



## Reaching the heights for the rights of the child

### Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2016-2021

#### High-Level Launching Conference

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#### Statements

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Malta strongly believes in equal opportunities for all.

For this reason we offer, *inter alia*, free education and free health services to all.

The Maltese Government believes that one of the pillars to fight poverty is through education.

Recently, we have gone so far as to give free tablets to students at an early school age and over the last 30 years stipendents to post secondary students to further their studies.

For the first time we are incentivising post secondary studies by giving national insurance credits to past and future students for the years of post secondary studies. We believe in, and we are practicing, educational mainstream integration to all, including persons with disabilities.

Secondly, we are fighting poverty through work and empowering those individuals who are currently on non-contributory benefits to enter work.

Families who live in poverty are more likely to neglect their children, foremost due to financial constraints. For this reason, my government has reduced utility bills by 25% and reduced direct taxation without increasing indirect taxes.



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Because of generous unemployment benefits, we have introduced, in the last 2 years, a number of incentives to make work pay:

- Tapering of benefits over a 3 year period to those who are on benefits and enter work;
- In-work benefit per child to working parent/s with a low income;
- Free child care centers to working parent/s;
- Free breakfast club to children who arrive early in the morning at school;
- 3 to 16 classes after school hours.

Through these initiatives we have noticed more women in employment, a drastic drop in families dependant on social benefits, an unemployment rate of less than 5% and a record employment level.

My government has introduced legislative rights to LGBTIQ and is ensuring that the right to education can be effectively enjoyed free from discrimination, unhampered by gender stereotypes and free from violence, bullying, social exclusion and other forms of discriminatory and degrading treatment.

We are working hard to reduce bullying and cyber bullying. In addition, we are doing our utmost for a safe digital environment for children through initiatives both locally and with co-operation at international level.

My government believes that the most powerful tool against radicalisation of children is through education. We are now moving to the next step to fight radicalisation through integration and not ghettoism. Experiences show that ghettoism is the root leading to radicalisation. Malta supports the promotion of positive parenting and endeavours to instill the right values that will support parents in upbringing their children in a healthy environment that protects them from any form of abuse.

In the bill to be discussed in the coming weeks we will be giving particular weight to support families, going through hardships in caring for their children, and also those whose children are taken in alternative care.

Besides we have just started an out-reach program, knocking on doors of vulnerable families and offering them assistance to move forward in life.

To achieve this goal we have been opening Family Resource Centers in our communities with the aim of:

- Profiling families living in poverty;
- Allocating social mentors to mentor families in the upbringing of their children;
- Giving parents skill-building and job training to make them employable;
- Training in positive parenting.

These are just but a few initiatives we are taking, and are able to do this, thanks to the vibrant economy Malta has been experiencing in the last 3 years under my government.