.

## 4.8 Current debates and reforms

Social policy in Malta is undergoing a process of change characterised by reforms which aim to promote greater decentralisation of social welfare services, a more targeted approach to the provision of benefits, the flourishing of public-private partnerships in health and social care, a rights-based as opposed to a charity-based approach, and greater differentiation and specialisation of services, particularly 'enabling' services. These reforms reflect new needs and evolving realities within the context of an active inclusion and participatory approach (Vella & Gauci, 2016).

## 5. PARTICIPATION

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In Malta young people can be active and participate in societal and political life in a number of ways including being members in political parties, student councils, youth parliaments, youth local councils etc. Young people are also represented in the Malta Committee for Economic and Social Development.

As of 2015 16 year olds were extended the right to vote in local council elections. A consultation process is happening at the moment to extend voting rights for 16 year olds for National and European Parliament elections.

### 5.1 General context

#### Definitions and concepts

One of the eight principles that underlie the [National Youth Policy Towards 2020](#) is participation. The document states that: young people should be consulted and be involved in all planning and decision-making as active participants in their own development and in that of wider society.

#### Institutions of representative democracy

Malta is a constitutional republic and parliamentary democracy. The [Constitution of Malta](#) states that the President is the Head of State and is appointed by the unicameral parliament, the House of Representatives. The President appoints a Prime Minister the leader of the party winning a majority of seats in parliamentary elections.

At a national level, Malta's main representative institution is the Parliament of Malta. This consists of the President and a House of Representatives.

With the introduction of the [Local Councils Act](#), Malta is divided into five regions. Each of these regions is made up from a number of localities. Each locality elects its own Local Council consisting of a Mayor, a vice Mayor and Councillors.

Voting in Malta is cast by ballot and it is not compulsory.

After participating in the project for 2 years the Maltese National Youth Agency will be organising the forum in Malta that will bring around 200 young people and policy makers to discuss European issues that affect the well-being of young people.

#### Ongoing Debate

The major debate vis-a-vis youth political participation in Malta regards the age when a young person can stand for election, whether it is local, national or European. This policy debate is the natural progression after the voting age in all forms of elections was lowered from 18 to 16 in March 2018. In this regard a debate is now going on whether such young people should also stand for elections.

## 5.2 Youth participation in representative democracy

### Young people as voters

Voting age in Malta is at 16 years across the board.

The voting age in Malta has been split into two phases; in 2015, 16 year olds were given the right to vote in local council elections, and in 2018, this was extended to all elections/referenda in the nation.

16-18 year olds can vote and be voted for, however prior to turning 18 years of age, they cannot take a role of a mayor.

When youths voted in 2015, 62.3% have turned out, whereas in 2019, the youth turnout for local council and European Parliament elections were not accounted for by age, nevertheless the Electoral Commission claims that 72.7% of the voting population partook in the process.

### Young people as political representatives

Malta has 2 major political parties the Partit Laburista – the Labour Party and the Partit Nazzjonalista – the Nationalist Party. There are also smaller parties, namely Alternattiva Demokratika – The Green Party, as well as the Partit Demokratiku.

[Forum Żgħażaġh Laburisti](#) is the youth organisation of Partit Laburista. It encourages the participation of Maltese young people in politics, and ensures that the voice of younger generations is represented in the Labour Party's policies. Members of the Labour Party aged between 16 and 35 years old are automatically members of Forum Żgħażaġh Laburisti. The [Moviment Żgħażaġh Partit Nazzjonalista](#) (MZPN) is the youth movement within the Nationalist Party. MZPN works on its own initiative mainly to involve young people within the party; it pushes forward the needs and aspirations of young people within party policy and promotes the policies agreed by the party. Any PN member between the age of 16 and 30 years old is automatically a Moviment Żgħażaġh Partit Nazzjonalista member.

[Alternattiva Demokratika \(AD\) Żgħażaġh](#) – Green Youth is the youth wing of AD - The Green Party is committed to green principles, environmental protection, social justice and social cohesion principles with special emphasis on respect for human and civil rights. Members of Alternattiva Demokratika aged between 16 and 35 years of age are members of Alternattiva Demokratika Żgħażaġh.

There are no special provisions or quotas reserved for young people that facilitate their candidature for local, national or European elections. Any person who is a registered voter over the age of 18 can submit nominations to be considered to be candidates in elections.

Currently there are 4 young people (under the age of 30) among the members of the representative assembly in the current term.

## 5.3 Youth representation bodies

### Youth parliament

A Youth Parliament is established annually by the [National Youth Council](#) according to the latter's statute. This platform does not form part of the country's constitutional structure and is supervised by the National Youth Council.

The Youth Parliament has no fixed number of members. Interested young people apply to form part of the youth parliament through a call issued annually by the National Youth Council. The youth parliament is divided into two groups. One group for young people between 13 and 18 years old and another for those between 19 and 35 years of age. The mandate of the youth parliament is for a year.

The two age groups are divided into three further groups. Each of these six groups work on a resolution and later present it to their peers for amendments. During this period, they meet as often as necessary to finalise the resolutions.

The Youth Parliament has 2 main aims. The first is to present the finalised resolutions in a session of parliament. Then the resolutions are also presented to the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the President of the Republic. The second is that the Youth Parliament serves as a form of training and political simulation for the young people participating in it. In this sense, the Youth parliament serves both as an opportunity to learn to participate and participate to learn.

The National Youth Council funds the Youth Parliament.

Additionally since 2018, after the lowering of the voting age to 16 years, through a budgetary measure the Government committed itself to enhance the remit of the National Youth Parliament. In this regard, in an effort to increase young people's political awareness that facilitates their critical engagement in democratic processes, [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) – the National Youth Agency – was charged with providing a non-formal education training programme for young people interested in the Youth Parliament.

This materialised in a non-formal education programme entitled [Young Parliamentarians](#).

This programme gives young people, aged 13-16 years old, the opportunity of representing their respective schools in a debating competition #ejjewniddibattu. It is run in 3 phases. During the first phase young participants will receive training on different political systems, highlighting the Maltese system including Parliamentary, policy and electoral systems, public speaking and debating; pitching, formulating policy recommendations, and lobbying. This phase is then followed by a second phase where young participants will get together and work on developing a number of policy recommendations on topics that impact their well-being. The third phase and final phase will take the form of a debating society where young participants will have the opportunity to take part in a debating competition where they would debate the recommendations that they themselves would have formulated during the third phase.

This training will be offered by youth workers employed by [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) and the winning school receiving the Youth Parliamentarians trophy and a prize of Eur 750 and the runners up Eur 250.

Such training is envisaged to empower young people to participate in the National Youth Parliament organised by the National Youth Council and also other political participation projects such as the Model European Parliament, Youth Local Councils or School Councils.

## **Youth councils and/or youth advisory boards**

Following a recommendation in the first National Youth Policy Document in 1993, a National Youth Council – [Kunsill Nazzjonali Żgħażaġħ](#) (KNŻ) – was established. However, there are no legal frameworks that establish the Council. The Council operates at a national level. It is an autonomous non-governmental youth organisation and does not form part of the country's constitutional structure.

The age range of the Council members is between 15 and 35 years old. There are no special public measures or guidelines facilitating greater inclusiveness and diversity, however, any young person nominated by a youth organisation that is a full member of the National Youth Council can be a candidate.

The National Youth Council has 4 Statutory Bodies mainly:

**The General Assembly:** This is the highest organ of the National Youth Council and has the authority to decide on any matter raised. The General assembly is composed of representatives of each member organisation, together with the Executive Committee. Amongst other functions, the General assembly is responsible for the admission of new members in the National Youth Council; appointing the Executive Committee for the upcoming term; approving the Annual Report of the preceding year; approving the

Financial Report of the preceding year; appointing the Vigilance Board for the upcoming term; appointing the Auditors for the upcoming year.

The Annual General Assembly meets in November, however, an Extraordinary General Assembly may convene whenever this is requested by a simple majority of members during the Organisations' Committee, the Executive Committee, or the Vigilance Board or else by 40% of all members within KNŻ.

**The Organisations' Committee:** This body is composed of the Executive Committee and a representative of each Member Organisation and is convened at least once every three months. This body may also be convened by the Executive Committee whenever a demand is made by at least 5 Member Organisations. The Organisations' Committee is responsible for discussing and deciding any issue raised by the Executive Committee or the Member Organisations; during the first meeting after the General Assembly, approving the Work plan proposed by the Executive Committee; drafting and adopting any policies or regulations upon a recommendation made by the Executive Committee.

**The International Committee:** This committee is appointed by the Executive Committee after the General Assembly is composed by the International Secretary of the Executive Committee as Chairperson; any other Member from the Executive Committee as Vice-Chair; the President and the Secretary-General of the Executive Committee, or their representatives, ex-officio; two representatives appointed by the Organisations' Committee; representatives of the National Youth Council elected in any European Youth Forum Organ; other persons, as appointed by the Executive Committee, who have gathered experience in International Relations and are currently elected or appointed to represent their organisation in an International Organisation; International Secretaries of Member Organisations who want to join the International Committee. The International Committee is convened according to whenever this is necessary, but must be convened prior to any statutory meeting of the European Youth Forum.

**The Vigilance Board:** This Board is appointed and approved by the General Assembly and it is responsible to decide on any disciplinary issue raised by the Executive Committee, the Organisations' Committee or any Member Organisation and assure that the National Youth Council's Statute is not infringed and also give its interpretation on its provisions whenever this is requested. The Vigilance Board is composed of a Chairperson and two other members, together with a supplementary member. Members of the Vigilance Board may not be members of the Executive Committee.

**The Executive Committee:** The Executive Committee is elected and approved by the General Assembly and is made up of 13 members and is responsible for the administrative and executive direction of the Council. The executive convenes at least once a month and holds office for 2 years.

The main role and responsibility of the National Youth Council is to represent the interests of Maltese youth organizations and also to work for the interests and needs of unorganized young people both at national and international levels. The Council does so by:

- promoting the participation of young people in society;
- promoting a spirit of cooperation, pluralism, and equality among young Maltese people;
- promoting Maltese culture among young people;
- serving as a medium for the exchange of ideas and information among young people;
- assisting youth organizations in their objectives;
- making proposals for government assistance programmes to the Ministry responsible for youth;
- raising awareness among Maltese people for a wide variety of cultural activities and entertainment;

- organising social, educational, and cultural activities that interest all Maltese young people;
- monitoring and evaluating the work of the Government, especially in the youth field and by actively contributing to the preparation of the National Youth Policy.

The National Youth Council receives public funding. This funding is audited every six months and a report is sent to the Ministry of Education and Employment.

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġh's Advisory Board](#) is made up of 3 young people appointed by the Minister for Education and Employment, being the Minister responsible for the agency, after an expression of interest. The role of the Advisory Board is to advise and support the Chief Executive Officer of [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) in the discharge of her duties and responsibilities.

### Higher education student union(s)

The [University Students' Council](#) – Kunsill Studenti Universitarji - is an independent body at the University of Malta. The official organs of Kunsill Studenti Universitarji are the General Meeting, the Executive, the Education Commission, and the Social Policy Commission. The General Meeting is the highest institution within the KSU structure.

The University Students' Council is composed of an executive of 13 people. 11 members of the executive are elected through a general election for a one-year term. The candidates are chosen by political organisations on campus and selected in a manner that covers all faculties and institutions within the university to ensure full representation. The remaining two candidates are elected through the education and social policy commissions and are independent candidates. The Council represents approximately 13,000 students from both the University of Malta and Junior College.

The executive is made up of five members at an administrative level, and four offices, with two members in each office. The offices are social policy, education, international, and entertainment. The social policy and education commission meetings take place at least once a month, while the executive meets on a regular basis.

The main roles and responsibilities of the Kunsill Studenti Universitarji are to:

- serve and represent students in all that is in their interest;
- serve as an official means of communication between students and the relevant authorities;
- give voice, strength, and power to students;
- promote the value of lifelong learning;
- cultivate an educational, social, and cultural awareness among students;
- work to protect the rights listed in the Charter of Students' Rights.

KSU does not receive any public funding. The council depends on its main partners and its own activities to be able to sustain itself. KSU holds an annual audit and financial statements are presented to its stakeholders, the students, during the annual general meeting. A vote is also taken during the Annual General Meeting to approve the financial year.

The [Kunsill Studenti MCAST](#) – MCAST Student Council – is a student representative body at the [Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology \(MCAST\)](#). The Council consists of 10 members, which are elected by the students. Each member has the role to represent a different institute from MCAST. The role of the student council is to promote the college interest and to enhance the involvement of the students in the affairs of the college the student council is to promote the interests of the college and to improve the involvement of students in the affairs of the college.

The main aims are:

- To represent the student requests and opinions to MCAST administration.
- To improve the communication and relationship between students, management, and administration.
- Organising activities
- To improve the environment at the college
- To support the management and administration in the development of the college
- To acknowledge and keep the students updated on the college's general matters
- To provide information and consultation to students and giving the opportunity to the student to give his/her input on matters regarding the students themselves.
- To provide opportunities to the students as discussions, information, and consultation about matters which concern the students

The [Kunsill Studenti Junior College \(KSJC\)](#) - Junior College Student Council - is an independent organisation that represents all [Junior College](#) students. The KSJC is made up of 8 board members that are elected by fellow Junior College students in an election that is held every year.

The board members' roles and functions are defined by the KSJC statute whereby the Board Members are obliged to work and respect that framework. At the end of the term, KSJC holds an Annual General Meeting whereby the students approve or disapprove of the council's work in the past year. Elections are then held to elect a new council. These elections may be contested by anyone, as long as they are Junior College students. The elected team will work upon organizing educational and recreational activities and caters to the students' needs. The students are presented with a set of proposals from the contenders and are left free to deliberate and make up their minds. The KSJC aims to:

- Represent JC students on a national and international level;
- Intervenes in order to voice students' concerns in any difficulty;
- Safeguard their interest and strengthen their rights;
- Fulfill students' needs with regards to JC matters or any other student-related issues;
- Promote education and cultural activities amongst students.

The [Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary School \(GCHSS\) School Student Representative Council \(SRC\)](#), is a student representative council within the GCHSS. The aim of this council is to represent students' interests in any matter which is of concern to them. The council's primary goal is to provide students with opportunities to participate in the school's management while advocating for higher standards of school services. In this regard, the SRC serves as a link between students, staff, and the administration of GCHSS by providing an accessible platform for open discussions. The SRC also works to enable students at GCHSS to become responsible leaders in the community and to instill in them a sense of active citizenship. The SRC strives to eliminate any form of inequality, negative discrimination or injustices on the students.

### **School student union(s)**

Maltese secondary level students have Student Councils representing their interests but there is no established network of inter-linked student representation bodies. The establishment of such councils is referred to in several documents such as Democracy In Schools – Setting Up Of Student Councils and Class Committees (1999); National Minimum Curriculum (1999); [For All Children To Succeed](#) (2005) and [National Curriculum Framework](#) (2012).

Student Councils in each school are often guided by their Link Teacher/s (voluntary), who link with the school administration and the rest of the school. At a departmental level, help and guidance are provided by a Head of Department (Citizenship Education). Each

Student Council has its own statute and is composed of its members and officials: president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and public relations officer.

Since the scholastic year 2019-2020, Aġenzija Żgħażaġh - The National youth Agency – started running the [School Council Democracy Awards](#). This programme is offered to all secondary schools and post-secondary schools in Malta and Gozo. Participating student councils compete for Gold, Silver, and Bronze Awards as they implement their Student Council Action Plans over a period of one scholastic year. This programme is underpinned by the values of democracy, active citizenship, participation, dialogue, leadership, and equality. Training is provided to both Link teachers and young people. Eur 150 and Eur 300 are granted to secondary and post-secondary schools respectively as an incentive to take part in this programme and start running the council. A toolkit guides the process and youth workers are available to support the student councils and the school coordinators.

## Other bodies

Idejazzjonisti is a program for young people between 14 and 18 who want to participate in their communities as active citizens. Groups of up to 5 young people join together and to come up with a proposal concerning the preservation and conservation of a particular element in their locality. A youth worker facilitates the whole process. Throughout this programme these young people will:

- receive training related to civic education skills, to enable them participate as active citizens in their communities.
- learn to work intergenerationally.
- take an interest in the life of their community, in the challenges and opportunities that offer, and at the same time be able to propose ways of conservation and improvement.
- reflect on their communities, in all physical elements,
- intergenerational, social, and cultural aspects that shape it and how they affect it
- gain leadership skills while having the opportunity to put these skills to good use for the service of society.

[Model European Parliament – Malta](#). As the national coordinator of [MEP Europe](#) in Malta, Aġenzija Żgħażaġh organises national sessions to select and prepare Maltese delegates to take part in international sessions which are held in different European destinations every 6 months. Young people aged 16-19 can apply for these national sessions. The best 5 national delegates are then invited to take part in the international session. Traveling costs are subsidised to incentivise all young people to participate, especially those who would otherwise be unable to manage the financial cost of taking part in an international session.

## 5.4 Young people's participation in policy-making

### Formal Mechanisms of Consultation

Young people are represented in a standing committee called [Civil Society Committee](#) of the [Malta Council for Economic and Social Development](#) (MCESD). The MCESD functions as an advisory council that forms opinions and issues recommendations to the Maltese government on matters of economic and social relevance. As per [S.L. 431.01](#) of the Laws of Malta, the [Civil Society Committee](#) must have a youth representative.

Also, since 2014, young people may also avail of a consultation platform hosted by the Ministry for European Affairs and Equality called [Public Consultations Online](#). In this platform legislations, policies, strategies, green papers and white papers are uploaded and become available for public consultation.

Consultation with young people also happens on an ad-hoc basis according to issue e.g. during the drafting of the National Youth Policy Towards 2020, the Sexual Health Policy, the National Pensions Reform or the Campaign the Vote 16.

### Actors

Young people are represented in the [Civil Society Committee](#) by the [Junior Chamber International Malta](#).

### Information on the extent of youth participation

Data on young people's participation is not collected.

### Outcomes

The Standing Committee is consulted by MCESD on social matters.

During instances of ad-hoc consultation young people are asked for feedback on the policy to be discussed at that particular time. During the consultation period of the National Youth Policy, apart from having the National Youth Council as part of the Ministerial Advisory Board, feedback was sought from youth organisations through a consultation seminar. During this seminar, workshops were held to represent young people's voice.

Through the online platform young people can give feedback on anything that relates to the document that is open for consultation. A detailed report of the outcome is published and made available to the public on the [Public Consultations Online](#).

### Large-scale initiatives for dialogue or debate between public institutions and young people

Debates are organised by [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) in partnership with the [Malta Union of Teachers](#) on an ad-hoc basis in secondary schools.

The Faculty of Social Wellbeing organises the [Dean's Forum](#). Through this initiative students and academics discuss and debate on social well-being issues and current events.

## 5.5 National strategy to increase youth participation

### Existence of a national strategy to increase young people's political and civil society participation

The strategy to increase young people's political participation is part of the [National Youth Policy Towards 2020](#). One of the ten action plans in this document is called: Awareness raising, listening to, and supporting the voice of young people. This document was introduced in 2015 and has a timeframe of five years, until 2020.

Civil society participation

The strategy to increase young people's participation in civil society is [The National Strategy on Volunteering – Moving Towards 2025](#). One of the strategy's aims is to encourage more participation of different age groups in civil society including young people. The strategy looks at young people as that cohort that can add further zeal and energy to the sector. This document was published in 2020 and has a timeframe of 5 years.

### Scope and contents

Political participation

The national action plan, targeting all young people between 13 and 30 years old, proposes initiatives and opportunities that enhance young people's social and political awareness and enables their voice to be heard on issues that have an impact on their

lives. The action plan intends to strengthen the youth information services, further promote the European Youth Card, expand the Structured Dialogue, increase the number of projects relating to political awareness and democratic participation and publish a training manual for youth participation.

#### Civil society participation

The national strategy recognises the need of creating young willing volunteers and for this reason, this strategy needs to look into all stakeholders being 'youth ready' by making roles accessible for young people while providing guidance and support. The strategy does not look at young people differently to other volunteers in experiencing the challenge of making time to volunteer, and no different in what motivates them to volunteer; although their motivations may be held in different priorities to older volunteers, with more value for most young people on skill development, as well as giving something back to the community/ pursuing personal interests/being with friends.

In this regard, [MCVS](#) is committed to:

- Address the issue of creating young willing volunteers by reassuring their confidence through offering peer ambassadors and mentors;
- Accessing their influencers (including schools and other educational institutions, families and peers);
- Adapting the length or regularity of their volunteer role to address their transient time commitments;
- Addressing their access to transport;
- Understanding how young people prefer to communicate – in terms of media and styles by embracing websites and social networking. Understanding how to effectively use digital communication media to target young volunteer audiences is clearly a huge development area for volunteer-involving organisations;
- Targeting recruitment of young people by keeping application processes short as possible. Targeted recruitment was essential to attract young people into the organisations, utilising digital and non-digital recruitment mixes, using existing peer networks, schools, colleges, universities, and youth centres;
- Training and using young people as ambassadors, to help potential young people to put themselves in volunteers' shoes;
- Providing youth workers to train voluntary organisations on how to manage and maintain young volunteers.

### **Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy**

#### Political participation

The action plan is under the direct responsibility of [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) - the national youth agency. The document states that it will use the agency's annual reports as a means to monitor progress on each action plan of the document.

#### Civil society participation

The strategy is under the direct responsibility of [The Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector](#). The reviewing of its implementation progress will be ongoing, with annual submissions to the Ministry responsible for the voluntary sector.

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

#### Political Participation

The implementation of the national youth policy over the period 2015-2020 will be monitored on an on-going basis through Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ's Annual Reports. At the end of this period, an independent evaluation will be conducted on the overall impact of the

policy and the benefits accruing for young people, the voluntary youth sector, and wider society.

Civil society participation

A review of the implementation and impact of the Strategy and action plan will be conducted annually and a report will be submitted to the Minister with responsibility for the voluntary sector in Malta.

## Revisions/Updates

Political participation

Since its launch in 2015, there were no revisions or updates.

Civil society participation

Since its launch in 2020 there were no revisions or updates.

## 5.6 Supporting youth organisations

### Legal/policy framework for the functioning and development of youth organisations

There is no legal or policy framework specifically designed for youth organisations.

Just like other non-governmental voluntary organisations, youth organisations may apply to become enrolled with the [Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations](#). Once enrolled such youth organisations become subject to the observance of applicable provisions and regulations of the [Voluntary Organisations Act](#) and enjoy its privileges. These include grants, sponsorships or other financial aid from the Government, any entity controlled by the Government or the Voluntary Organisations Fund; be the beneficiary of any policies supporting voluntary action; benefit from exemptions, privileges or other entitlements in terms of any law; and be a party to contracts and other engagements, whether against remuneration or not, for the carrying out of services for the achievement of its social purpose at the request of the Government or any entity controlled by the Government. As of 2018, with the amendments to the [Voluntary Organisations Act](#), the permissible registration age with the [Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations](#) was lowered from 18 to 16, making it possible for young people at the age of 16 years to form, manage and run youth organisations that qualify for all the benefits and regulations found in the [Voluntary Organisations Act](#).

### Public financial support

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) has two funding schemes developed specifically for youth organisations

Youth organisations/groups who are registered with Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ and are enrolled and compliant with the Office of the Commissioner of Voluntary Organisations to be eligible to apply for support through Assistance4You - [A4U scheme](#). This scheme provides financial support, of a maximum of €1,500 to help youth organisations/groups develop and increase resources, improve premises and facilities and develop and deliver training for their current and prospective leaders.

Youth organisations/groups who are registered with Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ and are enrolled and compliant with the Office of the Commissioner of Voluntary Organisations to be eligible to apply for support through The [Be Active scheme](#). This fund aims primarily to provide youth organisations/groups with financial support, of a maximum of €2,000 to develop projects/initiatives for their respective service users and the community in general. Organisations/groups are invited to develop a project in connection to a set of priority areas.

Youth organizations, that are either run by young people or that provide services to young people are entitled to register as members of Aġenzija Żgħażaġh. Registered organisations can benefit from the following advantages. Registered organisations may hire equipment against a fully refundable deposit. The deposit will be fully refunded once that the equipment is returned in time, fully functional and in the same condition that was handed over to the organization.

Registered organisations are also entitled to a subsidised rate when making use of the facilities available at the Marsaxlokk Youth Activity Centre and Villa Psaigon. Aġenzija Żgħażaġh also support activities that are organised by registered organisations through free publicity on its Facebook page and website.

There are also a number of funding schemes that are not exclusive to youth organisation but are still tapped quite frequently by youth organisations, amongst which are:

The Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector issues the [Small Initiatives Scheme](#) that supports small initiatives by Voluntary Organisations. Funding is awarded to initiatives particularly related to encourage projects in areas such as training courses for volunteers or the public, events such as exhibitions, festivals, websites, publications and other initiatives related to the voluntary sector.

The Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector issues the [Civil society fund](#) provides financial assistance for the purpose of facilitating affiliation with and participation in European groupings, associations, federations, confederation networks, and training related to EU Policy/Programmes. The objectives of the Civil Society Fund (CSF) are to assist CSOs to keep abreast with the developments occurring at an EU level; to enable CSOs to better educate their members on EU matters related to their respective fields of competence; and to enable CSOs to participate effectively in the decision-making process at a European level. Interested youth organisations may apply so as to first, to receive assistance with affiliation of their organisation to European umbrella organisations, grouping, federations, confederations or networks. Secondly, to facilitate their attendance at conferences, seminars and meetings abroad in relation to affiliations in European umbrella organisations, groupings, federations, confederations or networks and participation in Training Abroad related to EU Policy or Programmes.

The Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector issues the [Training Initiatives Scheme \(TIS\)](#). The main objectives of this scheme are to offer support for individual volunteers who form part of a Voluntary Organisation in one's training which will be beneficial both to oneself, one's Voluntary Organisation, to other Voluntary Organisations and to the community at large. The scheme also supports Voluntary Organisations in the organisation of training initiatives which are beneficial both to the same organisation, to other Voluntary Organisations and to the community at large.

Arts Council Malta issues the [Creative Communities](#) programme that enables voluntary organisations to carry out projects related to culture and the arts in local communities. The funding can include informal training and development programmes; research or events, productions and/or exhibitions.

The [President's Award for Creativity](#) is a fund support to organisations, especially those working with vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, to engage these groups in creativity and arts-driven projects and thereby increase their level of integration and engagement in society.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion issues the [Official Development Assistance](#) Fund for voluntary organisations offering humanitarian and development assistance to developing countries with the aim of supporting economic and social progress based on the notion of 'eradicating poverty through development', in the light of the 2030 Agenda.

The Ministry for Gozo issues the [Gozo NGO Scheme](#) designed to provide support and facilitate the realisation of small projects, activities and initiatives on the Island of Gozo by Voluntary Organisations. The objectives of this scheme are to enhance the social,

cultural, economic and ecological fabric of the Gozitan society; promote and encourage a culture of volunteering and the participation in volunteer activities amongst the Gozitan society; stimulate co-operation and networking between Voluntary Organisations; foster co-operation between Voluntary Organisations and the Ministry for Gozo through collaborative initiatives.

The Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development, and Climate Change issues the [Sustainable Development Fund](#) Support Scheme for Voluntary Organisations is aimed to support non-Government, non-profit voluntary organisations to undertake tangible sustainable development projects and initiatives that have the potential to cover activities and initiatives in line with the Sustainable Development Goals

### **Initiatives to increase the diversity of participants**

There are no large-scale initiatives aiming to increase the diversity of young people participating in youth organisations.

## **5.7 “Learning to participate” through formal, non-formal and informal learning**

### **Policy Framework**

The national strategy which applies to social and civic competences and their development is the [National Youth Policy Towards 2020](#). One of the two aims of this policy is to effectively support young people as active and responsible citizens who fully participate in and contribute to the social, economic, and cultural life of the nation and Europe. The National Youth Policy Towards 2020 is made up of two strategies. Strategy 1, through its three action plans, relates directly to civic competences and their development in young people. Action plan 1 focuses on creating new spaces and facilities at a community level to support the development of young people through their active involvement and participation in non-formal learning opportunities. Action plan 2 focuses on creating initiatives that enhance young people’s social and political awareness, and that enable their voices to be heard on issues that impact their lives. Finally, Action plan 3 focuses on the development and implementation of initiatives, programmes, and activities that actively involve young people and youth organisations in developing young people’s competences and skills that enhance their future learning and employment prospects.

The policy targets all young people aged between 13 and 30 years old.

Also the National Curriculum Framework - [A National Curriculum Framework for All 2012](#) - aims to enable individuals to become lifelong learners. This implies an effort by all to give learners the knowledge, skills, competences, attitudes, and values necessary to be attracted to further and higher education, to re-skilling and up-skilling during the working years, and to active participation in the civic and social life.

### **Formal learning**

Citizenship education is not a standalone subject. It falls within Education for Democracy Learning Area and is directed towards developing responsible citizens. It is integrated into Social Studies; Personal, Social and Career Development and European Studies.

The learning objectives are about learning the principles of democracy, active citizenship, and active participation in society.

### **Non-formal and informal learning**

#### **Participative structures within formal education settings**

The Youth Hub is a non-formal educational service provided and funded by [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) – the National Youth Agency - within formal upper-secondary education set-

ups. Youth Hubs offer an informal and recreational environment in which a youth worker can build a healthy relationship with young people. As a result of this relationship, the youth worker can work with young people so that they can come up with projects and initiatives that enhance both their personal and social skills that in turn upgrade their educational attainment and employability. The Youth Hubs serve a number of purposes and aims. First, the distinctions between formal, non-formal, and informal learning environments are at once both articulated and resolved: learning becomes a lifelong pursuit regardless of age or environment. Second, the merits and ends of particular forms of learning emerge as both distinctive and mutually supportive. Third, the effect on young people's moral and confidence through their active involvement and participation in shaping and developing their own learning environment is a means of empowering them to make decisions, to work towards the achievement of their aims and aspirations and to take responsibility for their actions both as individuals and citizens.

Since the scholastic year 2018/2019 a newly accredited training programme for young people called "Award in Youth Leadership" was developed by [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) and is being delivered by youth workers and teachers together in different higher education institutions. This training programme is made up of 4 modules:

- Introduction to Leadership
- Communicating Effectively
- Strategic Planning
- Civic responsibilities and Active Citizenship

The Award in Youth Leadership training programme is designed so as to enable young people to acquire skills that will allow them to serve as catalysts for change in their personal and social lives, be it in organisations or communities where they belong.

As for this year due to the pandemic is also available the [Award in Youth Leadership](#) was also available online

All State Schools in Malta have the opportunity to elect a School Council, regulated through the [Education Act](#) of the Laws of Malta. The School Council is a forum where teachers and parents work together for the benefit of the children and the school. In post-secondary schools (with students of 16 years and older) 3 members of this Council are elected by and from the students themselves during bi-annual elections. The School Councils are responsible for:

- administering the funds and assets of the School;
- discussing the school environment and the school amenities and propose ways to ameliorate them;
- discussing the curriculum and the educational services offered by the school and make suggestions to the Department of Education regarding changes or additions to the curriculum;
- discussing and monitoring any environmental, transport and other problems;
- organising fund-raising activities as well as educational and cultural activities both for students and parents.

### **Partnerships between formal education providers, youth organisations and youth work providers**

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#)- the Maltese National Youth Agency in collaboration with [Scouts \(Malta\)](#) signed up a Memorandum of Understanding to develop a programme to help young people enhance their personal and social skills, integrate within their communities and engage in extra-curricular and after-school activities. Students from different schools within the 13 to 16 and 17 to 18 age groups using the service benefit from non-formal outdoor education expertise of the organisations such as the Scouts and the youth work

expertise provided through Aġenzija Żgħażaġh. The salaries of the youth workers employed with this project and the resources to run the project are paid through public funding.

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) – the Maltese National Youth Agency in collaboration with [Żgħażaġh Azzjoni Kattolika](#) – Catholic Action Youth signed a Memorandum of Understanding through which the latter runs a number of Youth Cafes' where young people can meet up informally and participate in activities that are conducive to learning of civic and social competences. The salaries of the youth workers employed with this project and the resources to run the project are paid through public funding.

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) in collaboration with the Ministry for Education and Employment are providing a number of hands-on training courses/seminars for students between the ages of 14- 16 year-old.

3E Citizens – is divided into 3 workshops:

- Enfranchise – This will take the form of a panel discussion with school students sitting on the panel to elaborate more on implications, rights and responsibilities of 16+ voting
- Educate – This workshop is intended to help students explore and understand how a bill becomes law
- Engage – The last workshop will give the students the opportunity to work in groups to discuss given issues and then to defend them with the rest of the other students

Voting Voices, Responsible Choices – is divided into 4 workshops:

- Introduction to topic / Interactive Q&A session (survey voting)
- Understanding the Electoral Process
- Simulation Exercise – General Council of Students will approve by voting for the candidates and manifesto they will present for the next General Election
- Reflection and Evaluation

[My Next School Adventure](#) is an online school transition programme for young people who are entering into secondary schooling developed by [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#). For young people, this transition to secondary schooling often poses a number of challenges as they have to deal with new subjects, different teachers and timetables, they will be meeting new students and much more. However, this transition also presents new opportunities. During the 8 online sessions the students will have the opportunity to meet up with peer who will be going through the same school transition and together with a youth worker they explore their personal skills; look into effective ways to express their views in class; discover learning styles; learn how to work effectively with fellow students; learn to be active students; how to deal with conflict and how to get support and also how to manage time both at school and home.

[The Secondary Schools Survival Kit](#) is an online transition programme, developed by [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) that aims to equip students with essential skills for a smooth transition to their last 3 years of secondary school. Students who are equipped with this kit will find it easier to transition through their last leg of secondary school. This programme is made up of 8 themes, one for each session, that will prompt a discussion around transition, change, celebrating self and friendships, and how to navigate the inevitable stresses associated with these years. The Secondary Schools Survival Kit encourages students to look ahead and start building toward their future goals as individuals and as members of their respective communities. On completion of the sessions, students are given a certificate of participation and the survival kit.

The [FineOnline programme](#) developed and delivered by youth workers from [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) in secondary schools is designed to present information and generate

discussion and reflection to enable young people to manage their digital health and well being more effectively – the first aid of digital well-being.

In these unprecedented times of the Covid-19 pandemic, everyone is relying on digital devices more than ever to remain socially connected while physically distancing from each other.

There are 2 Fine Online programmes entitled deFINEonline – for young people in Year 7 & 8 and reFINEonline – for young people in Year 9 & 10. Through these sessions young people can:

- Become aware about the importance and scope of digital wellness;
- Acquire strategies to enable virtual well-being;
- Be able to self-manage a healthy online/offline balance.

[Stand Up Speak Out](#) is an online life skills programme developed by [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) and designed to enable young people, from Year 8 to Year 10 to deal with hate speech and equip themselves with skills to counter intimidating behaviour in schools, outside of schools, and online. Through 8 interactive sessions, young people discuss and express themselves on different scenarios while outlining other solutions to minimize and stop hate speech. During Stand Up speak Out young people will:

- Understand what hate speech is and be able to distinguish different types of intimidation
- Identify and discuss the actions of the perpetrator's behaviour
- Outline different skills needed to help victims and by-standers to stand up and speak out
- Become aware of the different professionals that can help and support me.

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) in collaboration with the Directorate for Learning and Assessment Programmes, launched an online programme called [It's My Choice](#) targeting PSCDE students in secondary schools.

The sessions, in the form of webinars, are delivered by youth workers from Aġenzija Żgħażaġh to students in Years 9, 10 and 11 and focus on the relationship between weighing options and making choices on issues relevant to young people, namely dealing with stressful situations, different career paths and first-time voters.

Demokrazija ISSA! (Democracy now!) is a collaboration between Aġenzija Żgħażaġh and the Ministry for Education. Youth Workers from Aġenzija Żgħażaġh deliver session in the form of a webinar to students in Year 8, 9 and 10. The session focuses on democracy as a tangible idea that can be experienced by the students in the immediate through the Student Councils.

### **Supporting non-formal learning initiatives focusing on social and civic competences**

The [Civic Education Programme](#) by [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) uses a youth work approach to engage, inform and empower young people. This programme consists of 3 different workshop sessions.

The first is Community Consensus through which young people are given the opportunity to understand and experience consensus as a form of democracy through the simulation of a student advisory group.

The second workshop is Democracy Dine through which young people are given the opportunity to understand how deliberation and negotiation can affect political decisions as compared to an electoral process where decisions are reached following a ballot.

The third workshop is Time for an Adventure through which young people are introduced to human rights, youth information and the benefits of EU citizenship, with an emphasis on the opportunities that mobility offers to you.

Idejazzjonisti is a program by [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) for young people between 14 and 18 who want to participate in their communities as active citizens. Groups of up to 5 young people join together and to come up with a proposal concerning the preservation and conservation of a particular element in their locality. A youth worker facilitates the whole process. Throughout this programme these young people will:

- receive training related to civic education skills, to enable them to participate as active citizens in their communities.
- learn to work intergenerationally.
- take an interest in the life of their community, in the challenges and opportunities that offer, and at the same time be able to propose ways of conservation and improvement.
- reflect on their communities, in all physical elements,
- intergenerational, social and cultural aspects that shape it and how they affect it
- gain leadership skills while having the opportunity to put these skills to good use for the service of society.

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) coordinates the [Model European Parliament](#) (MEP) in Malta. This project creates an opportunity for young people who are interested in politics and wish to develop their skills in public speaking and political debate to participate in a simulation of the European Parliament. As the representative of MEP Europe in Malta, organises national selections to choose the best delegates from 16 to 19 years old to represent Malta for upcoming international MEP sessions which are held twice a year in different European countries. National selections include training and information workshops following by a simulated European Parliament session which discusses and debates topics of current interest of controversy. Those young people deemed the best contributors in debates can take part as Maltese delegates to the following international MEP session.

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) also provides further training and travel costs to the chosen delegates for an international MEP session. Maltese delegates who excel during international MEP sessions also have the possibility of returning to the next MEP session as Committee Presidents.

### **Quality assurance/quality guidelines for non-formal learning**

All quality assurance for the above projects falls under the responsibility of [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#). The [law](#) that established the agency clearly states that one of the roles and responsibilities of the agency is to ensure the highest standards in youth work in Malta.

### **Educators' support**

The [Institute for Education](#) organises Professional Learning Sessions for teachers that serve their Continuous Professional Development. Teachers are obliged to attend such courses prior to the start of every scholastic year.

Trainers and youth workers can participate in an annual programme of [Transnational Cooperation Activities](#) organised by the [European Union Programme Agency](#).

Also, Aġenzija Zghazagh, has an annual training programme for its youth workers, in 2020 this included the ECDL; Being Online: Social Media Training; Where's the Punchline; report writing course; general disability issues; food handling; MOOC on youth work and first aid.

The training envisaged for 2021 includes Sex education for persons with intellectual disabilities; dyslexia training course; dealing with autism; report writing; disability issues; Jimmy e-learning course; Open Online Course on Digital Youth Work; Promoting

Mental Health and Wellbeing in the School System and Project management and implementation skills.

## 5.8 Raising political awareness among young people

### Information providers / counselling structures

One of the roles of the Office of the Commissioner for Children, as stipulated by law, is to create awareness as well as an understanding of children's rights. The term children refers to all those under the age of 18 years old. The [Commissioner for Children Act](#) also sets up a Council for Children which consists of various representatives from Ministries as well as six young people between the ages of 13 and 17 years old. This Council supports the Commissioner in the work carried out by her Office. The young people not only learn more about their rights but also guide the Commissioner with regard to the realities faced by children and young people, as well as the most effective way to create awareness.

The Youth Information One Stop Shop (YIOSS) is an information centre, housed in [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#), that works with young people to enable access information and advice in a safe and friendly environment. The centre's aim is to help young people find answers to questions about education, work, housing, health, relationships, money, leisure and cultural activities among others.

YOISS provides:

- Information on the Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ's programmes and services;
- Issuing of youth card (EYCA);
- Information on job, training and further education opportunities;
- Support in drawing up a CV, job application or preparing for an interview;
- Guidance in choosing a career path or in planning for the future;
- Information on opportunities to develop skills and talents;
- Personal support and someone to talk to and referral to specialised support services if required;
- Information on volunteering opportunities in Malta and abroad;
- Information on youth organisations.

There is no top-level framework existing for youth information and counselling structures, however YOISS services is a full member of ERYICA and as such it has the principles of the [European Youth Information Charter](#), formally signed by [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#)

### Youth-targeted information campaigns about democratic rights and democratic values

In preparation to the extended right to vote, an educational campaign had been raised by the ministry responsible to educate the youth about the meaning of having this right and the importance to exert it. The campaign targeted the 15- 17 year olds in Malta, through content published on social media and the press, as well as through collaboration with youth NGOs, and political youth groups.

### Promoting the intercultural dialogue among young people

In an effort to promote intercultural dialogue among young people, [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) since 2019 has organised an intercultural dialogue for young people in Malta. The event is set to coincide with World Day for Cultural Diversity and Dialogue and Development.

In 2019, as part of a project called [Polifest Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) organised its first [Youth Intercultural Dialogue Fair](#). The objective of this project was to facilitate a structured dialogue between young people from diverse cultural backgrounds living in Malta and policy-makers and Maltese young people. Several communities of foreign young people living in Malta participated in an exchange of ideas that culminated in a recommendation presented to the Parliamentary Secretariat for Youth, Sport and Voluntary Organisations.

In 2020, [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) was set to replicate however the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic meant the agency had to readjust. In this regard, the event was shifted online. [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) up a series of [online events to celebrate the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development](#). The aim of this initiative was to set up a space for conversations between local youth organisations and different foreign communities living in Malta, in an effort to bridge the gap and facilitate social cohesion through dialogue.

Preparations are on the way to hold the 3<sup>rd</sup> Youth Intercultural Dialogue Week in 2021.

### **Promoting transparent and youth-tailored public communication**

There are no policy frameworks or guidelines on transparent public communication targeting young people.

## **5.9 E-participation**

There are no legal frameworks aiming to promote young people's e-participation.

The [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) in collaboration with the [National Youth Council](#) has started a process where every quarter, young people are consulted on a particular issue (e.g. social media, education or health). Consultation is open to all young people and it is done using online survey platforms. The results of these surveys are then published and presented to relevant policy-makers.

The Maltese National Working Group for the [Structured Dialogue](#) also makes use of online survey platforms when collecting feedback from young people.

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) coordinates and manages the Maltese [Opin.me](#) platform. This platform creates a space where young people can be consulted online on a number of policy issues that affect them directly or indirectly.

The Opin.me platform was extensively used for the [consultation process on the National Youth Policy](#), which covers the period between 2021-2030. [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) and the [National Youth Council](#) set up the platform so as it could host the draft of the National Youth Policy: Towards 2030 and encouraged young people and youth organisations to participate in this consultation. The idea behind this was further pushed forward by the Covid-19 pandemic that limited the number of young people that could be together in a physical environment. Through [Opin.me](#) platform young people and youth organisations had the opportunity to have their say on matters that concerned them directly.

[I-Participate](#) was an e-participation project held by [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) in 2017. The OPIN platform by EUth was used to conduct the e-participation process. The project used both offline and online methodologies. During its online part young people had the opportunity to provide feedback on a number of issues concerning their well-being that were being discussed on a national level. The discussions which generated the most interest were the Legalisation of Marijuana and Vot16+. Through this initiative young people proposed a number of recommendations were used during an offline event held where young people presented these recommendations to the policymakers concerned.

Also, since 2014, young people may also avail of a consultation platform hosted by the [Ministry for European Affairs and Equality](#) called [Public Consultations Online](#). In this platform legislations, policies, strategies, green papers and white papers are uploaded and become available for public consultation.

## 5.10 Current debates and reforms

### Forthcoming Policy Development

The forthcoming Policy Development will happen in November 2019 when Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ will organise the Model European Parliament in Malta. The Model European Parliament is an international simulation of the working of the [European Parliament](#) for students aged 16–19. The aim of the programme is to give young people an insight into the workings of the European Parliament and raise their awareness of European citizenship. delegates of different nationalities form a committee that debates a certain topic extensively and drafts a resolution, a non-binding piece of legislation outlining the key issues of the topic and proposing solutions. The drafting process is followed by lobbying, during which delegates may debate and propose amendments for other resolutions. The finale of a session is the General Assembly (GA). During this, resolutions and amendments are debated and voted upon by all of the delegates. Any successful resolutions are then forwarded to the [European Parliament](#), the [European Commission](#) and the [Council of the European Union](#).

## 6. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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The Ministry for Education and Employment is responsible for Education in Malta. Having completed compulsory schooling at the age of 16, young people have the option to further their education in post-secondary institutions, including Vocational and Training Courses before engaging in tertiary education.

Currently there is a general effort to move away from the one size fits all education to an approach that is more student centered and caters for the specific learning needs of the individual.

### 6.1 General context

#### Main trends in young people's participation in education and training

Malta regards the investment in young people and job-creation as yielding towards the emergence of an adaptive workforce which is able to actively lead and remain at the forefront of modernisation in an increasingly globalised and rapidly-changing labour market. Various initiatives aim to provide Malta's youth with the necessary skills and talents for citizenship and employability for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is important for young people to develop both personal and social skills, and acquire the appropriate knowledge, key skills, competences and attitudes through a value-oriented formation including equity, social justice, diversity and inclusivity.

Access to relevant learning throughout life is a fundamental cornerstone in our aspirations to have a sustainable knowledge-based society and economy. Malta's vision is to become a learning nation - a society in which learning plays its full role in personal growth and emancipation, prosperity, solidarity and local and global responsibility.

Malta's past and present experiences have helped policy experts to identify areas of strength and limitations of standing practices, suggesting what should be sustained or improved, as well as where prevention or intervention are necessary to equitably promote values which help achieve the targets highlighted in the [Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024](#).

In this regard, the [Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta: 2014-2024](#) is a manifestation of the [Ministry for Education and Employment](#)'s commitment to provide present and future generations with opportunities to develop the necessary values, skills

and attitudes for active citizenship and employability in the 21st century and increasingly close the gap between the world of education and the rest of the world, including the world of employment. Malta stipulated four main targets in this framework, to:

- Reduce the gaps in educational outcomes between boys and girls and between students attending different schools, and decrease the number of low achievers and raise the bar in literacy, numeracy, and science and technology competence, and increase student achievement;
- Support educational achievement of children at risk-of-poverty and from low socio-economic status, by reducing the relatively high incidence of early school-leavers;
- Raise levels of student retention and attainment in further, vocational, and tertiary education and training; and
- Increase participation in lifelong learning and adult learning.

In this context, one of Malta's aims is to reach a more equitable quality secondary education. Education and training risks become irrelevant if tangible links with life beyond the school walls, remain sporadic and superficial. In November 2016, Malta's [Ministry for Education and Employment](#) launched the initiative - '[My Journey – Achieving Through Different Paths Inclusive and Comprehensive Equitable Quality Learning Programmes](#)'. Secondary school students will be able to choose between academic, vocational, applied subjects or a combination of the three elements during the senior cycle of secondary education. This will involve moving from a 'one size fits all' system to a more inclusive and equitable programme which can specifically cater to each learner's individual talents.

The intended inclusive and comprehensive equitable quality learning programmes for the compulsory secondary schooling structure is driven both by the values of inclusion, social justice, equity and diversity. This evolved education system is also inspired by the philosophy of values based education promulgated in the [Respect for All](#) document and guided by the [Education for All](#) audit report. It is also very much in line with the UNESCO Sustainable Development Goal 4 in ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all".

The [Ministry for Education and Employment](#) is committed to sustaining this educational journey whilst expanding it to increase accessibility to quality vocational training and provide opportunities for more applied learning programmes to all students ensuring parity of esteem and equivalence of qualifications. Malta aims to have a single structure comprehensive and inclusive secondary school with equitable quality academic, vocational and applied learning programmes within the same school for all students.

In addition, the re-introduction of Vocational Education and Training (VET) subjects in secondary schools was a fundamental initiative to provide learners with alternative assessment which is also based on learning outcomes approach. The choice of subjects include: Agribusiness, Engineering Technology, Health and Social Care, Hospitality, and Information Technology. The selection was inspired by priorities and needs expressed by the local industry. Consequently, the introduction of vocational subjects in the secondary school cycle serve as a measure to bring education processes closer to industry needs and thereby ensuring that education caters better for market realities. Alternative Learning Programme for students who pursue a vocational pathway instead of the one in mainstream education have also been successfully implemented.

Malta has also placed VET high on its agenda, with emphasis being placed on apprenticeship programmes and work-based learning initiatives. The [Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology](#) (MCAST) has been responsible for the implementation of the National Apprenticeship Scheme since 2014. Apprenticeship programmes have been merged with the complimentary modes of the 'off-the-job' education and 'on-the-job' training brought within the structure of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) level 3 and MQF Level 4. The reformed scheme has created a single focal point for apprenticeship training central to which is the quality of vocational and technical training,

and is now offering new apprenticeships at different competence levels to reflect labour market needs. The implementation of a three-tier framework for work-based learning has been launched wherein young people enrolling at MCAST Foundation College – Levels 1, 2 and 3 (Placements and Apprenticeship), MCAST Technical College – Level 4 (Apprenticeship) and MCAST University College Levels 5, 6 and 7 (Internship) are given the opportunity to access and progress to all levels of vocational education offered by MCAST. The number of apprentices has increased in the past years. In fact, MCAST is currently offering 50% of all its MQF Level 3 and MQF Level 4 programs on apprenticeship, which provide 1000 apprentices with a minimum of 1400 hours of 'on-the-job' training.

Malta also has a [Strategic Plan for The Prevention of Early School Leaving](#) that aims at facilitating focused action that will support students to make the best out of their school years, from early childhood to the end of compulsory school. The aim of this strategic plan is to enable students to develop their potential as citizens and as stakeholders in the economy. School communities have changed over the years in terms of student diversity. Preventing early school leaving enables all students to receive their educational entitlement in terms of the opening up of educational pathways that foster fulfilled individuals, empowered citizens and productive and creative workers.

A number of measures that make up Malta's Early School Leaving strategic plan includes 'prevention, intervention and compensation measures'. Some of the measures include the provision of free childcare for parents in employment, education or training and the promotion of literacy through family literacy programmes for young children and their parents/caregivers. Malta has plans to update its ESL strategy and an important study was carried out by the Early School Leaving Unit (ESLU) with 579 students who dropped out of post-secondary education during the academic year 2015-2016 in order to understand the current trends in ESL.

Addressing the ongoing and often unique education requirements of people in different stages of their life is crucial – the development of [Malta's National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020](#) has been an opportunity to take stock of the state of adult learning in Malta, and challenge what one means by the very notion of 'learning'.

The [National Commission for Further and Higher Education](#) (NCFHE) was also officially launched to foster the development and achievement of excellence in further and higher education in Malta through research, effective licensing, accreditation, quality assurance and recognition of qualifications established under the Malta Qualifications Framework. NCFHE is also responsible for the validation of informal and non-formal learning process.

The setting up of the [National Skills Council](#) is one strategic initiative to centrally manage the various complementary initiatives and to seek to align the education and training provision to the needs of the industry. A strategy is currently being drafted for the National Skills Council. Furthermore, three committees have been set up within the council each responsible for one of the following areas: work-based learning, digital skills and research and development. The work of the subcommittees has two aims: gathering information and compiling reports to guide educational entities; and to serve as consultative fora which bring together different stakeholders.

## **Organisation of the education and training system**

Maltese education system is largely centralised and governed by:

- [The Ministry for Education and Employment](#) (MEDE)
- [The Education Act](#)
- The Government's education policy documentation at all levels of education

Education in Malta is compulsory for all children and young people aged from five to sixteen years. This is defined in Chapter 327 of the Laws of Malta - [The Education Act](#) -

and subsequent amendments. Compulsory education covers six years of primary education followed by five years of secondary education.

All schools in formal education are obliged by law to follow the same national minimum curriculum (National Curriculum Framework) and to abide by all the regulations as listed in the [Education Act](#).

Secondary Education (ISCED Levels 2 and 3) - In Malta, secondary education is divided into two cycles: Middle schools and Secondary schools which last till students reach 16 years, this being the end of compulsory schooling. At secondary level, students follow a set of core compulsory subjects including the three core subjects of Maltese, English and Mathematics together with Integrated Science, one compulsory science subject (Biology, Chemistry or Physics), a foreign language, Religious Knowledge, Physical Education, History, Geography, Art, Personal and Social Development (PSD) and ICT. One compulsory elective subject is also offered during the first two years of secondary education (middle schools) and another one or two elective subjects are offered during the final three years of secondary education.

Students are assessed by sitting for school-based half-yearly examinations and centrally-set annual exams at the end of the year. Continuous formative assessment of the students' work also takes place. At the end of the compulsory education (Year 11), students sit for their Annual Examinations for Secondary schools and the marks attained form part of the [Secondary School Certificate and Profile \(SSC&P\)](#). This certification shows a record of achievement based on the students' profiling in formal, non-formal and informal educational experiences taking into account students' attendance and development of personal qualities and abilities during the five years of secondary schooling. This new certificate has the advantage that it is accredited at either Level 1, Level 2 or Level 3 of the [Malta Qualifications Framework](#) (MQF) and the [European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning](#) (EQF). A detailed transcript is also issued by the school. Students may also sit for the [Secondary Education Certificate](#) (SEC) examinations set by the [Matriculation and Secondary Education Certificate](#) (MATSEC) Board of the University of Malta.

At the end of compulsory education students can further their education and training in higher and post-secondary and tertiary educational institutions.

At post-secondary level students can follow a programme of their choice after they have completed compulsory education and are 16 years of age and older. State general upper-secondary education is provided at the [G. Curmi Higher Secondary School](#), the [Sir M. Refalo Higher Secondary School](#), Gozo and the [Junior College](#). The latter falls under the responsibility of the [University of Malta](#). There are also private educational institutions which provide courses at this level of education.

The overall responsibility for vocational education and training (VET) in Malta lies with the [Ministry for Education and Employment](#) (MEDE). However the two main state VET providers are the [Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology](#) (MCAST) and the [Institute for Tourism Studies](#) (ITS) are self-accrediting institutions offering VET courses.

Tertiary Education: Tertiary education in Malta is provided mainly by the [University of Malta](#) which is an autonomous and self-governing body, totally funded by the Government. The University structure has been reviewed according to the [Bologna Process Framework](#) which envisaged the establishment of the [European Higher Education Area by 2010](#). The governing bodies of the university are the [Council](#) and the [Senate](#).

To gain entry to University, candidates need to be in possession of two Advanced Level (Matriculation Certificate) subjects and four other subjects taken at Intermediate Level including Systems of Knowledge as well as passes in the Secondary Education Certificate at grade 5 or better in Maltese (a non-Maltese candidate may offer his own language instead of Maltese), English Language and Mathematics.

Adult Education: Young people aged 25 and over can participate in a number of [courses](#) offered by the lifelong learning directorate. It embraces post-compulsory education, Vocational Education and Training (VET), higher education, and adult education

### **Main concepts**

Malta defines [early school leaving](#) as those persons between 18 and 24 years of age who do not have at least the equivalent of [Secondary Education Certificate](#) (SEC) passes (grades 1 to 7) in five different subjects and who are not in education or training. While the EU defines [early school leavers](#) as those “young people leaving education and training with no more than lower secondary education”, early school leavers are those who will have limited life chances, will be channelled towards dead-end jobs if any, are more prone to join the working or non-working poor and are at risk of social exclusion. Early school leavers are thus those who will be less likely to fulfill their potential as human beings, as active citizens and as principal actors in the labour market.

According to the [Education Act](#) ‘Non-formal learning’ means learning embedded in a planned activity organised outside the formal educational system, which activity is not explicitly designed as learning but which contains an important learning component.

The [Education Act](#) defines ‘special need education’ and ‘individual educational needs’ as “a minor shall be deemed to have special educational needs when that minor has special difficulties of a physical, sensory, intellectual or psychological nature”.

## **6.2 Administration and governance**

### **Cross-sectorial cooperation**

Cross-sectorial cooperation is fundamental in today’s society in order to provide youth with the necessary knowledge and adequate tools to fully integrate in a continuously changing labour market and actively participate in society.

Malta has integrated the following key initiatives to enable better cross-sectorial cooperation in education and training:

The [Ministry for Education and Employment](#) has always worked with relevant stakeholders within and outside the Ministry in order to solidify a comprehensive framework for the collection of data to extend pertinent policy making and implementation. The Ministry for Education and Employment carries out continuous monitoring of strategies, policies and programmes with particular emphasis on education provision for children and youth at risk while analysing their performance based on empirical evidence.

The [framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014- 2024](#) has four broad goals in line with European and world benchmarks:

1. Reduce the gaps in educational outcomes between boys and girls and between students attending different schools, decrease the number of low achievers and raise the bar in literacy, numeracy, and science and technology competence, and increase student achievement
2. Support educational achievement of children at-risk-of-poverty and from low socio-economic status, and reduce the relatively high incidence of early school-leavers
3. Increase participation in lifelong learning and adult learning
4. Raise levels of student retainment and attainment in further, vocational, and tertiary education and training.

All policy measures related to education and training are connected to the framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014- 2024.

Preventive measures being taken to make schooling more engaging and meaningful for students, pre-empting early disengagement and failure include:

- The [Free Childcare Scheme](#) (April 2014) is an initiative whereby the Maltese Government provides free childcare services to parents/guardians who are in employment or who are pursuing their education. The age group for this scheme is for children from three months up to three years of age. Free Childcare is terminated once the child is eligible to enrol into Kindergarten 1 provided by the state.
- The [Migrant Learners' Unit](#) organises language programmes in English and Maltese for foreign students. These students were given special lessons in English and Maltese through a one-year pull-out programme.
- The [Directorate for Learning and Assessment Programmes](#) embarks on a number of initiatives, targeted at primary and secondary education gifted and talented students in order to enrich their educational experience and to promote STEM subjects and careers among this cohort of students.
- The new [Malta Visual and Performing Arts School](#) is well-equipped in enhancing students' high propensity towards visual and performing arts, and to further their artistic competence and ideas.
- The [National Sport School](#) is a co-ed school for students who have outstanding sport talent. The ultimate aim of the National Sport School is to guide these students along a dual career path, leading them to a successful career in sports and academic achievement.
- Parents are key stakeholders in the strategy to reduce Early School Leaving. Their valuable contribution to education and towards decreasing Early School Leaving can be seen through their involvement in the National Literacy Agency's programmes.
- Continuous Professional Development is fundamental for educators to keep up-to-date with the dynamic nature of education and to implement educational change. The Institute for Education provides various modes of continuing professional development that inject the 21st century skills and competences into the educators at all levels of leadership and infuse equity and social justice within all the learning programmes.

Intervention measures are student-centred and are based on the multi-disciplinary support required to establish a favourable learning environment.

- Early warning systems prompt schools and relevant stakeholders within the educational system to identify and monitor early stages of potential student disengagement in order to provide timely and targeted intervention.
- The career guidance service under the remit of the [National School Support Services](#) within the Ministry for Education and Employment holds a number of initiatives in State colleges in order to entice students' attendance and guide them on how to see the relevance of schooling with the world of work. Professionals work in a multi-disciplinary team in order to make schooling attractive for students and develop tailor-made programmes to reduce the risk of early school leavers. All students are encouraged towards further education in order to better equip themselves and acquire the necessary skills for the world of work.
- The National School Support Services Department is the owner of the '[Respect for All Framework](#)', which incorporates several policy, strategy and procedure documents that both directly and indirectly target the identification and prevention of young people at risk of becoming early school leavers. The latter include: 'Addressing Attendance in Schools', 'Addressing Bullying Behaviour in Schools' and 'Managing Behaviour in Schools'. The department's practitioners support the implementation of the strategies and procedures listed in the three policy frameworks. Moreover, practitioners within the Safe Schools Program, which incorporates (1) the Child Safety Services (dealing with potential and actual child abuse cases); (2) the [Anti-Bullying Service](#); and (3) [Anti-Substance](#)

[Abuse Service](#), provide also support to learners attending non-State schools (schools in the Church and Independent sectors).

The [National Literacy Agency](#) has embarked on a literacy programme aimed to increase literacy amongst the most vulnerable students. Syllabi have been revised to make them more relevant to the students. The National Literacy Agency has also developed a number of initiatives that involve both students and their parents in after-school programmes. The primary objective of these programmes is to promote a love of books among children through the involvement of their parents / caregivers.

Other organisations and entities have the common goal of save-guarding youth's welfare even though they do not fall within MEDE's remit. For example, the [Foundation for Social Welfare Services](#) has been running the [Youth in Focus](#) programme and the [Adolescent Day](#) programme that target young people who face extraordinarily challenging life circumstances. In line with the implementation of the [National Youth Policy 2015-2020](#), [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) revolves around the personal and social interests of young people.

[Nurture Classes](#) in primary schools and [Learning Support Zones](#) in secondary schools help students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD).

In September 2015, an [Education Hub](#) was opened in order to provide a specific programme for students who experienced extensive maladjustment within mainstream secondary schools.

[Unit Għożża](#) provides a support service as well as various educational and holistic programmes for pregnant teenagers, leading them to adopt a positive attitude towards motherhood while empowering them to pursue their career path.

The [Alternative Learning Programme](#) and [GEM16+](#) offer second chance education opportunities for students.

Concurrently, middle schools and secondary schools are developing their own in-house Core Curriculum programmes for students who find difficulty in following mainstream programmes and who may benefit from a vocational pathway. Since November 2015, the [XL Programme](#), developed by the [Prince's Trust](#), is currently running in 7 secondary schools in Malta. Young people aged 13 to 16 and who are at risk of underachievement or exclusion are offered a personal development programme as an opportunity for re-engagement in education

With regard to compensation measures:

A number of institutions in Malta provide full-time education to youths who have not acquired the necessary academic qualifications required to attain MQF level 4 and who wish to further their levels of education and training. Various other flexible education and training programmes are provided by other institutions according to students' particular requirements.

The [Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability](#) within the [Ministry for Education and Employment](#) embraces learning as a lifelong journey in which skills are acquired through a holistic approach. Besides offering guidance on lifelong learning, the directorate organises adult learning courses which are facilitated through personalised and innovative approaches to education.

The [National School Support Services](#) (NSSS) offers other educational opportunities for students with a disability who have finished compulsory school, namely the [Dun Manwel Attard Young Adult Resource Centre](#) and the [Helen Keller Resource Centre](#).

Intensive [SEC Revision Classes](#) falling under the [Youth Guarantee](#) scheme are offered for free to students who fail in one or more of the SEC core subjects and who want to apply for the September re-sit session. Another initiative that falls under the Youth Guarantee scheme consists of [Remedial Classes](#) offered to [MCAST](#) students who failed their examinations at Levels 1, 2 or 3 and hence can be classified as potential early school leavers. Through Youth Guarantee's ICT Course for ALP Students, educational

opportunities are provided for ALP students to acquire ICT knowledge and skills in line with the demands of the labour market.

The [NEET Activation Scheme II](#), launched by the Youth Guarantee office in July 2016, aims at re-integrating youths who are detached from education or from the labour market

Many initiatives mentioned above promote social integration at all levels. Data for every action is provided in the context of current status that needs to be considered as well as recommendations. Related stakeholders concur unanimously about the element of timely prevention, possibly at the earliest stages.

#### E-learning initiatives

The Directorate for Digital Literacy and Transversal Skills (DDLTS), within the Ministry for Education and Employment, identifies gaps in educators' digital competence and supports them accordingly. Digital literacy support teachers, Heads of department and Education officers coordinate support for educators to make use of various technologies that are available in schools and include them in their lessons in order to engage the students and to facilitate learning. DDLTS supports also students to foster their critical and confident use of technologies as well as their digital competence development. DDLTS organises many initiatives in education to promote digital literacy, coding and computational thinking like family coding sessions and Code Week, internet safety, eTwinning, SELFIE and DigComp.

The Ministry for Education and Employment is investing in digital skills in compulsory education curriculae and through an investment in ICT infrastructure in classrooms. In primary schools digital skills have been strengthened through the '[One Tablet per Child](#)' (OTPC) scheme where tablets were distributed to all students and educators in Year 4, 5 and 6 in all schools. The tablet is aimed to be an educational tool that helps students to go into deeper learning in literacy, digital literacy, numeracy, science and other areas. Students can learn anytime anywhere because the tablet facilitates collaboration, communication, creativity, character education, digital citizenship, critical thinking and computational thinking. These competences are pushed forward through the Digital Learning outcomes which are aligned with DigComp. The OTPC project aims to increase the skills and competences of students and future graduates; and to ensure that all children will be given a fair and equal opportunity to be closer to technology. Digital Skills in are cross-curricular at all compulsory levels and students are expected to use technology across all the subjects. A new ICT programme in middle schools, entitled ICT C3, has been introduced in Year 7, to replace the traditional ECDL. The new ICT C3 programme will go up till Year 11 to ensure that students will learn about safety on the net, robotics, coding and other new technologies. This is a compulsory subject in lower and upper secondary. Computing and VET IT are optional subjects which students can opt for in the secondary.

With regard to transforming teaching and learning of digital skills in a lifelong learning perspective, including the training of teachers, DDLTS is mainstreaming the [EU's digital competence framework DIGCOMP \(JRC, 2017\)](#) focusing on digital literacies and 21st century skills. The Institute for Education offers a whole range of CDP courses, including courses related to digital competences, in collaboration with DDLTS. In the framework of the national project One-Tablet-Per-Child (OTPC,) all educators in Year 4, 5 and 6 have to follow the mandatory course 'Award in the use of tablets in the Primary Classrooms'. All these initiatives form part of the combined effort for the strategic implementation of the [Digital Education Action Plan \(EC, 2018\)](#).

#### Career guidance and relevant professional advice for young people

The [career guidance service](#) within the Ministry for Education and Employment contributes towards the career development as well as personal and social development of students, within a holistic approach. This includes initiatives to support students' subject/career option choices and transitions from primary to secondary education and

from secondary to post-secondary education and/or work. Career guidance services are delivered in schools by Principal Education Support Practitioners (Career Advisors), and guidance teachers through a variety of face-to-face provisions, such as on a one-to-one basis as well as in small and large groups. Career guidance services are also offered at [MCAST](#), [Junior College](#), [Higher Secondary](#), and the [University of Malta](#).

The transition co-ordinator support Year 11 students with Individual Educational Needs on the different opportunities that meet the needs of the student. This will ensure that the best possible choice of provisions is made for each student. The transition co-ordinator helps in the transition programme from secondary mainstream to post-16 provision or from Education Resource Centres to other post-16 provisions, Adult Services or employment opportunities. The Transition co-ordinator organises orientation visits to the different provisions and prepare profiles and action plans for each student's transition programme.

The [career guidance platform](#), provides all the information needed, such as careers within specific sectors by means of videos, a quiz/personality test which determines one's career aptitudes and a description of several post-secondary courses and the respective entry requirements for students to decide on which career path they will choose.

Other services include:

- Talks by employers, career orientation visits and one-week career exposure experiences for students at the place of work.

- [I Choose Fair](#)

- [Euroguidance Malta](#) which falls under the remit of the [National Schools Support Services](#) within the [Ministry for Education and Employment](#) in collaboration with other entities such as the [Malta Career Guidance Association](#) organises continuous professional development opportunities for career guidance practitioners within the education and employment sectors so that practitioners are better equipped to guide students or adults accordingly.

- Interactive career websites aim of addressing the information given to young people aged 11- 15 about their future career choices.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

The Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (VINFL) in Malta is regulated by [Subsidiary Legislation 327.432, Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning regulations](#) of September 2012. Under the remit of this legislation and as per Article 6(1) of SL327.433, the [National Commission for Further and Higher Education](#) (NCFHE) has been entrusted with VNFIL in Malta. Subsidiary Legislation 327.432 determines that the NCFHE must establish [Sector Skills Units](#) (SSU), the members of which must include representatives from a number of industry relevant stakeholders. The main roles of the SSU are to develop national occupational standards, a set of job related standards for occupations in their respective sectors. By the end of 2018, the NCFHE had set up a total of 8 SSUs covering the following industries/ sectors: Automotive; Health and Social Care; Education Support; Hospitality and Tourism; Hair and Beauty; Construction and Building Services; Printing and Digital Media; IT

Throughout 2018, validation assessment was expanded to new areas such as hairdressing, block laying and beauty which gave the chance to individuals from a wider range of occupations to apply for validation. All individuals who passed their validation assessment were given an award for their occupation and MQF level.

Work-based vocational competences are integrated in Malta's educational and training programmes emphasising on quality qualifications whilst: increasing economic competitiveness and ensuring that the skills gap between education and work is addressed, producing a skilled labour force which responds better to the labour market needs.

- At compulsory education level:

One of the successful measures undertaken by Malta was the implementation of 5 vocational subjects in both state and non-state secondary schools. These subjects are hospitality, health and social care, agri-business, information technology, and engineering technology. In scholastic year 2019/20, 4 more vocational subjects were introduced; namely media literacy, hairdressing and beauty, retail, fashion and textiles.

The [Learning Outcomes Framework](#) (LOF) was applied to the syllabi of these subjects. The principal aims of the LOF are to free schools and learners from centrally-imposed knowledge-centric syllabi, and to give them the freedom to develop programmes that fulfil the framework of knowledge, attitudes and skills-based outcomes that are considered national education entitlement of all learners.

As of September 2019, through the '[My Journey: achieving through different paths: equitable quality education for all](#)' reform, secondary school students can choose from academic, vocational and applied subjects in addition to the core curriculum. During scholastic year 2019/20, 60% of Year 9 students have chosen at least one vocational or applied subject. A national careers web portal and events such as I Choose were developed. Students and parents/guardians are guided through the subject choosing process and have access to all information on the different subject options through the 3 routes.

The My Journey reform involves moving away from a 'one size fits all' system to a more inclusive and equitable programme. The aim is to respond to different education needs and give parity of esteem to general, vocational and applied subjects. The new system builds on the current one but ambitiously moves forward in democratising academic, vocational and applied learning for all students within a framework of parity of esteem. It retains key competences and sustains traditional academic learning programmes. Complementarily, vocational subjects and applied learning programmes leading up to MQF Level 3, are also made available to all students and are provided within the same school and in all secondary schools. Applied learning is comparable and equivalent to the academic and vocational education and accredited up to MQF Level 3. Following compulsory education, students may opt to continue their studies at the [University of Malta](#) (UM), [Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology](#) (MCAST), [Institute of Tourism Studies](#) (ITS) or another higher education institution of their choice.

The introduction of equitable learning programmes enables more quality time for in-depth learning whilst increasing learning opportunities, eliminating dead ends and easing labour market entry. My Journey seeks to promote increased links between education and industry. Close cooperation between schools and workplaces assures the currency of subject learning outcomes (SLOs), provides real-life work environments thus warranting the assimilation of the aims of work life, establishes fruitful relationships with companies and facilitates the learning of entrepreneurship competencies. These processes contribute to their development of expertise in the occupation that cannot be simulated in a school-based environment. The reform offers the possibility to choose vocational and/or applied paths at the age of 12, and is implemented in a manner that intends to make learning more inclusive, flexible and without dead-ends, to give more young people opportunities to develop employability and skills for personal and social development. In order to avoid that students may leave compulsory education not being well equipped with those key competences that could allow later re-skilling and up-skilling, the My Journey reform will also include new learning programmes in the core subjects (Mathematics, English, Maltese and Science) targeted at students following applied programmes. In this regard, a new certification is being introduced. The Secondary Education Applied Certificate (SEAC) run by the MATSEC board will certify 9 applied option subjects and 5 core subjects.

At post-secondary education level:

In March 2018, the [Work-based Learning and Apprenticeship Act](#) came into force, providing regulations and governance and administration of accredited training programmes for work-placements, apprenticeships and internships for VET purposes.

The Work-based Learning and Apprenticeship Act aims at strengthening work-based learning by:

- setting definitions and operational parameters for work placements, apprenticeships and internships;
- outlining responsibilities and governance structures (such as National Skills Council, Sector Skills Units);
- defining rights and obligations for VET providers, employers and learners;
- highlighting the role of employers as responsible learning partners;
- setting a compulsory minimum number of hours for all forms of work-based learning and linking remuneration to the minimum wage;
- using ECVET/ECTS in all forms of work-based learning;
- introducing a single EQF-based apprenticeship qualification replacing the dual certification currently in place;
- launching a training agreements register to support data collection and policy-relevant analysis by the national skills council

As Malta's leading vocational college, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) is the VET institution responsible for governing and managing the Apprenticeship system at national level in Malta, and has been working to raise the quality of apprenticeships so as to strike a balance between theoretical and on-the-job training and hence enable the apprentice to obtain long-term employability. The Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship Act provides regulations and governance and administration of accredited training programmes for work-placements, apprenticeships and internships for VET purposes.

Through this Act, Malta has now introduced a system where apprentices get first-hand knowledge of how the industry works, and are able to see clearly, what they would like to pursue as a career. All apprentices now have the opportunity to obtain the qualifications they need in the specific field chosen, while being able to put the skills they learn into practice at the same time, with the assistance of experts who are always be on-hand to show them how things are done.

As at August 2019, MCAST has 820 students registered on apprenticeship programmes. Students are expected to do from 700 -1400 hrs in industry depending on their programme of studies and the tripartite contract signed with their employer and the college. In the majority of cases this translates into 3 days of study and two days in industry during the academic year and then 40 hours weekly in summer for two years.

In relation to work-based learning, MCAST is also implementing a project on '[Achieving Vocational Excellence through enhanced Work Based Learning](#)' which aims to making VET more attractive to students, whilst providing a more competent workforce that can cater for current and future industrial requirements.

The project will involve the development and delivery of a mentoring training programme to MCAST lecturers and staff. Furthermore, training and information sessions will also be organised for industry sponsors. MCAST will map out the number of apprenticeship per area and the learning outcomes which can be offered by each participant employer. This monitoring will be achieved through the development of a comprehensive competency framework and use of an analysis tool.

In addition, six emulative centres will be set up with the main aim to tackle labour market mismatches and provide students with innovative work-based competences by simulating real working environments.

In 2019, MCAST also launched a new suite of MQF Level 6 Degree Apprenticeships in Biomedical Engineering, Construction Engineering, Software Development, Multimedia Software Development, Computer Systems and Networks, and Fashion. Students following such degree apprenticeships will be able to achieve a recognized Bachelor's Degree while simultaneously getting paid for gaining valuable work experience.

At MCAST, the [Skills Kit](#) is a programme intended for students who prefer to study at their own pace and explore different vocational areas. It is made up of a number of Skills

Kits (small bite-size topics) covering various vocational areas as well as personal skills and employability skills. The programme gives the students the possibility to choose how many Skills Kits to study over a period of time. It also gives the students the opportunity to choose their own combination of Skills Kits consisting of MQF Level 1 short courses (20 hours) which they would like to register for.

## Governance

The [Ministry for Education and Employment](#) has four Directors General (DGs) that are responsible for different education Departments. Each Department has a number of Directorates headed by a Director. The DGs are sectioned as follows:

The [Directorate General for Curriculum, Research, Innovation and Lifelong Learning](#) is composed of the Learning and Assessment Programmes Directorate, Research, Innovation and Lifelong Learning, Digital Literacy and Transversal skills. This DG is in charge to sustain a knowledge-based economy, learning as a lifelong pursuit is the key to success and to ensure a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. It offers adult learning classes in several areas of knowledge and it is also contributing towards a strong base of high level graduates by offering scholarships in several priority sectors of the knowledge-based economy.

The [Directorate General for Educational Services](#) (DES) is in charge to ensure the effective and efficient operation and delivery of services to the Colleges State schools within an established framework of decentralisation and autonomy. (College Principals, National School, Education Resources, Education for all, Migrant Learners, Education Logistics and Support, Schools Internal Review and Support).

The [Directorate General Strategy and Support](#) the departments that fall within this remit are the International Affairs, Strategy and Programme Implementation, Finance and Administration and Human Resources.

The [Directorate General for Quality and Standards in Education's](#) (DQSE) role is to regulate, establish, monitor and assure standards and quality in the programmes and educational services at the compulsory level of education provided by State and non-State schools. The functions of the DQSE are established by the Education Act (CAP 327 of the Laws of Malta). As part of the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) the mission of the Quality Assurance directorate is to establish and ensure high quality educational standards that promote well-being through the programmes and educational services provided by Maltese State and Non-State Schools, as provided for in the Education Act.

## Officially appointed agencies/public actors within the Ministry of Education and Employment

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) mainstreams youth related issues and further develop youth services. It enables further investment in young people and helps them realise their potential.

[English Language Teaching Council](#) (ELTC) fosters the ELT Profession and Industry in all its various aspects.

[European Union Programmes Agency](#) (EUPA) implements and manages the Erasmus+ Programme, previous programmes and other programmes and initiatives of the European Union.

The [Examinations Directorate](#) is responsible for the administration of the examinations for induction into the Public Service, public corporations and commercial partnerships in which the State has majority shareholding, intra-Service written Examinations; examinations for the issue of Local Licences; examinations on behalf of their parties. The Department also acts as an agent for Local and Overseas Examining Bodies responsible for the award of Academic, Vocational and Professional Qualifications.

The [Foundation for Educational Services](#) (FES) works concurrently with the Education Directorates to provide a range of innovative educational initiatives to meet the needs of

the community. The FES is committed to ensuring that all service users are supported through informal educational initiatives. It strives to offer quality educational services through structured contemporary programmes, financial sustainability and ethical behaviour.

The [Foundation for Tomorrow's Schools](#) (FTS) is the public entity in Malta responsible for the construction of Malta and Gozo's State-owned schools.

The [Institute for Education](#) promotes high quality education for all educators and fosters learning communities of the highest standard, educational leaders at all levels and instils education with equity and social justice.

[JobsPlus](#) enhances accessibility to the labour market through modernised and targeted services, whilst facilitating labour mobility and promoting investment in human capital. Jobsplus has provided thousands of local jobseekers and employers with successful and rewarding work experiences by empowering, assisting and training jobseekers; promoting workforce development; and assisting employers in their recruitment and training needs.

The [Malta Libraries](#) are responsible for the National Library of Malta, the National Library (Gozo), the Central Public Library, the Gozo Public Library, and all Regional and Branch Public Libraries in the Maltese Islands. The mission of Malta Libraries is to ensure the collection and conservation of Malta's documentary heritage for present and future generations, to maintain and develop the libraries regulated under the Malta Libraries Act, and to encourage reading for study, research, self-development and life long learning information and leisure purposes.

The [Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology](#) (MCAST) is a leading vocational education and training institution. It has six Institutes in Malta and the Gozo Campus and offers 185 full-time and over 300 part-time vocational courses ranging from certificates to degrees (MQF Level 1 to Level 6). Students are prepared for careers in different sectors of the economy or for higher education.

The [National Archives](#) is currently working on the appraisal and cataloguing of an extensive backlog of records of post-Independence Malta. It is also preparing itself to face the challenge of managing electronic records.

The [National Commission for Further and Higher Education](#) (NCFHE) fosters the development and achievement of excellence in further and higher education in Malta through research, effective licensing, accreditation, quality assurance and recognition of qualifications established under the Malta Qualifications Framework.

The [National Literacy Agency](#) (NLA) seeks to promote and enhance lifelong and life wide, high quality literacy practices among children, youth, adults, third country nationals and persons with learning difficulties. It also strives to improve literacy outcomes, resulting in inclusive practices, higher educational qualifications, and better job prospects.

The [Scholarships and National Skills Council Unit](#) aim to first review the past and present available skills within our labour work force and evaluate the changes required to meet current and future needs. The main aim being that to minimise the skill gaps that exist in some of the demanding and rewarding sectors such as the digital, technical and financial sectors where Malta is, and can maintain, excellence. It is the council's task to recommend policy changes to the government that would reduce these gaps and prepare the labour force with the right skills, to meet the future challenges.

[SportMalta](#) is Malta's national sport agency. Its core purpose is to inspire Maltese and transform the nation through sport. Its role is to also create greater sporting opportunities and access, more inclusivity and integration as well as broader development of capabilities.

The [Students' Maintenance Grants' Board](#)'s main functions are to: oversee the effective allocation and payments of Students' Maintenance Grants to students; offer guidelines and regularly review procedures in the management and implementation of all the stages

leading up to payments of Students' Maintenance Grants to students; oversee the effective assessment, review and payment of Supplementary Grants to students; process reports submitted from educational institutions and apply any sanctions when necessary; oversee the management of payments and take action to recover any overpaid Students' Maintenance Grants; recommend changes to already-existing policies to improve the support the student receives.

The [University of Malta](#) is the highest teaching institution in Malta. It is publicly funded and is open to all those who have the requisite qualifications.

Other social partners contributing to the development of policies in the field of education and training are the following: The [Malta Union of Teachers](#); School Councils; Junior College Students' Council; The [Kunsill Studenti Universitarji](#) (KSU) and Student Organisations within KSU

All local entities and authorities with their respective responsibilities fall under the portfolio for Education and Employment. The organisational structure of the Ministry for Education and Employment can be found in this [organigram](#).

## 6.3 Preventing early leaving from education and training (ELET)

### National strategy

In 2014, the framework for the [Education Strategy for Malta 2014- 2024](#) was launched which aligns all sectoral education strategies and policies, and has four broad but measurable targets in line with European and world benchmarks and that set the education agenda in Malta:

- reduce the gaps in educational outcomes, decrease the number of low achievers and raise the bar in literacy, numeracy, and science and technology competence;
- support educational achievement of children at-risk-of-poverty and from low socio-economic status, and reduce the relatively high incidence of early school-leavers;
- raise levels of student retainment and attainment in further, vocational, and tertiary education and training; and
- increase participation in lifelong learning and adult learning.

This framework offers focus and direction for other policy documents, such as the [National Curriculum Framework](#), [National Literacy Strategy for All in Malta and Gozo](#), a [Strategic Plan for The Prevention of Early School Leaving in Malta](#), the [Higher Education Strategy for Malta](#), the [National Vocational Education and Training Policy](#) and the [Malta National Lifelong Learning Strategy](#). Measures that are already in place and others set to be initiated are aimed to reach across all socio-economic sectors and different cultural, ethnic, religious, gender and sexual status. While acknowledging that out-of-school factors like poverty and social exclusion affect student achievement, the Ministry is seeking to improve students' learning experiences by encouraging creativity, critical literacy, entrepreneurship and innovation at all levels. Objectives falling within compulsory education are set to be achieved through the provision of a relevant curriculum built on a learning outcomes approach and a variety of learning experiences and qualifications pegged to the Malta Qualifications Framework. On the other hand different pathways and opportunities to increase the relevance of learning to the labour market will be increased during post-compulsory education and training. This Framework thus aims to contribute towards a society that is competent, resourceful, critically conscious, and competitive in a global economy driven by information, knowledge and innovation.

Two national strategies stemming from the above framework that address ELET are:

- A Strategic Plan for The Prevention of Early School Leaving In Malta and;

- The Malta National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020.

The first strategy document, a [Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Early School Leaving In Malta](#) has a time-frame for this document which is 2014 – 2020. This Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Early School Leaving in Malta aims at facilitating focused action that will support students to make the best out of their school years, from early childhood to the end of compulsory school and beyond. The aim is to enable students to develop their potential as human beings, as citizens and as stakeholders in the economy. This strategic plan caters for prevention, intervention and compensation measures so it targets early years, primary years, middle school, secondary school and upper secondary (post compulsory) thus the age is not up to 16.

The actions outlined in this strategic plan are in line with the Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024 that centres around four measurable targets that both individually and collectively contribute directly towards the reduction of the number of early school leavers in Malta. The Framework highlights the need for Malta to reduce the gaps in educational outcomes between boys and girls and between students attending different schools. It aims at decreasing the number of low achievers and raise the bar in literacy, numeracy, and science and technology competence while increasing student achievement. Another measurable target to achieve is the provision of support in educational achievement of children at-risk-of-poverty and from low socio-economic status, and reduce the relatively high incidence of early school leavers. A third target put forward by the Framework is to raise levels of student retention and attainment in further and higher education, followed by another target to increase participation in lifelong learning. These four measurable targets form the basis of the present document. The document a Strategic Plan for The Prevention of Early School Leaving In Malta envisages structures that enable stakeholders to monitor implementation for the purpose of revising plans when the need arises, with the specific target of keeping on track in the quest for providing a more meaningful and successful educational experience for all students. The Early School Leaving Strategy is currently being revised on the basis of evidence-based monitoring, assessments and evaluation that have taken place. The revision process will be complete by 2017-2018.

The second strategy document the [Malta National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020](#) has a time-frame 2014 – 2020. The Directorate for Research, Lifelong learning and Innovation within the [Ministry for Education and Employment](#) is responsible for the implementation, coordination and monitoring of both strategies. The National Lifelong Learning Strategy for Malta 2020 focuses on adult learning, specifically the participation of people aged 25 to 64 years in lifelong learning. It embraces post-compulsory education, Vocational Education and Training (VET), higher education, and adult education. The Lifelong Learning Strategy consolidates and builds on ideas and processes already taking shape in different organisations and institutions in Malta, such as to ensure a single, coherent place to guide actions in lifelong learning. All applicants must be sixteen years of age or over, if not stated otherwise in certain specific sections or Centres.

The Strategic objectives of this document are

- Stimulate participation in lifelong Learning by Maltese adults by creating a demand and a desire for learning. This latent demand does not lie solely among those with low-skills and at risk of poverty and social exclusion, but also among people in employment who wish to further their skills set and job mobility.
- Place the 'learner' at the centre by optimising all possible types of innovative learning methods and environments to make learning flexible, personal, accessible and relevant. This implies a commitment to alternative pathways, beyond those defined by formal learning.
- Improve skills sets that contribute to professional development, employment mobility and active citizenship.
- Develop support structures for adult learning.

Improve governance in the Lifelong Learning sector, exploring structural, institutional, fiscal, legal, political and administrative measures available.

The Lifelong Learning Strategy has 10 strategies supporting the 5 Lifelong Learning objectives. These strategies are fundamentally inter-related and inter-dependent. Strategies are broadly measures to empower, connect and value learning acquired in different tracks (e.g. Vocational Education and Training and higher education) and settings (formal, non-formal, informal learning) and to improve guidance.

- Coordinate delivery of Lifelong Learning by public organisations
- Promote Adult Skills and VET as the optimum, flexible route to employability, personalised professional development and economic well-being
- Develop a coherent, equitable and sustainable accreditation system for adult learning
- Improve the overall quality of adult learning in Malta and Gozo
- Embrace emergence of Open Education Resources as opportunity for Connected Learning
- Facilitate women's participation in workplace through Lifelong Learning
- Leverage Lifelong Learning to support inclusivity & empower marginalised communities
- Improve the quality of life of older people through Lifelong Learning opportunities
- Coordinate ownership and delivery of Community Learning
- Raise awareness of Greener living as a core component of Lifelong Learning

The National Lifelong Learning Strategy for Malta 2020 focuses on adult learning, specifically the participation of people aged 25 to 64 years in lifelong learning. The strategy was published for consultation in November 2014 and adopted as final in January 2015. It embraces post-compulsory education, Vocational Education and Training (VET), higher education and adult education. The Lifelong Learning Strategy consolidates and builds on ideas and processes already taking shape in different organisations and institutions in Malta, to ensure a single, coherent focus and framework to guide actions in lifelong learning.

The strategy addresses a number of challenges including:

- Low level of participation of adults in adult learning
- Early school leavers and low skills achievement
- Low number of women actively at work or engaged in lifelong learning
- Intergenerational cycle of disengagement from education

In February 2015, a task force was set up to monitor the implementation of the strategy. The task force includes representatives from the Directorate for Lifelong Learning, the University of Malta, the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE), Jobsplus, Foundation for Educational Services and Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST). The task force meets on a regular basis and takes stock of progress on the implementation of the 40 strategy programmes. The task force has also set up 3 working groups to focus on specific adult learning aspects: community learning and vulnerable groups; employment and accreditation; and connected learning.

The task force consolidated and eliminated duplication in provision to eliminate operational overlaps related to lifelong learning courses. It also submitted an action plan to the Ministry for Education and Employment with the objective of separating lifelong learning policy and strategy functions from the actual delivery of courses. Main initiatives in the implementation of the strategy include also the setting up of the National Skills Council in 2016 and the establishment of the Department for Arts, Adult Education and Open Communities within the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta.

## Formal education: main policy measures on ELET

ESL Prevention, Intervention and Compensation measures are available in the [Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Early School Leaving In Malta](#)

Prevention measures that have been implemented so far to prevent early school leaving, supporting young people to stay in school, and offering opportunities to early leavers for re-entering education include:

- The launching of the [Free Childcare Scheme](#), with more than 90 childcare centres registered with the scheme.
- The setting up of the Cultural Integration Unit to facilitate the integration of the increasing number of foreign students in school communities.
- A rewriting of all school programmes at compulsory level using a Learning Outcomes approach and which are currently being negotiated with relevant stakeholders.
- The introduction of co-education at secondary level.
- A sustained investment in educational technology including the phasing in of tablet technology in primary schools.
- The introduction of VET subjects as part of mainstream secondary education.
- More investment in transition processes between one educational stage and another in order to increase student retention at all levels of education.
- The involvement of parents in the education of their children, particularly in programmes implemented by the [National Literacy Agency](#).
- The setting up of the [Institute for Education](#) which started operating in 2015 with the aim of providing CPD for educators and educational leaders in order to equip them with the skills to deal with the challenges of providing a meaningful educational experience to all students.

Intervention measures to prevent early school leaving, supporting young people to stay in school, and offering opportunities to early leavers for re-entering education include;

- a more focused monitoring of students' attendance through a data management system (the E1 platform) that serves as an early warning system that triggers off intervention processes by psychosocial professionals,
- recruiting of more psychosocial professionals to give a more focused service in the schools,
- more awareness about the contribution that youth workers can make to motivate students to learn, as well as the recruitment of youth workers to offer services within day-schools and programmes at lower and upper-secondary level,
- the development of special services in primary and secondary schools for students with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD),
- the development of a number of programmes by the National Literacy Agency aimed at both students and their families,
- the setting up of the Alternative Learning Programme to offer an applied-learning oriented programme for vulnerable students in their final year of compulsory school who were in danger of dropping out,
- the introduction of modular programmes for vulnerable students in secondary schools, such as the [Prince's Trust International's XL Programme](#).

Compensation measures to prevent early school leaving, supporting young people to stay in school, and offering opportunities to early leavers for re-entering education include;

- The setting up of the [Foundation Certificate Programme](#) at MCAST and a similar programme at ITS both aimed at students who leave compulsory education without the necessary qualifications but who are keen on continuing with their education,
- The setting up of a new school for students who leave compulsory schooling without the necessary entry qualifications, but who would like to have a second opportunity to follow the academic route, [GEM 16+](#), which was set up in September 2015,
- The implementation of academically-oriented second chance programmes in the two other further education institutions of the Ministry,
- The development of a VET oriented second-chance programme run by the national youth agency using a youth-work approach in order to offer training to young adults and facilitate their transition to employment,
- Second chance programme offered by the Foundation for Social Welfare Services of the Ministry for Family and Social Solidarity targeting vulnerable young people,
- A well-developed part-time adult education programme currently run by the Directorate for Lifelong Learning and Early School Leavers and also a VET-oriented part-time adult education programme offered by MCAST.
- At least three entities belonging to the Ministry for Education offer second chance programmes for young persons with disability.
- Jobsplus, the Public Employment Service (PES), is also using ESF funds earmarked for the [Youth Guarantee](#) in order to fund programmes specifically aimed at vulnerable young people who include students who need to re-sit for the Secondary Education Certificate examinations that would enable them to progress further in their educational path, and also programmes aimed at NEETs, through the NEET Activation Scheme.

### **Addressing ELET through non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work**

The [Youth.inc](#) programme is an inclusive education programme, based on applied learning, for young people between the age of 16 and 21. The aim of the programme is to help young people to improve their standard of education and gain more knowledge, values and skills to enter the labour market or gain qualifications to continue in further education and/or training. Youth.inc is under the remit and management of Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ, which adopts a more youth-centred approach and seeks to strengthen the complementary role of formal and non-formal learning. The programme has a strong youth work component and all young people attending the programme are assigned to a youth worker who works with them on a daily basis. The project is divided into five main areas: basic skills courses, work placement, vocational courses, activities, life skills programme. Once a week young people have a whole day dedicated to Life Skills programme where through the engagement with a qualified youth worker, they can benefit from the youth work approach.

The Youth Hubs area non-formal education service provided by Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ in higher education institutions. Youth Hubs offer an informal and recreational environment where young people can develop projects and initiatives with the support of youth workers, that build their personal and social skills and improve their educational and employment opportunities.

The Youth Village provides space, facilities and supports for young people and youth organisations to stage events and initiatives. The Youth Village aims to create a physical, and learning environment that will attract both young people and youth organisations.

### **Cross-sector coordination and monitoring of ELET interventions**

The Early School Leaving Unit has three ESL Working Groups that include representatives of various entities within and outside the Ministry for Education and Employment, that

may contribute to the reduction of the ESL phenomenon. These groups will be rescheduled on finalisation of the ESL strategic plan's revision.

The **Compulsory Education Working Group** consists of representatives from:

- the 10 Colleges -1 representative from each of the 10 Primary and Secondary Education Colleges
- Church and Private Schools
- the ALP Resource Centre, Paola
- the Department for Student Services (DSS)
- the VET Department
- the Quality and Assurance Department
- the Institute for Education

The **Post-Secondary Education Working Group** consists of representatives from:

- Malta College for Art, Science and Technology (MCAST)
- Junior College
- Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary School, Naxxar
- Sir Mikiel Ang Refalo Sixth Form, Gozo
- GEM 16+
- Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ
- Dun Manwel Mallia Resource Centre, Wardija
- ALP+
- Institute for Tourism Studies
- Youth Guarantee

The **Inter-ministerial Committee** consists of representatives from:

- Ministry for Gozo
- Ministry for EU Affairs and Equality
- Ministry for Finance
- Ministry for Health
- Ministry for the Family, Children's rights and Social Solidarity (through FSWS)
- Ministry for Economy, Investment and Small Businesses
- Ministry for Tourism
- Ministry for Justice, Culture and Local Government

The ESL Working Groups have the responsibility of:

- determining, coordinating and monitoring services that address the needs of children and young people who are disengaged or at risk of disengaging in specific local conditions;
- ensuring that pro-active preventive measures are in place;
- identifying the need for professional development of school administrators, teachers, psycho-social professionals and others working with children and young people at risk;
- facilitating the establishment of parents, family and community networks that would work with schools to intervene and prevent ESL;

- establishing support mechanisms that parents, families and carers may require to better support children or young persons;
- ensuring that this is done in a concerted and mutually supportive manner, especially when the services are being given by entities that fall within the same Ministry and aiming to reach connected cohorts of students.

## 6.4 Validation of non-formal and informal learning

### Arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning

As stipulated under the [Education Act](#), Malta established the [National Commission for Further and Higher Education](#) (NCFHE) to be responsible for the validation of informal and non-formal learning process.

The general process of validating informal and non-formal learning (VINFL) consists of:

- identification through dialogue of particular experiences of an individual;
- documentation to make visible the individual's experiences;
- formal assessment of these experiences; and
- certification of the results of the assessment which may lead to a partial or full qualification.

NCFHE has worked in collaboration with [different sectors](#) in developing occupational standards.

NCFHE had started working on the childcare occupational standards by organising the Health and Social Care SSU according to the requirements listed in the Subsidiary Legislation. NCFHE has seven functioning Sector Skills Units working on Occupational Standards and is in the process of setting up another Sector Skills Unit. The roles of these Sector Skills Units vary from proposing occupational standards relevant to the sector, to providing guidance and counselling services to individuals submitting their documented experiences for validation and audit all assessment processes and results achieved thereby.

The following policies and documents serve as a reference to the development of the professional competences of staff involved in the validation process across all relevant sectors:

- [Subsidiary Legislation 327.433](#) Further And Higher Education (Licensing, Accreditation And Quality Assurance) Regulations
- Manual of Procedures for Provider Licensing and Programme Accreditation Version 1.2 Updated September 2016
- The [National Quality Assurance Framework](#) provides guidance to educational institutions that embark on the processes of Internal and External Quality Assurance in order to enhance the learning outcomes provided through their educational programmes. It is underpinned by the following six principles.
- The [Manual for VET Providers](#) and the Handbook for VET Providers (CEDEFOP)
  - The handbook is meant to guide VET providers through a quality journey, based on the PDCA (plan-do-check-act/review) cycle, which underlies any quality management system (QMS). The handbook's guidelines, advice and practical examples are taken from 20 providers of initial, continuing or sector-based vocational training, all of which have successful and mature quality management in place.

- The Manual for VET Providers is a guideline on how to implement Quality Assurance and is not prescriptive in any way. The Manual provides examples of good practice on how quality indicators can be used in the quality cycle systematically. It does not prescribe one system to be adopted by all. It does not set the criteria for accreditation required by the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE).

The [NEET Activation Scheme II](#) aims at encouraging the re-integration of young people who are detached from the education system or from the labour market through targeted intervention and empowerment. Through this scheme, participants are individually profiled and receive forty hours of personalised assistance from assigned youth workers and another eighty hours of motivational and behavioural training intervention covering topics such as: Guidance on employment; Communication skills; and CV writing skills. This training enables participants to develop skills that are necessary for them both as members of society and as prospective employees. Following this initial phase, young people are requested to either further their training through continued education or else participate in a work exposure experience, leading to an offer of traineeship. In both instances, participants receive an allowance which should be equivalent to the minimum wage (subject to a number of conditions including performance and attendance).

### Information and guidance

The [National Commission for Further and Higher Education](#) (NCFHE) was officially launched to foster the development and achievement of excellence in further and higher education in Malta through research, effective licensing, accreditation, quality assurance and recognition of qualifications established under the Malta Qualifications Framework.

NCFHE focuses on:

- providing accreditation to further and higher educational institutions;
- providing accreditation to programmes or courses of studies at further and higher education levels;
- quality assurance of both educational institutions and programmes or courses;
- recognition of obtained national or international qualifications as well as prospective qualifications;
- validation of informal and non-formal learning;
- research and policy recommendation on issues related to further and higher education.

### Quality assurance

The following [National Commission for Further and Higher Education](#) (NCFHE) frameworks are providing guidelines to assess and validate non-formal and informal competences in Malta. The national criteria and guidelines focus primarily on systematic quality work and assurance to carry out validation at first hand and also include external quality assurance.

- [Internal and External Quality Assurance in Further and Higher Education](#)
- [National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education](#)
- [External Quality Assurance - Provider Audit Manual of Procedures Updated May 2017](#)

## 6.5 Cross-border learning mobility

### Policy framework

In November 2011, Member States agreed on a benchmark of at least 20% of higher education graduates having had a period of study or training abroad, and 6% for vocational education and training students, both to be reached by 2020.

### Main cross-border mobility programmes for students in formal education

The [National Commission for Further and Higher Education](#) (NCFHE) works on promoting, implementing and offering guidance for the use of EU tools that support mobility. These include ECVET, ECTS, and the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF). Furthermore, the NCFHE is in the process of developing a database for the national qualifications (database) (NQD) and linking it to the Learning Opportunities and Qualifications (LOQ) so that local and foreign students can get access to qualifications offered in Malta and Europe.

The NCFHE also collects data on student mobility during studies to monitor and evaluate credit and short term study mobility.

The [University of Malta](#) has been participating in the [Erasmus programme](#) for the last 19 years and has over this period of time strategically positioned the programme for it to be considered as not just the EU's but also the UOM's flagship programme for mobility. From its inception the UOM adopted a policy that studies conducted abroad through Erasmus and other programmes would be considered part of one's course of studies - this ensures that full recognition is obtained and a certain level of flexibility is allowed. The University of Malta is currently moving out a large number of students from courses which are linked to warrants and licencing which in itself can be a bit more complex to organise but which has been mastered successfully.

The [Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology](#) (MCAST) has been absorbing Erasmus+ funds for student and staff mobility in recent years. MCAST is implementing various actions to sustain international mobility of staff and students in higher education. Some of them are: 1. Increase the number of partner institutions across the EU to increase the number of available places for student and staff mobilities; 2. Engage Erasmus+ champions in all the Institutes at MCAST to promote and facilitate international mobility; 3. Organise students training courses to be entirely semester-based to enable students to go on international study mobilities during the academic year.

The [European Union Programmes Agency](#) (EUPA), is a legal autonomous agency established through the [legal notice 128 of 2007](#). The aim of the EUPA has always been to support Maltese individuals and entities in availing themselves of funding under the various educational programmes provided by the [European Commission](#). Yet the aim of the Agency is deeper than simply a financial contribution or sponsorship through which projects may be realised. Between 2007 and 2013 the EUPA was responsible for the management of the decentralised action of former generations of EU programmes for education including the Youth in Action and Lifelong learning programmes.

The Agency acts as a link between the European Commission and project promoters both at national as well as the local level, while it also promotes and manages EU projects of an educational nature, content or objective. The EUPA engages itself in initiatives that are consonant with the educational policies and strategies of the Ministry responsible for education.

For the current programming period (2014- 2020), the European Commission developed the new EU programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport under the name of Erasmus+. Programme decentralised actions are implemented at national level by a

network of National Agencies. In Malta the National Agency responsible for the management of these actions is the European Union Programmes Agency (EUPA).

As of 2017, the [European Union Programmes Agency](#) (EUPA) is also coordinating the implementation of the [European Solidarity Corps](#) (ESC). The European Solidarity Corps (or, Korp Ewropew ta' Solidarjetà - KETS) is the new European Union initiative that enables young people to show solidarity with communities in their respective country as well as abroad.

Under the Erasmus+ Programme Higher Education students have the opportunity to study abroad for a period of 3 and 12 months. It is financed by the European Commission. In Malta, Erasmus+ is administered by the National Agency (EUPA) and the higher education institutions that participate in the programme.

Furthermore under the Erasmus+ Programme VET learners (including apprentices) in vocational training organisations (VET providers), have the opportunity to participate in work placements or a combination of school based learning and work placements, such activities last between 2 weeks and 3 months, whereas long term mobility in VET providers last between 3 and 12 months.

KA2 school exchange partnership projects

Students in secondary education can participate in a KA2 school exchange partnership project. The main aim of Strategic Partnerships is to support the development, transfer and/or implementation of innovative practices as well as the implementation of joint initiatives promoting cooperation, peer learning and exchanges of experience at European level. The primary goal is to allow schools to develop and reinforce networks, increase their capacity to operate at a transnational level, share and confront ideas, practices and methods. A Strategic Partnership is transnational and involves a minimum of three organisations from three different Programme Countries. Exceptionally, the following types of projects may involve a minimum of two organisations from two different Programme Countries: Strategic Partnerships for schools only: This type of partnership may only apply for projects supporting exchange of good practices between organisations from Programme Countries.

In the field of school education, there are a number of priorities;

Reinforcing the development of key competences (in line with the Council Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning) for example by promoting cross-curricular collaboration, creativity and innovative learning approaches and environments, cooperating with stakeholders in local communities and abroad, supporting teachers in delivering competence based teaching and developing assessment and validation of key competences.

Strengthening the profile of the teaching professions, including teachers, school leaders and teacher educators, for example by: making careers more attractive and diverse; strengthening selection, recruitment and evaluations (models of staff appraisal, assessment and feedback); enhancing teachers' initial education and continuous professional development and linking its different phases; facilitating and significantly increasing teacher mobility, including by overcoming remaining obstacles; supporting teachers in developing innovative teaching and assessment methods, especially to promote competence-oriented teaching and learning; strengthening leadership in education, including distributed leadership and teacher leadership.

Promoting a comprehensive approach to language teaching and learning (in line with the [Council Recommendation on language teaching and learning](#)), building on the increasing linguistic diversity in schools, for example by: encouraging early language learning and awareness; developing bilingual teaching options, especially for border regions and/or in areas where inhabitants use more than one language; mainstreaming the use of new technologies to support language learning; supporting the integration of the language dimension across the curricula; focusing on reaching adequate competence levels by the end of compulsory education; promoting the creation of language aware schools.

Increasing the levels of achievement and interest in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics ([STEM](#)). This priority will include, among others: promoting the development of national STEM strategies; developing partnerships between schools, businesses, higher education institutions, research institutions, and wider society; promoting effective and innovative pedagogies and assessment; promoting the STE(A)M approach to education through interdisciplinary teaching of STEM in cultural, environmental, economic, design and other contexts, with the involvement of all academic disciplines.

Tackling early school leaving and disadvantage, enabling success for all learners, including children with a migrant background, for example by: strengthening collaboration among all actors within schools, as well as with families, and other external stakeholders; improving transitions between different stages of education; fostering preventive and early intervention approaches; supporting networking of schools which promote collaborative and holistic approaches to teaching and learning; improving evaluation and quality assurance.

Developing high quality early childhood education and care systems (in line with the [ECEC Council Recommendation](#)), for example by: supporting initial and continuing professional development of all staff involved in organising, leading and providing early childhood education and care; creating, testing or implementing strategies and practices to foster participation of all children in early childhood education and care, including children in need of special support (e.g. children with disabilities, or children from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, children from a migrant background); promoting the implementation of the EU quality framework for quality early childhood education and care.

Building capacity for promoting and facilitating recognition of learning periods abroad (including follow-up to the [Council Recommendation on automatic mutual recognition](#)), including promoting recognition of formal education and transversal competences developed through non-formal and informal learning, for example by: building administrative capacity of schools to support participation of pupils in transnational projects and peer exchanges, including by exploring the potential of intermediary bodies pooling the capacity of several schools; establishing sustainable partnerships between organisations setting cross-border learning exchanges in general education; promoting embedded class exchanges or pupil mobility in school programmes; ensuring appropriate safety standards for pupils participating in transnational mobility; developing and disseminating tools and mechanisms for the preparation, monitoring and recognition of periods abroad; and sharing and promoting good practices.

Developing strong quality assurance systems to achieve high-quality inclusive education and enhance trust among countries in relation to the quality of their respective school education systems, for example by: supporting countries in developing synergies between internal and external evaluations, in engaging stakeholders in quality assurance processes, or in designing their quality assurance strategies in ways to support broad competence development.

The duration of the project can take place between 12 and 36 months.

Eligible activities within a school partnership project are the following:

- Blended mobility of pupils and learners combining short-term physical mobility (5 days to 2 months; excluding travel days) with virtual mobility;
- Short-term exchanges of groups of pupils (5 days to 2 months; excluding travel days);
- Long-term study mobility of pupils (2 to 12 months).
- Eligible participants within a school partnership project are the following:
- Pupils of any age, accompanied by school staff (in short-term exchanges of groups of pupils);

- Pupils aged 14 or older enrolled in full-time education at a school participating in the Strategic Partnership (in long-term study mobility of pupils);

The main funding components under a KA2 school education project are the following:

- Project Management and Implementation costs
- Transnational project meetings
- Exceptional costs
- Special needs support

In addition for cross sectoral Strategic Partnerships supporting innovation any intellectual outputs and multiplier events are also eligible.

For transnational learning, teaching and training activities within the strategic partnership: travel and individual support, linguistic support and exceptional costs, are eligible costs.

As a mechanism to support young people in participating in Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, EUPA organises a number of workshops and information sessions to provide information and support on how to apply for funding. Furthermore, EUPA offers one to one assistance in discussing project proposals, officers are always available to provide support to young people.

### **VET mobility programmes**

EU (Erasmus+) funded VET mobility programmes belong to the VET educational context and the purpose of these mobilities is the placement of learners in companies and VET learners in schools. Mobilities are only for outgoing learners and students go for short term duration mobilities (2 weeks).

The Erasmus+ funding provides students with funding to cover travel, subsistence as well as linguistic preparation expenses.

### **Cross-border learning mobility - Tertiary education**

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) which are established in a Programme Country and awarded with an Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) in advance by the European Commission can apply and participate in a KA1 Mobility project for higher education students and staff. In Malta there are 7 HEIs in possession of an ECHE charter. The 3 most established HEIs which benefit on yearly basis from the Erasmus+ programme are [University of Malta](#), [Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology \(MCAST\)](#) and the [Institute for Tourism Studies \(ITS\)](#).

Student mobility:

1. a study period abroad at a partner higher education institution (HEI);
2. a traineeship (work placement) abroad in an enterprise or any other relevant workplace.

A study period abroad may include a traineeship period as well. Such a combination creates synergies between the academic and professional experience abroad and may be organised in different ways depending on the context: either one activity after the other or both at the same time. The combination follows the funding rules and minimum duration of study mobility.

To ensure high-quality mobility activities with maximum impact on the students, the mobility activity has to be compatible with the student's degree-related learning and personal development needs. The study period abroad must be part of the student's study programme to complete a degree at a short cycle, first cycle (Bachelor or equivalent), second cycle (Master or equivalent) and third or doctoral cycle. Traineeships abroad at a workplace are also supported during short cycle, first, second, third cycle studies and within a maximum of one year after the student's graduation. This also

includes the 'assistantships' for student teachers. Wherever possible, the traineeships should be an integrated part of the student's study programme. Student mobility can be in any subject area/academic discipline.

Staff mobility:

1. teaching periods: this activity allows HEI teaching staff or staff from enterprises to teach at a partner HEI abroad. Staff mobility for teaching can be in any subject area/academic discipline.
2. training periods: this activity supports the professional development of HEI teaching and non-teaching staff in the form of training events abroad (excluding conferences) and job shadowing/observation periods/training at a partner HEI, or at another relevant organisation abroad. A period abroad can combine teaching and training activities.

The [University of Malta](#) participates in the Erasmus+ programme at tertiary level. University students proceed on an Erasmus+ mobility which is fully recognised as part of the course they would be reading with the [University of Malta](#). The average duration of the mobilities for study purposes is mostly 1 semester (4-5 months) or a year (9 months). Students who proceed on an Erasmus+ training mobility are allowed a minimum of 2 months up to 1 year, the average duration is that of 3 months. Academic and administrative staff exchanges to and from partner institutions are also catered for by the Erasmus+ programme.

The main purposes of students participating in the Erasmus+ programme is either to study for a period of time in a partner university in their field of studies or to carry out a traineeship or research mainly linked to their future profession or degree. While on an Erasmus+ exchange students are given the opportunity to follow the [Online Linguistic Support](#) (OLS) services which aim to improve a person's language competences while on Erasmus.

Members of staff proceed on Erasmus+ to obtain more experience through the mobility of administrative/ technical staff or to carry out teaching and research through the academic mobilities.

Erasmus+ allows for both outbound and inbound mobility. The University sends and receives students through Bilateral Agreements specifically signed in relevant fields of studies that the partner universities have deemed as mutually beneficial. When undertaking Erasmus+ for training students are free to proceed to partner institutions and other institutions/ companies that may be relevant to their field of interest.

The minimum duration for beneficiaries to proceed on Erasmus+ is a minimum of 3 months and a maximum of 12 months for studies and a minimum of 2 months and a maximum of 12 months for training. As stated above on average students proceed on study mobilities for about 1 semester (4 to 5 months) and proceed on traineeships for an average duration of 3 months. Under the current Erasmus+ programme students may proceed on both studies and traineeship mobilities. The average duration of staff exchanges is about 1 to 2 weeks.

The Erasmus+ grants beneficiaries receive consist of a travel grant, which is a lump sum calculated, by the EU Commission, according to their destination and a monthly grant depending on destination too. A similar process is implemented for staff mobilities too.

EU (Erasmus+) funded VET mobility programmes belong to the VET educational context and the purpose of these mobilities is the placement of learners in companies and VET learners in schools. Mobilities are only for outgoing learners and students go for short term duration mobilities (2 weeks).

The Erasmus+ funding provides students with funding to cover travel, subsistence as well as linguistic preparation expenses.

## Promoting mobility in the context of non-formal learning, and of youth work

In 2017 [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) coordinated a project called '[Let's Talk about Life](#)'. This project was a multilateral 6 day exchange involving 4 countries. The participating countries include Poland, Ireland, Estonia and Malta, as the hosting country. 36 young people between the ages of 13 to 17 years participated in the youth exchange.

The primary theme of the exchange was focused on young people's life with particular focus on Bullying and Gender Stereotyping. In line with this thematic focus, the project aimed at creating more awareness on the issue of gender stereotyping and bullying both in public spaces where young hang out and on social media through Peer Education. The project aimed to consolidate young people`s knowledge and understanding the ethical responsibility to prevent bullying and gender stereotyping and avoid being bystanders. By being aware of the impact of bullying and gender stereotyping, the young people were better equipped in bringing positive change and aware of their duty to stand up when discrimination takes place.

The project aimed to encourage young people to use their own knowledge and abilities to create peer educational material that could be used with their peers. The methodologies utilized during the youth exchange included a combination of non-formal learning methods such as interactive workshops, teambuilding activities, inter-cultural events, experiential experiences, and evaluation and reflective sessions.

As a result of the project the participants became aware that in various situation injustices, discrimination and bullying can be minimized by speaking up and not being indifferent and hence becoming proactive citizens. Moreover, the project helped in encouraging young people to take on active roles in their respective communities, thus sustaining the European democratization process.

The project made use of Erasmus+ funding.

The main mechanisms in place to monitor and ensure the quality of the programmes implemented were an APV at the start of the project during which management of project was discussed and various evaluation tools during the project such as Mood Boards, comparing expectations shared on first day of the project to the participants actually experienced, mid-way evaluation activity, national group evaluations, daily leaders meeting, informal discussion about the project with the young people .

The main criteria and indicators used to assess the quality of programmes were a Presentation of exchange programme on the first day; a discussion and activity about the youthpass, the 7 competencies, youthpass journal; a daily reflection time with youth leaders from respective groups and the completion of Youthpass online

The main outcomes of quality assurance process given through the MT NA the [European Union Programmes Agency](#).

### Quality assurance

[European Union Programmes Agency](#) (EUPA) constantly monitors closely all awarded projects through:

1. General Monitoring Meetings
2. Desk Monitoring
3. Regular one to one meetings with all ongoing projects (bilateral meetings)
4. On-site monitoring visits
5. Quarterly round table meetings with all awarded Higher Education Institutions having an ongoing KA1 mobility project.
6. Mobility tool training

The MT NA also created a [handbook](#) listing all the necessary guidelines and procedures that entities need to abide to. This is distributed to all institutions having an ongoing project.

In addition, the MT NA holds a number of checks both during the implementation of the project, therefore an on the spot during the action, while also a check after the project has been finalised, therefore an on the spot after the action. The MT NA also conducts system checks on recurrent beneficiaries such as Higher Education Institutions.

The MT NA closely monitors all 7 entities holding an Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) through monitoring visits, by using the ECHE monitoring guide provided by the European Commission.

The main criteria for the assessment of the quality of the programmes consist in the assessment of the quality of outputs and deliverables against what is declared at application stage. In the latter, applications are assessed vis-à-vis the adherence to Commission as well as local priorities. Following qualitative evaluation and financial evaluation, funding can be withheld (namely the final payment) if the programme is deemed unsatisfactory in terms of quality.

## 6.6 Social inclusion through education and training

### Educational support

Malta's education system aims to cater for students with different abilities, to have access to the learning that matches their technical skills and therefore ensuring that all students are engaged. A tangible inclusive education is achieved by improving the required support and assistance in the learning journey. This is done through the provision of the professional development of learning support educators, teachers and staff together with the provision of an environment fit for the needs of students with special abilities. Investment in the infrastructure of Resource Centres and the services offered form an integral part of the strategy. In addition, the physical environment in mainstream education is undergoing further improvement to ensure the wellbeing of students with special needs through the introduction of multi-sensory rooms and other environment upgrades.

Malta's education strategy is based on four main principles; equity, social justice, diversity and inclusivity. The [Framework for Education Strategy 2014-2020](#) places emphasis on students learning to live together. The [Respect for all Framework](#) also states that for these principles to be achieved the values of co-operation, responsibility, unity, tolerance, honesty, peace, happiness, love, freedom, humility, simplicity, courage, friendship and respect need to form the general values to behaviour in schools. The value of respect is considered as a prerequisite.

As highlighted in the [National Curriculum Framework for All](#), acquiring positive attitudes and a respect for human rights, is one of the learning outcomes for Education for Democracy as a cross curricular theme in Social Studies, Environmental Studies and aspects from Personal and Social Development as well as Home Economics. Through their studies in this area, learners acquire skills in enjoying rights and exercising responsibilities in various communities; dealing with conflict and controversy; making informed choices and decisions, and taking action, individually or collectively to promote a just and sustainable society whose policies are based on justice, equity and a respect for the community of life. As they develop their learning in this area, young people learn to employ citizenship skills, showing responsibility towards their environment and their world, and understanding the impact of enterprise and industry on the local and global community.

Malta also believes that for the education regime to be truly inclusive and convey a message of respect for the individual's dignity, it needs to be directed at all life phases and extend beyond the obligatory school years in order to address the needs of all

stakeholders, including those at the risk of social marginalisation. In this regard one of the strategies of [Malta's National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020](#) stipulates that lifelong learning needs to support inclusivity and empower marginalised communities.

The Ministry for Education and Employment has also launched the initiative '[My Journey – Achieving Through Different Paths Inclusive and Comprehensive Equitable Quality Learning Programmes](#)'. Through this initiative, secondary school students will be able to choose between academic, vocational, applied subjects or a combination of the three elements during the senior cycle of secondary education. This will involve moving from a 'one size fits all' system to a more inclusive and equitable programme which can specifically cater to each learner's individual talents.

The **National School Support Services** within the Ministry for Education and Employment is implementing the following social inclusion measures:

- Pilot project for students on the spectrum with severe challenging behaviour attended a programme which offers the below interventions.
- Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA)
- Verbal Behaviour
- Behaviour Modification
- Natural Environmental Teaching (NET)
- Discrete Trial Teaching (DTT)
- Visual Schedules
- Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)
- Pivotal Response Training (PRT)
- Setting up and equipping six new Multi-sensory rooms so that students on the autism spectrum and students with severe disabilities can use in their mainstream school - Three multi-sensory rooms were set as from scholastic year 2016-2017 having a sensory garden also in one school as from 2017 – 2018. Work is in progress for another 6 multi-sensory rooms for six different primary schools which will start operating as from January 2019.
- Compiled guidelines including a checklist for the school environment to become more autism friendly;
- Autism Toolkit was compiled to be used in schools and it will be used during scholastic 2018 -2019.
- Intense training was given to 50 educators on developing and utilising effective strategies and resources for learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Other training included strategies to support diverse needs, how to adapt curricular aspects for the various needs, how to support children with autism in relation to their behaviour, practical strategies on literacy and students with disability.
- Reinforced the practice of support services giving guidance and support as well as sessions inside the classroom in order to guide and support the educators together with the learners
- Research and more support to students with complex communication needs in order to establish an effective mode of communication together with strategies and devices/software to access curriculum
- Implementation of the Provision Map Tool to enhance the compilation of Individual Education Plans in schools.
- A new policy on Inclusive Education in Schools has been drafted. The aim is that this new Policy be launched during scholastic year 2018/2019 together with a National

Inclusive Education Framework. The policy embraces the concept, values and principles of Inclusive Education into the realm of responding positively to all learners' diversity. It will bring together all educators and practitioners, learners, families and community members who create colleges and schools that are conducive to learning, thereby giving all learners the education they need.

One of the key educational policies of Malta to include students with special needs within mainstream education and assign a Learning Support Assistant (LSA) on a one-to-one basis or on a shared basis depending on the student's needs. The role of the LSA is to assist students with special educational requirements in the classroom and provide additional support to enhance their learning experience.

Students with dyslexia are provided with one-to-one attention, support with the transition from primary to secondary school, and use of a specific needs-based library. Whole-class measures are being implemented in a way the dyslexic child receives the support required without making the learning difficulties evident.

The '[Alternative Learning Programme](#)' (ALP) is aimed at students who are reaching the end of compulsory schooling, but who clearly demonstrate that they will not attain the desired qualification. This programme has a strong vocational component and students are expected to continue with their education or training in a full-time higher education institution or in other lifelong learning institutions on a part-time basis. Following the implementation of the ALP, the programme's effectiveness in ensuring that students remain in the education and training system is currently being assessed. Besides the ALP programme, two other programmes are offered to students who at the end of compulsory education manage to acquire no or minimum qualifications, giving the opportunity of a 'second chance education'. '[Youth Inc.](#)' is an inclusive education programme based on applied learning offered by Malta's National Youth Agency to people between 16 and 21 years of age. It seeks to strengthen the complementary role of formal and non-formal learning, and to assist young person in gaining key competences and sectoral skills. The second programme offered is '[GEM16+](#)', launched by the Ministry for Education and Employment in October 2015. This programme is aimed at students who lack the necessary qualifications to continue their studies, and focuses on preparing its students in Maltese, English, mathematics and physics at SEC level.

The Personal, Social and Career Development (PSCD) programme was created for all students of compulsory schooling age in order to develop young people's personalities and mind-sets which is done both through student councils that function within schools as well as through PSCD lessons that focus on gender issues, racism, migration, religious diversity, disability and sexual orientation (in an age-appropriate way) both in primary as well as secondary schooling. During PSCD all students learn to work in a group and understand the functions of the various roles one can take.

The Achieve XL programme seeks to provide the opportunity to develop the confidence and skills of young people, supporting the disadvantaged, vulnerable and those struggling in education. This programme is an occasion to tackle early school leaving and youth unemployment.

A number of structures are also in place within Malta's education system in a bid to help asylum seekers, migrants and third country nationals.

- The [Ministry for Education and Employment](#) (MEDE) has formally set up a [Migrant Learners' Unit](#) to develop and implement an organisational structure for the provision of education to learners having a migrant background under the age of 16. The Migrant Learners' Unit provides language support for Maltese and English at both the primary and secondary cycles of education. It offers various types of services depending on the needs of schools and/or individual learners. An induction course is offered to all newly-arrived learners whatever their provenance (EU or TCN) who cannot communicate in Maltese and English, and who would therefore be unable to cope with the mainstream curriculum. The induction programme acts as a form of intervention. It takes place for a limited period of time (usually one year) and is

discontinued as soon as the learner is considered able to cope in the mainstream classroom. Induction enables better social integration whilst ensuring that students adjust to Malta's education system. The programme enacted focuses on cross-curricular language learning where subjects such as Physical Education, Mathematics, Music and Art are taught with the primary intention of enhancing language competency. This not only introduces a dimension where children can explore and develop their creativity but also strives to achieve a sense of well-being through sports and games. The teachers delivering the induction programme have all been provided with specialised training in managing classes that include newly arrived learners to provide them with the skills to be integrated in mainstream classes.

- "Making Friends" is an initiative that was launched by the Migrant Learners' Unit in April 2018. The objective of this practice is to encourage active inclusion and integration between learners having a migrant background and Maltese learners. This objective is achieved through the formation of friendships between the participants in the Club. Activities organised by the Club are specifically designed for participants aged between 5 – 10 years old. It is offered on an after-school basis and each session is of 2 ½ hours duration. In this after-school environment, an informal and creative learning programme focusing on becoming friends through an appreciation (and thus better understanding) of cultural differences is offered to participants. Dialogue and respect are key to achieving this objective. The "Making Friends" activities also focus on facilitating peer learning under the supervision of specially trained teachers and other members of staff.
- Non-English speaking students are offered a one-year induction course in basic functional English and Maltese. MCAST is also offering a course in functional Maltese for non-Maltese speaking students at post-secondary level, as well as additional learning support in English through its Learning Support Unit.
- The Directorate for Lifelong Learning within the Ministry also pursues a policy of inclusivity. It has developed courses for Maltese and English as a foreign language, accredited at MQF level 2.
- The University of Malta has launched SPARK – a voluntary network of lecturers within the University assisting migrants with obtaining a sound knowledge of the English language and to sit for exams such as [IELTS](#) and [TOEFL](#).
- The University of Malta is also offering two courses which assist in the development of learning on migration and migrant affairs, these are: M.A in Humanitarian Action offered by the Department of International Relations, and M.A. in Transcultural Counselling offered by the Faculty of Social Wellbeing.
- In addition, a proposal on Race and Ethnicity issues is currently being reviewed by the Senate.

## **Social cohesion and equal opportunities**

[The Respect for All Framework](#) is based on a philosophy of values-based education, supporting active citizenship. The work of the educator is to promote this philosophy through the different educational activities in a way that develops relationships and promotes positive human values.

The [Framework for the Education Strategy 2014 - 2024](#), based on the 4 principles of equity, social justice, diversity and inclusivity addresses the learning to know and the learning to do through the Curriculum whilst placing emphasis on students learning to live together and students learning to be.

The [Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex Students in Schools Policy](#) is developed within the context of the Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024 and the values promoted through the Respect for All Framework . Every student, in the present and in the future will be provided with the necessary knowledge, skills, competences and

attributes for citizenship and employability within an inclusive, safe, secure and motivating school environment that inspires and facilitates learning.

The implementation of the policy on [Addressing Bullying Behaviour in Schools](#) serves to continually support and guide schools and colleges to address bullying in schools.

In Malta, CPD courses and seminars relating to citizenship take place from time to time. For example, in September 2009 a number of such courses for teachers in charge of the subject 'Personal and social development' (PSD) were held in connection with citizenship and human rights education and students' active participation. The CPD courses for PSD peripatetic primary teachers organised in 2011/12 have included citizenship education with a focus on student councils.

## 6.7 Skills for innovation

### Innovation in formal education

Innovative skills are part of the National Curriculum Framework document (2012) and are also part of the cross-curricular themes which have been developed, under [Education for Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Creativity](#).

Innovative skills are also included in the [My Journey](#) document which encourages the development of innovation in the choices that learners opt for, during their secondary cycle of compulsory education.

Entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation are considered to permeates all aspects of the curriculum. The overall goals of entrepreneurship education are to give learners the attitudes, knowledge and capacity to act in an entrepreneurial way and to acquire the skills that will promote their lifelong employability in a rapidly changing commercial, economic and social environment. This includes becoming entrepreneurial citizens in other spheres beyond industry or employability. These goals require the development of the 'soft' generic personal and interpersonal skills fundamental to becoming entrepreneurial, as well as the fostering of the more discrete entrepreneurial knowledge and understanding required to pursue entrepreneurial endeavours and to possess an entrepreneurial mindset which is both creative and innovative.

Creativity is generally recognised as both an innate yet often under-developed quality in young people, as well as a practical skill that helps to unlock an entrepreneurial disposition. It is a skill that can be taught and that everyone can aspire to. It involves opening up young peoples' thinking processes in ways that help them to look at familiar things with a fresh eye, to identify and frame a problem and to generate solutions whilst using their imagination, knowledge and skills to explore new possibilities rather than established approaches.

The ability to be innovative and the confidence to look for innovative responses to opportunities or problems encountered is best nurtured in a safe, supportive environment where this type of approach is encouraged, recognised and rewarded. Such a pedagogy requires allowing learners time to reflect on a situation and tap their resources and imagination to develop plans and solutions. It also requires time for implementation of new processes and the application of new ideas. Teaching and learning for innovation might even include space to 'learn from failure'.

Providing pedagogical tools and support is intended to be part of the training provided to educators, with respect to all the cross-curricular themes within the [Learning Outcomes Framework](#).

### Fostering innovation through non-formal and informal learning and youth work

[Kreattiv](#) is a non-formal education programme managed by the [Arts Council Malta](#) aiming to promote innovation and experimentation amongst young people. The programme

engages educators (including youth workers) and creative practitioners in dialogue and collaboration while encouraging young people and educators to work creatively and innovatively through the application of different creative tools. The aim is to initiate creative projects through collaborations between educators, young people, creative practitioners and other relevant sectors such as science and technology. Chosen projects are then allocated a maximum of € 5,000 or € 8,000 if the applicant is collaborating with another entity.

[Changemakers](#), supported by the [Ministry for Economy, Investment and Small Business](#), [Mita Innovation Hub](#), [Malta Enterprise](#) and [Malta Innovation Hub](#) organise the annual [Malta Innovation Summit](#). This conference brings together top international and local business leaders and innovation stakeholders to discuss, learn and share innovation best practices through keynotes, presentations, expert panels, master-classes, workshops and networking opportunities all aimed at boosting their innovation capabilities. As part of this conference [Malta Innovation Summit](#) organises an [Innovation Hackaton](#). During this event young people have the opportunity to put their business designing skills to the test and give life to their ideas while getting a better understanding of what an innovation process really involves. Young participants are grouped in teams with a mentor who guides them through the process. Ideas are then pitched to a panel of experienced judges and winners are presented with tickets for the main day of Malta Innovation Summit. In 2019 the Ideation topics included – Circular Economy; Healthy Lifestyle; Food Sustainability; Smart Cities; E-Mobility and Climate Change.

## 6.8 Media literacy and safe use of new media

### National strategy

Currently there are 2 national strategies that promote media literacy and online safety. The first is [National Digital Malta Strategy 2014-2020](#). The strategy has a number of sections including one on Enhancing Digital Literacy and Social Equality. The strategy looks at media literacy as vital for inclusivity and social cohesion. It promotes media literacy and online safety among young people. The strategy proposes an education and awareness programme will be launched to boost ICT competences, media literacy and confident, critical and safe use of the Internet. The programme will be implemented at community level and young people are one of the target groups.

The second national strategy is [Malta Cyber Security Strategy 2016](#). The strategy has a number of goals among which is 'Cyber security Awareness and Education'. This goal refers to the Digital Malta Strategy and states that Digital Citizenship will become part of the National Education Curriculum, to equip children and young people with the abilities to interact and use the Internet safely and intelligently. It also states that parents and carers will be involved together with educators and youth workers. This action intends to stimulate the production of creative online content, empower young people and help create a safer environment. It is also intended to help combat cyber abuse and exploitation.

Media literacy is also a cross-curricular subject and it is mainly tackled in Personal, Social and Career Development (PSCD) and in Religious Studies covering media awareness and its use. It is also used to enrich Maltese and English language development and use.

The issue of "critical thinking" and "being media literate" are both tackled within the Learning Outcomes Framework for Personal Social Career Development and Social Studies.

Within the Secondary School Social Studies Outcomes Frameworks there are units that tackle the issue of responsible media use. These coalesce with and reinforce the Religious Studies and PSCD as well as Media Literacy work on the use of media in a responsible manner.

Students are guided by teachers particularly in PSCD lessons and during the 'be safe programmes' on what is acceptable for students to view and use on social media.

The Cyber Crime Unit, a specialized police internet vice squad within the Malta Police Force protects citizens from any abuse deriving from the social media.

A good example of media literacy is a programme within [St. Thomas More College's](#) PSCD Primary school teachers entitled: Media Awareness Talks with year 4 students. This is about the use of Media Tools as part of our daily lives. These sessions highlight the quick methods of communication via electronic Media but also the potential dangers of misuse or overuse. Such talks also include Parent Talks and some PD Sessions with teachers in other Colleges as requested by different schools.

Malta is addressing the challenges related to media literacy by introducing the subject for teacher-training (through the Institute for Education); and for digitalisation (through MOOC programmes), lifelong learning and media literacy through the operations of the Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning.

Additionally, the Personal, Social and Career Development (PSCD) Section in conjunction with the [Malta Communication Authority](#) (MCA) have a structured ongoing programme entitled [BeSmart Online!](#) This programme targets students of all ages and parents about the safe use of Social Media in general. What is needed to be added is that the MCA and the PSCD Education Officers regularly organize Seminars for teachers and Administrative Teaching Grades with regards to Internet Safety Use.

### *Digital Education*

Malta is also investing in digital skills in compulsory education curricula and through an investment in ICT infrastructure in classrooms.

The [Framework for Education Strategy for Malta \(2014-2024\)](#) emphasizes various goals, such as reducing the high incidence of early school leavers in Malta, decreasing the number of low achievers, raising the bar in literacy, numeracy, and science and technology competence, increasing student achievement and raising the levels of student retention and attainment in further, vocational, and tertiary education and training attainment. Therefore, the aim for the OTPC which has now entered its third year with 15,000 tablets distributed to all students from Year 4 to Year 6, is to partially contribute to the fruition of the set goals through employing learning initiatives in all Maltese and Gozitan primary schools. The OTPC project is intended to provide a supportive technical and pedagogical framework for the tablet to be effectively used in the teaching and learning environment.

There are increased levels of motivation, self-esteem and confidence where tablets are more used. It is very common to see students searching for educational information on the web. Supported by teachers, students are sharpening their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Computational thinking skills and coding sessions through particular apps are also being done. In these instances, collaboration and communication competences are continually addressed. Students have also the opportunity to browse through various educational and fiction e-books, through the recently launched Literacy Pro App and even from the National Public Library of Malta. BrainPop UK and News-o-Matic are particular apps where various students are benefiting from daily articles aimed for students.

Malta has also launched the introduction of learning outcomes programmes in primary and secondary schools in Malta as from September 2018. This should increase the skills and competences of students and future graduates; and to ensure that all children will be given a fair and equal opportunity to be closer to technology.

Digital Skills are cross curricular, and students are expected to use technology across all the subjects in schools. A new ICT programme, entitled ICT C3, has been introduced in Year 7, to replace the traditional ECDL. The new ICT C3 programme will ensure that

students will learn about safety on the net, robotics, coding and other new technologies which are the basis for further generations.

With regard to transforming teaching and learning of digital skills in a lifelong learning perspective, including the training of teachers, the [Directorate for Digital and Transversal Skills](#) within the [Ministry for Education and Employment \(MEDE\)](#) has carried out work on mainstreaming the EU's digital competence framework (proposed by the Joint Research Centre [JRC] for institutions and citizens). The National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 and report on the future of post-secondary education both engage with the need to enhance digital skills – focusing on digital literacies and 21st century skills.

Online course on Using Mobile Devices in Education for teachers in primary schools - Currently there are two online courses which are professional development courses for teachers: Using Web 2.0 tools in education and Using Mobile devices in Education. Both courses aim to promote new ways of learning and teaching; to involve teachers in the quest of using new tools; to promote online collaboration and sharing of information and to develop cross-curriculum activities engaging different teachers and subjects. The overall objective is that these acquired digital competences and skills diffuse to the teachers' classes. Through this diffusion student will also be benefiting when the tablet is used both in school and at home.

A digital system is available to assist teachers in the assessment process and recording of absenteeism. This will be strengthened further through the phased in introduction of a new management information system as from 2018/19.

Schools are being equipped with an infrastructure fit for today's and tomorrow's needs such as interactive whiteboards, all-in-one computers, Wi-Fi, 3D printers and scanners and the provision of tablets to students. In fact, by 2018/19 all students in Year 4, 5 and 6 in both State and Non-State schools will have a LearnPad Workbook 10.1" tablet as a learning tool that could help achieve a number of educational objectives. The vision is to empower all students to become global digital citizens.

Malta is currently giving a fresh impetus to digital education. Malta is in the process of developing an Open Education Resources Policy, coordinated in conjunction with the Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning, the Commonwealth of Learning in Vancouver and Creative Commons.

A green paper developed by the Directorate for Digital Literacies in 2017, and the Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 form the basis for the digital education strategy steered by MEDE in compulsory education.

### **Media literacy and online safety through formal education**

Media/Digital literacy is a cross-curricular subject and it is mainly tackled in Personal, Social and Career Development and in Religious Studies covering media awareness and its use.

The National Curriculum Framework for All sees Digital literacy as a cross-curricular theme where learners acquire skills in the confident and critical use of Information Society Technology for communication, work and leisure. They acquire basic skills in ICT organised around four major overlapping strands: data sources and manipulation; information communication and presentation; programmed control; and social, ethical and personal aspects. They discover and use digital data sources, and learn to organise, manipulate, interrogate and interpret data. They learn to communicate and present information using multimedia presentations; send emails and attachments; use VOIP and video-conferencing, and chat to collaborate with others. They use collaborative authoring tools and program devices to respond to input using a simplified iconic interface. They also explore social and ethical dimensions of digital technologies and learn to practice netiquette and online safety measures.

Digital literacy enhances the teaching and learning processes, the interaction among peers, and interactions between students and teachers. It is driven by the need for increased access to learning which can be facilitated through:

- a shift to constructivist education philosophies;
- a move from teacher to student-centred learning activities;
- accessing both local and global resources;
- making full use of the potential of technologies to enable children to show and create knowledge;
- an increased complexity of tasks and use of multi-modal information.

Amongst other general teaching tools, as part of the [BeSmartOnline!](#) project in Malta, Personal Social and Career Development (PSCD) Education Officers have developed a series of workbooks to help teach young people digital citizenship skills. The aim of the workbooks is that of developing 21<sup>st</sup> century digital citizenship skills from a very young age. The workbooks, which are interactive, fun and thought provoking, are an important tool being used by PSCD teachers so that students learn how to communicate and collaborate safely and responsibly online. Comparison between online and offline citizenship is emphasised within the workbooks to ensure that students are made aware that the virtual community to which they belong also has its rules and regulations.

With the aid of these workbooks, various areas related to digital citizenship education are being explored since children and youth, more often than not, embrace technology without examining the consequences of what they post, search or download. Therefore, emphasis on the importance of protecting one's private information, communicating respectfully, and being careful on what one posts online are all given their due importance. Attention is also given to the importance of creating online personas that project a positive and constructive image, how to prevent, protect and report cyber-bullying, and how students look up, select and streamline information from the internet and thus choose authentic sources of information.

The workbooks provide a proactive way of helping students engage with the digital world, being an excellent tool to help students acquire the necessary skills that include, among others, media literacy skills and communication and critical skills.

### **Promoting media literacy and online safety through non-formal and informal learning**

Young people are amongst the biggest users of online and mobile technologies. Whilst Malta's education system undertakes every effort to ensure the safety and well-being of ourselves and others in the real world, the same has to be done in the virtual world.

[BeSmartOnline!](#) is a programme which was set up in 1999 and evolved over the years, taking into account the latest technological developments and their impact on adolescents' lives. The Safer Internet Programme is present in 30 European countries and supports the development of awareness-raising material and the organisation of information sessions for children, parents and teachers. The Programme also supports the establishment of Hotlines and Helplines. The Hotlines and Helplines are intended to receive reports on illegal content found on the Internet as well as give advice on how to stay safe online. This has been the national flagship initiative that promotes the safer use of the Internet for the past 6 years. The overall objective of the [BeSmartOnline!](#) Project is to act as a Safer Internet Centre in Malta. The project is coordinated by the Malta Communications Authority and implemented through a consortium made up of the Foundation for Social Welfare Services, the Office of the Commissioner for Children and the Directorate for Learning and Assessment Programmes. The overarching mission of the consortium is to proactively safeguard the well-being of children as they navigate and explore the Internet in order to ensure a positive online experience. It also aims to help children fully recognise and reap the benefits of the many opportunities that the Internet

can present. This is done through the implementation of a number of awareness raising and educational initiatives targeting children and their supporting networks; particularly, parents, carers, and educators. In this regard, the learning objectives and outcomes of the Personal, Social and Career Development subject, which focus on digital citizenship, are instrumental in reaching all students within compulsory schooling.

This website is intended to help children, youths, parents and educators understand the basic principles and best practices for a safer online experience for children. It will also act as a tool to communicate news, announce events and share resources. Specific guidelines are available to all parties (websites, lesson plan, Power Point Presentations, educational games, tip sheets, helpline, brochures, a hotline – [ChildWebAlert](#)).

The [BeSmartOnline!](#) project is funded by the European Union through the Safer Internet Programme and national funds.

Apart from having a dedicated website to proactively safeguard the well-being of children as they navigate and explore the Internet in order to ensure a positive online experience – BeSmartOnline, various partnerships have been created with key supporters to promote and disseminate information on online safety:

- [Kellimni.com](#)
- Malta Police Force - [Cyber Crime Unit](#)
- Secretariat for Catholic Education
- [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#)
- [University of Malta](#)

### **Raising awareness about the risks posed by new media**

A number of awareness raising initiatives were organised targeting young people primarily, amongst which were:

- Campaigns on safer internet
- Public Discussions on Digital Awareness
- Children's Internet Use and Parents' Perceptions of their Children's Online Experience
- Conference for Professionals Working with Children
- Safer Internet Day
- Conferences for Educators
- Seminar for eLearning, ICT teachers and PSCD teachers
- Safer Internet Forums
- [Maltese Safer Internet Centre](#)
- [Guide to protecting your kids online](#)

## **6.9 Awareness-raising about non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work**

### **Information providers / counselling structures**

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) uses its information services at YIOSS, Youth Information Portal and Website to promote and raise awareness on non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work.

## Awareness raising initiatives

Target youth workers and youth leaders, [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) and [EUPA](#) collaborate to organise the National Tool Fair. The aim of the Tool Fair is to promote quality in youth work and support capacity building of youth workers and to raise awareness of best practices of non formal education and youth work practices.

It is an opportunity for participants to shape educational and experiential pathways, to run a workshop and to share tools for learning with colleagues, as well as to participate in workshops conducted by their peers. Beyond merely experiencing a wide variety of tools for learning, the Tool Fair aims to provide a space to reflect on tools, give and receive feedback, pave the way for their transferability and further development.

The theme for 2016 was [#Ready for the ROAD](#) and the toolfair provided a stimulating environment for innovative pedagogical approaches and practices.

## 6.10 Current debates and reforms

### Forthcoming Policy Developments

The Maltese Government is developing a reform called 'My Journey: Achieving through different paths', which is to be implemented in lower secondary school in the school year 2019/2020 in order to move from a 'one size fits all' system to more inclusive and equity-oriented programmes, catering to pupils' individual aptitudes. The aim here is to promote inclusion and respond to diversity by allowing students to choose from several education routes among general, vocational or applied subjects for their elective subjects (beyond the core curriculum). Under the current system, students are focused mainly on areas of general education, e.g. science, business etc.

A number of vocational subjects were introduced and learning outcomes developed to be offered at levels 1-3 on the Maltese Qualifications Framework (MQF). 'My Journey' introduces applied subjects, thus changing the secondary education system (beyond core curriculum) into three main streams: general, which reflects current subjects offered; vocational subjects which build on existing ones; and applied subjects (Secondary Education Applied Certificates). Once the new system is in place, students will be able to choose either an individual pathway or a mixed one. The reform is intended to promote inclusion and to reduce the number of early school leavers by making education relevant to more students and to an evolving labour market.

As from 2019 the following VET subjects to be taught in schools are Retail, Media Literacy, Hairdressing & Beauty, Textiles and Fashion, Agribusiness, Engineering Technology, Health and Social care, Hospitality and Information Technology.

#### *Options exercises for students*

All state colleges will be undertaking an exercise among Year 8 students and their parents/guardians to enable them to choose the option subjects they will choose to start following during the following scholastic year. This exercise will guide them to choose between academic, vocational and applied subjects through the 'My Journey' reform which will be introducing a number of these subjects for the first time.

#### *My Journey – Labs in Schools*

Scholastic year 2019-2020 will also see the completion of 77 labs spread among 13 secondary schools, aimed to offer facilities for the teaching of vocational and applied subjects. The supplies for these labs are being co-financed by a European Social Fund Project. ESF funds (INVEST) to be used to finance the labs' equipment.

As part of the implementation of My Journey, a new [career guidance platform](#) will be launched in December 2018. This interactive platform will help to facilitate career choices for secondary school students between the ages of 11 and 15. During their secondary level of education, students need to choose a number of subjects to focus their studies

on and which will pave the way for their professional choices later on in their lives. This project will indeed tackle these issues and provide a solution. Through focused research, all available information will be channeled to one platform and will include a series of videos portraying 'a day in the life of', giving students a better idea of what the job they are aspiring for is all about.

### **The Reading Recovery (RR) training programme**

Through the Reading Recovery (RR) training programme 14 complementary and literacy teachers are following the RR teacher training course and 8 Heads of Department (HODs) and literacy support teachers are following the Masters RR leader course consisting of 4 face-to-face sessions to the MARR course participants and 2 face-to-face sessions to the RR teachers' course at Malta's National Curriculum Centre.

The [National Literacy Agency](#) (NLA) has distributed all the educational resources required to the nine schools involved in the programme. The RR rooms in the same schools have nearly all been set up. When all the RR rooms are fully functional, the RR teachers and leaders will commence the RR intervention programme, circa 88 low ability Year 2 pupils will benefit from Reading Recovery.

### **Ongoing Debates**

#### *New learning outcome programmes and syllabi*

A new learning outcome programmes and syllabi was introduced for Kinder 1, Year 3 and Year 7. These programmes aim to make teaching more student-centred and all the activities set in class help to achieve the learning outcomes for that particular year programme. Children will be assessed continually since mid-year exams will be removed. New learning programmes and syllabi based on learning outcomes will continue to be introduced in other year groups during subsequent scholastic years on a year by year basis.

## **7. HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**

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Health and Well-Being is primarily under the responsibility of the Ministry for Health. Health policies are not specifically directed towards young people however, this cohort, feature significantly in all the policies developed by the Ministry.

Health education is also give particular attention in school. A number of initiatives were directed to tackle obesity through both nutrition and physical activity.

### **7.1 General context**

#### **Main trends in the health conditions of young people**

Over the past 15 years Malta has experienced a rise in life expectancy and Maltese people spend on average close to 90% of their lifespan in good health. Life expectancy at age 15 has increased from 63.86 years in 2000 to 67.77 years in 2014, being higher among females than males (WHO, 2016a).

According to the Health Behaviour of School-aged Children Study, the percentage of Maltese 15 year olds rating their health as fair or poor is higher than many other countries, with a high proportion of Maltese youngsters reporting multiple health complaints more than once per week (WHO, 2016b).

HCBS Study among 15 year olds	Malta			
Fair or poor health	30%	13%	21%	13%

Multiple health complaints 65% 44% 50% 27%

The self-perceived health of young people aged between 16 and 29 has been relatively stable since 2005. Those rating their health as very good or good ranged from 91.8% in 2010 to 96.7% in 2006, with less than 1% rating their health as bad or very bad (Eurostat, 2010).

Daily tobacco smoking prevalence has decreased from 23.4% in 2002 to 20.1% in 2014, with WHO estimated age-standardized prevalence of current tobacco smoking among those aged 15 years and over standing at 25.9% in 2003 (30.9% in males and 20.9% in females) (WHO, 2016a). Specifically in the 15-29 year age group, figures from 2008 show the prevalence of daily smokers to be 20.9%, with 16.8% of females who smoke, and 25.3% of males smoking (Eurostat, 2010). Looking just at 15 year olds, 12% of girls and 11% of boys report smoking at least once a week, which is in the same as the HBSC average. (WHO, 2016b).

Information in the [draft National Alcohol Policy](#) shows that binge drinking in adults has increased between 2008 and 2014 (results from European Health Interview Survey). However, data from the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD) shows a downward decline in most patterns of alcohol use among young people aged 15 and 16. Alcohol use (20+ times) in the last 12 months declined from 51% in 1999 to 19% in 2015, while alcohol use in the last 30 days declined from 30% to 11%. Heavy episodic drinking in the last month (drinking more than five drinks in a row) declined from 57% in 2007 to 47% in 2015. Drunkenness in the last 30 days also declined from 19% in 2007 to 15% in 2016.

Looking just at Maltese 15 year olds, 26% of girls and 32% of boys report drinking alcohol at least once a week, the highest percentages in the HBSC study (WHO, 2016b).

Obesity is the principal public health problem in Malta, with 25% of the adult population and 27% of children (aged 11–15 years) being obese: the highest rate in the EU. (WHO, 2017)

Age-standardised prevalence (WHO estimated %) of overweight in people aged over 18 years increased from 62.1% in 2010 to 64% in 2014, and of obesity increased from 24.7% in 2010 to 26.6% in 2014 (WHO, 2016a). Obesity levels in the youth age group (16 - 29 years) in 2008 were 13.8% of males and 11.5% of females (Eurostat, 2008). Looking particularly at 15 year olds, Malta's youngsters top the charts when it comes to overweight and obesity, with over a third of adolescents found to be overweight or obese by the HBSC study, which demonstrated that boys tend to have significantly higher prevalence. 26% of girls and 34% of boys are overweight or obese, a lot higher than the HBSC average of 13% in girls and 22% in boys (WHO, 2016b)

Tying in with this are the nutrition habits of the Maltese. The proportion of adolescents consuming soft drinks daily was highest in Malta (37%), and while decline in such consumption has been observed in almost all countries and regions and among boys and girls, no significant change in consumption over time was seen for girls in Malta. Significant decreases in daily fruit consumption were observed in boys and girls in five Malta between 2002 and 2014, however at the same time, adolescents in Malta reported the one of the largest increases in vegetable intake over time (WHO 2017).

According to the 2012 [National Sexual Health Survey](#) 78% of those aged 16 – 40 years old are sexually active. 41% of those aged 16 to 18 report having had sexual intercourse. 41% of those sexually active reported having known their partner for a few months, while 6% had only just met before having intercourse. As many as 30.1% did not use contraception during their first sexual intercourse encounter. With 20.7% having had 6 or more sexual partners in their lifetime, multiple partners are more common among males. Sexually transmitted infections were diagnosed by a medical professional in 6.6% of respondents).

According to the [Infectious disease prevention and control unit](#) within the HIV has a relatively higher prevalence in Malta compared to other European countries, and while there is an increasing trend in HIV incidence in Malta since 2009, among the 15- 24 age group this has been minimal.

Data from the Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children Study (HBSC) shows that across all age groups surveyed, the percentage of boys and girls in Malta who report either feeling 'low' or feeling 'nervous' is higher than the average amongst the 48 countries and regions surveyed in Europe and North America. The proportion increases with age such that more than a quarter of children aged 15 report feeling low and more than one third report feeling nervous. Girls consistently report these feelings more commonly than boys. A study conducted locally in 2007 showed that 21.3% of Form 3 students were at risk of developing depression. A similar subsequent study in 2015, found that 27.3% of Form 4 students were at risk of developing depression indicating an increasing trend in risk.

## Main concepts

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (WHO)

Mental Health Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community (WHO)

Wellness: the optimal state of health of individuals and groups. There are two focal concerns: the realization of the fullest potential of an individual physically, psychologically, socially, spiritually and economically, and the fulfillment of one's role expectations in the family, community, place of worship, workplace and other settings (WHO).

Obesity: the condition of severe overweight where a person has a body mass index (BMI) equal to or greater than 30. The obesity rate is the proportion of the total population (or of a subgroup based on gender, age, etc.) with a BMI of 30 or above (Eurostat)

Drugs: All drugs including medicines, volatile substances, alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs (World Health Organisation WHO).

Drug use: Drug taking through which harm may occur, whether through intoxication, breach of laws or school rules, or the possibility of future health problems, although such harm may not be immediately perceptible. Drug use will require interventions such as management, education, advice and information, and prevention work to reduce the potential for harm.

Drug misuse: Drug taking which harms health or functioning. It may take the form of physical or psychological dependence or be part of a wider spectrum of problematic or harmful behaviour. Drug misuse will require treatment.

Harm reduction techniques: A range of public health policies designed to reduce the harmful consequences associated with human behaviours, even if these behaviours are risky or illegal.

## 7.2 Administration and governance

### Governance

While there are no specific policies targeting only the dimension of youths, and their health and well-being, this age group of the population features very significantly in all the various policies and strategies developed for the improvement of the health and well-being of the population. The [Ministry for Health](#) has three main actors involved in policy-making. These are the Department for Health Policy who are responsible for overall policies; the Department of Health Regulation who are responsible for the formulation of

policies in the field of Public Health as well as its regulatory function to ensure standards; and the Department of Health Care Services who are responsible for the provision - organisation and delivery of the public system of health care services.

Other Ministries that are also responsible and are involved in a variety of aspects that affect the health and well-being of young people include the [Ministry for Education and Employment](#) and the [Ministry for the Family, Children's rights and Social Solidarity](#), who are responsible for social, family and child policy.

The [Foundation for Social Welfare Services](#) has responsibility in the fields of social services, who provide social welfare services, in particular in relation to alcohol and substance abuse and in relation to other social welfare problems prevalent in the country, especially those related to family welfare; [Aġenzija Sedqa](#), whose remit covers the provision of care, prevention and research services with regard to drugs and alcohol abuse, compulsive gambling and other dependencies, together with [Aġenzija Appoġġ](#) and [Aġenzija Support](#), forms part of this Foundation for Social Welfare Services. Aġenzija Appoġġ is the National Agency for children, families and the community, who safeguards and promotes the well-being of these persons through the development and provision of psycho-social welfare services. Also, [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) is responsible of coordinating the implementation the [National Youth Policy Towards 2020](#) and promote and safeguard the interests of young people. Within the National Youth Policy Towards 2020, one of the nine action plans is Health and Well-Being.

Other social partners that play an active role include a variety of foundations, groups, NGOs that are listed with the Office of the [Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations](#), and committees such as the Advisory Council on Health Lifestyles, Advisory Committee on Immunization Policy and others.

The Richmond Foundation is a leading local NGO in the provision of community services for persons with mental health difficulties and in the promotion of mental health and the prevention of mental illness amongst the public. It strives to combat stigma and increase awareness on the subject through the local media.

The [President's Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society](#) aims to produce relevant, appropriate and timely research by seeking innovative methodologies to engage with society for the promotion of peace and unity.

### **Cross-sectorial cooperation**

There are no existing formal mechanisms of cross-sectorial cooperation. However as already indicated the [Ministry for Health](#) and [Ministry for Education and Employment](#) and the [Ministry for the Family, Children's rights and Social Solidarity](#) work in close cooperation.

## **7.3 Sport, youth fitness and physical activity**

### **National strategy(ies)**

In 2019 Malta launched a new [National Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity in Malta](#). The document is entitled: Aiming Higher, is a cross-sectorial strategy dependent on the support, hard work and accountability of all stakeholders towards building the foundations of sport, increasing physical activity, whilst implementing new structures and support incentives. Aiming Higher comprises objectives and actions which integrate the experiences, ambitions and realities of all stakeholders. The strategy recognizes the value of sport and physical activity towards a healthier, inclusive, economically-productive, ecologically educated and balanced society. It is set up on 5 core values namely to be determined in attitude in an understanding that everyone is intrinsically motivated to achieve; to be integrated in the approach where everyone works together for the benefit of all; to be inclusive in practice and ensure that everyone has the same opportunities for participation; to be operationally accountable and everyone shoulders

responsibility for proposed projects and actions; and be innovative allowing everyone to employ advanced systems to achieve growth. The document identifies five recurrent strategic themes which emerged following widespread consultation with the sporting community and other stakeholders:

- Building a more active and healthy nation
- Stimulating a new sporting culture
- Enhancing the competence of all stakeholders
- Transforming Malta into a centre of sporting excellence
- Achieve competitive success

In implementing the above the strategy focuses on seven pillars: High Performance, Integrity, Gozo, Industry, Facilities, Participation and Quality of Life and Education. Aiming Higher is a comprehensive strategy geared towards achieving a paradigm shift in the way we approach sport and physical activity. The strategy is nationwide and focuses on the whole population it will be coordinated by [SportMalta](#) under the remit of the [Parliamentary Secretariat for Sport, Recreation and Voluntary Organisations](#)

### **Promoting and supporting sport and physical activity among young people**

The main programme promoting and supporting sport and physical activity among young people in Malta is developed, coordinated and managed by SportMalta.

[#OnTheMove](#) offers a dynamic programme divided into 3 modules running annually from October to May. One of these modules the Performance module is open to young people up to 16 years. Activities for these modules are mainly held on Saturday mornings and adults are also invited to support their children and join in the fun by taking part in the adult activity class held concurrently with the children's activity.

The Performance module strives towards improving standards once youngsters have undergone (ideally) both stages and are in a position to choose their sport discipline. #OnTheMove has been giving this opportunity to youngsters between the 11 to 16 age group, however, this is now being extended to children from 9 years of age who have undergone the foundation and participation programmes and now would like the option to choose a particular sport with the desired outcome being that of retaining and attracting more children at this age band (9 to 10 years old). Youngsters can choose a sport from an extensive list and learn the skills, tactics and rules of that sport. Sport Associations and Clubs partner with SportMalta in the provision of training for most of the sports. The Performance module different sport disciplines where youngsters learn the skills, tactics and rules of the respective sport. Disciplines include: Athletics, Badminton, Ballet, Baseball/Softball, Basketball, Bowling, Dance, Football, Gymnastics, Handball, Hip-Hop, Karting, Rugby, Sailing, Squash, Swimming, Table-Tennis, Tennis, Traditional Karate and Volleyball

Swimming sessions are also available. Lesson objectives are specifically related to the age and ability of the participants. For beginners, these include increasing confidence in water, learning how to float without floatation devices, and enjoy water safely. More advanced courses aimed at teaching and improving the stroke technique for each of the four strokes are also being planned.

The Adult Programme is designed to encourage those of 17 years and over to take up physical activity at least once weekly. Our programme is flexible enough to embrace all abilities, from the very beginner to the most veteran and trained athlete. This module offers a choice of fitness activities for adults in all the different venues catering for all levels of fitness and ability. Activities include Aerobics, Aqua Aerobics, Dance Fitness, Physical Fitness, Swimming, Zumba and for the first time a Programme of different sport and team games.

[#OnTheMove \(Summer Programme\)](#) is the continuation of the [#OnTheMove](#) programme and consists of one module running from July to September. In addition through [#OnTheMove academies](#) SportMalta offers a number of specialised Sports Academies that run in conjunction with various Sports Organisations and Associations including Triathlon; Basketball; Horseracing; Gymnastics; Volleyball; Handball and Synchronised Swimming.

Additionally, SportMalta also offers a programme of [adventure and multi-sport](#) to entice and encourage young people to participate in a programme that is both fun and challenging. In these programmes young people are challenged in a variety of adventure activities including, amongst others abseiling and canoeing. In a multi-sport programme youth will be given the opportunity to play a variety of games and learn the rules, techniques and tactics. At the end of a course with SportMalta young people can choose to join an organisation and take up further training or else pursue the activity with their friends at a recreation level.

## Physical education in schools

### Secondary Level

Physical education (PE) in schools is a compulsory subject that provides regular opportunities of physical activity for children in a school setting. Physical Education (PE) is a core subject within the curricula across the educational spectrum, promoting a healthy lifestyle in all students. Subject content focuses on the development of psychomotor skills and physical, social and psychological development through a variety of games, sports and exercises that teach fair play, values, equity, teamwork, leadership and social inclusion.

At secondary level, Health Education includes Physical Education and Sport (PE), aspects of Home Economics (HE) and Personal, Social and Career Development (PSCD). This learning area promotes enjoyment through engagement in physical activity that inculcates a healthy lifestyle as well as a positive disposition towards oneself, others and life. Commitment to social communities and environmental issues also forms part of the students' development at this level.

Provision of physical activity at post-secondary level is also being catered for though as yet this is not mandatory.

The minimum number of hours of participation in PE, as outlined in the [National Curriculum Framework](#) of 2012 is 5% and 10% of the total taught time for lessons of primary school and secondary school respectively.

Professional Learning Courses, dealing with different topics, are organised annually and normally target a specific cohort of teachers. Attendance is mandatory for PE teachers hailing from State Schools while those employed by Non-State Schools may apply on voluntary basis. Guest speakers may also include specialists from overseas.

The Physical Education Department works in close collaboration with schools to develop a School Development Programme (SDP) specifically targeted towards fostering a healthy lifestyle among students, including through the provision of extracurricular activities. The sharing of good practice is also highlighted during such meetings and to this effect a social media network has been established in order for schools to demonstrate what is being done and, in most cases, is emulated by other schools.

As per above mainly through the formation of schools teams that will go on to participate in national interschool festivals and competitions organised by the Physical Education Department in conjunction with . It is to be noted that emphasis is laid upon participation rather than the competitive element.

During scholastic year 2016-2017 a pilot project entitled " " was launched by in collaboration with the St James Capua Hospital and the (ITS). Students from three different colleges will be participating in this project which consists of 360 minutes of

more physical activity per week and healthy eating. Participating students will then be compared with students who did not participate in this programme, to evaluate the effectiveness of this project.

### **Tertiary Level**

In tertiary education the [Institute for Physical Education and Sport](#) (IPES) of the [University of Malta](#) was established in 2002 with the aim of providing Certificate, Diploma, Degree Courses and professional development courses in Physical Education and Sport and to carry out research in the same area. It also services the requirements of the [Faculty of Education](#) in Physical Education. PE has been taught at University since the establishment of the Faculty of Education in 1978.

The Institute also strives to establish National and International links related to PE and Sport and to attract foreign students under European programmes. Current affiliations include the European Health and Fitness Association (EHFA), the European Network of Sport Science, Education and Employment (ENSSEE), the UK Association for Physical Education (AfPE), and the Federation Internationale du Sport Universitaire (FISU) to entice and encourage young people to participate in a programme that is both fun and challenging. In these programmes Young people are challenged in a variety of adventure activities including, amongst others abseiling and canoeing. In a multi-sport programme youth will be given the opportunity to play a variety of games and learn the rules, techniques and tactics. At the end of a course with SportMalta young people can choose to join an organisation and take up further training or else pursue the activity with their friends at a recreation level.

### **Collaboration and partnerships**

[SportMalta](#) has teamed up with a local bank to introduce a financial scheme to revamp the [Youth Development Scheme](#). This scheme is intended to maximize the benefits from funds available for the development of young elite athletes who have not yet attained 18 years of age. The Youth Development Scheme shall focus on a maximum of 20 athletes that are chosen according to their merits connected to their performance in their sport.

A project entitled '[Move 360](#)' was launched by [SportMalta](#) in collaboration with the [Health Promotion Unit](#), St James Capua Hospital and the [Institute for Tourism Studies](#) (ITS). Students from three different colleges will be participating in this project which consists of 360 minutes of more physical activity per week and healthy eating. Participating students will then be compared with students who did not participate in this programme, to evaluate the effectiveness of this project.

Also, national sport organisations are invited to visit schools in order to promote their sport, even if it does not form part of the fixed syllabus. It is strongly believed that such a collaboration offers a win-win situation as the students would be exposed to a new discipline through training from a qualified instructor while national sport organisations stand to benefit by luring students towards their sport, this increasing the basis of their fundamental groups.

The government is increasing financial incentives to tackle the lack of professional athletes, assists financial local councils to organise specific sporting activities, offers grassroots and elite level financial support and provides financial incentives for structured projects. Moreover it provides financial assistance to sport organisations.

Also an alternative source of funding is through EU funds which some organisations managed to tap successfully and have provided high quality programmes to students.

## 7.4 Healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition

### National strategy(ies)

The [Healthy Lifestyle Promotion and Care of Non-Communicable Diseases Act](#) was enacted on the 15th January 2016 with the purpose of establishing and ensuring an inter-ministerial lifelong approach favouring physical education and healthy balanced diets for a healthy lifestyle and reducing the level of noncommunicable diseases throughout all age groups. The act stipulates that there shall be established an Advisory Council on Healthy Lifestyles, to provide advice on any matter related to healthy lifestyles particularly to:

- advise the Minister on matters relating to health, physical activity and nutrition;
- advise the Minister on policies, action plans and regulations intended to reduce the occurrence of noncommunicable diseases among the general public;
- upon the request of any other Minister advise such Minister on such matters as may be required in order to achieve the objectives of the Act;
- encourage an inter-ministerial approach to issues related to physical activity and a healthy lifestyle; and
- encourage a lifelong approach, from intrauterine life till old age, to physical activity and a healthy lifestyle.

The [Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Disease in Malta](#) was developed in 2010 with the overall goal of developing a multifactorial approach to NCD prevention through tackling common risk factors targeting both at a population level, and also high-risk groups. The strategy aims to:

- Reduce the burden of NCD by targeting the following major chronic diseases: cardiovascular disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, mental ill-health and cancer;
- Reduce the burden of oral diseases;
- Improve the individual risk profile by focusing on: four lifestyle-related factors: diet, physical activity, tobacco and alcohol; and four biological risk factors: obesity, hypertension, hyperlipidaemia and carbohydrate abnormalities

'[A Healthy Weight for Life: A National Strategy for Malta](#)' seeks to address the many challenges we are experiencing to maintain a healthy weight across the population. It aims to halt the rising overweight and obesity rates and eventually to decrease the number of people suffering from this condition, subsequently reducing morbidity and mortality from related conditions and healthcare and productivity costs and aiming towards an improved quality of life. This covers the time-frame 2012-2020.

In order to promote healthy eating, the following priority areas for action were identified:

- To improve the availability and uptake of a healthy diet by the Maltese population through healthy public policies across Government.
- To work with stakeholders on consumer education about healthy eating and moderation as underlying principles of healthy eating.
- To promote exclusive breast feeding for the first six months of life and to continue breastfeeding in the first years of life.
- To support pregnant women and new mothers to adopt healthy eating habits for themselves and their families through education and community initiatives.
- To support schools and families so that meals and snacks, including drinks, prepared for school aged children are nutritious and appetising, without being energy-dense and/or containing excess amounts of fats, trans-fatty acids, salt and sugar.

- To regulate audiovisual advertising, such as advertising of unhealthy foods especially that directed at children.
- To support schools to implement all the recommendations of the Healthy Eating Lifestyle Plan (HELP) document and to strengthen the Personal and Social Development (PSD) and Home Economics curricula as related to nutrition and healthy choices.
- To set up a National Task Force led by the Ministry responsible for Health to develop action plans on the introduction of agreed mechanisms to reduce salt and sugar, limit saturated fat and eliminate transfat content in local food products.
- To set up a Healthy Food Scheme using colour coding so that healthy food is easily identifiable
- In order to promote physical activity, the following priority areas for action were identified:
  - To increase physical activity through healthy public policies, so that the living environment is one that promotes healthy choices.
  - To implement the recommendation of three hours of physical activity weekly for all schoolchildren.
  - To encourage children and parents to use a screen time log, reduce the number of hours of watching television, use of computer/video games to a maximum of two hours per day for children, and to encourage sit down meals as family time as opposed to TV dinners, whenever possible.
  - To support Local Councils to increase the opportunities available for physical activity, including the use of legislation and enforcement to improve safety on the roads, availability of open spaces and increase walkability in built-up areas.
- Commitment has been made to the following initiatives:
  - To increase and improve weight management and physical activity classes for adults.
  - To set up community initiatives such as cookery clubs and community gardens, focusing especially on lower socio-economic groups and older persons.
  - To increase and improve parentcraft and breastfeeding classes.
  - To provide training and guidelines to health professionals in primary care in order to improve the delivery of holistic advice and management on all issues related to nutrition, physical activity and weight management and ensure that it contains the same key messages.
  - To work with stakeholders to develop a national curriculum and certification for facilitators of weight management programmes.
  - To set up multi-disciplinary clinics for the management of excess weight in adults and children. The National 'Food and Nutrition Policy and Action Plan for Malta' covers the period 2015- 2020, and addresses the main public health challenge facing the Maltese Nation in the area of nutrition and food security that are associated with diet-related noncommunicable diseases and conditions including obesity whilst promoting better health and wellbeing for the Maltese population. Its vision is to improve dietary habits to maximise health and well-being, the goals of which are:
    - To assist the Maltese population towards adopting a healthy dietary pattern across the lifecourse;
    - To encourage all government entities to place health in the consideration of all policies related to the production, marketing, sale, provision and choice of food;
    - To be responsive to the links with the social determinants of health and health inequalities and focus on the most vulnerable groups;

- To implement dietary intake and nutritional status surveillance and monitoring of the population with a special focus on children;
- To accelerate action in the field of obesity prevention and control by means of the implementation of the actions proposed in the Healthy Weight for Life Strategy, with a focus on children, comprehensive preventive and treatment approaches and intersectoral action under the leadership of the Ministry for Energy and Health.

Objectives:

- To promote healthy nutrition as the basis for healthy behaviours for the population of Malta;
- To increase the vegetable and fruit intake in the population;
- To reduce salt intake;
- To reduce the consumption of foods high in saturated fats, trans-fats and sugars;
- To address inequalities in food accessibility;
- To halt and reverse the obesity trend in children, adults and older persons

Actions that specifically address young persons include:

- To promote plain water consumption in schools
- To reduce the availability and intake of foods high in fat, sugar, and salt in schools

The [National Sexual Health Strategy](#) was developed in 2011 following the launch of the National Sexual Health Policy. The principles guiding this strategy are underpinned by human rights and social justice principles. The core principles stemming from this approach are:

- Respect and care towards human life from its conception
- Individual rights and responsibilities in the context of the broader society
- Adequate, accessible and accurate information and education which is equally accessible to all members of the population, enabling informed choices
- Freedom from exploitation and abuse
- Freedom to express one's sexuality
- Psychological and physical expression of one's sexuality in the context of a sound family unit is valued as an essential cornerstone of a society while respecting diverse family structures and lifestyle choices

The objectives of this strategy include:

- Determining and providing educational, social and support services that match the prevalent needs by an appropriately resourced, competent and skilled workforce working within a supportive environment
- Determining and providing adequate, accessible and equitable health services that match the prevalent needs by an appropriately resourced, competent and skilled workforce working within a supportive environment
- Identification of the role and contribution of the media as a tool to inform and educate all the members of the population on all aspects of sexual health, including the provision of an appropriate channel that can be used to help individuals to develop the skills needed to make informed choices
- Establishing pathways and implementing initiatives to conduct research, monitoring and surveillance to secure accurate data specifically pertaining to the Maltese islands. This will also involve the collation of information to be able to map the social, cultural and religious dimensions of sexuality, within our specific national context.

- Enhancing the capacity to project and plan to address the challenges of the future and developing further co-operation with other countries and partnerships with stakeholders

The [National Breast Feeding Policy and Action Plan 2015-2020](#) seeks to increase both the initiation of breastfeeding rates at hospital discharge and its exclusive continuation for the first six months. With many mothers falling into the youth age group of 15-30 years, this is most relevant for youths. This policy updates the previous policy in line with current scientific evidence on the short and long term benefits of breast feeding to the mother and child, to achieve higher exclusive breastfeeding rates for the first six months and thereafter for breastfeeding to continue with appropriate complementary foods.

This policy outlines actions for promoting the initiation and maintenance of exclusive breastfeeding. The evidence-based policy initiative include all population groups, different settings such as community, workplace, hospital or health centre, and promotes supportive environments and training for health professionals and other groups. The Policy recommends that all health, social and allied workers and institutions caring for mothers, infants and young children should aim at promoting breastfeeding. All hospitals, maternity units and primary health care facilities should adopt and implement effective strategies for the promotion, protection and support of breastfeeding as outlined in the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative, which is a joint WHO/UNICEF initiative. All health, social and allied workers caring for mothers, infants and young children should get the education, training and skills development required to implement this policy. Strategies should be developed for the promotion and support of breastfeeding in the community, by involving fathers and family, the wider community and employers. The policy also outlines the indicators to be used for monitoring and areas of research required.

The [National Cancer Plan](#) aims to reduce incidence, prolong survival and ensure the best quality of life possible for cancer patients by ensuring the prevention of preventable cancers and the provision of high quality and equitable cancer services to all cancer patients in Malta.

Children and adolescents are a priority in the [Mental Health Strategy: Building Resilience: Transforming Services](#) that was published in 2019.

A series of initiatives to promote mental health in schools are planned. There is also a focus on increasing the time spent on physical activity since this can reduce mental illness.

Young people spend much time in the digital setting. Recognition of the risks associated with mental illness is growing. On the other hand there are opportunities that can be exploited to provide positive mental health messaging and online support to young persons using digital technologies.

A national centre for child and adolescent mental health will be developed as part of the implementation of this strategy.

Other Ministry of Health plans and strategies only target Youth in a limited way:

The purpose of the [National Cancer Plan](#) is to reduce incidence, prolong survival and ensure the best quality of life possible for cancer patients by ensuring the prevention of preventable cancers and the provision of high quality and equitable cancer services to all cancer patients in Malta.

[A Whole School Approach to A Healthy Lifestyle: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Policy](#) aims to promote healthy eating and physical activity in the whole school community. The Policy takes a two-pronged approach – the promotion of healthy eating, and the promotion of physical activity – and gives high priority to these two themes through holistic education; it strengthens the necessary framework and supports an enabling school environment to help the whole school community to adopt healthier patterns of living by encouraging physical activity; it promotes healthy foods and limits

the availability of products high in salt, sugar and fats; it empowers children to achieve the required physical and health literacy, to adopt a healthy lifestyle from an early age and to make informed choices about their lifestyles throughout the life course; it makes provision for a flexible curriculum which highlights health, nutrition, food safety and hygiene and food preparation, and promotes physical activity; and it ensure that clear and consistent messages about food, drink and physical activity are delivered across the school day.

Other than the Whole School Approach to a healthy lifestyle policy, there are no top-level policies, strategies or programmes specifically targeting young people. All others encourage healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition on a population basis. However, a number of projects and initiatives do focus on children and young people.

Prevention throughout the life course remains the best answer to health and wellbeing. [The Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate](#) continues its work in supporting and empowering individuals to adopt a healthy lifestyle, encouraging people to make healthier choices to help reduce their risk of illness. This is done through a variety of services and programmes in the community, in health centres, schools, local councils, hospitals and at work places. These include various outreaches, health initiatives in the work place and presentations particularly focusing on youth.

Relevant government departments have implemented various European Union initiatives. The [Toybox project](#) was developed for the prevention of obesity in early childhood, and campaigns aimed towards the prevention of obesity in early childhood, and later cancer, the use of tobacco and drinking and driving. The Toybox intervention is a multi-component, kindergarten-based, family-involved intervention, focusing on the promotion of water consumption, healthy snacking, physical activity and the reduction/ breaking up of sedentary time in preschool children and their families.

The [School fruit scheme](#) is now being implemented in all primary schools, providing all school children with a seasonal fruit on a weekly basis, currently twice a week. While this exposes children to fruit, it also attempts to bring across the right messages of the benefits involved.

[Health factor](#) is a teacher's tool kit developed as part of a healthy lifestyle project with kindergarten classes. This was designed to assist Kindergarten teachers with teaching their pupils the importance of healthy eating and physical activity, encouraging them to learn to make healthy life choices and better their chances of becoming active healthy adults.

Over a decade ago the Food and beverage standards for school tuckshops were introduced. Adapted from the report of the Task Force for Appropriate School Nutrition Environments, and revised by the [Home Economics Seminar Centre](#) staff, these stipulate lists of permissible foods and drinks, and prohibited foods and drinks, as well as nutrient based guidelines for food and drink providers. While the implementation of the standards is mandatory only in state-run schools, this can, and should be scaled up for full implementation also by church and private schools.

In 2018, the [Procurement of Food for Schools Regulations](#) were passed as subsidiary legislation, regulating for food sold or provided by schools. The Criteria for Food Procurement was drawn up by the Advisory Council for the Procurement of food for Schools Regulations during school hours in accordance with [Chapter 550 of the Healthy Lifestyle Promotion and Care of Non-Communicable Diseases Act](#). The criteria are updated from time to time and current update took place in October 2018.

A successful initiative following on from introduction of the Criteria for Food Procurement was a collaborative effort between the [Superintendence of Public Health](#), the [Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate](#) and [Malta Dairy Products Ltd](#), the leading dairy producer in Malta. Discussions led to the reformulation of yogurt products resulting in Benna's innovative Yummy Kids Yogurt range, as the only yogurt range on the local market that is made of fruit and vegetables. These yogurts are intended exclusively for a

younger cohort. The sugar content in these yogurts is very low (less than 10g per 100g), making them the only yogurts available in the market which children can take to school.

Two sets of Dietary Guidelines have been developed: [The Dietary Guidelines for Maltese Infants and Young Children](#), and [The Dietary Guidelines for Maltese Children](#). The former is a guide for the parents of children aged 6 months to 3 years, suggesting weaning guidelines that aim to offer the best information on how to gradually introduce babies to a wide range of new foods, tastes and textures, so that, by the age of one year, babies can enjoy a balanced and healthy diet. The Principles of the 'Healthy Plate' allow for the practicing of good eating habits up to the age of 3 years. The Dietary Guidelines for children aims to support parents, grandparents and guardians to provide a healthy lifestyle for children aged 3 to 12 years.

The conditions and settings in which people live, as well as their life styles, influence their health and quality of life which in turn affects productivity as health equity is central to any developmental effort. Poverty, unequal distribution of wealth, lack of education, rapid urbanization, aging, and social, economic, and environmental determinants are contributing factors. The Social Determinants of Health Unit was set up with the aim of supporting, guiding and strengthening the intersectoral capacity across government and society in order to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate initiatives to promote and address health equity through addressing the Social Determinants of health. The EU funded project '[Establishing a national platform to address Social Determinants of Health](#)' has so far included a large research study among the general population, collecting data on various social determinants of health in Malta among those over the age of 16. Results of this study will feed in to a nationwide campaign to increase awareness of the social determinants of health which will target different age groups and focus on the lower socio-economic classes. One of the components of the campaign includes the development of healthy recipes that can be prepared on a budget, using seasonal produce. Another aspect of this EU project relates to a smaller research module done in collaboration with the Ministry for Education, from which an Assessment tool for use by teachers in the classroom was developed. This tool can be used to identify those children who may be at risk of ill health due to their social background and status. This will enable such children to be observed, and referred to a guidance counsellor or other services as may be necessary

## **Encouraging healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition for young people**

Malta took part in the [Joint Action on Nutrition and Physical Activity](#) (JANPA) project. The overall aim of the project is to contribute halting the rise of overweight and obesity in children and adolescents by 2020. In accordance with the policy actions that addresses overweight and obesity at European level and as a contribution to the [EU Action plan on childhood obesity 2014-2020](#). JANPA focused on aspects such as: the economic burden of obesity in national health systems, the multilevel and multi-sectorial and life-course approach for preventing health problems that originate from childhood obesity, sedentary lifestyle and unhealthy nutrition and related health problems, taking into account social inequality.

Malta is also part of another Joint action initiative called [Chrodis Plus](#), a three-year initiative (2017-2020) led by the Institute of Health Carlos III and is being funded by the European Commission and the participating parties. The initiatives on chronic diseases should build on four cornerstones:

- health promotion and primary prevention as a way to reduce the burden of chronic diseases
- patient empowerment
- tackling functional decline and quality of life as the main consequences of chronic diseases

- making health systems sustainable and responsive to the aging of our populations associated with the epidemiological transition

Malta participated in two work packages which involved the implementation of the Toybox best practice (as mentioned above) and a policy dialogue to increase free water availability in public areas such as children's playgrounds. All church and independent kindergarten schools in Malta and Gozo were invited to participate in the implementation of the ToyBox intervention, which consisted of activities to improve energy-related behaviours and oral care among children aged 3-4 years of age. Parents were also involved in this project through the distribution of informative material and their participation in a questionnaire.

Work has also begun on a project 'Establishing a National Platform to address Social Determinants of Health' which embarked on structured awareness building among all stakeholders in promoting healthier lifestyles in various settings such as schools, community, homes, work. The project offers specific capacity building sessions in intersectoral and cross sectoral collaboration. Tackling social determinants will reduce health inequalities through a Health in all policies whole-of-government and a whole-of-society approach, which is dependent on awareness among all sectors – policy makers, government, civil society and general public.

Actions of this project include:

- extensive review of health inequalities status in Malta, leading to development of a national action plan to promote healthier lifestyles and health and safety at work using different mediums.
- Establishment of partnership and network - working with a wider range of partners increases commitment towards tackling health inequalities
- Up-skilling and updating knowledge of professionals working within Health and care sectors through training.

## **Health education and healthy lifestyles education in schools**

The area of Health Education includes Physical Education and Sport and Personal, Social and Career Development (PSCD) as well as aspects of Home Economics. The learning experiences that take place during health education activities aim at equipping learners with the necessary knowledge, competencies, skill, attitudes, and values which they need to maintain, promote and enhance physical, emotional, psychological and social well-being throughout their school life and as lifelong learners. Educators are encouraged to collaborate with parents and the wider community to ensure meaningful and long-lasting experiences in order to inculcate a deep understanding of 'self', 'other' and the impact of choices and actions upon individuals, communities and the environment. Health Education lays the vital foundation for dispositions necessary for lifelong learning.

One of the [Learning Outcomes Framework](#) of the [National Curriculum Framework](#) is Health and Physical Education which encourages learners to deal with the following topics:

- actively and enthusiastically participate in activities to develop important physical skills in an enjoyable way.
- learn the skills and rules of collaborative play, sportsmanship, leadership and competitiveness.
- participate in teamwork and develop team spirit.
- begin to appreciate the importance of a healthy body and physical well-being.
- become aware of and appreciate the changes that take place physically as they grow.
- experience activities that encourage social interaction, promote self-awareness, reflective behaviour, decision-making processes and consequential thinking to develop the necessary skills of emotional and social intelligence.

- begin to become aware of the importance of a healthy mind and body.
- understand the importance of nutrition and eating in a healthy way.
- discover their strengths and weaknesses.
- learn to understand and manage both positive and negative feelings.
- develop the important dispositions of active thinkers and learners especially during key transitions.

The legal basis for the Maltese [National Minimum Curriculum](#) can be found in the [Education Act](#). Education on Human Sexuality, Strengthening of Gender Equality and Wise Choices in the Field of Health are three of the Educational Objectives listed in the [National Curriculum Framework for All](#) which indicated the knowledge students and young persons needed to acquire and the skills and attitudes they needed to develop. The National Curriculum Framework for All continues to emphasise the need that students and young persons are equipped with the necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills which they will need to maintain, promote and enhance physical, emotional, psychological and social well being throughout their school life and as lifelong learners. The delivery of Sexuality and Relationship Education (SRE) lessons is also guided by the [Guidelines on Sexuality and Relationships Education in Maltese Schools](#), which highlights the skills, competencies and knowledge students should be exposed to for an effective SRE programme.

The delivery of sexuality and relationships education in Maltese Colleges and Schools is guided by the following principles:

- The acknowledgement that children and young persons are sexual beings and develop at different rates.
- The provision of a safe, caring, inclusive and non-judgemental environment that is conducive in promoting a positive attitude towards sexuality.
- The provision of a comprehensive and inclusive curriculum which takes into account the gender, age, orientation, cultural, religious, social and geographic backgrounds of children and young persons.
- The promotion of the importance of healthy relationships in the context of respect, intimacy, readiness, love and the law.
- The promotion of abstinence and postponement of sexual activity and sexual intercourse for children and young persons.
- The provision of age appropriate and scientifically correct information about harm reduction strategies to minimize the risks associated with promiscuous behaviour and drug use.

It is important to point out that SRE lessons in PSCD start in the primary sector with year 4 students (9 year old) and continue till the end of compulsory schooling (16 years old). Specific workbooks have been developed throughout the years to encourage parents or caregivers to have a greater role in the Education of their children in issues related to health and growing up.

In Malta, PSCD teachers are specifically trained at initial professional tertiary education training and qualify as PSCD teachers with a bachelor's degree (B.Ed Hons) or post-graduate certificate in education (PGCE). All PSCD teachers teaching in State Schools must have received this mandatory training. They are also obliged to attend training which is regularly organized by the Education Officers. This a list of the training carried out during the years in relation to SRE.

- 2007- 2008 - The Health Promotion Department coordinated and delivered a training course entitled 'Issues in Health and Sexuality'. Guest speakers covered the topics related to Sexual Health, STI's and the GU Report of 2006 and Contraception including Family Planning

- 2010 - A seminar 'Should I say that? Sexual Health Related Issues?' was organized for all PSD teachers and other stakeholders in conjunction with the PSD association.
- 2011 - The University of Malta delivered a seminar to all primary PSD teachers as part of their continuous professional development sessions on 'Issues related to Sexuality Education in Primary Schools'
- 2014 - A four day seminar on various issues related to SRE organized in conjunction with the Health Promotion Unit as part of the Strategy for Sexual Health
- 2016 - A three day inset course entitled 'Reflecting on Sexuality and Relationships Education Issues' for secondary PSCD, Religion and Science teachers.
- 2017 - Three day inset course entitled 'Reflecting on Sexuality and Relationships Education Issues' for secondary PSCD, and Religion teachers.

The main pedagogical tool used by teachers are the reflective workbooks for the different years. These compliment the resources and material used by teachers themselves. They also help to assess whether learning outcomes have been achieved.

The teachers are supported by continuous visits in class and lending of resources which they can use with their students. Resources include 'Contraceptive Kit', 'Testicular Cancer Kits' and 'Breast Cancer Kits'. The teachers can also make use of the PSCD website which is continuously updated and uploaded with resources which teachers might find helpful in class. Additionally, teachers also make use of the FRONTER VLE. On FRONTER, the PSCD room is used as electronic information repository from where teachers can have updated, important resources for them to download such as curricula and syllabii.

### **Peer-to-peer education approaches**

There are currently no top-level guidelines, programmes projects or initiatives facilitating or relying on peer-to-peer education.

### **Collaboration and partnerships**

There is no legal framework for collaboration with other entities however they had closely collaborated with the Ministry for Health, Elderly and Community Care to develop a Health Strategy 2011. As a result, various initiatives were taken up such as the training of educational personnel on issues related to SRE.

The research department also closely collaborates with different entities to distribute and collect health related questionnaires in schools like the [ESPAD](#) and [HBSC](#).

### **Raising awareness on healthy lifestyles and on factors affecting the health and well-being of young people**

The [Directorate for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention](#) is the main public authority responsible for disseminating information about health which is generally targeted at population level, however includes aspects that are more commonly youth health related areas, such as sexual health.

No specific contact point exists which specifically targets young people and where young people can access to receive information.

No top-level framework exists for youth information and counselling structures other than through the support of [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#).

Currently there are no major, largescale, youth-targeted information campaigns on healthy lifestyles and factors affecting the health and well-being of young people. These only exist at population level, targeting all age-groups, including young people.

Initiatives targeting the population at large are on-going and these include:

- Campaign to promote a Mediterranean diet
- Campaign on the benefits of drinking water

- Weight Management classes including aerobics, life skills and nutritional advice
- Smoking cessation classes
- Community outreaches throughout the year that target different areas of health such as anti-smoking and on sexual health
- Talks on depression given to health care workers, in conjunction with Mental health services
- Outreaching at University fresher's week on sexual health

## 7.5 Mental health

### National strategy(ies)

A [National Strategy for Mental Health](#) targeting for the whole population, with a specific focus placed on promotion and preventive efforts in children and adolescents, was published in 2019 and covers the period between 2020 and 2030. This strategy will guide the implementation of investment and reforms which will truly place mental health and treatment of mental illness at the heart of the health policy agenda in the years to come.

The strategy upholds the values of dignity, autonomy and rights of all people with mental disorders. It recognises that everyone has an equal opportunity to attain mental well-being throughout their lifespan and all individuals are entitled to appropriate health care, including mental health care. It embraces a modal shift in the locus of care away from institutions towards community-based mental health care.

It is based on a vision that a society that promotes mental health and well-being for everyone, prevents mental disorders among individuals at high-risk and provides quality treatment, care and support to individuals with mental health problems. This vision will be implemented through a series of actions grouped under four clusters:

- Promoting mental health and wellbeing by addressing the wider determinants of health
- Transforming the framework within which mental health services are delivered
- Supporting all persons with mental disorders and their families
- Building capacity and fostering innovation to improve the performance of our mental health services

The strategy falls under the direct responsibility of the [Ministry for Health](#).

### Improving the mental health of young people

The [Child and Young People's Services](#) (CYPS) at St. Luke's Hospital offers assessments and management for mental disorders in young people. This is done in a collaborative multidisciplinary way with young people and their carers, rather than guide them and tell them what is best to do.

[With regards to assessments, there are two functioning multimodal pathways: one for Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder \(ADHD\); and one for autism. These follow NICE guidelines.](#)

Interventions include individual therapy for young people with depression, anxiety, bipolar, and early onset psychosis and group dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT) such as emotional dysregulation, distress tolerance, interpersonal skills for young people suffering from emerging personality disorders and low moods and self-harm behaviour.

CYPS also offers psychoeducation to parents with children with ADHD and Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), and to parents with children who have autism.

The Innovations Team 13-25 years, is for young people with multiple complex mental disorders. This team offers multidisciplinary intense intervention, including home visits and weekly reviews and therapy.

The Young People's Unit at [Mount Carmel Hospital](#) within Mental Health services uses a pre-admission system to screen patients and only admits young people between the ages of 12 and 18 with mental issues such as bipolar disorder, depression, and autism with aggression issues.

The [Children Development Assessment Unit](#) (CDAU) at St. Luke's Hospital assesses and treats young people up to 16 years referred by consultants/doctors. Young people seen at CDAU are referred for various limitations and difficulties including Autism, Global Developmental Difficulties, Learning Difficulties, ADHD, Cerebral Palsy, Head Injuries, Down syndrome and other syndromes. Children may be treated individually or in groups. Group therapy includes the Sensory Motor, Handwriting, Prewriting, Perceptual Motor and the Alert Group. The CDAU aims to provide assessment, therapy and support to patients with cognitive impairment and their families from a very early age. Children can be referred to the unit as early as, immediately after birth.

The assessment and treatment services at the CDAU, are provided by a multidisciplinary team of professionals consisting of pediatricians, nurses, psychologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and speech and language pathologists.

[Children and Adolescents Psychiatric Emergency Service \(CAPES\)](#) offer mental health emergency service at Mater Dei Hospital.

[Kellimni.com](#) is a joint effort between SOS Malta, the Salesians of Don Bosco, [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) and Aġenzija Appoġġ. This initiative is an online support service run by trained staff and volunteers reachable through e-mail, chat and smart messaging for support.

Through Kellimni.com, young people can, in an anonymous way, express their concerns and talk about the issues directly affecting them. Kellimni.com is aimed at young people who are suffering from any form of social exclusion, abuse, neglect, and/or psychological difficulties and are in need of immediate emotional, moral and social support.

In October 2020 to celebrate 'World Mental Health Day', [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) launched the campaign '[Trust yourself to talk. Anxiety is this you?](#)' The aim of this initiative is to encourage young people to speak up, reach out and obtain reliable information whilst making use of services to improve their mental health. This campaign lasted till the beginning of 2021 and it is envisaged to start again in April till May 2021. The [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) will also be launching the service of a youth worker online to engage with young people who might have issues with anxiety on a one-to-one basis.

[Youth in Focus](#) provides social work intervention to adolescents and young persons, aged between 13 and 18, with the scope of assisting them throughout their adolescence, by addressing their needs and empowering them to reach their full potential. There is a wide range of presenting difficulties and issues that the team encounters and deals with. These may include, anger management, mental health difficulties, turbulent relationships, alcohol/drug abuse & other addictions, promiscuity, time management, prostitution, criminal behavior, employment, petty crime, past traumas, poverty & homelessness, etc.

In 2017 the service offered support to a total of 211 young people and received 68 new cases.

[Embark for Life](#) (E4L) targets young people aged 15-24 years and supports them in finding employment. This service was already in existence as it was a service funded by the EU under the European Social Fund and, following its success, local funds were provided and the service started operating in July 2013. E4L contributes towards the community strategic guidelines by matching project participants to avail of the already existing schemes and educational/vocational training in the country, whilst supporting them in finding suitable employment. Disadvantaged young people are often likely to fall

into the social benefit trap. Thus, by supporting them to lead a sustainable healthy lifestyle and have job security, their dependence on social assistance and the revolving syndrome of attaining support from various public services is minimized.

In 2017, the service worked with a total of 188 young people and received a total of 52 new cases. During the said year 42 young people were successfully engaged in employment and continued to receive the support of the workers within the Embark for Life team.

The Adolescent Day Programme is a 16-week programme spread onto 3 phases namely Bronze, Silver and Gold. Activities/sessions range from intrapersonal and interpersonal skills learning to more active outdoor sessions. The programme includes also a 2-week experience with the Armed Forces of Malta. The programme is aimed at young people with challenging behavior and addictions and helps in trying to provide them with a secure and stable lifestyle. Young people meet 4 times a week for a 3-4-hour session. In 2018, the programme received accreditation from the Education Department, to implement the Prince Trust Achieve Programme

## 7.6 Mechanisms of early detection and signposting of young people facing health risks

### Policy framework

In 2014 the [Ministry for Education and Employment](#) issued a set of guideline for '[Substance abuse Prevention Programmes and Interventions in State School](#)'. The guidelines focus on both informative and formative aspects so that young people are given the opportunity to develop the necessary skills to deal with such issues.

### Stakeholders

The guidelines are directed to school teachers in particular those who teach Personal, Social and Career Development and School Support Staff such as youth workers, social workers working in schools and Learning support Assistants.

The guidelines also point out to other stakeholders such as [Sedqa](#), [Caritas](#) and [OASI](#).

### Guidance to stakeholders

Continuous professional development of school staff and school support staff is necessary to improve their skills and provide a more specialized area of knowledge and service to students. This training is important if class teachers are to do follow-up sessions after programmes are delivered.

The training to school support staff will help teachers to identify early signs of drug abuse or misuse and refer as necessary.

Schools can make use of the different agencies and services to organize training for school staff and school support staff as necessary.

### Target groups

The direct target group is the Secondary School Students cohort.

### Funding

These drug education programmes are publicly funded

## 7.7 Making health facilities more youth friendly

As such, there are not many top-level policies, programmes, projects or initiatives that specifically aim to make health facilities more youth friendly. However there are

initiatives that have been introduced to facilitate things, such as the introduction of free WiFi in public hospital areas, and for example the completely confidential and anonymous/un-identifiable nature of the Genito-Urinary Clinic which helps youths to feel more secure.

The Young People's unit at [Mount Carmel Hospital](#) opened its doors to adolescents with facilities which are more conducive to the wholesome well-being of these young adolescent patients, as one of a number of initiatives that have been under way to give equal priority to mental and physical health. The new facility has separate dormitories for male and female patients and a recreational area, including open-air spaces. The plan behind this was to change the outdated system at the young people's unit, which is set up in an asylum format in an old house to that of an acute ward whose indoor environment is more therapeutic and youth friendly.

## 7.8 Current debates and reforms

Currently there are no new policies being formulated by the [Ministry for Health](#) that are specifically in the field of youth health and well-being. However Malta is also in the process of drafting an HIV strategy as well as a Health-enhancing physical activity policy. Both of these will not be specifically youth or young person oriented, however they will be very relevant to this particular age-group.

To replace the '[Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Disease in Malta](#)', the Ministry for Health has embarked on the development of a Framework for the Prevention of ill-health and Promotion of well-being which will be an overarching horizontal framework that will identify objectives which are considered to be priority areas for action linked to preventable lifestyle risk factors, risky behaviours and unhealthy environments. This will take a life course approach, focusing on different risk factors for various age groups – children and youth will therefore be a focus age group within this framework. The first draft of this framework is expected to be available for public consultation by the end of 2020.

A number of vertical strategies will emanate from the Prevention framework, among them a Tobacco Control Strategy for Malta: Towards a Tobacco free future for Malta.

Following a capacity assessment in 2019, which identified young people as being at the centre of the tobacco epidemic in Malta, and smoking in youth a disturbing public health problem, youth has been selected as a particular focus group for action within this strategy. Emerging realities such as the e-cigarette epidemic will be dealt with within this strategy. It is envisaged that the first draft of this strategy will be discussed with stakeholders during the first half of 2020.

The Whole School Approach to Integrated Management of Severe Allergies in Schools emanates from the "[Whole School Approach to a Healthy Lifestyle Policy: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity](#)" and consequently adopts a whole school approach for schools to manage, in an integrated manner, the risks of severe allergic reactions to food, insects, medicines and other allergens taking place in the school and to help schools minimise the risk of students suffering allergy-induced anaphylaxis whilst at school or attending any school related activity.

The [National Sexual Health Strategy](#) is currently undergoing extensive review, to be revised in line with recent trends. Young people are a large focus of this strategy. Parallel with this review, the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate Sexual Health team is organising seminars to be better informed on the changing landscape with respect to sexual health in Malta. These seminars aim to bring together multiple stakeholders including NGO's and will focus primarily on the 16-25 year old age group.

Currently a draft version of the [national policy for sport in Malta](#) is available. The document focuses on three pillars: sports and education, sports participation, and sports as a means of economic growth. Each section analyses the current situation for each

pillar, followed by a number of targets and recommendations to achieve the desired results. This national sports policy is an attempt to provide ideas for the national stakeholders in sport, namely the government, through the Ministry of Education and Employment, the Parliamentary Secretariat for Youth, Sport and Voluntary Organisations and SportMalta, and all national sports organisations, to utilise in the period between 2017 and 2027, ensuring the administration of sport in Malta is target oriented. The aim is to drive all stakeholders to perform the required actions to reach the objectives set out by this policy and meet the aspirations of the Maltese sport movement and the citizens of Malta and Gozo. Emphasis is placed on the role of SportMalta as the national authority on sport and the prime motor for the promotion of sports participation across all sectors of society, including leisure activity and amateur and elite sporting competitions. It collaborates with the [Maltese Olympic Committee](#) (MOC). It also provides ideas for the growth of the sporting industry with the intention that Maltese sport may one day be financially self-sustainable and start contributing to the country's economy.

## 8. CREATIVITY AND CULTURE

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Culture falls under the responsibility of the Ministry for Justice, Culture and local Government. A recent survey reported that the 16-24 and 25-34 year old cohorts have the highest rates of participation in cultural activities when compared to other age groups.

A number of creative artistic and cultural activities were created targeting young people such as Ziguzajg and Atrivisti. Also young people have access to the Culture Card which gives them opportunity to experience, at least, one cultural event a year.

### 8.1 General context

#### Main trends in young people's creativity and cultural participation

In the [Cultural Participation Survey 2016](#) young people from the age groups 16-24 and 25-34 had the highest rate of participation in most cultural activities compared to other age groups. The below are a few salient points on young people's cultural participation based on these statistics followed by a summary of main statistical findings (total population aged 16+ for the survey amounted to 360,335):

- Young people registered the highest rate of internet use for cultural purposes. The most popular activities included listening to music online, watching movies and reading newspaper articles.
- The 16-24 age group had the highest readership rate (63% read at least one book in 2016).
- Young people are more likely to listen to music everyday
- Young people registered the highest attendance in most cultural activities from all age groups except for dance performances, museums and historical sites. As for art exhibitions it is the 16-24 age group that the highest attendance rate followed by the 45-54 age group. The most attended cultural activities by young people are cinema and live music performances.
- The 25-34 age group are had the highest rate of regular yearly attendance to traditional events from all age groups except for Good Friday/passion plays. Parish feasts are the most popular from the traditional events which is also the case for the rest of the population.

- As for engagement, the most popular cultural activity in which young people take part is creating digital artworks or animations for the 16-24 age group and crafts for the 25-34 age group.
- Young people are the most likely to have volunteered with a cultural organisation at some point in their life. However the 16-24 age group was the second most likely to have volunteered in a cultural organisation in the 12 months preceding the survey after the 35-44 age group.
- The 16-24 age group are the most likely to perceive themselves as being artists (28% of them do so) from all age groups.

The survey also revealed some barriers that young people face to participate in cultural activities. The 25-34 age group were the mostly likely to agree with the statement "Other commitments in my life prevent me from having enough time to go to arts or cultural events" with 69% saying they tend to agree or strongly agree. Also 16-24 and 25-34 age groups had the highest rate of agreement with the statement "I do not find enough of the kind of events I am interested to attend" (37% and 33% respectively).

### Main concepts

Culture is not specifically defined in the [National Cultural Policy](#) and the document clearly acknowledges the difficulty and restrictions in defining culture. However, the principles guiding the policy indicate an open and evolving definition that is driven by the concept of culture as a network which bridges differences and which brings people and communities together, while providing opportunities for self-fulfillment through employment and economic activity. [Section 8](#) of the Maltese Constitution states that "The State shall promote the development of culture and scientific and technical research." Malta subscribes to the notions of culture adopted by international bodies such as UNESCO and the Council of Europe.

According to the [Cultural Heritage Act](#) cultural heritage means movable or immovable objects of artistic, architectural, historical, archaeological, ethnographic, paleontological and geological importance and includes information or data relative to cultural heritage pertaining to Malta or to any other country. This includes archaeological, paleontological or geological sites and deposits, landscapes, groups of buildings, as well as scientific collections, collections of art objects, manuscripts, books, published material, archives, audio-visual material and reproductions of any of the preceding, or collections of historical value, as well as intangible cultural assets comprising arts, traditions, customs and skills employed in the performing arts, in applied arts and in crafts and other intangible assets which have a historical, artistic or ethnographic value.

## 8.2 Administration and governance

### Governance

#### Culture

The [Ministry for Justice, Culture and Local Government](#) has the role of initiating cultural policy developments and strategies through the Directorate. The [Culture Directorate](#) re-established in 2013. The aim is to ensure that the governance role of the [Ministry for Justice, Culture and Local Government](#) responsible for culture is fulfilled efficiently and expediently, and that important issues affecting the sector are brought to the attention of the competent political and administrative authorities.

The [Directorate's](#) main responsibilities are as follows:

- provision of policy, direction and advice on the arts, heritage, and audiovisuals;
- management of two programmes related to culture, arts and the creative industries, namely the Culture Pass and the Cinema Digitisation Scheme

- preparation of contributions for public debate and discussion;
- liaising with the relevant entities and stakeholders on all matters related to Malta's cultural and creative sectors.

Apart from the policy-determined functions listed above, the [Directorate](#) hosts the contact point for the [Creative Europe Programme](#). The [Creative Europe Desk Malta](#) promotes awareness and understanding of Creative Europe. It provides free advice and support to applicants, and encourages organisations from Malta to become involved in successful applications.

The [Ministry for Justice, Culture and Local Government](#) includes within its portfolio the responsibility for cultural heritage.

The [Cultural Heritage Act](#) and the [National Strategy for Cultural Heritage](#), launched during the 2006 National Forum, clearly define the responsibilities and competences of the entities.

The [National Forum](#) is an annual event, which brings together entities responsible for, or interested in, the preservation of cultural heritage, to discuss the state of cultural heritage in general. The entities include the [Superintendence of Cultural Heritage](#), [Heritage Malta](#), the [Malta Centre for Restoration](#), the [Committee of Guarantee](#), the [Catholic Cultural Heritage Commission](#) and other Religious Cultural Heritage Commissions, government departments and entities, [Local Councils](#), NGOs, the [University of Malta](#), and other educational institutions, specialists, consultants, and any other parties registering their interest in writing to the Minister.

The [Superintendence of Cultural Heritage's](#) mission is to fulfill the duties of the state in ensuring the protection and accessibility of Malta's cultural heritage.

Within this legal framework of the [Cultural Heritage Act](#), the [Superintendence of Cultural Heritage](#) was established and given the mission to ensure the protection and accessibility of cultural heritage. The [Act](#) also establishes the functions of the [Superintendence](#).

[Heritage Malta](#) is the national government agency, set up in 2002 under the provisions of the [Cultural Heritage Act](#), entrusted with the management of national museums and heritage sites and their related collections in Malta and Gozo, including seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites. It operates within four key aspects, namely management, conservation, interpretation and marketing. The agency is responsible for immobile heritage (e.g. museums and heritage sites), developing measures to ensure educational promotion, accessibility, conservation and the proper operation and marketability of Malta's vast patrimony in heritage sites, buildings, collections and museums, both locally and overseas.

One of the main initiatives of [Heritage Malta](#) is to attract more people from a young age to visit and interact with museums, thus fostering a love to the nation's rich cultural heritage.

## The arts

Cultural governance in the arts operates differently from cultural heritage. [St. James Cavalier Centre for Creativity](#), the [Manoel Theatre](#), the [Malta Philharmonic Orchestra](#), [Pjazza Teatru Rjal](#) and the [Mediterranean Conference Centre](#) are the entities which organize the artistic events in Malta and Gozo

[Arts Council Malta](#) is legally responsible for creating the necessary synergies between all artistic entities. Synergies between public cultural organisations (PCOs) are now facilitated through regular meetings chaired by the Minister and Valletta 2018 Foundation. A new board was set up in 2013 to oversee the implementation of the cultural infrastructure programme. This board has the remit of developing the cultural infrastructure programme leading up to Valletta 2018 as European Cultural Capital. The main focus is to develop a contemporary arts space, a music hall/centre for performing arts and creative clusters.

The [Arts Council Malta](#) operates through three specific directorates. The creation and development of strategies for the sector falls under the Strategy Directorate. The Directorate is built on five strategic focal points which include internationalisation and business development but also research, education and training and diversity and communities. These points also run through the council's national strategy for the cultural and creative sectors for the years 2016-2020, which was published recently.

The directorate also focuses on the management and development of the funding portfolio, which currently includes nine national funding programmes amounting to around 1.5 million euro. A brokerage team also assists operators in the cultural and creative sectors to maximize their potential.

The aim is the creation of a one-stop shop for culture, a service hub for those working in the sector, mainly characterized by micro-enterprises and individual operators.

[Arts Council Malta](#) promotes and supports young people's cultural participation and nurturing their creative potential through specific initiatives and funding programmes being [Kreattiv](#), [Professional Development Grant](#), [Artisti](#). Other programmes which are not exclusively aimed towards young people but are still open to their participation are [Premju tal-President għall-Kreattivita`](#), [Cultural Export Fund](#) and the [Malta Arts Fund](#).

### **Spazzju Kreattiv**

The mission statement for [Spazzju Kreattiv](#) focuses on its role as a catalyst for the contemporary art scene in Malta, as well as a hub where people of all ages and from all walks of life can join in the enriching act of creativity. Run by a creative team, the Centre emphasises the need to foster aesthetic and cultural awareness among the younger generation and the socially and economically disadvantaged. The Centre houses a theatre, a music room, five exhibition spaces and an art-house cinema. [St. James Cavalier](#) is constantly seeking partnerships with Maltese, European and Mediterranean partners to develop innovative cultural projects. Relative autonomy is given to the running of the Centre and programming of events and activities is devised by the General Manager, with the assistance of programme coordinators. The Board of the Foundation Centre for Creativity monitors the work and approves yearly objectives set by the creative team.

### **Teatru Manoel**

Built in 1732, the [Teatru Manoel](#) in Valletta is not only Malta's oldest theatre, but one of the oldest in Europe. Embellished over the centuries, this theatre is a true architectural gem. Today, the theatre is one of Malta's foremost performing spaces, offering a wide range of productions including opera, ballet, contemporary dance, music, children's performances and drama. Teatru Manoel manages an education programme named '[Toi Toi](#)' aimed towards young people which includes the Teatru Manoel Youth Theatre, Youth Opera and Toi Toi Schools project.

### **Malta Philharmonic Orchestra**

In September 1997, the orchestra previously known as the Manoel Theatre Orchestra became an autonomous organisation under the responsibility of the Culture Ministry and was officially named as the National Orchestra of Malta. Ten years later the [Malta Philharmonic Orchestra](#) was launched on the 12th January, 2008. The MPO is also responsible for the orchestral training and professional development of young musicians, through the formation of the MPO Academy and the Malta Youth Orchestra.

### **Valletta 2018 Foundation**

The [Valletta 2018 Foundation](#) is responsible for Valletta's journey towards the title of the [European Capital of Culture in Malta](#) in 2018. The Foundation was responsible for the bidding process starting with the pre-selection phase in January 2012, the final selection in October 2012 and the official declaration by the Council of Ministers in May 2013. The implementation of Valletta's 2018 is also responsible to leave a legacy of high profile cultural activity in and around the capital city of Malta.

## Cross-sectorial cooperation

The Ministry for Justice, Culture and Local Government collaborates with a number of Ministries, agencies and entities in relation to the National Cultural Policy:

### Ministry for Education and Employment

The National Archives of Malta

The National Archives of Malta aims to preserve the collective memory of the Maltese nation and protect the rights of citizens through ready access to essential evidence. The administration of the National Archives incorporates the general direction of the services, the coordination of accessions from government departments, and the representation in national co-ordinating bodies such as the National Archives Advisory Committee. Specialised advice on research, palaeography, and contacts with international research institutions are also carried out.

Malta Libraries

In May 2011, Parliament approved the legislation for the establishment of Libraries Malta, a national agency that absorbs the functions of the National Library and the Department of Libraries. The mission of the Malta Libraries is to ensure the collection and conservation of Malta's documentary heritage for present and future generations, to maintain and develop the libraries regulated under this Act, and to encourage reading for study, research, self-development and lifelong-learning information and leisure purposes.

### Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security

Public Broadcasting Services

PBS owns TVM (the most popular TV station in Malta) as well as Radio Malta1 & 2 and Magic Radio.

Broadcasting policy in Malta is the responsibility of the Ministry responsible for Culture. It also sets guidelines for Extended Public Service Obligation programming (drama, current affairs, documentaries, children and entertainment programmes) funded directly by the Ministry. However, PBS falls within the portfolio of the Minister for Home Affairs and National Security who appoints the Board and the Editorial Board.

*Malta Film Commission*

The Malta Film Commission is a government organisation, established by Chapter 478 (Act No. 7 of 2005) of the Laws of Malta, with the role of advising the Minister responsible for the film sector on policies pertaining to the promotion, development and support of the audiovisual and film servicing industry. The board is composed of a chairman and four board members, including the Film Commissioner who is responsible for the implementation of Malta's audiovisual policy. The board of the Malta Film Commission has a largely non-executive function except for the approval of applications for both fiscal and financial incentives. Over the years, the role of the Film Commission has evolved from an entity that promotes the production of foreign films in Malta, to one that also develops the Maltese Film Industry through the management of the Malta Film Fund, the Malta Film co-production fund and training programmes.

### Ministry for Finance

Apart from approving and monitoring all financial matters for all Ministries and Agencies, the Ministry administers the National Lottery Good Causes' Funds with beneficiaries including artists and cultural organisations. The Ministry for Finance also spearheaded the development of Malta's creative economy through the development of a creative economy working group and was instrumental in ensuring substantial increases in public expenditure for culture.

## Ministry for the Economy, Investment and Small Business

### *Malta Crafts Council*

The Malta Crafts Council set up by virtue of Act XXI of 2000 is also another entity contributing to the development of the creative industries. The aims of the Council are focused on the encouragement, promotion and regulation of crafts and craftsmen and entrepreneurs dealing in Maltese craft products. The work of the Council is currently absorbed by the Commerce Directorate.

### Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion

Cultural diplomacy falls within the remit of the MFA. Through the Cultural Diplomacy unit, Maltese Representations abroad are encouraged to facilitate cultural cooperation and presentation of Maltese culture. The Ministry is also responsible for the bilateral cultural agreements with other countries.

### Ministry for Gozo

This Ministry is responsible for the administration of Malta's sister island. Through the culture department and Gozo Culture Council, it runs an exhibition space, supports amateur cultural organisations and programmes, as well as ad hoc artistic events.

## 8.3 National strategy on creativity and culture for young people

### Existence of a national strategy

In December 2015, [Arts Council Malta](#) launched the five-year strategy [Create2020](#) for 2016- 2020 with the vision of placing culture and creativity at the heart of Malta's future.

### Scope and contents

[Create2020](#) is comprised of 5 goals and 70 actions addressing creative professionals, communities and public cultural organisations.

The goals include:

- Nurture creative potential and support its development into professional activity
- Invest in artistic excellence
- Connect Malta to the international artistic community
- Provide more opportunities for people to engage in creativity
- Build the capacity of public cultural organisations

With regards to young people the strategy aims to achieve the following through its goals:

- An increase in the number of young people studying the arts who are equipped with skills to manage their own business
- Continue bringing artists and schools closer together and emphasise the importance of working with and for young audiences and the elderly
- Development of a strategy working group involving all public cultural organisations to address programming requirements through audience development initiatives with a particular focus on young audiences, hard-to-reach communities and new audiences.

### Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy

The responsible authority is the [Arts Council Malta](#) (ACM). The ACM operates through three specific directorates. The creation and development of strategies for the sector falls under the Strategy Directorate. The Directorate is built on five strategic focal points

which include internationalisation and business development but also research, education and training and diversity and communities. These points also run through the council's national strategy for the cultural and creative sectors for the years 2016-2020, which was published recently.

The directorate also focuses on the management and development of the funding portfolio, which currently includes nine national funding programmes amounting to around 1.5 million euro. A brokerage team also assists operators in the cultural and creative sectors to maximize their potential.

The aim is the creation of a one-stop shop for culture, a service hub for those working in the sector, mainly characterized by micro-enterprises and individual operators.

[Arts Council Malta](#) promotes and supports young people's cultural participation and nurturing their creative potential through specific initiatives and funding programmes being [Kreattiv](#), [Professional Development Grant](#), [Artivisti](#). Other programmes which are not exclusively aimed towards young people but are still open to their participation are Premju tal-President għall-Kreattività`, Cultural Export Fund and the Malta Arts Fund.

In 2019 the findings of two impact studies conducted on [Kreattiv](#) and [Premju tal-President għall-Kreattività](#) were launched. In the Kreattiv study conducted in collaboration with the [University of Malta](#), the results compare well to findings in the literature which also finds that specific interventions can improve creativity, that parental education, exposure to creative activity matters, that academic results and creativity are linked, and that there may be gender differences in creativity. The intervention of Kreattiv showed net positive results on most measures of creative and stronger results were obtained among students who did not volunteer to participate and therefore would not have otherwise been exposed to such activities. Also more hours with the practitioners yielded better results. From an educational policy perspective, it is worth noting that creativity scores also declined in almost all domains between then the start and the end of the academic year. Also parental education was found to contribute to creativity but this does not translate into a higher desire for a career in creativity and creativity responds positively to academic results. The finding that girls tend to perform worse in some creativity tests but aspire more to a career in the arts is worth investigating further.

The evaluation on "il-Premju tal-President għall-Kreattività" commissioned through a tender process by the Office of the President of the Republic and coordinated by Arts Council Malta. Among the findings it was indicated that "il-Premju tal-President għall-Kreattività" gives prestige and validation to projects and beneficiaries. The five thematic areas that emerged as projects impacts and spillovers were therapy, safe space, self-expression and integration, education and intergenerational relations. Recommendations included establishing a national platform for arts and wellbeing bringing together organisations and artists who are active in the field, the need for the fund to sustain projects in the longer term and an increase public awareness of projects.

### **Revisions/updates**

No revisions or updates are yet available.

## **8.4 Promoting culture and cultural participation**

### **Reducing obstacles to young people's access to culture**

[Arts Council Malta](#) facilitates young people's access to cultural environments and foster their participation in cultural events and experiences through the following initiatives and funding programmes:

[Creative Communities](#) is a fund for community-led creative and artistic activities, primarily addressing local communities. It provides the opportunity for training, research

and the development of artistic projects led by the community for the community, while celebrating cultural diversity.

[Creative Communities](#) aims to:

- Boost art and culture in the community through projects managed by voluntary organisations active in the local community
- Enable voluntary organisations to carry out projects related to culture and the arts in local communities
- Encourage active participation of local communities in the culture and arts sector
- Celebrate the cultural diversity found in the various towns and cities around Malta and Gozo
- Support projects that encourage cultural integration
- Strengthen and increase knowledge of local tangible and intangible heritage

The projects the fund invests in are:

- Informal Training and Development Programmes which boost the artistic development of the applicant organisation or which encourage the creative development of the community. This may include exchange programmes on a local and international level
- Research related to aspects of the collective memory of the community and/or cultural identity of the community
- Events, productions and/or exhibitions which encourage active cultural participation, boost the community's creative expression or appreciation of its history and identity

II- [Premju tal-President għall-Kreattività](#) provides recognition and support at the highest level of the State to organisations, especially those working with vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, to engage these groups in creativity and arts-driven projects and thereby increase their level of integration and engagement in society. The Award is managed by the Office of the President and [Arts Council Malta](#).

The Award aims to:

- Support organisations and institutions that target the social needs and well-being of the community at large, especially the more vulnerable sectors and hard to reach groups – with a special emphasis on children, youth, the elderly, hard-to-reach groups, people with different abilities, people from different ethnic backgrounds – through creativity and the arts
- Provide accessibility to disadvantaged groups to a wide range of quality art experiences and art-engagement activities, as well as act as a platform for young promising talent
- Incentivise the contribution of arts organisations towards community development and collaborative arts project

The [Professional Development Grant](#) is a new grant launched by [Arts Council Malta](#) as outlined in its Create2020 Strategy, with a particular focus on nurturing creative potential and supporting its development into professional activity. The grant programme forms part of the National Fund for Artistic Excellence

The [Professional Development Grant](#) supports the continuous professional development of Maltese or Malta-based artists and cultural operators who are active in the cultural and creative sectors and seeking to engage in short term professional training to improve their skills and advance their specialisation. The programme is also open to students engaged in the cultural and creative sectors, as long as the proposed training programme is not related to the full-time studies.

The programme reflects the drive towards further professionalisation of the sectors and the promotion of an entrepreneurial culture among creative professionals. It provides

opportunities that can strengthen the knowledge base and strategies of cultural and creative enterprises. By investing in processes designed to improve the quality that is needed to generate artistic work of excellence, our goal is to support the development of a sustainable creative ecology, providing value added and job opportunities in the sector.

The [Kreattiv](#) funding programme engages educators and creative practitioners in dialogue and collaboration while encouraging students and educators towards further engagement within the creative sector. Kreattiv aims to bring creative practitioners into schools to work with teachers and students to inspire, learn and create in a collaborative and innovative way.

The aims of the fund are to:

- Initiate creative projects in classrooms, schools and colleges through collaborations between teachers, students and creative practitioners and, in so doing, to facilitate creative education as a key tool for holistic development.
- Introduce children and young people to potential careers in the cultural and creative sector, through selected collaborations with higher educational institutions.
- Embed cultural and creative entrepreneurship in schools as expressed in the National Cultural Policy.
- Encourage collaboration between educational institutions, the culture and creative industries, and other relevant sectors such as science and technology.
- Create employment opportunities for creative professionals.
- Encourage creative collaborations amongst educational institutions, and partnerships with public and private cultural operators.

The [Culture Pass](#) is an initiative of [Arts Council Malta](#) through which every secondary school student in Malta is given the opportunity to experience a minimum of one artistic production a year produced by creative professionals and presented through a curated [programme](#).

[Divergent thinkers](#) is an annual collective exhibition for young artists managed by [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) in collaboration with St James Cavalier Centre for Creativity. Divergent Thinkers creates a platform for young contemporary Maltese artists to exhibiting and promote their work. Young artists between 18 and 30 years old are invited to submit their artistic proposals and be considered for public exhibition. Selected artists receive an honorarium and participate in a curated exhibition. The works are included in an illustrated catalogue accompanying the exhibition. The artist with the best work are awarded with a residency in an international art centre. The winning artist and runner-up are given support to set up their own exhibition.

[It-Taħriġ Mużikali taż-Żgħażaġh fil-Każini tal-Banda](#) is a project managed by [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) with the support of [Għaqda Każini tal-Banda](#) that offers financial assistance to band clubs to develop initiatives to bring more people into the teaching of music or to improve facilities which teach music.

The aim of Music Quest is to help young emerging singers, musicians and bands wishing to break into the music scene. Young artists between 13 and 30 years are to submit a demo with an original song. Selected participants are given free coaching management and opportunities for live performance. The winner with the best demo song is given financial assistance to help with the professional production in a studio.

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) together with [Kunsill Nazzjonali tal-Ktieb](#) organise the annual [Konkors ta' Kitba – Letteratura għaż-Żgħażaġh](#) which is a writing contest that selects, rewards and publishes Maltese novels written for young adolescent readers. Submissions for this contest explore themes related to the different situations encountered by young people during this stage in their lives.

Organised by [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) the Malta Youth Film Festival is aimed at young people between 16-30 years old interested in filming, production, and cinematography. Young artists are invited to submit their short film productions (not exceeding 10 minutes) in any genre. The aim of the festival is to provide a platform for young people who are interested in this sphere. Through this festival interested young people can participate in a number of workshops that guide them from the submission process onwards. Awards are given for seven different categories including best script, actors and direction as well as a final evaluation to each participant to help them improve in this art.

[Artivisti](#) is a collaboration between [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) and the [Arts Council Malta](#) and is intended to be a development platform for youth collaboration in the creative works. [Artivisti](#) is designed to recognise the talent of emerging young artists in the creative and artistic field, and to foster their potential, creativity, talent, initiative and social responsibility.

Taħżiż is a programme managed [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) and the [Għaqda tal-Malti](#) of the University of Malta. Taħżiż creates an opportunity for young writers between 18 and 30 years old to participate in a series of three intensive residential seminars on creative writing. At the end of the program have performed work during the seminars publication.

[ŻiguŻajg](#) is an annual International Arts Festival for children and young people organised by [Fondazzjoni Kreattività](#) with the support of [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) that aims to foster aesthetic and cultural awareness amongst the younger generation. ŻiguŻajg has a vision of positioning the creative arts for children and young people at the core of Malta's creative ecology. The festival aims to do this by showcasing professional arts specifically designed for children and young people in various disciplines at a high level of excellence. It does this through the development of a national repertoire of works for children and young people and by creating an accessible and inclusive artistic programme which increases cultural participation.

[Young Talent Fund](#) is an annual grant that supports the participation of young artists and performers in international platforms such as festivals, competitions, exhibitions and/or performances organised by [Arts Council Malta](#). The Young Talent Fund aims to support the mobility of young creatives to explore, build networks and to engage in international collaborations; to encourage young creatives to actively engage in international platforms and to facilitate and expose young talent to other international practices. The programme is also open to young creatives engaged in technical skills within the creative sectors, such as backstage crew, audio visuals, set design, marketing and management. The fund does not cover short or long-term professional training or workshops.

The [Young Artist of the Year Award](#) is a collaboration between [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) and the Arts Council Malta as part of the council's National Arts Awards.

[Malta Youth Film Festival](#) is an annual festival organized by [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) in collaboration with the [Malta Film Foundation](#) and the [Parliamentary Secretary for Sports, Recreation and Voluntary Organisations](#). The Malta Youth Film Festival is open to all film genres including animation, drama, thriller, music video, documentary and others. Film duration is not to exceed 10 minutes. Participants must be between 16 and 30 years. Awards include best script; best direction; most original concept; best actor; best cinematography; best overall film; public choice award.

[Għanja tal-Poplu Żgħażaġh](#) is a collaborative project between [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#), Għanja tal-Poplu the Akkademja tal-Malti and the Ministry for Education and Employment. This initiative is part of Għanja tal-Poplu a festival that celebrates Maltese popular song.

MalTeen is residency with a focus on young people organised by [Spazju Kreattiv](#) in collaboration with [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#). This residency is an opportunity for young people aged 13-17 to participate in a short project with creatives that are sensitive to work with younger people. MalTeen is a year-long arts programme geared towards active youth involvement and empowerment.

## Disseminating information on cultural opportunities

[Arts Council Malta](#) also organises regular information sessions on its funding programmes to inform the young people and the general public on the opportunities it offers as well as regular meetings, networking and matchmaking. These sessions entitled [ACMLab](#) taking place monthly serving as a platform to share information and good practices, debate cultural matters and facilitate networking between peers and other stakeholders. In these sessions young people have the opportunity to learn about opportunities available that may be offered by other organisations external to Arts Council Malta.

The [Youth Information Portal](#) a service provided by [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) is an online information service provided through the web portal of the National Youth Agency. The portal provides information on a number of topics, one of which is culture. Young people can also find information about events related to youth related to both young and even youth organizations.

## Knowledge of cultural heritage amongst young people

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) offers the [Karta Żgħażaġħ](#) to all young people aged between 13 and 30. Karta Żgħażaġħ forms part of the [EYCA Card network](#) and offers discounts to a number of cultural activities in 36 different European countries.

[Heritage Malta](#) introduced the [Heritage Passport](#) for all secondary and post-secondary school students. Students receive a card at their respective schools and will eventually receive a passport on their first visit to a Heritage Malta site or museum.

The passport will be stamped every time the students visit a site or museum. Ten stamps will entitle the student to a 'visa' which will allow them to access a site which would normally be closed to the general public. Twenty stamps will allow access to two of these sites.

When the passport is stamped 27 times, students will be given a special visa which will allow them to visit the [Ħal-Saflieni Hypogeum UNESCO World Heritage Site](#) with one adult for free or a gift from Heritage Malta.

## 8.5 Developing cultural and creative competences

### Acquiring cultural and creative competences through education and training

Education for Entrepreneurship, Creativity and Innovation is one of the cross curricular themes at compulsory education level that have been developed as part of the [Learning Outcomes Framework](#), based upon the [National Curriculum Framework](#). Creativity is generally recognised as both an innate yet often under-developed quality in young people, as well as a practical skill that helps to unlock an entrepreneurial disposition. It is a skill that can be taught and that everyone can aspire to.

The ability to be innovative and the confidence to look for innovative solutions to opportunities or problems encountered are best nurtured in a safe, supportive environment where this type of approach is encouraged, recognised and rewarded. Such a pedagogy requires allowing learners time to reflect on a situation and tap their resources and imagination to develop plans and solutions. It also requires time for implementation of new processes and the application of new ideas.

As part of the [National Curriculum Framework for All](#) and in line with the [Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024](#), the education authorities re-introduced vocational programmes at level 3 of the MQF in the final three years of compulsory schooling (year 9 to year 11) from ages 14 to 16. In 2011 vocational subjects at MQF level 3 were piloted successfully in a number of state and non-state secondary schools following an intensive teacher training programme. Subjects such as Textiles and Fashion

and Media are expected to be also added to the list of vocational students which students can choose at state secondary schools.

A new secondary school for [Visual and Performing Arts](#) was set up in September 2017. The school provides a setting for the teaching of Arts, Music, Drama, Media Literacy and Dance to talented students who were chosen following an audition. Learning programmes were developed for each of these subjects, and appropriate teachers were chosen to teach the subjects. The new school will give students the opportunity to further their artistic talents without renouncing their proficiency in core academic subjects.

The Performing Arts Schools in Malta and Gozo are namely, the:

- [Johann Strauss School of Music](#)
- [Malta Drama Centre - Mikelanġ Borg](#)
- [School of Art](#) (Malta)
- [Visual and Performing Arts School](#) (Gozo)

The Visual and Performing Arts schools provide training in art, dance, drama and music. The main focus is the provision of a learner-centred curriculum which promotes creativity, innovation, participation, reflection, personal independence and the development of lifelong learners. These schools offer effective exposure to meaningful creative practices and educational experiences. They also play a significant role in developing future audiences that will appreciate and actively participate in national and international cultural events. The faculty currently consists of over 30 dedicated teachers who are all experts in their own creative fields. This makes it possible for the school to offer a broad range of subjects across the four disciplines. In fact, over 1,200 pupils were registered at the School in 2014/15, and they successfully attended one or more of the 46 evening courses offered over a span of a six-day.

Also, the Ministry for Education and Employment invited public officers in the grade of teachers/instructor to perform duties and give lessons in different subjects, including the following creative topics such as Peripatetic Art; Peripatetic Drama and Peripatetic Music.

### **University of Malta**

The [School of Performing Arts](#) at the [University of Malta](#) brings together the disciplines of Dance Studies, Music Studies and Theatre Studies, and to provide a sound base for the development of new programmes of study together with more specialised fields of research. The school highlights the performance dimension of the respective disciplines, integrating the interplay between the technical and artistic aspects of performance and the ability to reflect critically on performance within an array of theoretical contexts in contemporary and historical practice.

The School of Performing Arts guides students to develop the skills, knowledge and expertise in their respective disciplines, pertinent to Malta's needs. This means that programmes consider the integration of theoretical approaches with artistic practices, focusing on the education of concepts, frameworks and principles that support creative processes.

The [Edward de Bono Institute for the Design and Development of Thinking](#) at the [University of Malta](#) set up in collaboration with Professor Edward de Bono, the originator of Lateral Thinking offers a wide range of courses and events to University students and to the general public in the following interrelated subject areas: Creativity and Idea Generation; Innovation Management; Entrepreneurship; and Foresight.

The [Institute](#) offers the following study-units to a wide variety of faculties, institutes and centres at the University of Malta: design and Innovation, an introduction to creativity, critical thinking, communication and innovation, foresight – a tool for scenarios and visions, leadership and organisational innovation, innovation and entrepreneurship, psychology of creativity, a toolkit for thinking out of the box, creativity, innovation and digital technologies, innovation and entrepreneurship: practical approaches, creative and

critical thinking for social intervention. These study-units help students develop skills and attitudes that are required in public and private organisations where key competencies, transferable skills and knowledge concerning creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship and foresight are considered to be crucially important. These skills and attitudes will enable students to recognise opportunities and will improve their future career options.

The [Institute](#) also offers a [Master degree in Creativity and Innovation](#). The course is an interdisciplinary programme designed to assist participants to expand their perception, employ creative skills, develop ideas individually and in teams, sustain a creative climate and manage innovation. It offers methods and processes which help to identify opportunities and cultivate appropriate skills and attitudes. It promotes imaginative, flexible and practical thought and action, and improves the ability to respond practically and creatively to problems and opportunities.

## **MCAST**

The [Malta College for the Arts, Science and Technology](#) (MCAST) offers a vast range of courses which prepare students for the creative industries where students are trained with specific vocational and professional objectives. Within MCAST the [Institute of Creative Arts](#) provides underpinning knowledge and practical skills, giving students an introduction to specialisation spectrum on various aspects of the creative industries. These programmes are especially beneficial for those students who intend to work in the creative industries and range from Art and Design to different Media to fashion to Cultural Heritage Skills.

## **Malta Arts Scholarships Scheme**

The [Malta Arts Scholarships Scheme](#) aims at providing more opportunities to support individuals who are exceptionally talented in the creation and/or promotion of professional in the Expressive arts. Theatre, music, dance, design, creative writing, film, the visual arts or any combination thereof shall be given priority.

## **Specialised training for professionals in the education, culture and youth fields**

The [Institute for Education](#) has been established to develop and coordinate all continuing professional learning for educators within the [Ministry for Education and Employment](#). The Institute promotes high quality education for all educators and fosters learning communities of the highest standard, educational leaders at all levels and instils education with equity and social justice. The outcome is to provide a structured, coherent and comprehensive Continuous Professional Development (CPD) system by moving away from traditional methodologies and adopting a more transformative stance, which would lead educators to understand the importance of CPD and take responsibility for their own Professional Development. Additionally, [MCAST](#) has a strong system of professional development of its staff, including a mandatory pedagogical course for academic staff going through the staff progression process at MCAST. The UoM also has a mandatory programme that provides professional development to academics seeking the tenured path.

Through the [Youth and Community Studies Department](#), students studying at the [University of Malta](#) to qualify as youth workers go through a unit called [Theatre and Young People](#). During this unit prospective youth workers will discuss Boal techniques for the Theatre for the Oppressed including: 'Forum Theatre', 'Invisible Theatre', 'Cop in the Head', 'Rainbow of Desire', and 'Legislative Theatre'. This study-unit will examine the applicability of this type of theatre when engaging with young people. A particular focus will be placed on theatre for and by young people, and the range of learning that takes place through young people's engagement in, and appreciation of this form of art.

Two training courses were organised for youth workers entitled [Interactive Media Project](#) and [Advanced Drama for Youth Workers](#). Participants in the Interactive Media Project participated in the training course the purpose of which was to help them acquire both

knowledge and ideas on how the potential of media can be used constructively and effectively in supporting young people's development. During the Advanced Drama for Youth Workers, participants acquired skills on how to use drama to reach young people and help them in their various issues.

### **Providing quality access to creative environments**

The mission statement for [Spazzju Kreattiv](#) focuses on its role as a catalyst for the contemporary art scene in Malta, as well as a hub where people of all ages and from all walks of life can join in the enriching act of creativity. Run by a creative team, the Centre emphasises the need to foster aesthetic and cultural awareness among the younger generation and the socially and economically disadvantaged. The Centre houses a theatre, a music room, five exhibition spaces and an art-house cinema. [St. James Cavalier](#) is constantly seeking partnerships with Maltese, European and Mediterranean partners to develop innovative cultural projects. Relative autonomy is given to the running of the Centre and programming of events and activities is devised by the General Manager, with the assistance of programme coordinators. The Board of the Foundation Centre for Creativity monitors the work and approves yearly objectives set by the creative team.

[Creative Communities](#) is a fund for community-led creative and artistic activities, primarily addressing local communities. It provides the opportunity for training, research and the development of artistic projects led by the community for the community, by encouraging the active participation of local communities.

The [Youth Village](#), ran by [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) provides space, facilities and support for young people and youth organizations to take up their initiatives. The purpose of the Youth Village is to create a non-formal learning environment and attract both young people and youth organisations to make use of the site and to attend or organize seminars, workshops and similar activities.

## **8.6 Developing entrepreneurial skills through culture**

### **Developing entrepreneurial skills through cultural activities**

In boosting young people's entrepreneurial skills, [Arts Council Malta](#)'s strategic tools is mainly business development with aim of creating an environment to:

- empower cultural entrepreneurs to act as agents of change and resourceful visionaries organising cultural, financial, social and human capital, and generating revenue from cultural activities;
- support creative practitioners to turn their artistic ideas and disciplines into sustainable economic activities

The actions supporting these aims are:

- Invest €700,000 in creative entrepreneurship;
- Invest €500,000 in games development;
- Create a comprehensive cluster policy programme;
- Manage a tax deductions programme for arts sponsorships;
- Foster connections between the creative industries and businesses;
- Collaborate with Malta Enterprise on bridging the gaps in areas of access to finance, skills and incentives;
- Collaborate with the respective entities to address legislation and regulations impacting the production of cultural events;

- Collaborate with the respective entities to address the legal status of the creative professional.

## **Support young entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative sectors**

In 2017 [Arts Council Malta](#) launched the [Creative Industries Platform](#) to give creative entrepreneurs the skill-set required to launch their business idea. The scope of these platforms is also to provide support and services to help creative professionals improve their product and take their creative ideas to market. The funds received by successful applicants are therefore to be used to provide one or more sub-sectors within Culture and Creative Industries with access to professional mentoring, capacity building initiatives, networking, and export development opportunities.

## **8.7 Fostering the creative use of new technologies**

### **New technologies in support of creativity and innovation**

[Arts Council Malta](#) manages the [Malta Digital Games Fund](#) which aims to encourage the creation of digital games by small companies, small teams and groups of individuals based in Malta, support Malta-based creative talent that demonstrates long-term potential, strengthen digital games as a cultural product and promote Malta as a hub for digital design and innovation.

The [Ministry for Economy, Investment and Small Business](#) organises the annual [Malta Innovation Awards](#). The aim of these awards is to recognise the efforts of individuals and companies that have taken their ideas and concepts or their operational processes a step forward. Through these Awards, Government is encouraging the development of Innovative ideas and products which have a degree of potential that is both unique and sustainable. One of the awards is the Award for Creative Innovation. The Award rewards individuals or enterprises operating in the cultural and creative industries, which have an excellent combination of creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship. The contribution can be a new product, innovation of a process or a new way of working.

A Special Award is also awarded to the Emerging Innovator which is chosen by the Adjudicating Committee from all the submissions received for the three Categories. This award is furthermore divided into two sections according to age group i.e. over 30 and under 30.

### **Facilitating access to culture through new technologies**

The [National Archives](#) is currently building a new website that opens access to much of the digital catalogues that it currently holds. The main targets shall be giving access to extensive digital catalogues during 2018 and all open items it holds in digital form by the end 2019.

The [National Archives](#) is also a partner in the [Archives Portal Europe](#), the largest European collection of archival collections online. The archives aims to have 100,000 descriptive units and over 350,000 digital items on the European portal by the end of 2019

A major project that the [National Archives](#) has started in 2017 is the Memorja. This is the first oral and sound archive in Malta, that shall be made available online for access to everyone. The aim is to have over 500 hours of sound clips describing the first-hand experience of historically important events on a wide variety of themes. All young people, who are doing historical research, are looking for artistic inspiration, need historical bases for fictional writing or scripts, or are just interested in Maltese culture, would have over 200 years of history at their fingertips. The five officers working on the construction of this portal are also young people.

The [Malta Tourism Authority](#) in collaboration with [Heritage Malta](#) have launched an application called the [Malta Culture Guide](#) with which one can explore the best cultural

highlights of Malta and Gozo, and locate them on the map without roaming costs. The application gives practical information through which a person can plan for cultural events. It also features a free podcast.

As part of the activities that are taking place during European Capital of Culture 2018 in Valletta, the [Valletta 2018 Foundation](#) developed an application called [Valletta18](#) intended to connect users to the foundation in real time and offer them a more accessible experience. The application's purpose is to create value for Valletta18's audience and serves as a real time event guide for events taking place in various venues across Malta and Gozo. Moreover, using category selection during the signup process, a user can tailor event feeds displayed. A user who is interested in art will see an event feed that is different from a user interested in music. Users will have the possibility to add an event to their mobile calendars as a reminder to not miss the event and also to plan their schedules around it. A user can mark events as favourite to stay up to date with any event changes or updates. Favourites will be stacked away in a separate section for ease of future access. Push notifications will notify users of nearby events or newly added events.

Heritage Malta in collaboration with Google, launched an online platform called [Wonders of Malta](#) through which the public can access high-resolution images of artworks housed in the initiative's partner museums. Through this platform audience with Internet access or smart mobile technology have access to a number of artefacts from the National Museum of Archaeology can now be viewed online on [Google Arts & Culture](#).

[Heritage Malta](#) in collaboration with Google Expeditions also launched a virtual reality teaching tool that lets the user lead or join immersive virtual trips all over the world. Google Expeditions, allows for children from around the world to discover the beauty of the Megalithic Temples of Malta. Expeditions enable teachers to bring students on virtual trips to places like museums, underwater, and outer space. Expeditions are collections of virtual reality 360° panoramas and 3D images – annotated with details, points of interest, and questions that make them easy to integrate into curriculum already used in schools. Finally, visitors can discover a number of interactive stories and cardboard tours about the top wonders of Malta. For this exhibition, more than 27 cultural institutions under the remit of Heritage Malta created over 35 exhibits, sharing a total of 600 assets and more than 800 images online in collaboration with Google. The exhibition is available for free on the web and through the new Google Arts & Culture mobile app on iOS and Android.

[Heritage Malta](#) together with St Martin's Institute of IT launched the St Paul's Catacombs Oculus Project. The new extended site includes a visitor centre incorporating all amenities and interpretation facilities and a walkway which provides access around the site. The project also incorporated a number of scientific studies, including archaeological research, environmental studies and ground penetrating radar scans, the construction of new visitor facilities, 3D navigation through parts of the site, new interpretation of the site and its different phases, and access to previously inaccessible areas and to a number of catacombs.

The site's interpretation includes a number of audio-visuals with information on various aspects of the site. Heritage Malta has also implemented an interactive immersive experience of the Catacombs through a setup of virtual reality goggles and 3D navigation systems using the Oculus Rift technology. Instead of viewing a screen in front of them, users are immersed in the Catacomb and able to interact with physical objects, sounds and other sensations that simulate a user's physical presence in a virtual or imaginary environment. The aim is to provide alternative accessibility to the catacombs. Allowing people with mobility problems to virtually access the St Paul's Catacombs

[Heritage Malta](#) has also launched [MUŻA](#), an Arts museum. This museum will be different to others as the visitor, apart from admiring the exhibited works of art, will be helped to understand and possibly even discover the muse of the artist in order for him to create, or try to create, a particular painting, sculpture or other artistic objects. In order for

those who visit MUŻA to appreciate the works on display, it was decided to use technology in all its forms to understand the history of the artistic work, and to possibly even discover what inspired the artist. To this end, various professional artists worked on audio-visual material projects, some of them interactive, intended to allow the visitors to not only experience the museum, but to be critical, ask questions and possibly even provide them with their own muse to be artistic. The project is partially funded by the EU, as part of the European Regional Development Fund and the European Structural and Investment Fund 2014-2020.

## 8.8 Synergies and partnerships

### Synergies between public policies and programmes

[Arts Council Malta](#) collaborates with other public entities from outside the cultural sector in order to facilitate young people's participation in cultural activities. This is done through the following initiatives:

It-[Premju tal-President għall-Kreattività](#) provides recognition and support at the highest level of the State to organisations, especially those working with vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, to engage these groups in creativity and arts-driven projects and thereby increase their level of integration and engagement in society. The Award is managed by the Office of the President and [Arts Council Malta](#).

A memorandum of understanding was signed in 2017 between [Arts Council Malta](#) and the [Malta Council for Science and Technology \(MCST\)](#). This MoU will serve to strengthen the collaboration between the two institutions and through its funding programmes and initiatives, [Arts Council Malta](#) shall encourage artists to pursue their interests in science and technology and to collaborate with individuals and organizations in these fields of knowledge. It will also encourage the integration of science and technology in the [Kreattiv](#) funding programme while [Esplora](#), which forms part of the MCST, shall provide mentorship and assistance to beneficiary projects that include a science and technology component. Esplora will be offering its premises to selected projects to exhibit their work where such events are open to the general public visiting Esplora as well as jointly collaborate in activities and events organised by ACM including the Malta International Arts Festival. Moreover, ACM and Esplora shall co-organise networking and information sessions whereby artists, public cultural organisations, educators and individuals in the fields of Science and Technology will have the opportunity to discuss and explore potential ideas for future projects or other collaborations.

Collaborations with [Malta Enterprise](#) on bridging the gaps in areas of access to finance, skills and incentives – In 2016, in collaboration with Malta Enterprise, ACM organised information sessions for newly registered self-employed in the cultural and creative sectors. The sessions focused on tax obligations, e-business, copyright and incentives available from Malta Enterprise and were attended by around 50 people. 42 meetings were held, focusing on Malta Enterprise incentives, the majority of which were eligible to make use of [Microinvest](#). Additionally two creatives benefited from [B.Start](#) and one from the [Microguarantee](#).

The [Kreattiv](#) funding programme engages educators and creative practitioners in dialogue and collaboration while encouraging students and educators towards further engagement within the creative sector. Kreattiv aims to bring creative practitioners into schools to work with teachers and students to inspire, learn and create in a collaborative and innovative way.

The aims of the fund are to:

- Initiate creative projects in classrooms, schools and colleges through collaborations between teachers, students and creative practitioners and, in so doing, to facilitate creative education as a key tool for holistic development.

- Introduce children and young people to potential careers in the cultural and creative sector, through selected collaborations with higher educational institutions.
- Embed cultural and creative entrepreneurship in schools as expressed in the National Cultural Policy.
- Encourage collaboration between educational institutions, the culture and creative industries, and other relevant sectors such as science and technology.
- Create employment opportunities for creative professionals.
- Encourage creative collaborations amongst educational institutions, and partnerships with public and private cultural operators.

[Divergent thinkers](#) is an annual collective exhibition for young artists managed by [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) in collaboration with St James Cavalier Centre for Creativity. Divergent Thinkers creates a platform for young contemporary Maltese artists to exhibiting and promote their work. Young artists between 18 and 30 years old are invited to submit their artistic proposals and be considered for public exhibition. Selected artists receive an honorarium and participate in a curated exhibition. The works are included in an illustrated catalogue accompanying the exhibition. The artist with the best work are awarded with a residency in an international art centre. The winning artist and runner-up are given support to set up their own exhibition.

[It-Tahriġ Mużikali taż-Żgħażaġh fil-Każini tal-Banda](#) is a project managed by [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) with the support of [Għaqda Każini tal-Banda](#) that offers financial assistance to band clubs to develop initiatives to bring more people into the teaching of music or to improve facilities which teach music.

[Artivisti](#) is a collaboration between [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) and the [Arts Council Malta](#) and is intended to be a development platform for youth collaboration in the creative world. [Artivisti](#) is designed to recognize the talent of emerging young people in creative and artistic field, and to foster their potential, creativity, talent, initiative and social responsibility.

Taħżiż is a programme managed [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) and the [Għaqda tal-Malti](#) of the University of Malta. Taħżiż creates an opportunity for young writers between 18 and 30 years old to participate in a series of three intensive residential seminars on creative writing. At the end of the program have performed work during the seminars publication.

[ŻiguŻajg](#) is an annual International Arts Festival for children and young people organised by [Fondazzjoni Kreattività](#) with the support of [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) that aims to foster aesthetic and cultural awareness amongst the younger generation. ŻiguŻajg has a vision of positioning the creative arts for children and young people at the core of Malta's creative ecology. The festival aims to do this by showcasing professional arts specifically designed for children and young people in various disciplines at a high level of excellence. It does this through the development of a national repertoire of works for children and young people and by creating an accessible and inclusive artistic programme which increases cultural participation.

## **Partnerships between the culture and creative sectors, youth organisations and youth workers**

[Creative Communities](#) is a fund for community-led creative and artistic activities, primarily addressing local communities. It provides the opportunity for training, research and the development of artistic projects led by the community for the community, while celebrating cultural diversity.

[Creative Communities](#) aims to:

- Boost art and culture in the community through projects managed by voluntary organisations active in the local community

- Enable voluntary organisations to carry out projects related to culture and the arts in local communities
- Encourage active participation of local communities in the culture and arts sector
- Celebrate the cultural diversity found in the various towns and cities around Malta and Gozo
- Support projects that encourage cultural integration
- Strengthen and increase knowledge of local tangible and intangible heritage

The projects the fund invests in are:

- Informal Training and Development Programmes which boost the artistic development of the applicant organisation or which encourage the creative development of the community. This may include exchange programmes on a local and international level
- Research related to aspects of the collective memory of the community and/or cultural identity of the community
- Events, productions and/or exhibitions which encourage active cultural participation, boost the community's creative expression or appreciation of its history and identity.

## 8.9 Enhancing social inclusion through culture

### Fostering equality and young people involvement through cultural activities

[Creative Communities](#) is a fund for community-led creative and artistic activities, primarily addressing local communities. It provides the opportunity for training, research and the development of artistic projects led by the community for the community, while celebrating cultural diversity.

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The [Kreattiv](#) funding programme engages educators and creative practitioners in dialogue and collaboration while encouraging students and educators towards further engagement within the creative sector. Kreattiv aims to bring creative practitioners into schools to

work with teachers and students to inspire, learn and create in a collaborative and innovative way.

The aims of the fund are to:

- Initiate creative projects in classrooms, schools and colleges through collaborations between teachers, students and creative practitioners and, in so doing, to facilitate creative education as a key tool for holistic development.
- Introduce children and young people to potential careers in the cultural and creative sector, through selected collaborations with higher educational institutions.
- Embed cultural and creative entrepreneurship in schools as expressed in the National Cultural Policy.
- Encourage collaboration between educational institutions, the culture and creative industries, and other relevant sectors such as science and technology.
- Create employment opportunities for creative professionals.
- Encourage creative collaborations amongst educational institutions, and partnerships with public and private cultural operators.

Il-[Premju tal-President għall-Kreattività](#) provides recognition and support at the highest level of the State to organisations, especially those working with vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, to engage these groups in creativity and arts-driven projects and thereby increase their level of integration and engagement in society. The Award is managed by the Office of the President and [Arts Council Malta](#).

### **Combating discrimination and poverty through cultural activities**

The [Kreattiv](#) funding programme engages educators and creative practitioners in dialogue and collaboration while encouraging students and educators towards further engagement within the creative sector. Kreattiv aims to bring creative practitioners into schools to work with teachers and students to inspire, learn and create in a collaborative and innovative way.

The aims of the fund are to:

- Initiate creative projects in classrooms, schools and colleges through collaborations between teachers, students and creative practitioners and, in so doing, to facilitate creative education as a key tool for holistic development.
- Introduce children and young people to potential careers in the cultural and creative sector, through selected collaborations with higher educational institutions.
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- Events, productions and/or exhibitions which encourage active cultural participation, boost the community's creative expression or appreciation of its history and identity
  - [8.10 Current debates and reforms](#)
  - In 2012, Malta's capital - Valletta - was declared European Capital of Culture (ECoC) for 2018. The [Valletta 2018 Foundation](#) is responsible for the implementation of the Cultural Programme which aims to foster citizen participation while promoting a European dimension. Valletta 2018 will enable the participation of European citizens and will form an integral and sustainable part of the long-term social, economic and cultural development of Malta. The [Cultural Programme](#) is built around four themes: Generations, Routes, Cities and Islands, with a number of activities specifically targeting young people. In conjunction with the Cultural Programme, the Foundation is developing a programme of consistent, accessible and comparable research and evaluation directly linked to culture.
  - The [Culture Directorate](#) is in the process of formulating a new culture policy which looks towards 2020 and beyond. It is the Directorate's intention to target young people in becoming more interested and participative in culture and arts, as well as to build a young cultural audience that appreciates more culture and arts.

## 9. YOUTH AND THE WORLD

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The Ministry for Inclusion and Quality of Life, through Aġenzija Żgħażaġh and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion promote global issues among young people. Malta is particularly active in the Commonwealth and the Euromed platform.

Young people have the opportunity to learn about global issues both at school in the formal way or else through opportunities of non-formal learning.

## 9.1 General context

### Main concepts

The geographic, cultural, and economic differences that long defined the world are fast disappearing and are being replaced by new realities, new opportunities and new challenges for young people.

Young people today are confronted with new developments in the ways and means of learning; often rapid economic change, social dislocation and growing, if uneven, affluence; increasing urbanization and rural isolation; and the affects of climate change and threats to the natural environment. Political instability and the shadow of ethnic and religious conflict and violence hang over the lives of many young people.

Geographic location, physical environment, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic background, religious beliefs, cultural background, and sexual orientation are some of the characteristics that differentiate young people. Consequently, young people require supports and different resources based on their differing characteristics, aspirations and needs.

Malta is of the view that in this global context empowering young women and young men is critical if they are to successfully overcome the challenges and avail of the opportunities that face them today.

Empowerment is based on respect for the individuality, worth and dignity of every young person regardless of their gender, beliefs, ethnicity, capacities, socio-economic background and sexual orientation; for the right to have their voice heard and to be informed on all issues that concern them; and for the right to determine their own future and happiness.

Empowerment upholds the human rights and responsibilities of young people. It fosters gender equality and equal treatment for all as well as social solidarity, civic engagement and volunteerism. It promotes good and responsible governance and strengthens the democratic process. It recognises the particular needs and aspirations of young people with disabilities, young people at risk, and those living in indigenous communities.

In its foreign policy, Malta seeks to support young people and youth organisations both in the Mediterranean region and further afield, while domestically it seeks to encourage young people to be opened to the wider world and to engage actively with its many peoples and cultures.

### Youth interest in global issues

There are no surveys or studies that describe recent general trends on youth interest in global issues. A study entitled "[The Participation of Maltese Young People in the Voluntary Sector](#)" published in 2012 had noted that "the voluntary youth sector lacks the human resources necessary to see through its plans and seems to be experiencing difficulties in attracting the participation of young people. Voluntary organisations also seem to have a dearth of the basic resources they require to cope with the complex process to apply for funding through EU programmes. Most lack legal, financial and a governance framework." However, a number of youth organisations, such as [Malta UNESCO Youth Organisation](#), [MaltMUN](#), [Kopin](#) and [AIESEC](#), offer opportunities for young participants to get involved in global issues such as UN Millenium Development goals, Human rights and Sustainable development.

## 9.2 Administration and governance

### Governance

Youth cooperation, participation and contribution to policy-making at the global level is promoted by [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#), the national youth agency, in cooperation with the

[Minister for Inclusion and Social Wellbeing](#) and the [Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion](#). Malta also plays an active role at regional level - the Mediterranean region - in cooperation with the [EU-CoE youth partnership in the youth field](#), and at global level through the [United Nations](#) and the [Commonwealth](#). Aġenzija Żgħażaġh represents Malta in cooperation initiatives under the [Commonwealth Youth Programme](#) and in promoting the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment its strategic policy framework, the [Commonwealth Youth Civil Activism Network](#) and initiatives to professionalise the youth work sector.

Aġenzija Żgħażaġh collaborates also with the voluntary youth sector and NGOs such as [SOS Malta](#) and [Anna Lindh Foundation](#). Also youth organisations such as [Malta UNESCO Youth Organisation](#), [MaltMUN](#), [Kopin](#) and [AIESEC](#) participate in the development of policies related to young people's contribution on global issues.

### **Cross-sectorial cooperation**

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#), the national youth agency, in cooperation with the [Minister for Inclusion and Social Wellbeing](#) collaborates with the [Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion](#) on policies related to young people's contribution on global issues.

## **9.3 Exchanges between young people and policy-makers on global issues**

### **Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the domestic level**

To mark the International Youth Day in Malta, [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) organises annual meetings and events for youth organisations at the Youth Village. The aim of such meetings is to initiate discussions on the International Youth Day theme. In 2014 as part of the [International Youth Day 2014](#), Aġenzija Żgħażaġh and the Maltese Olympic Committee organised a sport event to promote physical activity. In 2015 Aġenzija Żgħażaġh teamed up with Parliamentary Secretary for Research, Innovation, Youth and Sport and the Maltese National Youth Council to commemorate the [International Youth Day 2015](#) focusing on Youth Civil Engagement. The theme for the [International Youth Day 2016](#) was The Road to 2030: Eradicating Poverty and Achieving Sustainable Production and Consumption and young people had the opportunity to discuss with national policymakers ways on how to tackle the issue of poverty, especially with regards to young people. In 2017 as part of the [International Youth Day 2017](#) youth organisations attended a meeting at Aġenzija Żgħażaġh's Youth Village with the aim of initiating discussions on the International Youth Day theme and encourage young people to become agents for social change in their communities and contribution to peace building at international level. In 2018 as part of the [International Youth Day 2018](#), themed 'Safe Spaces for Young People' Aġenzija Żgħażaġh launched Polifest, a 12 month initiative, during which young people will have the opportunity to discuss with policy makers issues that effect their well being in safe environments.

### **Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the international level**

#### *Commonwealth Youth Forum*

The [Commonwealth Youth Forum](#) is held every five years, in parallel with the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), the last of which was held in Malta in November, 2015. [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) was actively involved in organising and hosting the event.

The [Commonwealth Youth Forum](#) runs in parallel with the CHOGM programme and its primary aim is to facilitate and encourage constructive dialogue between young people and heads of government in addressing youth related issues.

The overall theme of the Commonwealth Youth Forum was '[Adding Global Value...#WhatNext?](#)'. The forum discussed practical solutions and strategies focusing on how young people can contribute and add value to upholding and promoting the Commonwealth Charter, achieving the goals of the post 2015 development agenda to eradicate poverty and promote sustainable development in the Commonwealth.

The [Commonwealth YouthCan Network](#) was officially launched in November 2015, following the conclusion of the Commonwealth Youth Forum. This initiative was possible through the collaboration of the Institute of Strategic Dialogue, the Commonwealth Youth Division and the Parliamentary Secretariat for Research, Innovation, Youth and Sport in Malta. The aim of this network is to upscale and optimize grassroots efforts to combat violent extremism of all forms. It enables an ongoing and international exchange of practices and know-how and fosters collaboration and co-creation between its members. Through the network, young people's needs and views can be represented to policy makers.

The Commonwealth Youth Forum concluded a number of outcomes targeted for action over the next five years under economic, environmental, social and political agendas.

Under the Economic agenda action is to be taken to promote open and fair access to science and technology; create pathways to sustainable development and promote decent employment; and support youth entrepreneurship for economic growth.

As part of the Environment agenda action is to be taken to address disaster risk reduction and management; balance production and consumption patterns with sustainable development; and transform climate change into relevant opportunities for the youth.

Under the Social agenda action is to be taken to re-assess access to quality education for youth; create alternate pathways for accessing medical and health services; and supporting and recognising Youth Workers.

As part of the Political agenda action is to be taken to counter the rise of global extremism; promote social cohesion and reconciliation; and develop and promote human rights across the Commonwealth.

#### *Young Mediterranean Voices*

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) and the [Anna Lindh Mediterranean Foundation](#), have the strategic intent to deepen their cooperation in the domain of intercultural dialogue and youth development. This will be achieved through the development and establishment of a regional "Debate Academy" in Malta for Young Mediterranean Voices, the flagship debate programme that connects civil society, education and policy-makers across the Euro-Mediterranean region, and provides a pioneering platform to open doors for young influencers to shape policy and media narratives.

In preparation of this new stage of cooperation, the [Anna Lindh Foundation](#) and [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) piloted together a series of joint activities during the Foundation's previous multi annual phase (2015-2017). This included the piloting of the intercultural debate methodology for the new Young Mediterranean Voices programme on the occasion of the landmark MED FORUM in Malta (October 2016) and preparation of policy voice events hosted at the Malta House in Brussels on Youth, Peace and Security (June 2017), in the framework of the Maltese Presidency of the European Council.

MED FORUM in Malta was also the platform for the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Federica Mogherini, to announce the launch of the flagship debate programme Young Mediterranean Voices. As an immediate follow up, the EU's HR/VP Youth Dialogue Initiative was designed and launched with Young Mediterranean Voices in March 2017.

With co-funding secured from the European Commission (European Neighbourhood Instrument), Young Mediterranean Voices is also embedded in a series of new EU policies (joint communication on the European Neighbourhood Policy, first EU International Cultural Relations Strategy co-launched by the Commissioner for Education and Culture

and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs) as well as referenced in a series of Ministerial frameworks and declarations (5+5 Ministerial, League of Arab States-EU Foreign Affairs cooperation). The programme is also embedded in cooperation agreements with UNESCO, the League of Arab States, and EUNIC Global (the European Union network of cultural institutes).

The inception phase for Young Mediterranean Voices officially began on 1st January 2018 and there is a regional operational plan now in place to 2020. The Foundation organised the inception “management retreat” and “strategic partners’ forum” in Malta (May 2018), with the participation of representatives of regional institutions and the director of the National Youth Agency of Malta - [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#).

The outcomes of the inception meeting included the strategic intent until 2020: (a) to refine the model of Young Mediterranean Voices, and its theory of change, as a model of pioneering practice that can be replicated worldwide in partnership with the United Nations and regional institutions; and (b) to reaffirm the central role of Malta as a unique space to connect youth agency and voice across the two shores of the Mediterranean.

This cooperation agreement is also aligned with the United Nations Strategy on Youth (Youth2030) adopted in September 2018, and the implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 2250 and 2419, with a particular focus on moving from youth-led debate to youth leadership and advocacy.

## 9.4 Raising awareness about global issues

### Formal, non-formal and informal learning

#### Formal Education

As part of the [National Curriculum Framework For All](#) the following courses tackling global issues are covered in formal education in secondary level schools during Personal, Social and Career Development; History; Geography and Social Studies.

Personal, Social and Career Development deals with issues such as migration, sustainable development, health, safety and wellbeing, democracy, domestic violence and LGBTIQ issues. This subject adopts a developmental syllabus whereby it tackles different themes at different levels of education. The recommended time is a 90-minute lesson.

History is divided in History General (11-16 years) and History Option (14-16 years). During History General aspects concerning awareness and preservation of the world heritage in connection to Ancient Mediterranean civilizations, democratic rights, freedom of the press, right for education, gender equality within Malta’s 19th and 20th century political and social and economic history are tackled. During History Option the causes and consequences of international terrorism with special emphasis on the western world and the Middle East; the many facets of globalisation (e.g. political, economic, cultural, environmental etc.) causes and consequences of post-World War II regional conflicts. Such global issues are included in the curriculum and are treated as part of a wider theme. Global issues are taught in the form of case studies where students are taught how to compare and contrast the causes, events and consequences in relation to one another and bring out their own conclusions and generalizations.

Geography deals with global issues such as climate change, sustainable development, over fishing, soil erosion, land, air, sea pollution, acid rain, deforestation, and famine. These topics are covered separately in geography both in the general and option. These topics are covered together with other topics over a period of three years whereby students have one lesson a week if it is Geography general and 4 lessons if it is Geography option.

During Social Studies themes such as sex and gender, racial discrimination, democracy, human rights, consumerism, diversity, types of families, global democracy, fundamental

human rights, consumers and poverty, education, global peace, cultures, Economy, tourism, democracy, WHO, social exclusion, mass media, sustainable development and migration. Such global issues are tackled during the subject. The allotted time is only 40 minutes a week from Year 7 till Year 11.

A number of initiatives also take place in a non-formal learning environment. Nature Trust (Malta) representing FEE (Malta) co-ordinates [EkoSkola](#). This initiative, which is part of Eco-Schools, aims at mobilizing whole schools to empower students to adopt an active role in environmental decision-making and action in their school and in their community. Schools that have successfully achieved this goal are awarded a Green Flag – a prestigious eco-label testifying the school's commitment to fostering sustainable lifestyles.

A number of initiatives also focus on developing young people's sense of identity and respect for other people's identities such as the No Hate Speech Campaign. The campaign's main objectives are to support human rights education activities for action against hate speech, to develop and disseminate tools for reporting hate speech, to mobilise partners to prevent and counter hate speech and intolerance both online and offline. [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) joined forces with [SOS Malta](#) and the [American Embassy](#) in order to create more awareness on a national level about the No Hate Speech Campaign and participated with a number of partners in a number of activities.

Aġenzija Żgħażaġh, in partnership with [SOS Malta](#), initiated a project, [Youth Upbeat](#), co-financed by the European Refugee Fund, that aimed to promote integration between different sector of Maltese society, in particular, young people and refugees, or people with subsidiary protection, by providing opportunities for interaction and awareness-raising through the use of culture and the performing arts as tools for social cohesion. Six 'Cultural Ambassadors', all having refugee or subsidiary protection status, who had a particular performing arts skill, shared aspects of their culture as well as personal stories during 24 interactive workshops in which almost 500 young aged 13 and 14 participated.

### **Youth-targeted information campaigns on global issues**

In 2016 the focus of the No Hate Speech Campaign was on raising awareness among post-secondary school and university students in Malta. [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) raised awareness about the No Hate Speech movement in four (4) higher secondary schools in collaboration with [Studenti Demokristjani \(SDM\)](#), a student organisation. No Hate activities were also organised in post-secondary institution and at the university where young people were given the opportunity to voice their thoughts and concerns about young immigrants and refugees. Young people participating also had the opportunity in workshops to discuss the various attitudes that can be adopted when encountering and living near young immigrants and refugees.

A seminar entitled "The Contribution of Youth Organisations in Sport" was organised by Aġenzija Żgħażaġh in collaboration with Sport Malta as part of the National Sport Forum. During this seminar, physical activities were proposed as tools that youth workers and youth organisation can use to promote No Hate Speech Campaign and intercultural dialogue.

To mark World Refugee Day, Aġenzija Żgħażaġh, [SOS Malta](#), [Integra](#), [Migrant Women's Association](#), [African Media Association Malta](#) and [Spark 15](#) joined together for a march to take a stand against hate speech targeting refugees and a No Hate monument was erected by Youth Local Councils.

### **Information providers**

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) is the public authority responsible for providing information related to youth global issues. The agency uses its own [website](#), [youth information portal](#) and [newsletters](#).

## Key initiatives

Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ, in partnership with [SOS Malta](#), initiated a project, [Youth Upbeat](#), co-financed by the European Refugee Fund, that aimed to promote integration between different sectors of Maltese society, in particular, young people and refugees, or people with subsidiary protection, by providing opportunities for interaction and awareness-raising through the use of culture and the performing arts as tools for social cohesion. Six 'Cultural Ambassadors', all having refugee or subsidiary protection status, who had a particular performing arts skill, shared aspects of their culture as well as personal stories during 24 interactive workshops in which almost 500 young people aged 13 and 14 participated.

SOS Malta, in collaboration with Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ offered a training course entitled 'Blogger Training on No Hate Speech in Malta for Young People: Developing participant's knowledge, skills and attitudes in human rights' that focused on developing knowledge, skills and attitudes in human rights and supporting participants to recognise and act against racism and discrimination in their online form of expression, while also supporting them to further promote human rights values among young people online.

Malta avails of the opportunity provided by International Youth Day to promote and raise awareness of national and global issues. The theme of International Youth Day 2017 was Youth Building Peace. There is growing recognition that young people are agents of change in conflict prevention and sustaining peace. International Youth Day 2017 was dedicated to celebrating young people's contributions to conflict prevention and transformation as well as inclusion, social justice, and sustainable peace. To mark [International Youth Day 2017](#) in Malta, youth organisations attend a meeting at Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ's Youth Village with the aim of initiating discussions on the International Youth Day theme and encourage young people to become agents for social change in their communities and contribution to peace building at international level.

## 9.5 Green volunteering, production and consumption

### Green volunteering

The [Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change](#) (MESDC), along with its departments and agencies, undertakes various initiatives to incentivise the public, including young people, towards more sustainable production and consumption patterns through specific campaigns on effective waste separation management and reduction of single-use plastics, amongst others.

In this respect, the Government organises numerous educational campaigns and events to promote green production and consumption. The main outcome of these campaigns is to make citizens, in particular young people who can effectively create change, more aware of the negative impacts that waste can have on the environment, thus highlighting the importance of switching to green consumption and production patterns within the concept of a circular economy. By means of these and other initiatives that are in the pipeline, the Government will continue to make it as easy and cost-effectively as possible for consumers to make consumption choices that conserve natural resources in everyday life.

### Environment Education

Environmental Education regarding waste management can help our country to continue its move towards sustainable waste management. It will also help us as individuals to make the complex connections between environmental issues on a local and global level, economic prosperity, benefits to society and our own health. Educating children from a young age is the first step to continue this necessary change. [WasteServ Malta](#) offers the below services to all educational institutions:

#### Activities held at Primary Schools

- Story Telling about waste management and waste separation exercises

- A quiz about waste management in the Maltese Islands
- Interactive sessions using PowerPoint presentations
- Activities held at Secondary Schools
- Drama sessions for forms 1 and 2
- Quiz about waste management in the Maltese Islands
- Interactive sessions using PowerPoint presentation about waste management
- Site visits

#### Activities held at Post-Secondary and Tertiary Schools

- Systems of Knowledge Project
- Dissertations
- Activities held at the Visitor Centre in Marsaskala and Tal-Kus in Xewkija Gozo
- Activities held at Adults and Day Centres
- Activities for persons with disability
- Activities at different entities including hotels, NGO's and government departments
- Site Visits of facilities
- Summer Clubs
- Waste Reduction Guidelines for a Whole School Approach

### **Green production and consumptions**

As part of the [Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change](#) (MESDC), [Wasteserve](#) organises the [European Waste Reduction Week in Malta](#). The aim is to encouraging a wide range of audiences, including young people, to come up with practical solutions and activities that help to reduce waste or increase recycling, and promote these actions amongst peers.

The Thematic Focus for 2017 "Give it a new life", which encourages reusing and repairing rather than throwing away. Behind this topic is the need to shift from a throw-away attitude towards more appreciation for products and the resources used. This year the EWWR will open your eyes about how easy it is to find value in something you thought had become useless.

## **9.6 Intercontinental youth work and development cooperation**

### **Intercontinental youth work cooperation**

#### *Our White Seas*

A number of seminars and symposiums have been organised on the initiative of [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) and the [EuroMed Youth Platform](#), together with the [Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the youth field](#), the League of Arab States, and the North-South Centre on the promotion of the active citizenship and participation of young people in the south Mediterranean region with a focus on the:

- Development of a common cooperation framework on youth-related issues for sharing good practices and information on youth partnerships and funding opportunities
- Capacity building for NGOs and youth organisations in the region, through cooperation, training and other online supports with a particular focus on youth exchanges, culture, education and human development issues, and

- Employing non-formal learning and youth work practice in the region to enhance the skills and competencies of young people particularly in relation to employment, entrepreneurship, participation and social inclusion.

A series of five international conferences organised by the [EuroMed Youth Platform](#) under the general heading "[Our White Sea](#)" has also been held under the following themes:

- Youth participation for the promotion of peace, human rights and fundamental freedoms
- Empowerment of Youth Organisations and Youth-led Civil Society Initiatives

Euro-Arab Youth Policy Co-operation.

As EU funding for the EuroMed Youth Platform has now ceased, it is no longer active. The North African region is encompassed by the EU's European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).

### *3rd Commonwealth Conference on Youth Work*

In 2018, [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) organised the 3rd Commonwealth Conference on Youth Work called "Crosscurrents Steering a course for youth work as a growing profession in the Commonwealth and in Europe". As part of both, the Maltese Islands are in the crosscurrents between the Commonwealth and Europe, and in the crosscurrents between how they interface and interact in the development of youth work as a growth profession. The conference addressed youth work across the Commonwealth and Europe while examining, connecting, and looking to strengthen the status and standard of practice. The conference included exploration and discussion of professionalisation, its place, the potential and actual development of its meaning and contextual relevance globally.

The conference was organised in a context where recent policy initiatives and developments in the youth work field in both the Commonwealth and Europe provided an opportunity to discuss and consider together some of the salient features of youth work and how it can best be promoted as a professional practice that supports the education and development of young people worldwide. The conference discussed what are the values, policies, methods, practices, and priorities that we have in common? Where are the points of difference, variation, and perhaps counterflow? What can we learn from each other and how do we go about sharing our knowledge and experiences to enable us to work together in the future, alongside young people, to create a better world?

The conference aimed for:

- The promotion of discussion, debate and exchange between practitioners, Ministers and other stakeholders,
- Provision of opportunities for CAYWA members and others to liaise/work with senior government officials in developing potential actions/strategies to raise the quality of youth work in Commonwealth member states and Europe,
- Facilitation of the building of partnerships between European and Commonwealth where possible/appropriate.

The conference focused on four themes:

#### 1. Developing and implementing policy and strategies

Many countries have legislation, policies and/or strategies in place aimed at or encompassing young people, their education and welfare; some include youth work. However, relatively few countries appear to have specific legislative provision, policies and or/strategies for youth work: relatively few have any 'legal' or agreed practice-based definition of youth work.

#### 2. Professionalisation, education and training

The education and training of youth workers in many countries appear to be a mix of the formal/non-formal approaches and/or accredited/non-accredited programs/courses; the relative balance between these differs from country to country and sometimes within

national contexts. The professionalisation of youth work is often seen as a contentious issue, in terms of both what it means and implies and its impact on what has often been understood traditionally as the essentially voluntary nature and character of most youth work.

### 3. Ethics and young people's welfare

Ethical considerations are a feature of youth work in all countries; however, addressing issues such as the protection and safeguarding of young people varies globally. What might be considered to be ethical practice within any profession logically needs to be established by that profession. However, there are relatively few national professional associations for youth workers, fewer still can claim to be the voice of the majority of youth workers in their context. This means what is ethical, in large part, has to be assumed, using guidelines from other contexts or referral to sources that are, in the main, generated more from academic settings, rather than by the involvement of and consultation with grassroots practitioners. Often, what passes for ethical consideration is closer to expressions of personal and group morality.

Nonetheless, it is common to look to apply ethical standards that can work to ensure appropriate behaviour/conduct, something that is central to the very concept of youth work. It is hard to see how such considerations might not be a defining feature of professionalisation. For youth workers, both professional and voluntary, standards of ethical practice and behaviour are essential for what they do.

### 4. Emerging issues and innovative responses

The old geographic, cultural, and economic differences that long defined the world have either vanished or are fast disappearing. These often oppressive or at least limiting structures are being replaced by new realities, new opportunities and new challenges for the youth of the world. Young people today are confronted with novel developments in the ways and means of learning; often rapid economic change, social dislocation and growing, if uneven, affluence; increasing urbanization and rural isolation. At the same time, the effects of climate change and threats to the natural environment pose far reaching and complex challenges to future populations. Political instability and the shadow of ethnic and religious conflict, increasing social and economic inequalities, forms of radicalization, extremism and violence hang over the lives of many young people. How youth work and youth workers respond to these new challenges and opportunities will determine the future of youth work but also this can potentially play a positive part in addressing national, regional and global agenda and concerns.

In preparation for the *Summit of the Two Shores of the Western Mediterranean* in France, the high-level meeting that brought together Heads of State/Governments from the 5+5 Western Mediterranean Dialogue countries, the European Union, Mediterranean organizations international institutions and civil society representatives from the two shores of the Mediterranean, Malta organised *The Malta Forum on Youth, Education and Mobility* entitled "Investing in a #MediterraneanGeneration" is a key milestone for the Summit.

The forum brought together around 150 practitioners from the host country and the Member States associated with the Summit, including young leaders, educators, civil society practitioners and intercultural experts.

Organised by the Maltese Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion in collaboration Agenzija Zghazagh; the Anna Lindh Foundation, l'Università della Svizzera Italiana in Lugano and, L'Institut de hautes études internationales et du développement in Geneva and supported by the European Commission, the Union for the Mediterranean, the Mediterranean Academy for Diplomatic Studies, and the World Bank Group, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the Centre for Mediterranean Integration aimed to:

- Connect innovative and scalable projects in the domain of Youth, Mobility and Education;

- Put investment in “the Mediterranean Generation” at the heart of a renewed and inclusive regional agenda.

Following discussions on 4 key areas, namely education, virtual exchange, culturally intelligent schools co-designing the future and the potential of media, participants submitted 21 projects. Two Union for the Mediterranean -labelled projects, [Mediterranean New Chance \(MedNC\)](#) and [High Opportunity for Mediterranean Executive Recruitment \(HOMERe\)](#) were retained by the Forum. In particular, MedNC was recognized as a model approach to addresses the challenge of socio-professional integration of young people and, particularly, of NEETs in the region.

### **Development cooperation activities**

[Young Mediterranean Voices](#), was held in Malta in October 2016 under the [Anna Lindh Foundation’s MED FORUM 2016](#), the largest youth, media and civil society gathering for intercultural dialogue across the MENA region and Europe. Following on the forum, [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#), in collaboration with the Foundation, organised the first Young Mediterranean Voices debate following the establishing of a debating hub in Malta affiliated to the regional programme.

The 1st Young Med Voices Euro-Med Debate and Policy Forum will take place on 2- 5 July 2019 Malta. Organised by the Anna Lindh Foundation in partnership with the British Council and the Maltese Youth Agency, with the support of the European Commission, the Forum will bring together more than 50 young debaters from across the two shores of the Mediterranean for a unique programme of intercultural debates, virtual exchange, and policy roundtables. The YMV Forum will represent a central contribution of Mediterranean youth to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The motions of the debates will be connected to key Sustainable Development Goals, in particular linked to quality education, gender equality, reducing inequalities, climate action and peace, justice and strong institutions. Young Mediterranean voices is the flagship debate and Dialogue programme connecting civil society, education and policy-makers across the southern Mediterranean and Europe. The programme provides a pioneering platform to open doors for young influencers to shape policy and media narratives. It is grounded on the positive experience of Young Arab Voices launched in 2011 by the Anna Lindh Foundation and British Council and it benefits from the support of the European Union.

During the three-day Forum, 50 representatives of debate associations in more than twenty countries took part in thematic debates connected to the Global Sustainable Development Goals, Agenda 2030. The Forum debate was also connected through virtual exchange to debaters in diverse communities across the Middle East, North Africa, Europe and the Balkans.

Malta also has a number of protocol agreements on youth issues with a number of countries including Egypt, Tunisia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates and Azerbaijan (. These protocol agreements aim to encourage and promote cooperation and joint actions and exchanges in the youth field particularly in such areas as:

- youth employment and entrepreneurship;
- youth participation in public and social life;
- youth organisation capacity;
- rights and the protection of young people;
- youth and health promotion;
- youth and environmental protection;
- youth and volunteering; youth and art/culture;
- youth and ICT.

In addition, short term mobility programmes are to be encouraged and good practices shared and promoted.

## 9.7 Current debates and reforms

In 2016 the [Commonwealth Secretariat](#) planned and implemented a 35 country baseline survey on progress in the recognition of youth work in selected member states. Malta was one of the 35 member states of the Commonwealth selected to participate in the baseline survey.

The report of the baseline survey, [Youth Work in the Commonwealth - A Growth Profession](#), was published and presented at the Commonwealth Youth Ministers' Meeting in Kampala Uganda, in August 2017.

The survey aims to establish a baseline to inform planning and implementation of initiatives to professionalise the youth work sector at the Commonwealth Secretariat. The data will help identify national strengths and gaps in professionalising youth work in order to inform the Commonwealth's programme decisions in enhancing youth work sectors.

In the long-term, this data will serve as a beginning point for the setting up of a user-friendly data base on the status of professionalizing youth work across the Commonwealth that will help governments assess their status and move forward in strengthening processes to professionalize the sector.

This baseline serves as an inquiry into the professional identity and multiple practices of youth work, a look at the way in which its professionalisation has been approached in Commonwealth member states, and a preliminary look at how it has begun shaping and benefiting young people's autonomy, self-empowerment and productivity.

The study was conducted in 35 Commonwealth member states, including Malta, that were considered by regional consultants - comprising Africa, Asia, Caribbean, Europe and Canada, and Pacific - in relation to the extent of steps taken to professionalise youth work.

Out of the 35 countries in the sample, 12 countries (34%) had taken significant steps to professionalise the youth work sector. Only 11 (31%) countries, including Malta, had distinct national-level policies that recognised youth work. Twelve countries (34%), including Malta, had youth workers' associations that help safeguard the integrity and quality of the profession, and 25 (71%), including Malta, could claim at least a Diploma-level qualification for youth work professionals.

The survey report also considers regulating practices, professional validation and supervision, financial investment and remuneration and sets out general conclusions of the way forward for professional youth work in the Commonwealth.

Malta was seen as one of the richest examples of systematic state-supported youth work structures and was also identified as the strongest example of sustained links between legislation and policy and established and systemic structures and processes for youth work practice. While all four countries in the European/Canada region had legislation and policy relating to young people, only Malta had specific commitments to youth work in the form of a Youth Work Act. In terms of the actual advancement of youth work practice, the clearest correlation between policy and practice was seen in Malta.

## 10. YOUTH WORK

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### 10.1 General context

#### Historical developments

Like many other aspects of social life, Maltese youth work has its origins in the activities of the Catholic Church and its voluntary organizations. Bodies such as The [Society of Christian Doctrine](#), the [Catholic Action](#) and the [Salesians](#) which were all founded in Malta at the beginning of the 20th century were concerned with providing structures through which adults could reach young people and keep them connected to the orderly Catholic world. They mainly worked for the same cause using different methodologies. They were also committed to youth socialization, to mould a catholic character and to develop Maltese catholic citizens with habits of self-control, rather than having a congregation of young people separate from adult society and whiling away their time aimlessly. Amidst the voluntary work done by a number of Church organisations, the British connection brought about other youth organisations such as the Scout Association. Since 1908 the [Malta Scouts Association](#) started a tradition that kept scouting in the very forefront of youth education in Malta.

Later with the inception of Malta's independence and the Second Vatican Council reform (1963- 1965) the church had to take up the challenge of the new social role. The 1970s and early 1980s brought about parish based youth centres run by the parish priest or parish youth led groups run by the [Catholic Action](#). These centres still aimed at catholic formation but also opened as a drop in club where young people could frequent the centre every evening, have a drink at the bar and play indoor games or football whilst at the same time attending a weekly bible study or religious meeting organized mostly by a young priest from the parish. These centres were complimented with some residential focused work where retreats were run for groups of young people in a residential retreat centre.

State provided youth services and youth work started to get shaped in the 1980s. A section called YSO (Youth Services Organisation) within the Education Department was set up to organise youth exchanges between Malta and some close countries to encourage young people's mobility and strengthen language practice. These exchanges were organised through schools during the school holidays and young people were taken to countries like Italy and France.

Young people themselves also started seeking belonging because of the services offered rather than because of an interest in the ideals of the group. which led to the formation of new youth led movement.

In 1993 The [Department of Youth & Community Studies](#) within the University of Malta was established. Its main aims were to produce research on young people as well as to train people who wanted to work with young people – Youth Workers. In 1998 the first set of Youth and Community Studies graduates set the [Maltese Association of Youth Workers](#) intended to lobby for the profession and in 2015 Youth Work was officially recognised as a formally regulated profession through the [Youth Work Profession Act](#).

#### National definition or understanding of Youth Work

Youth Work in Malta is a formally recognised profession. The [Youth Work Profession Act – Chapter 533 of the Laws of Malta](#) specifies that: Youth Work Malta is a non-formal learning activity aimed at the personal, social and political development of young people. Youth workers engage with young people within their communities, including the voluntary sector and support them in realising their potential and address life's challenges critically and creatively to bring about social change. Youth work takes into account all strands of diversity and focuses on all young people between thirteen (13) to thirty (30) years of age.

## 10.2 Administration and governance of youth work

### Governance

The main responsibilities in youth work fall within 2 entities – [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) and the [Youth Work Profession Board](#).

[Legal notice 522 of 2010](#) that established [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) – the national youth agency - states that the agency is to carry out functions related to youth affairs and specifically to ensure the highest standards in youth work as well as to formulate, co-ordinate, manage and evaluate youthwork programmes which promote active youth participation and the empowerment of young people.

[Youth Work Profession Board](#) was established through the [Youth Work Profession Act](#). The Board is responsible to establish and assess existing youthwork standards and develop new continuing youthwork professional development and other standards, and recommend to the Minister in responsible for youth in relation to initial and continuing youth work education, proficiency, experience and other qualifications required for youth work holding a warrant; consider, process and make recommendations to the Minister with regard to applications and recognition of qualifications in youth work; examine applications and make recommendations to the Minister on the award or refusal for a warrant to practice youth work in Malta thereof; keep an official register of all registered youth workers and youth work associations; make recommendations to the Minister on the Code of Ethics for the professional behaviour of youth workers; inquire into any allegation of professional misconduct, negligence or incompetence by a youth worker.

### Cross-sectoral cooperation

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#), the National Youth Agency is charged with liaising and ensuring the necessary coordination between Government departments and other agencies in the implementation of youth policy and measures or initiatives proposed by Government ensuring quality standards in youth work. In this regard the agency collaborates with different Ministries including the [Ministry for Inclusion and Social Wellbeing](#), the [Ministry for Education and Employment](#), the [Ministry for the Family, Children’s Rights and Social Solidarity](#), the [Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security](#), the [Ministry for Health](#) and the [Ministry for Foreign Affairs](#), through several youth work programmes. In such collaborations the either agency provides youth work expertise through professional youth workers that are engaged to work in such programmes or collaborates with the youth workers engaged with other agencies within the mentioned Ministries.

## 10.3 Support to youth work

### Policy legal framework

Since 2015 Youth Work in Malta is a regulated profession through the enactment of the [Youth Work Profession Act](#). The act formalised an understanding of youth work that had been developing throughout years of practice. Youth work in Malta aims to provide for the holistic development of young people in their transition into adulthood. Youth work has always been envisaged as out of school, non-formal education for young people focusing mainly on their personal, social and political development. This understanding was incorporated in the [Youth Work Profession Act](#), which states that youth work in Malta is a non-formal learning activity aimed at the personal, social and political development of young people. In this context, the law also states that youth workers engage with young people within their communities, including the voluntary sector and support them in realising their potential and address life’s challenges critically and creatively to bring about social change. In this regard, youth workers work with and for young people to facilitate their life transitions

Another very important element of youth work as understood within the Maltese context is Youth Information. This has been a well pronounced since the first youth policy document in 1993. This understanding revolves around the notion that quality and reliable youth information is also essential to help young people develop into critics of their environment and to reach their full potential.

Such an understanding of youth work is reflected in the formulation, and the eventual implementation of the [National Youth Policy document Towards 2020: A Shared Vision for the Future of Young People](#). The implementation of this document rests on 2 Strategies. Strategy 1 – Youth Work and services for young people focuses on youth work services, programmes, projects and activities in support of young people and youth organisations. The strategy aims to support the personal development and well-being of young people through projects, initiatives and activities based on youth work and non-formal learning, as well as on information, participation and mobility. This strategy caters for an understanding of youth work as stated and described in the [Youth Work Profession Act](#).

Most of the youth work programmes pertain to the domains of extra-curricular non-formal education focusing on areas of inclusion, mobility, participation, empowerment and information. Such programmes focus on civic and political education and can include within them professional (paid) and voluntary activities and entail educational activities such as civic and political education programmes, recreational and volunteering activities.

Since youth work is a regulated profession any person or organisation who is in possession of a youth work warrant can provide youth work services in Malta. The main youth work provider is the State in particular through [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) – the National Youth Agency – as well as youth organisations and other faith based organisations. There are other state agencies such as [Foundation for Social Welfare Services](#) that employ youth workers, however, the service provided from these agencies is primarily focused on social work.

As stated in the [Youth Work Profession Act](#), youth work should take into account all strands of diversity and as such focus on all young people between thirteen (13) to thirty (30) years of age. Special provisions and focus are also provided for young people with fewer opportunities as indicated in the [National Youth Policy document Towards 2020: A Shared Vision for the Future of Young People](#).

## Funding

The main National funding for youth work is provided by the State, through [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#). In this regard, the total budget for 2021 is that of €1,330,000.

Youth work organisations that would want to benefit from public funding need to be registered with the [Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations](#). In the case of public funding from [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#), the youth work providers need to be registered also with [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#).

When it comes to EU funding the main source of funding is the Youth Programme within the Erasmus + funding programme as well as the European Solidarity Corps.

## Cooperation

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) has a number of projects through which the agency compliments to the implementation of these initiatives by providing its youth work expertise. These include the following:

*Cooperation with public services dedicated to young people*

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) has projects with the main public service entities providing education, social work and culture. Within the education sector the agency has a collaboration with the [Directorate for Educational Services](#) and provides youth work sessions during European Studies; Social Studies and Personal Social and Cultural Development lessons. The agency also facilitates the [Student Council Democracy Awards](#) in secondary and post-secondary schools. It also has a youth worker providing services in a number of

post-secondary institutions such as [MCAST](#); [Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary School](#) and [Sir Michelangelo Refalo Sixth Form](#). Within social work services, the agency has a collaboration with [Aġenzija Support](#) through a programme entitled [S.A.F.E.R.](#) The agency also collaborates with the [Community Services](#) by providing youth work sessions to young people following the Community Services programmes.

Youth work services are also provided to cultural endeavours in particular through collaborations with [Spazju Kreattiv](#) on projects such as [Song Craft](#) and [Arts Council](#) through projects such as [Artisti](#).

Cooperation with Civil society active in the field of youth work

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) has an MOU with [ZAK](#) Youth Catholic Action through which they operate a number of youth cafes, the agency offers professional youth work services within these youth cafes. The agency also collaborate with the National Youth Council on various issues affecting the well-being of young people.

Cooperation with research and experts in the youth field

Through an MOU with the University of Malta, the [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) provides fieldwork placement opportunities for the student following their studies with the [Department of Youth and Community Studies](#). This allows prospective youth workers to have first-hand experience of the world of youth work.

## 10.4 Quality and innovation in youth work

### Quality assurance

Youth work in Malta is recognized through national law as a fully regulated profession. In this regard the [Youth Work Profession Act – Chapter 533 of the Laws of Malta](#) acts as a quality assurance mechanism for youth workers as it lays down the professional standards for youth workers and states what is youth work and who can or cannot profess youth work. Moreover to ensure quality youth work the law established a [Youth Work Profession Board](#). This Board is responsible for establishing and assessing existing youth work standards and as well as keep an official register of all registered youth workers and youth work associations. The Board also made recommendations to the Minister for Youth so as to publish a [Code of Ethics](#) for the professional behaviour of youth workers. The aim of the Code of Ethics is to provide youth workers with a benchmark for good professional behaviour and practice. It is intended to guide and support youth workers in fulfilling their professional duties and responsibilities and to uphold professional standards and the continuous improvement of such standards. The Board can also inquire into any allegation of professional misconduct, negligence or incompetence by a youth worker and recommend to the Minister to take action against that youth worker.

Also [Legal notice 522 of 2010](#) that established [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) – the national youth agency - states that the agency is to carry out functions related to youth affairs and specifically to ensure the highest standards in youth work as well as to formulate, coordinate, manage and evaluate youthwork programmes. In this regard the agency set up a system of quality assurance by providing supervision services for all its youth workers. Such a system provides a space where youth workers are able to put forward any challenges or difficulties encountered in their practice, where good practice can be affirmed and where they can voice concerns to a senior youth worker. Supervision promotes learning, considers action and facilitates reflective practice. This process aims at underpinning youth safety, well-being and care, which allows for the effective and efficient achieving of the desired outcomes, goals and purposes, while emphasizing ethical and moral aspects of youth work. It is a foundational means to assess the quality of and judgement being made by the practitioner about and with young people. Thus, the process of supervision is based on sound youth work principles. Supervisors, working with and alongside supervisees identify areas and skills that need developing and

situations where interventions from other professionals may be required or appropriate. Youth workers operate within the agency structure and supervision is a central means of ensuring that each youth worker understands where the potential and limits of their responsibility and activity lie.

## Research and evidence supporting Youth Work

In 2016 [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) and the University of Malta, through the [Faculty of Social Well-Being](#), signed a Memorandum of Understanding guided by the aims and strategies of the [National Youth Policy Towards 2020](#). The Agreement was intended to consolidate and increase the collaboration between the two entities in research and the development of supervision. In this regard the agency published 2 research documents, *Mirrors and Windows 2: Maltese Young People's perceptions, experiences and expectations of Education Employment and Lifestyles* and *Voices of the Young and Vulnerable in Malta*. Both studies look at young people as they face the most significant transitions into adulthood and were intended to be used by policy makers when developing youth policies and in particular by [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) while developing youth work programmes.

Similarly when the agency introduced the concept of [detached youth work in Malta](#) it engaged in a project with 2 other international youth work providers and part of the project was a research that laid the ground work for the eventual development of the guidelines for the detached youth work in Malta.

## Participate Youth Work

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#), the National Youth Agency, was established under the [Public Administration Act](#), and in this regard, the Minister for Education and Employment, being the Minister responsible for the agency, appointed an [Advisory Board](#). The role of the Advisory Board is to advise and support the Chief Executive Officer of [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) in the discharge of her duties and responsibilities. In this regard to ensure that young people are actively participative in all the matters that concern them including the formulation, implementation and evaluation of national youth work programmes and activities the only 2 requisites for being eligible to this be chosen as a member of this [Advisory Board](#) is to be a young people aged between 16 and 30 years of age and have an interest in and commitment to helping young people determine their future. Prospective members are invited to send the curriculum vitae to the agency who in turn recommend the Minister their appointment.

## Smart youth work: youth work in the digital world

Kellimni.Com is an online space where young people can communicate in real time with youth workers and trained volunteers on issues that are of the young person's concern. Contact with Kellimni.Com can be made in realtime 24/7 through email, smart messaging or online chat. The website also features an information section called *Inform Yourself* where the young person can find resources relating to the self, relating to others and what's around me.

As a response to the Covid-19 pandemic [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ](#) shifted some of its services online. These services, falling within the agency's [Digital Youth Work Services](#), created safe online spaces where young people can engage with youth workers. The [Virtual Youth Hub](#) is an interactive space where young people aged 16 to 18 and over can come together virtually to engage between themselves and with a youth worker. This project was intended to replace the physical youth hubs that the agency has in post-secondary schools in Malta.

Similar to this was the creation of a virtual youth café. [Beat the Boredom](#), is a safe online space for young people between the ages of 13 and 15. This project was intended to replace the physical youth cafes that the agency has around Malta, to ensure that young people still have the opportunity to benefit from the services of youth workers

Another digital project is called [Alone? #inthistgether](#). Through this project the agency provided an online space where young people aged 18 and over can interact.

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) also developed [2 live online programmes](#) focusing on young people using digital social media platforms. [Go Live with Malcolm](#), uses Facebook as a platform. Through this live session a youth worker engages with young people and together they discuss current affairs. The other live programme is [Instapoint](#) which uses Instagram as a platform. During this live session, youth workers engage with young people and focus on particular life-skills such as teamwork, leadership or critical thinking and explore how youth work can enhance such skills

Also as a reaction to the Covid-19 pandemic [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) organised two online school transition programmes aimed at young people who will be starting middle school and secondary school in 2020/2021 scholastic year. These online programmes, intended to smoothen the transition to these new schools through this particular period, were called [My Next School Adventure](#) and [Secondary School Survival Kit](#).

[My Next School Adventure](#) targeted young people who were transiting from primary to middle school for their first two years of secondary schooling. During the online sessions these students had the opportunity to meet up with other youngsters who are going through the same school transition. The 8 sessions programme aims to explore different issues that these students might face through online interactive games, crafts, drama, quizzes, group work and discussions.

[Secondary School Survival Kit](#) aimed at equipping young people with essential life - skills for a smooth transition to their final 3 years of secondary schooling. The kit is presented in the form of a playlist. Each song on the playlist launches a theme that will prompt a discussion around transition, change, celebrating self and friendships, and how to navigate the inevitable stresses associated with these years. The Secondary Schools Survival Kit encourages students to look ahead and start building toward their future goals as individuals and as members of their respective communities.

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) also upgraded all of its social media platforms in particular those related to the digital youth information services. In this regard, the Youth Information One Stop Shop (YIOSS) now has now 3 dedicated websites and Facebook page related to [EYCA-MT](#), [Eurodesk MT](#) and [YIOSS](#). These three websites and their respective Facebook pages together provide comprehensive online youth information

[Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) organised a training, entitled [Social Media Training](#) as part of [Being Online](#) a [Eurodesk MT](#) funded project, for youth workers and other professionals working with young people as part of their professional development. During this training youth workers and other professionals working with young people had the opportunity to explore various effective ways to interact with young people online. Also, during the training youth workers were provided with the opportunities to sharpen their skills when using digital tools such as Zoom, Streamyard, Instagram or Facebook while engaging with young people.

Social media is one of the tools used by [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) to reach out to young people. In this regard, [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) looks at innovative ways, such as online methods, on how to work with young young people and involve them in the decision-making processes. The [OPIN](#) platform is one such medium. Through the OPIN platform, [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) strives to involve a wider range of young people using online tools including polling, text reviewing, idea generation and agenda setting. Through OPIN [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) collects young people's views, opinions and ideas on a wide range of issues. [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) uses [OPIN](#) mainly through its community services. Young people are invited to participate on [OPIN](#) and have a say in the decision-making processes. The platform offers a number of advantages such as the possibility to see and reply to other people's comments and knowing how this information is going to be used. As part of this project [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) attended the Open Summit in Berlin held in early December to discuss the results of the OPIN platform. During the summit the participants looked at the need for e-participation, active involvement of young people, effective strategies to involve young people in the decision process and the importance of following up on policy makers. During the summit, [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) experience was

presented as a good practice of an e-participation project. In October 2019, [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) engaged in a project called 'Digital youth participation made easy' ([DiGY](#)). Digital youth participation empowers young people to become active citizens from local to European level. The positive effects only unfold when the participation process is run professionally – just to use digital tool is not enough to inspire young people, administrations and youth organisations to collaborate.

The results of the project will be developed by a consortium of 7 partner from all over Europe, who bring in valuable country-specific knowledge and experiences. Nexus will be the coordinator with Liquid Democracy providing technical support. Youth organisation from Macedonia, Slovenia, Georgia and Malta will be working with on the project from a practical aspect. Creativitas will be focusing on project dissemination.

This Erasmus+ strategic partnership project '[DiGY](#)' – 'Digital participation made easy' aims to tackle this problem by delivering qualification and capacity building to initiators of digital participation projects. The materials designed will be integrated into the OPIN platform, a professional online tool-box for digital youth participation that is already available in 10 European languages. Thus, the European-wide infrastructure is strengthened and enriched by modules to increase the for digital youth participation project. [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#)'s role in the project will be that of piloting digital participation projects on OPIN, contribute to development of elearnin materials, establishing guidelines for best practices and redesigning of the OPIN platform.

## 10.5 Youth workers

### Status in national legislation

Youth Work in Malta is a formal regulated profession through the [Youth Work Profession Act - Chapter 533 of the Laws of Malta](#). In this regard the Act states that: "no person shall hold himself out to be a professional youth worker or exercise the profession of a youth worker against remuneration or otherwise or hold himself to be professionally qualified to do so or assume the title or designation of a registered professional youth worker unless he is the holder of a warrant issued under this Act." Without prejudice to any provision made by or under the Mutual Recognition of Qualifications Act, a person shall not qualify for a warrant unless such person: • is a citizen of Malta, or of a Member State or is otherwise legally entitled or authorised to work in Malta; • is of good conduct; • is registered in the Register of Youth Workers • is not registered in the Register established under the Protection of Minors (Registration) Act; • is in possession of the Honours Degree in Youth and Community Studies conferred by the University of Malta or a Masters in Youth and Community Studies conferred by the University of Malta as from academic year 2011/2012 or a Masters in Youth Ministry conferred by the University of Malta, or of another professional qualification recognised as equivalent for the purpose by a Member State, obtained from a university or college. In respect of applicants coming from third countries whose qualifications have not been recognised in a Member State, the Youth Work Profession Board may, in respect of such qualifications, require the applicant to sit for and pass a professional proficiency test.

Youth Workers also have to abide by a [Code of Ethics](#). The aim of the [Code of Ethics](#) is to provide youth workers with a bench mark for good professional behaviour and practice. It is intended to guide and support youth workers in fulfilling their professional duties and responsibilities and to uphold professional standards and the continuous improvement of such standards.

Moreover, Youth Workers employed by [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) are [Protection, Safety and Well-Being of Young People Good Practice Guide](#). The aim the Good Practice Guide is to give support and guidance to youth workers and all staff employed or contracted by [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) (including all volunteers, students on placement and interns working with staff employed by [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) in ensuring that the protection, safety and well-being of all young people with whom the agency works is prioritised and that any

issues that might impede or threaten young people’s safety and well-being are addressed promptly and effectively.

### **Education, training and skills recognition**

The University of Malta offers 3 courses that lead you to be warranted as a youth worker. [Bachelor of Arts \(Honours\) in Youth and Community Studies](#), [Master of Arts in Youth and Community Studies](#) and [Master of Arts in Youth Ministry](#). Following the completion of anyone of the aforementioned courses a person must prove to have worked the equivalent of 2 years full time (4160 hours) to be eligible for a youth work warrant.

The [Youth Work Profession Act](#) also confers upon the Youth Work Profession Board the discretion to develop requirements in relation to continuous professional development for the maintenance of a warrant. In this regard the Act states that: A warrant issued under this Act shall continue to have effect provided that the warrant holder shall prove to the satisfaction of the Board that he has carried out such programme or programmes of continuing professional development.

### **Mobility of youth workers**

Youth Workers employed by [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) also have to abide by a [Staff Training and Development Policy](#) aiming to enhance and enrich each member of the staff through organisation, job and personal development. The policy seeks to provide learning opportunities for all staff so that by performing their individual jobs effectively, they can contribute to the agency’s vision and mission.

Such Staff Training and Development is often offered in the form of seminars or training courses offered both at national or international levels. In 2019 all youth workers employed by [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) were requested to attend a Mental Health First Aid course, a first Aid Courses, a food handling course and a training in public speaking and report writing. Other trainings are offered to individual youth workers depending on particular needs of both the agency and the youth workers. In 2019 such trainings included for instance such as [Sounding Minds](#) a training that aimed to provide youth workers with good practices on how to appropriately handle situations involving young people and mental health issues and [BiTriMulti Training Course](#) a training programme that aimed to offer an international learning experience for those active in the youth work field to enable them to develop their competences in setting up quality Youth Exchange projects and a training on the Protection of minors training.

## **10.6 Recognition and validation of skills acquired through youth work**

### **Existing arrangements**

Young people can participate in a youth work programme managed and coordinated by [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) made up of 3 levels. The first level is called [“Access Skills for Independent Living and Working Life”](#). This course is between 35-40 weeks long and starts every September. On completion of the first level young people can continue with the second level called [“Skills for Independent Living and Working Life”](#). This course is between 35-40 weeks long and starts every September. The third course is called [“Connect Skills and Competences for the Work Place”](#). This course is between 35-40 weeks long and starts every September”. All three courses are delivered by professional youth workers employed by [Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#) and lead towards formal accreditation at MQF Level 1, 2 and 3 respectively.

### **Skills**

Currently there are no top-level national policies and/or recognition mechanisms identify specific skills and competences that can be acquired through youth work.

## 10.7 Raising awareness about youth work

### Information providers

The main source of information available to young people to know about youth work and opportunities for engagement is the [Youth Information One Stop Shop \(YIOSS\)](#). YIOSS is an information centre, run by youth workers, that works with young people to enable them to access information and advice in a safe and friendly environment. The centre's aim is to help young people find answers to questions about education, work, housing, health, relationships, money, leisure and cultural activities among others. It offers a drop-in service to all young people between the ages of 13 and 30 and strives to use modern technologies in order to facilitate access. The service is housed within Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ's main building and young people can use its services free of charge.

Another source of information on youth work opportunities available to young people is [Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ's website](#). The website is continuously updating highlighting the main youth work activities that young people can engage in. Aside from the website, the agency also uses its facebook and Instagram pages to share information with young people.

### Key initiatives

At the end of each year the agency holds a 2-day stakeholder conference. During the first day of this conference the agency invites youth organisations working with and for young people and other partners in the youth field. The agency highlights the work it would have done with young people in that current year and also provides a framework for the following year's priorities in the youth field targeting Strategy 1 of the National Youth Policy.

On the second day of the conference the agency invites youth workers exclusively. This is done for the purpose of building capacity within the profession. The agency again highlights the work it would have done with young people in that current year however with youth workers the focus would be solely on youth work activities. The conference creates a space where youth workers share their experiences and through a peer learning environment the best practices and the results obtained get shared.

Also, each year the [National Youth Agency](#) together with the [European Union Programmes Agency](#) organises the [National Tool Fair](#). The aim of the Tool Fair is to promote quality in youth work and support capacity building of youth workers. The National Tool Fair provides an opportunity for participants to shape educational and experiential pathways, to run workshops and to share tools for learning with colleagues, as well as to participate in workshops conducted by peers. Also, beyond experiencing a wide variety of tools for learning, the National Tool Fair provided a space to reflect on youth work, give and receive feedback, pave the way for their transferability and further development. Participants in the National Tool Fair also enter the opportunity to participate in the International Tool Fair.

Also, each the National Youth Agency invites young people who would have finished formal schooling without certification to join the Youth.Inc programme. The Youth Youth.inc is an inclusive education programme, run by youth workers, based on applied learning, for young people between the age of 16 and 21. The aim of the programme is to help young people to improve their standard of education and gain more knowledge, values and skills to enter the labour market or gain qualifications to continue in further education and/or training.

## 10.8 Current debates and reforms

### Forthcoming policy developments

Discussions are ongoing on the development of a National Life-skills Programme. Life-skills are a set of personal and social skills acquired through youth work and non-formal and informal learning that can be used to address issues, questions and problems commonly encountered in the course of daily human life. The idea is to develop such a course that young people can engage in voluntarily after secondary school completion. The course is being envisaged to lead to an MQF Level 4 certification.

### Ongoing debates

After 4 years of coming into action there are some debates on revising the [Youth Work Profession Act](#). This is mainly an issue that is discussed between the Maltese association of Youth Workers and the Youth work Profession Board. The main concerns relate a youth worker insurance and the continuous professional development and youth work specialisations

## GLOSSARY

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Aġenzija Appoġġ - Social Work Provision Agency

Aġenzija Sapport - Social Work Provision Agency

Aġenzija Sedqa - Social Work Provision Agency

Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ - National Youth Agency

Alternattiva Demokratika Żgħażaġħ - Alternative Democratic Party Youth Movement

Artivisti - A Culture Programme

Dar Osanna Pia - A shelter for homeless young people

Fondazzjoni Kreattività – A government entity created to take on the role of safeguarding a number of roles in Malta’s creative sector.

Forum Żgħażaġħ Laburisti - Labour Party Youth Movement

Karta Żgħażaġħ - European Youth Card

Kellimni.com - An online support platform for young people to through SMS, e-mails, chat or discussion fora.

Konkors ta’ Kitba – Letteratura għaż-Żgħażaġħ - a literature for young people funding scheme.

Kreattiv – A funding programme engages educators and creative practitioners in dialogue and collaboration while encouraging students and educators towards further engagement within the creative sector.

Kunsill Nazzjonali taż- Żgħażaġħ - National Youth Council

Kunsill Studenti Universitarji - Universtiy Students’ Council

Mid-Dawl għad-Dlam – An NGO set-up to help prisoners and their families undergo the prison experience with more dignity and self-esteem.

Moviment Żgħażaġħ Partit Nazzjonalista - Nationalist Party Youth Movement

OASI – Drug and alcohol rehabilitation Centre

Premju tal-President għal-Kreattività - A funding scheme launched by the Office of the President for creativity

Sir Sid Darek – A scheme to encourage tenants of apartments, houses and maisonettes Authority Housing and Property Department of the Government become home owners.

Spazzju Kreattiv – Malta’s National Center for Creativity

Studenti Demokristjani - Democratic Christian Students

ŻiguŻajg - A Youth Culture Festival

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[Aġenzija Żgħażaġh](#)

[AIESEC](#)

[Alternative Learning Programme](#)

[Alternative Youth Entertainment](#)

[Alternattiva Demokratika Żgħażaġh](#)

[Anna Lindh Foundation](#)

[Apprenticeship Department MCAST](#)

[Apprenticeships Department](#)

[Artivisti](#)

[Arts Council Malta](#)

[B.Start](#)

[BeActive](#)

[BeSmart Online](#)

[BOV JAIME](#)

[BOV Start Plus](#)

[Budding Rockstars Conference](#)

[Business Advisory Scheme](#)

[Business First](#)

[Career Guidance Service](#)

[Caritas Malta](#)

[Centre for Entrepreneurship & Business Incubation \(CEBI\)](#)

[Child and Young People's Services](#)

[Child Guidance Clinic](#)

[Children Development Assessment unit](#)

[Chrodis Plus](#)  
[Civil Society Committee](#)  
[Commissioner for Children](#)  
[Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations](#)  
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[Youth Upbeat](#)  
[Youth Village](#)

[Youth Work in Youth Hubs](#)

[Youth.inc](#)

[Youth.Inc Programme](#)

[ZAAR Crowdfunding Platform](#)

[ŽiguŽajg](#)

## **ARCHIVE**

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Information from previous years can be accessed and freely downloaded through the PDF files below.

### **2019**

[Malta 2019](#)

### **2018**

[Malta 2018](#)

### **2017**

[Malta 2017](#)