



31/10/2018

RAP/RCha/MLT/12(2019)

EUROPEAN SOCIAL CHARTER

12th National Report on the implementation of
the European Social Charter

submitted by

THE GOVERNMENT OF MALTA

Article 7, 8, 16, 17 and 27

for the period 01/01/2014 - 31/12/2017

Report registered by the Secretariat on

31 October 2018

CYCLE 2019



**TWELFTH REPORT ON THE
EUROPEAN SOCIAL CHARTER (REVISED)**

submitted by the

Government of Malta

**for Thematic Group Children, Families, Migrants
(1 January 2014 – 31 December 2017)**

AND

additional information

**for Thematic Group Health, Social Security and Social
Protection**

2018

INDEX

I. INTRODUCTION.....	3
II. PROVISIONS OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL CHARTER (revised)	4
Article 7 – The right of children and young persons to protection.....	4
Article 8 – The right of employed women to protection of maternity.	11
Article 16 – The right of the family to social, legal and economic protection	12
Article 17 – The right of children and young persons to social, legal and economic protection	17
Article 27 – The right of workers with family responsibilities to equal opportunities and equal treatment	31

I. INTRODUCTION

This Report by Malta is drafted within the context of the form for submission as adopted by the Committee of Ministers on the 26th March 2008.

The following information is to supplement previous information submitted by Malta with respect to the same provision under the European Social Charter and should be taken as additional information. Where a new provision of the Revised Charter has not been reported upon in previous Reports from Malta, full details of the situation of the respective Article in Malta will be provided.

II. PROVISIONS OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL CHARTER (revised)

Article 7 – The right of children and young persons to protection

With a view to ensuring the effective exercise of the right of children and young persons to protection, the Parties undertake:

1 to provide that the minimum age of admission to employment shall be 15 years, subject to exceptions for children employed in prescribed light work without harm to their health, morals or education;

2 to provide that the minimum age of admission to employment shall be 18 years with respect to prescribed occupations regarded as dangerous or unhealthy;

3 to provide that persons who are still subject to compulsory education shall not be employed in such work as would deprive them of the full benefit of their education;

4 to provide that the working hours of persons under 18 years of age shall be limited in accordance with the needs of their development, and particularly with their need for vocational training;

5 to recognise the right of young workers and apprentices to a fair wage or other appropriate allowances;

6 to provide that the time spent by young persons in vocational training during the normal working hours with the consent of the employer shall be treated as forming part of the working day;

7 to provide that employed persons of under 18 years of age shall be entitled to a minimum of four weeks' annual holiday with pay;

8 to provide that persons under 18 years of age shall not be employed in night work with the exception of certain occupations provided for by national laws or regulations;

9 to provide that persons under 18 years of age employed in occupations prescribed by national laws or regulations shall be subject to regular medical control;

10 to ensure special protection against physical and moral dangers to which children and young persons are exposed, and particularly against those resulting directly or indirectly from their work.

Article 7.1

The Maltese authorities consider that protection to young persons is still being given under the existing regulations since the exemption is given only in so far as occasional work or short-term work is concerned. Moreover, it is emphasized that in either case, the work to be performed cannot be regarded as being harmful, damaging or dangerous to the young person.

Article 7.2

The employment of a young person is regulated by the Young Persons (Employment) Regulations issued under Chapter 452, the Employment and Industrial Relations Act.

Young persons are persons under the age of 18 and this includes children and adolescents. The law defines a 'child' as a person who is under school leaving age

(currently this is 16) and ‘adolescents’ as persons who have attained 16 years of age but are less than 18 years of age.

The aims of the Regulations are the prohibition of employment of children, except in certain specified circumstances and under strict conditions, and the provision of a protective legal framework for the employment of adolescents.

Employment of children is only allowed in certain situations for the purposes of cultural, artistic, sporting or advertising activities and in light work if the child has attained at least 14 years of age. This is subject to prior authorisation by the Department of Industrial and Employment Relations (DIER) in each specific case.

In order for the DIER to be in a position to consider a request for authorisation for employment of a child, the child has to have been granted written permission by the education authorities that there is no objection to the carrying out of such activities on the grounds that such work is not likely to have an adverse effect on the child’s attendance at school, or on his participation in vocational guidance or training programmes and the employer has to provide a health and safety risk assessment of the work to be carried out by the child.

There is an exception to the requirement for an exemption by the education authorities in the case of children aged:

- thirteen or more who are to take part in cultural, artistic, sports, advertising or educational activities, approved by the Minister responsible for education;
- fourteen years of age, if they are either working under a combined work/training scheme or an in-plant work-experience scheme approved by the Minister responsible for education.

However, in such cases, the employer is obliged to notify the DIER prior to engaging the child in such activities.

In issuing an authorisation, the Director may attach such conditions as deemed fit on any issue relating to the conditions of employment of children, including on working time, night work, rest periods, and breaks which cannot be below the minimum set out in the schedule to the Regulations. Any such authorisation may be withdrawn at any time. Any employment contract entered into after authorisation has been granted has to specify the hours to be worked as well as the relative remuneration, which cannot be below the national minimum wage.

Working at night is regulated by the same law and varies according to the age of the young person. No child can perform work between 8p.m. on any one day and 6a.m. of the following day, and no adolescent shall perform work between 10p.m. on any one day and 6a.m. of the following day.

This prohibition does not apply for work performed in the shipping or fisheries sectors, hospitals or similar establishments and cultural, artistic, sports or advertising activities, if there are objective grounds for such work to be carried out at night. The law also

allows the Director some discretion to authorise work to be performed by adolescents in specific areas of activity during the period in which night work is prohibited, provided that no work is carried out between midnight and 4a.m., and, in the case of adolescents attending an educational institution, no work can be carried out between midnight and 6a.m. on any weekday during the period the adolescent is expected to attend such educational institution.

This law does not apply to occasional work or work carried out for a limited period in domestic service in a private household or to work in a family business which is not considered likely to harm, injure or endanger young people.

Statistics occupational accidents / diseases

Statistics on accidents at work are published by the National Statistics Office (NSO), based on data provided by the Department of Social Security (DSS). However statistics made public by the NSO are broken down by age groups. For the years 2015 -2017, NSO reported the following claims for injuries at work:

Age group	2015		2015		2017	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
15-24	428	13.3	441	14.2	396	12.4
25-34	827	25.7	803	25.8	798	25.1
35-44	775	24.1	754	24.2	800	25.1
45-54	669	20.8	652	21.0	656	20.6
55+	521	16.2	462	14.8	532	16.7
Total	3,220	100.0	3,112	100.0	3,182	100.0

Reference: https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/View_by_Unit/Unit_C2/Labour_Market_Statistics/Pages/Accidents-at-Work.aspx

Article 7.3

According to regulation 6 of SL.452.92, children shall be entitled to a minimum daily rest period of fourteen consecutive hours for each twenty four hour period, and a minimum weekly rest period of two consecutive days in any calendar week, one day of which shall be a Sunday. Also of notice is the fact that nothing precludes a child working in terms of the Maltese regulations to request 2 consecutive weeks of annual vacation leave.

Furthermore, before employing a minor (any young person of either sex, who is under sixteen years of age, or any other age which may from time to time be established as the school leaving age by virtue of the Education Act), the employer requires an authorisation issued by the Director General Educational Services and the Director of Employment and Industrial relations. As per Subsidiary Legislation 452.92 *Young Persons (Employment) Regulations*, a request for authorisation may only be considered if the proposed light work is not dangerous to the health or harmful to the child's

development. However, this legislation does not apply to occasional work or short-term work which involves domestic service in a private household or work in a family undertaking. In both cases the work to be performed cannot be regarded as being harmful, damaging or dangerous to a young person¹.

The Law Compliance Unit within Jobsplus monitors infringements on the place of work. Breaches related to underage employment are considered as high risk, given that they are related to minors. Underage employment might have a particular rise during the summer recess months. During this period it is expected that Jobsplus receives a higher number of Hotline reports concerning employment of minors. Nonetheless, anecdotal evidence for 2017 suggests that the number of irregular underage employment is not high, with employers having procured the necessary authorisations before employing the minors. Any report received is meticulously inspected and checked. Investigations necessitate cooperation with the Social Worker Section of the Student Service Department (DES) and also the DIER in order to establish the facts and review all the evidence at hand.

Moreover, regulation 6 of Subsidiary Legislation 343.23 Manpower Records (Commencement or Termination of Employment) Regulations clearly establishes that:

6. (1) No person shall employ a minor of compulsory school age except:

(i) where the Minister responsible for education grants written permission to employ such minor in terms of article 43(1) and (2) of the Education Act; or

(ii) under an apprenticeship indenture or training scheme approved by the Minister responsible for education in virtue of article 43(3) of the Education Act: Provided that the employer shall be bound to ensure that the conditions, if any, laid down in the mentioned written permission or apprenticeship indenture or training scheme are complied with.

(2) Any employer who fails to comply with any of the provisions of this regulation shall be guilty of an offence and shall on conviction be liable to a fine (multa) of not less than two hundred and thirty-two Euros and ninety-four cents (232.94) and not exceeding two thousand and three hundred and twenty-nine Euros and thirty-seven cents (2,329.37), and the Court may, at the request of the prosecution and in addition to such punishment, order the suspension or cancellation of any license held by the offender and relating to trade or business, or relating to any business premises where the persons are employed.

¹ Young persons include children (minors) still of compulsory school age (have not finished compulsory schooling or are below the age of sixteen years) and those between the compulsory school age and under eighteen years, known as adolescents.

The provisions of the Probation Act shall not be applicable in respect of such offence.

The table below shows the number of infringements (minors found in illegal employment) identified by the Law Compliance Unit within Jobsplus from 2014 to 2017.

	2014	2015	2016	2017
Underage persons found in illegal employment	1	15	21	4

Article 7.4

Regulation 4 (3) and (4) hold that “Any time spent on training by a young person working under a theoretical and, or practical combined work, training scheme or an in-plant work-experience scheme shall be counted as working time.

Where a young person is employed by more than one employer, working days and working time shall be cumulative and shall not exceed the working days and working times established by these regulations. It shall be the duty of the employer to ascertain whether a young person is performing work for another employer and to ascertain the working time in any other employment. If a young person has more than one employment, it shall also be the duty of the parent, in the case of employment of a child, or in the case of the employment of an adolescent, the duty of the adolescent, to inform the employer of the hours of work carried out for another employer.

An employer shall not permit a young person to carry out any form of work on any day on which that young person has done any form of work for any other employer, unless the aggregate working time with more than one employer on that day does not exceed the total time for which such a young person may lawfully work for one employer on that day according to these regulations.

Article 7.5

Net National minimum Wage

For 2018 the net national minimum wage for young workers aged under 17 years is € 146.56 (€162.89 gross wage less €16.30 social security contributions), the net national minimum wage for young workers aged 17 years is € 149.16 (€165.73 gross wage less €16.57 social security contributions), the net minimum wage of workers aged 18 years and over is € 155.25 (€172.51 gross wage less €17.26 social security contributions). In all cases, no tax is deducted.

Remuneration for apprentices:

1ST year of Apprenticeship

From Employer	€49.97/week
Stipend through Students' Maintenance Grant Board (SMGB)	€87.64/4 weeks
Summer remuneration through Students' Maintenance Grant Board (SMGB)	€232.94/4 weeks

2nd year of Apprenticeship

From Employer	€52.50/week
Stipend through Students' Maintenance Grant Board (SMGB)	€87.64/4 weeks
Summer remuneration through Students' Maintenance Grant Board (SMGB)	€232.94/4 weeks

Article 7.6

It should be recalled that any on the work training is to be considered as working time and thus is to be remunerated accordingly. Thus if the Inspectorate Section receives complaints and reports or becomes aware of situations where training is not being remunerated, remedial action would be taken accordingly.

Article 7.7

If a young person in employment is on sickness leave or on injury leave, annual vacation leave continues to accrue in his/her favour. If it is not possible for a young worker to enjoy the balance of leave during the calendar year during which he was absent due to sickness or injury, he has the right to carry forward that balance of leave to the following year and enjoy it accordingly.

Article 7.8

Objective grounds must be present in order for work to be carried out at night. Moreover the law emphasizes that compensatory rest should be granted once there is an objective ground justifying night work.

Article 7.9

Medical exams of young persons

As reported in the previous cycle, in order to avoid unnecessary bureaucratic burdens, there is no legal obligation on employers to submit to Occupational Health and Safety Authority (OHSA) a copy or details of, medical examinations carried out under S.L. 424.10 (LN 91 / 2000).

As required by this legal notice, an employer is bound to carry out a risk assessment and a medical examination before employing any young person. In practice this is ensured by OHSA, through regular workplace visits carried out by OHSA Officers, who verify these documentations and conduct workplace observations to ensure legal compliance.

Article 8 – The right of employed women to protection of maternity.

With a view to ensuring the effective exercise of the right of employed women to the protection of maternity, the Parties undertake:

1 to provide either by paid leave, by adequate social security benefits or by benefits from public funds for employed women to take leave before and after childbirth up to a total of at least fourteen weeks;

2 to consider it as unlawful for an employer to give a woman notice of dismissal during the period from the time she notifies her employer that she is pregnant until the end of her maternity leave, or to give her notice of dismissal at such a time that the notice would expire during such a period;

3 to provide that mothers who are nursing their infants shall be entitled to sufficient time off for this purpose;

4 to regulate the employment in night work of pregnant women, women who have recently given birth and women nursing their infants;

5 to prohibit the employment of pregnant women, women who have recently given birth or who are nursing their infants in underground mining and all other work which is unsuitable by reason of its dangerous, unhealthy or arduous nature and to take appropriate measures to protect the employment rights of these women.

Article 8.1

Up to December 2014 there was one rate of maternity benefit applicable to all self-employed women who were not eligible to maternity leave, those who were employed but opt not to avail of maternity leave, and those who were unemployed or terminated their employment due to their pregnancy.

With effect from January 2015, a higher rate equal to the national minimum wage (€166.26 pw) was introduced for self-employed women, and the rate of €87.35 pw was paid to women falling in the other categories. This shows that during the reference period, the Government of Malta started the way forward to increase the maternity benefit rate by increasing the rate for self-employed women to a level that exceeds the 50% of the median national equivalised income.

It is therefore pertinent to note that whereas the latest available data shows that the 50% of the median national equivalised income in 2016 was €6,786 (€130.50), the maternity benefit rate for self-employed women during the same year amounted to €166.26. The current applicable maternity benefit rate for self-employed women in 2018 is €172.51 pw, and €92.02 pw for women falling in the other categories.

Article 16 – The right of the family to social, legal and economic protection

With a view to ensuring the necessary conditions for the full development of the family, which is a fundamental unit of society, the Parties undertake to promote the economic, legal and social protection of family life by such means as social and family benefits, fiscal arrangements, provision and family housing, benefits for the newly married and other appropriate means.

Housing for families

For the period under review the following services were available:

- Rent subsidy to those leasing from the private sector was doubled on 1/1/2017 and the qualifying financial means were increased;
- An EU partly funded project under ERDF was initiated during late 2017 for the installation of around 109 lifts in government rented blocks;
- Building more social housing units;
- Assistance in home loan repayments to low income earners;
- Increase stock by leasing residential units from the private market and then subletting them for social housing purposes to applicants on waiting list for social accommodation.

Furthermore the following projects and services continued:

- Ongoing programme of Embellishment works of Housing Estates;
- Grant as Assistance to first time buyers;
- Tenants of government owned apartments are given the opportunity to become home owners;
- Grants for adaptation and/or repair works in residences.

Legislation on forced eviction - Now the Housing Authority is using Chapter 573 of the law to effect evictions.

Migrant Families

Migrants holding a Refugee status can benefit from the same Housing Authority services as Maltese/EU nationals. As things stand right now, the Housing Authority has no control over private market leasing.

Rent Subsidy and Alternative Accommodation

The rent subsidy has been available to migrants holding a Refugee Status since 2002. In 2013 third country nationals – persons who are neither Maltese Citizens nor EU citizens but who hold a Long Term Resident Status became eligible to benefit for rent subsidy. These Third Country Nationals are to possess an official document issued by the

Director for Citizenship and Expatriate Affairs granting them the status of Long Term Citizens.

Criteria for the rent subsidy scheme:

- The applicant is the recognised lessee or has a title of temporary emphyteusis not exceeding 21 years;
- The property is in a good state of repair and in a habitable condition;
- Applicants do not possess assets exceeding €23,300 from one year prior to the date of application;
- The income of the applicants should not exceed €23,000;
- Applicants have to produce a valid copy of the rental agreement;
- Applicants do not possess other property from a year prior to date of application;
- Subsidy is calculated on the income of applicants and the rent being paid, according to the table below;
- The subsidy is revised every two years and is based on applicants' income and assets for the preceding year;
- Further information about the entitlement of subsidy and conditions can be accessed from www.housingauthority.gov.mt;
- No means testing is to be carried out on applicants in receipt of Non Contributory Benefits such as Social Assistance, Social Assistance Single Parents, Unemployment Assistance, Age Pension, and National Minimum Invalidity Pension.

Prospective applicants are required to have set up residence in Malta for 18 consecutive months before submitting the application.

Alternative Accommodation

Applicants holding a Refugee Status may apply for the Alternative Accommodation (Social Housing).

Key conditions for the social housing application are:

Income brackets:

- Single person €10,000
- Married couples and single parent €12,000 with an additional amount of €700 on each sibling under the age of 18
- Assets must not exceed the amount of €28,000
- A separated person needs to provide a finalised separation document on submission of application
- Additional documents might be requested from client according the each individual case

Prospective applicants are required to have set up residence in Malta for 12 consecutive months within 18 months of residency before submitting the application.

Childcare facilities

As from July 2016, the quality assurance of childcare service provision has been shifted to the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE). By the end of 2017 there were 116 registered childcare centres with a capacity of 4,787 children. The DQSE ensures quality of care through yearly review visits and ad hoc inspections upon receipt of complaints.

By the end of 2018, the quality of standards published in the 2006 'National Standards for Child Day Care Centres' shall be revised.

Domestic violence against women

Since the last report the Government of Malta has upgraded the 2013 Domestic Violence Act by a new Act on Domestic and Gender Based Violence which essentially transposed the Istanbul Convention into Maltese Law. This law was passed in April 2018. In practice, this has meant that a risk assessment has to be carried out on every report lodged at Police Stations. If the score of the risk assessment is high the Police will notify the duty magistrate to issue a protection order in favour of the victim. The risk assessment tool has been developed by the Domestic Violence Services of the Aġenzija Appoġġ within the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS) and is carried out by social workers from the Emergency Team of the same agency. Since this service is relatively new data gathering is still in its initial stages. However, on average FSWS (Appoġġ) social workers are getting an average of two to three call outs every night.

It has to be pointed out, however, that FSWS did not wait for the passing of this law in order to start giving this social support to victims of domestic violence. The table below shows how many cases of domestic violence the FSWS professionals dealt with between January 2013 and June 2018.

FSWS (Appoġġ) Domestic Violence Data 2013 - 2017

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	TOTALS
New Cases (DVU)	243	276	293	348	338	1498
New Cases (Ghabex)	36	37	23	41	24	161
Cases Re-opened (DVU)	124	157	110	97	92	580
Cases Re-opened (Ghabex)	11	12	13	14	17	67
Closed Cases (DVU)	375	401	420	291	276	1763
Closed Cases (Ghabex)	48	49	37	51	47	232

Total cases worked with (Ghabex)	52	54	39	57	47	249
---	----	----	----	----	----	------------

N.B. DVU means Aġenzija Appoġġ Domestic Violence Unit and Ghabex is the domestic violence shelter run by the same agency.

Apart from this, the Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity also has three contractual agreements with three NGOs which operate domestic violence shelters. These have a bed capacity of 14 each and generally take in victims for an average of six months a year so that between them these shelters, which are normally always full, assist roughly 84 victims a year between them.

Participation of associations representing families

During the period under review several policies were launched in Malta with the specific objective to enhance the well-being of the family and children.

The National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusionⁱ launched in 2014 to provide a policy framework that promotes the well-being and improves the quality of life for all, particularly for 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. This strategic policy was preceded by a consultation process with a wide range of stakeholders including government entities, private and voluntary service providers, service users and people experiencing poverty and social exclusion.

The policy was construed as a public involvement continuum ranging from information gathering and sharing, to dialogue, engagement and partnership in the decision-making process which entailed stakeholder sessions and consultative outreach to explore and identify the main vulnerable groups, and provide a framework that will guide the national commitment towards poverty reduction and the promotion of social inclusion.

The National Children's Policyⁱⁱ was launched in 2017 with the scope to improve the quality of life of children vis-a-vis their rights and well-being in a holistic way across different sectoral areas by proposing a number of policy objectives to be translated into actual operational measures and actions by Government and relevant stakeholders. This policy was drafted in close collaboration with children to capture the vast realities and experiences, and also their needs, wants and aspirations. To this effect an age-sensitive questionnaire was distributed to 311 schools ranging from Kindergarten to Post-secondary from Government, private and Church Schools in Malta and in Gozo.

Furthermore, the policy also took into consideration other previous consultation exercises and also builds on the Draft National Children's Policy Document (2011)ⁱⁱⁱ and on the National Children's Policy 2016 Consultation^{iv}

Further to above, the general public and all interested parties may participate in the consultative process through the website of the Ministry drafting the policy strategies that lead to new legislation or legal amendments to existing legislative provisions.

Equal treatment of foreign nationals and stateless persons with regard to family benefits

Foreign nationals and stateless persons acquire residence status in Malta if they satisfy the relative criteria. Such status could be temporary or long term in accordance with the category of the permit issued. Certain categories of statuses are regulated by the

provisions of the Immigration Act (Cap 217) and relative subsidiary legislation <http://justiceservices.gov.mt/LOM.aspx?pageid=27&mode=chrono&gotoID=217>.

Once granted the person concerned is issued with a residence permit in plastic card format. Some of the said legislation is transposing migration directives issued by the European Union. As regards persons enjoying international protection their residence status is regulated by means of the Refugee Act and relative Subsidiary legislation <http://justiceservices.gov.mt/LOM.aspx?pageid=27&mode=chrono&gotoID=420>.

It is to be remarked that one of the categories of such status is that granted under the Subsidiary Legislation 217.05 – Status of Long-term Residents (Third Country Nationals) Regulations, which is transposing the provisions of EC Directive 2003/109 concerning the status of third-country nationals who are long-term residents, whereby in order to qualify for such status the persons concerned have to satisfy a 5 year residence requirement.

In view of the above such persons are eligible to all Social Security Benefits as provided by the Social Security Act (Chapter 318) of the Laws of Malta, and thus for family benefits. Persons who are not eligible to a refugee status, but are given subsidiary protection also by virtue of the provision of the Refugee Act (Chapter 420) are eligible for social assistance benefits only as provided under the Social Security Act, and therefore are not eligible for other supplementary or child family benefits.

However, if such person benefitting from subsidiary protection status is in legal insurable employment and has a residence permit, he/she may also qualify for supplementary or child family benefits.

Article 17 – The right of children and young persons to social, legal and economic protection

With a view to ensuring the effective exercise of the right of children and young persons to grow up in an environment which encourages the full development of their personality and of their physical and mental capacities, the Parties undertake, either directly, or in cooperation with public and private organisations, to take all appropriate and necessary measures designed:

- 1a. to ensure that children and young persons, taking account of the rights and duties of their parents, have the care, the assistance, the education and the training they need, in particular by providing for the establishment or maintenance of institutions and services sufficient and adequate for this purpose;
 - b. to protect children and young persons against negligence, violence or exploitations;
 - c. to provide protection and special aid from the state for children and young persons temporarily or definitively deprived of their family's support;
2. to provide to children and young persons a free primary and secondary education as well as to encourage regular attendance at schools.

Article 17.1

Right to assistance

The Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS) through Agency *Appogg* aims to keep enhancing its expertise when it comes to assisting children in irregular situations and to protect them against negligence, violence or exploitation. In 2016 and 2017, the Operations Director of Agenzija *Appogg* and the Service Area Leader of the Child Protection Service were involved in the EU project PROMISE. They visited various child friendly justice and support houses, known as 'Children's House'. In 2017, two Service Managers from Agenzija *Appogg* also visited *Barnahus* in Iceland. This visit made it possible for the Agency to achieve the necessary expertise to advocate for this child friendly justice system model in Malta, in the best interest of the children involved. Consequently, in 2017, the Children's House was inaugurated by the Minister for Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity.

It is important to note that FSWS makes no distinction in relation to race, gender, sexual orientation and nationality: any service which is available to Maltese minors is equally available to migrant minors. The Child Protection Services within Agency *Appogg* is and will continue to investigate, assess, intervene and ensure that all the children residing in Malta, including migrant children, are protected from abuse/neglect, however it will be doing so within a new legal framework, once the new Child Protection (alternative care) Bill is enacted and in force. This shall bring with it a number of new posts and new challenges.

The Children and Young Persons (Care Orders) Act states that when a minor arrives in Malta unaccompanied and in an irregular way, with no documentation and with no

family members, including parents, grandparents and uncles/aunts, it is in the remit of the Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers (A.W.A.S.) to issue the Care Order for said minors. The A.W.A.S is to see whether immediate protection for said minor is needed, and together with Agenzija Appogg work closely together, especially since according to the Care Orders Act, any minor in out-of-home care has to be followed by the Looked After Children service. Thus once A.W.A.S. places minors in out of home care, they are referred to the Looked After Children service of Agenzija Appogg.

Currently The Child Protection (Out of Home Care) Bill is being tabled in parliament for the first reading after an extensive public consultation. It is intended to replace the Children and Young Persons (Care Orders) Act. It aims to establish Child Court Services, to introduce child protection orders, to provide for special care and protection for children removed or separated from their parents and placed in out-of-home care.

Article 17.2

Introduction

Malta's Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024² aims to ensure that Malta's education system provides lifelong learning opportunities from early childhood education and care to adult learning to ensure that all children, young people and adults have the opportunity to obtain the necessary skills and attitudes to be active citizens and to succeed at work and in society.

The system is inclusive and promotes equity to ensure that all children undertake their education journey with success. These targets are achievable by investing in the improvement of the educational experience for more students to succeed while educators enjoy the teaching and training experience.

Education Strategy for 2014-2024 Goals

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 retention and attainment in further, vocational, and tertiary education and training.

The following are some of the recent developments which are being implemented with the context of the aims of Malta's Education Strategy for 2014-2024.

² <https://education.gov.mt/en/resources/Documents/Policy%20Documents%202014/BOOKLET%20ESM%202014-2024%20ENG%2019-02.pdf>

Strengthening VET in Compulsory Education

My Journey: Achieving through different paths: the educational reform that sees vocational and applied subjects available to secondary students, will open up secondary schooling beyond the traditional academic subjects.

This initiative will update the current secondary school model and will see the educational sector move from a 'one size fits all' system to a more inclusive and comprehensive learning system which equitably supports individual talents and needs through quality vocational education and training and applied learning programs which will be implemented from at the start of the scholastic year 2019.

Through this reform secondary schools will offer nine vocational and applied subjects. Malta is investing heavily in equipping schools with state of the art workshops to cater for these subjects.

Encouraging VET Studies

Measures have been taken on a national level to bring attitudinal changes and also to provide equitable access to VET, primarily ensuring that more individuals join VET programs. The Malta College for Science, Arts and Technology (MCAST) operates under the conceptual framework of three interlinked college systems namely at Foundation, Technical and University level. The new developments enabled the College to grow and strengthen all its different areas of its wide-ranging remit for the benefit of its learners and workers.

MCAST offers 192 full-time and over 300 part-time vocational courses ranging from awards to degrees at MQF/EQF Level 1 to Level 7. MCAST collaborates closely with local industries to ensure that the knowledge, skills and competences within its curricula are appropriate and relevant to Malta's dynamic and forward-looking economy. This reorganization was accompanied by a reform in its apprenticeship programs in order to link in a more constructive and meaningful manner the world of education with the world of employment.

The Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship Act, that provides regulations for governance and administration of accredited Training Programs for Work-Placements, Apprenticeships and Internships for Vocational Education and Training purposes, was approved in the National Parliament in early 2018. Currently MCAST is moving towards a strategic plan which covers the years 2019-2021 and which aims at taking the College to a higher level of excellence, inclusion and equity.

The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) launched the Skills Kits programme 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 programme provides the possibility of choosing individual combinations of Skills Kits study programmes from subjects such as art, hairdressing, beauty, basic web design, caring for others, animal care, sport, installation of low voltage devices and cultures. These Skills Kits have also been used successfully by MCAST as a form of

outreach towards secondary schools and for inclusion and integration processes especially among migrants.

School and Curriculum reforms

As from scholastic year 2018/19 Mid-yearly exams in primary schools (Years 4-6) and middle schools (Years 7-8) will be removed in order to reducing stress for students. Instead, various forms of continuous school based assessments will be strengthened. Annual examinations will be retained. The benchmarking exercise of Year 6 students is also undergoing further developments.

As from 2019/20 the end of secondary school examination system through which students achieved the Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) will undergo a major change and will move away from a system based on an end of Year 11 final summative examination towards a system where continuous assessment will play an important part of the final global grade. The SEC examinations will be retained as an entry point to further and higher education.

The introduction of a *national homework policy* will tackle the subsequent issue of carrying heavy bags from home to school and vice versa. Furthermore, a consultation process on uniforms will be launched to promote a better life-style for students and safeguards their mental and physical well-being. These policies and measures aim to introduce a sense of balance between family life, schooling and leisure time without reducing a student's learning potential.

The School syllabus is also in the process of being revised to reflect the needs of the 21st century and will be implemented from the scholastic year 2018/19. These syllabi are based on a learning outcomes approach and will lead to phased revision of all learning programs and syllabi within compulsory education. In the next scholastic year, this change will be introduced in the first year of kindergarten, Year 3 in Primary schools and Year 7 in secondary schools. In subsequent years, other year groups will have their syllabi revised in this manner. Further information is available on the following websites:

- <http://www.schoolslearningoutcomes.edu.mt/en/>
- https://curriculum.gov.mt/en/syllabi_as_from_sept_2018/Pages/new_syllabi.aspx
- <https://nextyear.edu.mt/>

Early childhood education and care is pivotal to respond adequately to the Education Strategy Framework since early years provision is the foundation of learning throughout life, development of better social skills and the reduction of behavioural problems.

Malta is investing in the opening of new childcare centres, accreditation procedure and monitoring of childcare centres, attracting personnel and providing them with the right training. Malta will continue to strengthen the provision of free childcare. This also includes further investment in the provision of the breakfast clubs, *Klabb* 3-16 and Summer Schools.

Standardisation of procedures ensures better communication among the school and the parents/guardians and other stakeholders. The Ministry for Education and Employment's clients will benefit from the introduction of a One Stop Shop centre offering over 63 services.

Other measures that promote a better learning environment at schools and within other contexts include: support to parents/guardians in the financial burden of educating children through the introduction of free supervised school transport; promotion of a healthy lifestyle through cooperation with the Ministry for Health (MFH) and, investment in the expansion of the Breakfast club and provision of lunches. In addition, the removal of exam fees (MATSEC), free past papers and complimentary re-sit revision classes aim at encouraging children to undertake examinations while reducing the financial burden on parents.

The *Addressing Attendance in Schools Policy* was adopted to have a unified collective and collaborative action in and by educators, administrators, parents and students. The policy has been introduced to improve student learning behaviour and well-being of learners and the conditions that support education and training. A strong effort has been made, led by the National School Support Service, to reduce school absenteeism with significant reduction in absenteeism being registered, particularly in primary schools. Following a consultation process, a revised strategy is to be launched in September 2018, while new proposals and recommendations will be put forward in the new Education Act, which is to be discussed in Parliament this year.

The setting up of the National Literacy Agency (NLA) has created a strong focal point for literacy support in schools. The 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 strives also to improve literacy outcomes, resulting in inclusive practices, higher educational qualifications, and better job prospects.

Strengthening Career Guidance provision

All students have access to career guidance through the Career Guidance Programmes organised at College level. These programmes aim to enhance students' learning and supporting their career choices. Career guidance services are delivered in schools by Principal Education Support Practitioners (Career Advisors), 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. These interventions contribute 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.

This provision is complemented by external resources with talks by employers, career orientation visits and one-week career exposure experiences for students at the place of work. All students, including learners with Individual Educational Needs (IENs), possible early school leavers, low achievers and other vulnerable groups are included in

such programmes. At times tailor-made experiences at the place of work are arranged for the latter by the respective colleges.

Complementing the career guidance services, within Maltese schools learners are also taught career management skills (CMS) as part of the subject 'Personal, Social and Career Development'. All students are exposed to a number of hours every year throughout their compulsory education on the acquisition CMS.

The National School Support Services organises the I Choose Fair – *Nagħzel il-Karriera Tieghi* (I choose my career) in collaboration with MEDE in both Malta and Gozo. Post-Secondary Institutions and other entities set up stands and provide information about the courses and the support they can offer to students and adults on the career options available. Qualified Career Guidance Practitioners also provide one-to-one career guidance sessions to individuals at the fair. Ongoing Information Talks are delivered by speakers coming from different sectors of Employment and Education/Training. Students, parents and adults are invited to attend those talks which interest them.

Euro-guidance Malta which falls under the remit of the National Schools Support Services 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.

Currently the National School Support Services in collaboration with a local NGO is also working on developing an interactive career website with the aim of addressing the information given to young people aged 11-15 about their future career choices. All the information needed for students to decide on what career path they will choose will be available online and on an app. Information on the educational reform 'My Journey' will also be provided to help students choose between the academic, vocational and applied routes. This information will be accessible to students, parents and teachers. The website will be launched in October 2018. It is planned that the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) will continue sustaining this web portal once the project ends in 2019.

The National School Support Services is also responsible for the compilation and publication of the annual Tracer Study. The Tracer Study is an annual study which portrays the post-Secondary choices, usually, further academic/vocational studies or employment (among other exceptional choices) taken up by Year 11 students after finishing compulsory schooling.

Inclusive education

Malta's education systems aim 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.

The setting up of a *Migrant Learners' Unit* has strengthened the provision for inclusive support for children from a migrant background to integrate within the school system. The development of a one-year induction programme for these children has been an important development in this regard. Programmes are available to tackle teaching of Maltese and sharing of cultural heritage among migrants is available for better communication and inclusion.

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.

Digital Education

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 'One Tablet per Child' (OTPC) scheme has been established to ensure that all children will be given a fair and equal opportunity to be closer to technology.

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.

Malta is piloting a ground-breaking nation-state pilot project using open standards blockchain technology (Blockcerts) to secure learning credentials and empower citizens in their lifelong learning journey.

A web portal is being created to assist students and their parents/guardians in the selection of subjects and different career paths, along with the organisation of an annual fair to assist students in their selection.

Investments in opening new schools and institutes as well as the development of School Infrastructures

- The opening and further investment in schools specializing in Sports and Visual Performing Arts;
- The establishment of the Institute of Education was to ensure the continuous professional development of teaching grades. The main objective of this initiative is to provide all educators within the educational sector courses and sessions to acquire or improve their competences to foster our generations into functioning citizens;
- Building of new schools, extension and refurbishment of state schools to ensure the best infrastructure and technology provision.

Lifelong Learning Initiatives

Malta has set up a Lifelong Learning Strategy and an Upskilling Pathways Working Group which is aimed at coordination of policy and provision to help ensure that public policy interventions in adult learning achieves specific goals.

These initiatives have increased the participation in lifelong learning. Malta provides subsidised Lifelong Learning Basic Skills Courses for adults with low skills, knowledge and competences.

Malta's public employment service provides courses aimed at helping individuals acquire transversal or specific skills. Different types of courses are available, varying from short courses to vocational courses referenced to the Maltese and European Qualification Frameworks.

Encouraging Tertiary Education

Government supports access to tertiary education by ensuring that it is free for Maltese students, as well as to those coming from EU and EEA countries and by providing grants to Maltese students enrolled in courses in MCAST (Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology) and the University of Malta. As from the academic year 2017/2018 post-graduate students under the age of 40 are exempt from paying income tax for two years. Other measures aim to encourage students to choose subjects which reflect the country's need for expertise and economic growth.

The Addressing Attendance in Schools Policy (2014) adopts a whole school approach philosophy. This approach is defined as a unified collective and collaborative action in and by educators, administrators, parents and students that has been strategically constituted to improve student learning behaviour and well being and the conditions that support these. This policy aims to:

- Maximize school completion for all students;
- Raise student achievement and close gaps in student performance;
- Identify attendance patterns in order to design attendance improvement efforts;

- Verify that individual students are complying with education Legislation relating to compulsory attendance;
- Promote the value of education.

Initiatives to improve attendance in state schools include:

- Better communication between schools, students and parents/guardians;
- Direct and personal contact with parents/guardians;
- Law enforcement;
- Monitoring of absenteeism through medical certificates;
- Support to students which is better coordinated and intense;
- Engagement of more social workers and social support workers along with other professionals within the Directorate for Educational Services;
- Clear policies and procedures;
- Launch of a National Campaign;
- Development of curricula which caters for the needs of all students and more alternative learning programs.

In addition to the above measures, a measure that had significant impact on the reduction of absenteeism was the *Child Supplement Benefit*, implemented for the scholastic year 2014/2015. Through this initiative, families were granted supplementary grants that are conditional on children having a 95% school attendance record. From the 11,588 students who were eligible, 6,290 students attended state schools. The attendance of such students increased by an average of **3%** when compared with the attendance of the previous scholastic year (2013/2014), and although 2,373 students were eligible, they did not receive this benefit as their attendance did not reach 95%.

Comparison of Unauthorised Absenteeism 2008-09 to 2017-18 (30+ days)

	Year	Student Population	No of Students missing 30+ Unauthorised Days	Percentage
PRIMARY	2008/09	20878	442	2.12%
PRIMARY	2009/10	20238	313	1.55%
PRIMARY	2010/11	19831	196	0.99%
PRIMARY	2011/12	19652	211	1.07%
PRIMARY	2012/13	19525	205	1.04%
PRIMARY	2013/14	16987	235	1.40%
PRIMARY	2014/15	13577	133	0.99%
PRIMARY	2015/16	14194	171	1.20%
PRIMARY	2016/17	14637	154	1.05%
PRIMARY	2017/18	15156	171	1.13%

N.B. As from 2013/14 the number of primary students quoted in table excludes kindergarten hence the rise in percentage

	Year	Student Population	No of Students missing 30+ Unauthorised Days	Percentage
SECONDARY	2008/09	15594	1210	7.76%
SECONDARY	2009/10	15031	1002	6.67%
SECONDARY	2010/11	14185	1052	7.42%
SECONDARY	2011/12	13431	1061	7.90%
SECONDARY	2012/13	12791	965	7.50%
SECONDARY	2013/14	11796	907	7.70%
SECONDARY	2014/15	11480	545	4.57%
SECONDARY	2015/16	10753	411	3.82%
SECONDARY	2016/17	10591	485	4.58%
SECONDARY	2017/18	10723	510	4.76%

Following the introduction of the Addressing Attendance in Schools Policy, Procedure and Strategy, the rate of absenteeism started being calculated as percentage rate per student and it included all absent days, that is, unauthorised absence, excused absence and medical absence. It is also the case that the secondary years were divided into 2: middle which incorporates Year 7 and 8 (ex-Form 1 and 2) and secondary incorporating Year 9 to 11 (ex-Form 3 to Form 5)

	% Attendance					% Unauthorised Absence³				
	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18
Primary	92.47%	93.08%	92.87%	93.47%	92.86%	3.81%	2.34%	2.64%	2.59%	2.78%
Middle (Year 7 - 8)	88.27%	89.66%	88.89%	88.41%	88.08%	6.83%	3.88%	4.08%	4.57%	4.73%
Secondary (Year 9 - 11)	79.61%	84.10%	86.69%	84.52%	84.61%	10.26%	6.95%	6.34%	7.24%	7.25%

As can be seen from the data provided above, absenteeism is a bigger issue for students

³ Unauthorised Non-Attendance with parental knowledge occurs in situations in which a parent or carer approves their child's late arrival or non-attendance at school. Alternatively, although parents may not approve such absence, they may fail or be unable to enforce attendance. Such absence includes students who work in the family business and students who against their will are kept from attending school to care for a family member

in years 9 – 11. Unauthorised absence has decreased from the scholastic year 13/14 to 17/18 in all three categories. Additionally, for years 7 and 8, the targets of the Key Performance Indicator for the scholastic year 2017/2018 has been reached and surpassed. As a concluding remark, for the established targets to be reached, more active collaboration between the parties involved is necessary, as absenteeism brings along challenges which require several holistic and timely interventions. Thus, shared responsibility between those involved is a must.

Finally, from the scholastic year 2019-2020, students in year 9 will start a new education process under the reform of ‘My Journey’, where they will be able to choose from applied, vocational and academic subjects, catering for the needs of all children. This reform is also expected to have positive results on attendance as it will assist in engaging students in the education system.

Additional data:

Number of parents referred to the Regional Tribunal because of habitual absenteeism:

Year	No of Parents
2010-11	1766
2011-12	1613
2012-13	1398
2013-14	1599
2014-15	1294
2015-16	1146
2016-17	1738

Number of Parents who attended Tribunal Sittings

Year	No of sittings
2011	144
2012	72
2013	53
2014	66
2015	52
2016	46
2017	64

Inclusive Education

The Maltese Government regards inclusive education as an essential element of education in Malta. Malta aims to create responsive environments to the differing developmental capacities, needs, and potential of all students throughout the whole educational journey. Several initiatives and measures have been undertaken to facilitate access to education. These include:

- The Malta’s *National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for All (2012)* aims at educating children to regard diversity as a key value in the development of the

Maltese society. This learning outcome framework seeks to instill values that respect diversity;

- The *Framework for the Education Strategy 2014 - 2024* (2014) based on four main principles; equity, social justice, diversity and inclusivity. The framework places emphasis on students learning to live together⁴.

Malta implemented the Respect for All Framework (2014)^[2] which addresses two pillars – 1) learning to be and 2) learning to live together. It is based on a philosophy of value-based education. 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.

Malta also developed the Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex Students in Schools Policy (2015)^[3]. This 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.

A Migrant Learners Unit in 2015 was also set up of for the provision of induction into the mainstream education system for learners with a migrant background under the age of 16. The Unit is also providing intensive language courses in summer to consolidate the acquisition of Maltese and English in compulsory school aged learners.

Malta has an official national publication which focuses on preventing ESL - A Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Early School Leaving In Malta 2014^[1] (Timeframe: 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.

At the Malta College for Arts, Science, and Technology (MCAST), 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 Inclusive Education Unit (IEU) within MCAST provides the necessary support to MCAST students with particular needs, including disabilities and/or learning difficulties. Students with particular needs are given the necessary support for their studies at MCAST to become more independent especially as they progress from one level to another.

⁴<https://education.gov.mt/en/resources/Documents/Policy%20Documents%202014/BOOKLET%20ESM%202014-2024%20ENG%2019-02.pdf>

^[2] <https://education.gov.mt/en/resources/News/Documents/Respect%20For%20All%20Document.pdf>

^[3]

<https://education.gov.mt/en/resources/Documents/Policy%20Documents/Trans,%20Gender%20Variant%20and%20Intersex%20Students%20in%20Schools%20Policy.pdf>

^[1] <https://lifelonglearning.gov.mt/dbfile.aspx?id=47>

The Directorate for National Schools Support Services has the responsibility for all the services provided to pupils with special needs in both mainstream and Resource Centres, offering services for the visually impaired, hearing impaired, home tuition, hospital classes, early intervention and services for pupils with communication difficulties, which include access to the Communication and Technology Unit (ACTU) and the Autistic Spectrum Disorder Support Team (ASST).

The opening of multi-sensory learning rooms for primary school learners serves to provide opportunities to learners with autism to engage and enhance learning as well as offering learner-centred and sensory support.

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. Additionally, examination papers have been made more suitable for students with dyslexia through changes in colour and fonts.

National benchmark assessment papers are monitored to ensure that students on the autistic spectrum are not disadvantaged by any feature of the papers.

Free childcare services are offered for children whose parents are in employment or education, along with breakfast clubs and after-school hours programmes (Klabb 3 – 16).

Ghozza is a support service and an educational programme to unmarried pregnant minors with the intention of leading them to adopt a positive attitude towards motherhood while empowering them to pursue their career paths.

Malta has also been focusing on implementing individualised teaching approaches to disadvantaged students and students with difficulty in learning, reflected in yearly intakes of Learning Support Educators (LSEs), totalling to 3525 in early 2018. Additionally, the Institute for Education organises a part-time 15 ECTS Level 4 course: ***Supporting Students with Individual Educational Needs*** for Learning Support Educators (LSEs) three times a year where different topics are tackled, namely:

- Working Collaboratively with teacher and parents;
- Examining models of inclusion and Multiculturalism;
- Gender equality; ADD/ADHD;
- Autism Spectrum Disorder;
- Intellectual Impairment;
- Behaviour Management strategies (including Social and emotional);
- Dealing with Communication difficulties and learning styles to adapt to the curriculum.

Malta is working on a reform called 'My Journey: Achieving through different paths' 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. In this regard, Malta is set to introduce learning outcomes instead of prescribed syllabi. The aim 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. But in the past few years, 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. Once the new system is in place students will be able to choose either an individual pathway or a mix of the three. 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 a changing labour market. The Ministry for Education and Employment is working on the infrastructure needed to implement the system in local schools.

To promote a better learning environment at schools, support is given to parents/guardians with financial burdens of educating children through the introduction of free supervised school transport; promotion of a healthy lifestyle through cooperation with the Ministry for Health and, investment in the expansion of the Breakfast club and provision of lunches. In addition, the removal of exam fees (MATSEC), free past papers and complimentary re-sit revision classes aim at encouraging children to undertake examinations while reducing the financial burden on parents.

Schools have 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.

Article 27 – The right of workers with family responsibilities to equal opportunities and equal treatment

With a view to ensuring the exercise of the right to equality of opportunity and treatment for men and women workers with family responsibilities and between such workers and other workers, the Parties undertake:

1. to take appropriate measures:
 - a. to enable workers with family responsibilities to enter and remain in employment, as well as to re-enter employment after an absence due to those responsibilities, including measures in the field of vocational guidance and training;
 - b. to take account of their needs in terms of conditions of employment and social security;
 - c. to develop or promote services, public or private, in particular child day care services and other childcare arrangements;
2. to provide a possibility for either parent to obtain, during a period after maternity leave, parental leave to take care of a child, the duration and conditions of which should be determined by national legislation, collective agreements or practices;
3. to ensure that family responsibilities shall not, as such, constitute a valid reason for termination of employment.

Article 27.2

Parents who avail of parental leave are not awarded financial compensation or a benefit by the Maltese state. However under the Social Security Act (Chapter 318) of the Laws of Malta, a parent who takes a career break to take care of his child while under the age of six, or under the age of 10 if child is severely disabled, would qualify for credits of contributions for pension assessment purposes.

Through this measure, parents who take a career break to take care of their child/children will benefit from the award of credits of contributions which are added to their contribution record. This would help the parent get a better pension when he/she are of pension age.

ⁱ <https://family.gov.mt/en/Documents/Poverty%20Strategy%202014%20English%20Version.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <https://family.gov.mt/en/Documents/National%20Children%27s%20Policy%202017.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://education.gov.mt/en/resources/Documents/Policy%20Documents/Draft.pdf>

^{iv} <https://tfal.org.mt/en/professionals/PublishingImages/Pages/Documents/National%20Children%27s%20Policy%202016.pdf>