

Language Education Policy Profile

MALTA

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1. INTRODUCTION¹

1.1. The origins, context and purpose of the Profile

The Language Policy Unit of the Council of Europe offers to Member states assistance in carrying out analyses of their language education policies. According to the *Guidelines and Procedures*², “the aim is to offer member States (or regions or cities) the opportunity to undertake a ‘self-evaluation’ of their policy in a spirit of dialogue with Council of Europe Experts, and with a view to focusing on possible future policy developments within the country. [...] This does not mean ‘external evaluation’. It is a process of reflection by the authorities and by members of civil society, and the Council of Europe Experts have the function of acting as catalysts in this process”.

This activity is known as the *Language Education Policy Profile*, and the process leads to an agreed report, the *Profile*, on the current position and possible future developments in language education of all kinds.

The *Profile* differs from other international protocols on languages in two ways:

- It considers languages primarily from the viewpoint of education, both inside and outside national systems ;
- It is based on the principle that language education should be viewed not in a compartmentalised but in a holistic fashion. Language teaching/learning concerns both so-called foreign or second languages (to which it is usually limited) and the national/official language(s), regional or minority languages, languages of recently established immigrant groups and so on.

The process of the Profile consists of the following main phases:

- the production of a Country Report³, describing the current position and raising issues which are under discussion or review; this report is presented by the authorities of the country in question
- a week’s study visit to the country by a small number of Experts nominated by the Council of Europe from other Member states (the “Expert Group”) to get a fuller understanding of the situation, the potential and challenges: exchanges with authorities and a wide range of relevant interlocutors, e.g. specialists and other parties active in the field concerned or representatives of civil society chosen by the national authorities from sectors of society regarded as relevant (education officers, teachers’ associations, business, media, etc.). This also includes visits to institutions and schools (individual or group discussions).

¹Acknowledgements to previous Country Profiles for parts of the content of this section.

² [Document DGIV/EDU/LANG \(2002\) 1 Rev. 3](#) - the procedure described in the ‘Guidelines’ has been reviewed since, mainly in order to shorten the whole process which in certain cases extended over 2 years with the risk of political changes.

³ A ‘Country Report’ is the generic term. This activity may also be applied to a smaller entity such as a region, a local authority or a city.

- the production of a *Language Education Policy Profile* drawing on the Country Report and the analysis of the Expert Group, and taking account of comments and feedback provided during the study visit. The draft 'Profile' is discussed during a second visit of the Rapporteur and team members
- the "Profile" is launched - an occasion for a national or local event

The "Profile" is a report which is agreed in its final form by the Experts and the country authorities, and published by the Council of Europe⁴ and the country in question.

This approach, which is centred on complementary joint analyses, is intended as a means of discharging the "catalyst" function of the Council of Europe as part of a national self-evaluation process, aided by analyses by outside observers. Within the area of democratic debate, its purpose is to give these questions greater immediacy, identify "good practices" and devise new approaches according to each state's educational culture.

In providing comments, the Council of Europe Expert Group bears in mind both the priorities of the country in question and the policies and views of desirable practice presented in documents of the Council of Europe, in particular with respect to the promotion of plurilingual and intercultural education as formulated in documents in the project 'Languages in Education, Languages for Education' to be found on the 'Platform of resources and references for Plurilingual and Intercultural Education' (www.coe.int/lang-platform).

1.2. Language education policy and social policy

The core objective of the Council of Europe is to preserve and promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law its three pillars - as was re-iterated in the Warsaw Declaration of May 2005. Within that context, the fostering of the active involvement of citizens and civil society in democracy and governance, and a European identity and unity based on respect for shared fundamental values and respect for a common heritage and cultural diversity are crucial conditions for success. As stated in the Cultural Convention - 60th anniversary celebrated in December 2014 - this requires the study of languages, history and civilisation in order to gain mutual understanding. It is only on the basis of such understanding that the particular need for political, inter-cultural and inter-faith dialogue described in the Council of Europe's 'White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue' of 2008 can be fostered.

Language teaching and learning is therefore an essential part of social policy in Europe and the analysis of language education policy is part of the effort which all member States make to develop their social policy. The Language Education Policy Profile is a contribution to this process.

⁴ The Country Report and the Profile are also available online: www.coe.int/lang

1.3. Council of Europe Language Education Policies

The language education policy of the Council of Europe is founded on the key concept of the plurilingualism of the individual. This needs to be distinguished from the multilingualism of geographical regions.

According to Council of Europe principles

- 'multilingualism' refers to the presence in a geographical area, large or small, of more than one 'variety of language' i.e. the mode of speaking of a social group whether it is formally recognised as a language or not; in such an area individuals may be monolingual, speaking only their own variety
- 'plurilingualism' refers to the repertoire of varieties of language which many individuals use, and is therefore the opposite of monolingualism; it includes the language variety referred to as 'mother tongue' or 'first language' and any number of other languages or varieties at whatever level of competence; in some multilingual areas some individuals are monolingual and some are plurilingual.

Europe as a geographic area is multilingual, as are all its 47 Member states. The Council of Europe has developed an international consensus on principles to guide the development of language education policies which promotes plurilingualism for the individual as a principal aim of all language education policy. This position is formulated in a number of documents listed in Appendix 2.

Plurilingualism is defined in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)*⁵ in the following way:

(Plurilingualism is) the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social agent, has proficiency of varying degrees, in several languages, and experience of several cultures. This is not seen as the superposition or juxtaposition of distinct competences, but rather as the existence of a complex or even composite competence on which the user may draw. (Council of Europe, 2001: 168).

Thus plurilingualism refers to the full linguistic repertoire of the individual, including their 'mother tongue' or 'first language', and in this document we are concerned with all language education in Malta, including education in Maltese, English and in those languages which are labelled as 'foreign' languages.

This perspective places not languages but those who speak them at the centre of language policies. The emphasis is upon valuing and developing the ability of all individuals to learn and use several languages, to broaden this competence through appropriate teaching and through plurilingual education, the purpose of which is the creation of linguistic sensitivity and cultural understanding, as a basis for democratic citizenship.

This Profile is informed by the Council of Europe position, contained in the Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the

⁵ Council of Europe, 2001: *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*, Cambridge University Press. Also online on www.coe.int/lang-CEFR, available in 39 languages.

Council of Europe⁶ and in instruments such as the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, and presented in detail in the *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe*⁷. In this latter document it is made clear that plurilingualism is also a fundamental aspect of policies of social inclusion and education for democratic citizenship:

By making education for democratic citizenship a priority for the Council of Europe and its member states in 1997, Heads of State and Government set out the central place of languages in the exercise of democratic citizenship in Europe: the need, in a democracy, for citizens to participate actively in political decision-making and the life of society presupposes that this should not be made impossible by lack of appropriate language skills. The possibility of taking part in the political and public life of Europe, and not only that of one's own country, involves plurilingual skills, in other words, the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with other European citizens.

The development of plurilingualism is not simply a functional necessity: it is also an essential component of democratic behaviour. Recognition of the diversity of speakers' plurilingual repertoires should lead to linguistic tolerance and thus to respect for linguistic differences: respect for the linguistic rights of individuals and groups in their relations with the state and linguistic majorities, respect for freedom of expression, respect for linguistic minorities, respect for the least commonly spoken and taught national languages, respect for the diversity of languages for inter-regional and international communication. Language education policies are intimately connected with education in the values of democratic citizenship because their purposes are complementary: language teaching, the ideal locus for intercultural contact, is a sector in which education for democratic life in its intercultural dimensions can be included in education systems. (*Guide for Language Education Policies in Europe Main Version 2.3*)

As a consequence, the Council of Europe's language education policy is to promote 'plurilingual and intercultural education' as defined in the document *Plurilingual and Intercultural Education as a Project*⁸:

Plurilingual and intercultural education needs to be conceived as a global language education, across all languages of the school and in all disciplinary domains, which provides a basis for an identity open to linguistic and cultural plurality and diversity, insofar as languages are the expression of different cultures and of differences within the same culture. All disciplines contribute to this **language education** through the contents which they carry and the ways in which they are taught.

It should be noted that while the development of plurilingual and intercultural education is an accepted aim of language education, its implementation is only just beginning in most education contexts. Measures may be more or less demanding, e.g. ministerial regulations

⁶ See appendix 1.

⁷ This *Guide* was published in 2002 (rev. 2007) by the Language Policy Unit / Council of Europe, and is available online www.coe.int/lang. It exists in two versions to suit the needs of specific groups of readers: a *Main version* and an *Executive version* and is accompanied by a series of 21 thematic studies.

⁸ See "*A Platform of resources and references for plurilingual and intercultural education*" Section "The learner and the languages present in school". www.coe.int/lang-platform

concerning curriculum, or new forms of organisation, which may require special financial arrangements, or political decisions, implying extensive discussion at all levels.

Implementation of policies for the development of plurilingual and intercultural education can be approached in different ways, and it is not necessarily a matter of “all or nothing”. The responses to the Country Profile in any particular country can thus be expected to vary according to their circumstances, history and priorities.

1.4. The Process of preparing the Malta Profile

This present Profile is the outcome of the following steps :

- the application for a *Profile* was submitted to the Council of Europe in July 2013
- the Council of Europe Expert Group was then constituted as follows: Elidir King (Rapporteur), United Kingdom; Jean-Claude Beacco, France; Marisa Cavalli, Val d’Aosta; Philia Thalgott, Council of Europe. Charles Mifsud, Chair of the Maltese “Language Policy in Education Committee” acted as liaison person and adviser.
- a preparatory meeting was held in February 2014, involving the Rapporteur of the Expert Group, the Council of Europe representative and the national authorities (particularly the Maltese “Language Policy in Education Committee”)
- a Country Report (to accompany this current Profile) was produced and made available in May 2014
- discussions and visits to institutions by three Council of Europe Experts, and one member of the Council of Europe Secretariat (Language Policy Unit) took place over one week in June 2014 (Appendix 8)
- documentation was provided before and during the week visit by Maltese authorities and others further two-day visits by the Rapporteur and one team member took place in November 2014 and February 2015 for additional visits and meetings and to discuss the draft “Profile”
- a number of Skype discussion meetings were also organised.

The Profile is organised in five sections:

1. **Introduction** explaining the background to the profile
2. **An Overview of Languages Education in Malta.** A summary of the current situation as raised by the internal Country Report and the authorities
3. **Key issues for consideration** . An analysis of the main challenges facing language education policy in Malta.
4. **Looking forward.** Reflections and proposals on possible future approaches to language education in Malta.
5. **Appendices** referring to key documentation, participants and the profile process.

The overview of the findings concerning language education policy in Malta and the proposals in this document are based on examination of the *Country Report* (document accompanying this *Profile*), on the guidelines adopted by the Council of Europe regarding language policies (mentioned in the body of this document and summarised in Appendix 1) and on the renewal process initiated by the Ministry for Education and Employment and leading figures in the educational system.

It obviously does not contain a definitive list of potential decisions, responsibility for which falls to the Ministry for Education and Employment. This Profile is conceived and drafted as an aid to self-evaluation and forward-looking reflection on the future of the Maltese educational system with Council of Europe assistance so that subsequent decisions may be taken.

The authors of the Profile are most grateful to the Maltese authorities, to the Language Policy in Education Committee and to the many organisations and individuals who contributed their time and expertise to the development of the Profile. We may not have understood everything, but without such enthusiastic contributions from so many people this Profile would never have been completed.

2. AN OVERVIEW OF LANGUAGES EDUCATION IN MALTA

In this section, which is heavily indebted to the much more detailed country report, we outline some of the main characteristics of languages education in Malta. The aim here is to present a brief description of the main features of languages education, before the more analytical consideration of key issues in Section 3, although inevitably the distinction is not always clearcut.

2.1. A complex sociolinguistic context

Malta's history and its geographical position between three continents have had a significant impact on its linguistic development. The Maltese language provides a possibly unique example of a fusion of elements from diverse linguistic sources. It has an Arabic base upon which elements of other languages - Romance languages, in particular Italian, and also English have been inserted. Indeed the presence of more than one language in Malta, has been an integral part of its sociolinguistic context throughout the centuries.⁹

2.1.1 Maltese and English Bilingualism

The presence of English is a result of Malta's colonial heritage. During the British colonial period (1800-1964), English replaced Italian as the country's official language, after a lengthy struggle known as the 'Language Question'¹⁰. This period was characterised by two important linguistic changes: the introduction of the English language as an official language and a legitimisation of the Maltese language. In fact, over time the status of Maltese improved, and from a mainly spoken language it acquired its standardised written form. Maltese was finally declared an official language together with English, in 1934. This position was maintained after independence in 1964, although Maltese was then defined as the national language with English having a constitutionally subsidiary role as an official language. In 2004, on Malta's accession to the European Union, Maltese became an official language of the EU.

Currently Maltese is the dominant spoken language. Surveys¹¹ indicate that Maltese is the mother tongue of around 98% of the population, with a small percentage of Maltese nationals also claiming that English is their mother tongue. Furthermore, despite its small population Malta also has a number of viable dialects, notably Gozitan, which have survived the effects of globalisation (Country report section 2.4). In the private domain, then, interaction in most families takes place overwhelmingly in Maltese (93.2 % with

⁹ Brincat, J.M. (2011). *Maltese and other languages: A linguistic history of Malta*. Malta: Midsea Books. Mifsud, M. (1995). *Loan verbs in Maltese: A descriptive and comparative study*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

¹⁰ See Country Report - "his was a heated argument between pro-English and pro-Italian supporters as to which language should be used for administrative purposes".

¹¹ Sciriha, L., & M. Vassallo. (2001). *Malta: A linguistic landscape*. Malta: University of Malta. Sciriha, L., & M. Vassallo. (2006). *Living languages in Malta*. Malta: IT Printing.

mother and 93.1% with father)¹². The data also reveals that the incidence of English language use is consistently highest among the managerial and professional classes and much lower percentages are registered among manual workers, homemakers and the unemployed.

When it comes to the written medium, however, the position is rather different. A survey carried out by the National Statistics Office¹³ reveals that written English is preferred by 44.5 % of the population, compared to the use of written Maltese, at 43.1 %. When asked about their preferred language when reading, 46.3 % opt for English while 38.6 % prefer Maltese. As regards newspapers, readership of English language newspapers - *The Times of Malta* and *The Sunday Times* - is higher than that of other papers¹⁴. Although an increasing number of books are being written in Maltese and translated into Maltese, reading material in Maltese remains relatively limited compared to the availability of English texts. Most textbooks used in schools are in English, with textbooks in Maltese generally dealing with the actual teaching and learning of the Maltese language.

	MALTESE		ENGLISH	
	<i>Spoken</i>	<i>Written</i>	<i>Spoken</i>	<i>Written</i>
Administration				
Parliament	+	+	-	-
Courts	+	+	-	+
Church	+	+	-	+
Broadcasting				
Television	+	n/a	+	n/a
Radio	+	n/a	+	n/a
Theatre	+	n/a	+	n/a
Cinema	-	n/a	+	+
Newspapers	n/a	+	n/a	+
Publications	n/a	+	n/a	+
Work	+	+	+	+
Home	+	+	+	+
Education	+	+	+	+

Table 1. Language use by domain

(Camilleri, A. (1995) *Bilingualism in Education. The Maltese Experience*. Heidelberg: Julius Groos Verlag, p. 100)

Thus, although the Maltese language is spoken by the majority of citizens, it is not used in all domains. Language use in Malta has been described as a situation of bilingualism without diglossia, whereby two languages are used in the same domain¹⁵. The above table summarises language use by domain.

¹² Sciriha & Vassallo (2006)' op.cit

¹³ National Statistics Office. (2011). Culture participation survey. Available online http://www.nso.gov.mt/statdoc/document_file.aspx?id=3231.

¹⁴ Vella, A. (2013). Languages and language varieties in Malta, *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 16(5), 532--552.

¹⁵ Camilleri-Grima, A. (2000). The Maltese bilingual classroom: A microcosm of local society, *Mediterranean Journal of Educational Studies* 6(1): 3-12; Fishman, J. (1967). Bilingualism with and without diglossia; diglossia with and without bilingualism. *The Journal of Social Issues* 23, 29-38.

Maltese is used on most local television and radio stations, but local television stations continue to transmit films and documentaries in English. Maltese is used regularly in most churches for religious services. In education, English is a major language of instruction, and knowledge of the language is considered indispensable. English also predominates in many other spheres such as tourism, industry, entertainment, commerce, and the mass media.

School type is also associated with language use. Independent and Church schools, especially single-sex girls' schools and schools in the Northern Harbour region, are considered to be largely English-speaking, while in State schools, both teachers and pupils employ extensive English-Maltese code-switching in the classroom¹⁶ However, recent changes in student populations have resulted in more diversity in students' language backgrounds, affected also by the growing presence of migrant children.

It should, however, be emphasised that in present-day Malta, an accurate representation of the domains in which each language is used is very complex, and any assignment of one language to a particular domain must be viewed tentatively. This is because in a context where societal bilingualism prevails, Maltese and English code-switching is a common linguistic practice (often giving rise to complaints about language deterioration). Even those who claim to use Maltese or English exclusively are likely to use forms of codeswitching¹⁷, and in the majority of communities where codeswitching has been studied, it seems that very often some social stigma is attached to it¹⁸, being associated with a lack of command in either language, and being seen as a threat to the development of the Maltese language¹⁹.

A perhaps more helpful way of viewing the linguistic behaviour of Maltese speakers is through the continuum quoted in the Country report, based on the work of Alexandra Vella²⁰ who argues that since the effects of regular use of English alongside Maltese can be seen in daily interactions, rather than describing the linguistic situation as a dichotomy between Maltese and English, the notion of a continuum of use better illustrates the complex linguistic behaviour of Maltese speakers, as illustrated in the following figure:

¹⁶ Camilleri, A. (1995) *Bilingualism in Education, the Maltese Experience*. Heidelberg: Julius Groos Verlag.

¹⁷ Camilleri, A. (1995) op.cit. ; Sciriha, L. (2004) *Keeping in Touch. The Sociolinguistics of Mobile Telephony in Malta*. Malta: Agenda.; Sciriha & Vassallo, (2006), op.cit.; Vella (2013) op.cit.

¹⁸ Romaine, S. (1994). *Bilingualism*. 2nd Edition. Wiley-Blackwell

¹⁹ Sciriha & Vassallo (2006) op. cit.

²⁰ Vella, A. (2013). "Languages and language varieties in Malta", *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 16(5), 532-. -552.



Table 2: Continuum of language use by Maltese speakers
(Source: A. Vella quoted in the Country Report Section 1.3.)

Finally it should also be noted that there is an important ideological aspect to the language question in Malta. Several small case studies have demonstrated that, while English is viewed positively as a language of communication which is key for socioeconomic advancement, Maltese is viewed as a symbol of national identity and pride. Moreover, regular use of English in Malta by Maltese nationals, especially as a spoken medium, is sometimes associated with families belonging to a higher socioeconomic class²¹ and can be viewed as a marker of social superiority. On the other hand, those who find difficulty in expressing themselves in English are associated with lower socioeconomic groups and with low levels of education. These attitudes are important as they form the ideologies on which linguistic identities are formed, which in turn have important repercussions on how these languages are presented in educational contexts.

2.1.2 Attitudes to other languages

In general, as reported in several surveys²², the overwhelming majority of Maltese citizens consider foreign languages to be important for economic reasons, and also because of Malta's geographical position where encounters between individuals of different cultural backgrounds have been extremely frequent throughout its history.

Italian has a significant role in Malta for both geographical and historical reasons. In fact, Italian television channels, received in Malta via antennae or satellite, were for a long time popular amongst Maltese of all ages. The presence of the Italian media in Malta was especially influential up to the early nineties, when Italian TV channels had an important impact on the learning of Italian: many Maltese nationals report that they acquired the language by watching television²³. However, the recent shift in television viewing patterns, where people are opting more for Maltese channels, together with American and

²¹ Camilleri, A 1995, op.cit., Vella, A 2013, op.cit., Caruana, S. (2007). Language Use and Language Attitudes in Malta. In Lasagabaster, L. & Huguët, Á. *Multilingualism in European bilingual contexts: Language use and attitudes* (pp.184-207), Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

²² For instance in Sciriha & Vassallo (2006), 62.8% of the participants state that foreign languages are very useful, 34.4% state that they are useful whereas only 2% declare that foreign languages are not useful.

²³ Discussions during Expert Visit June 2014

British channels, has had an influence on the status and proficiency of Italian, especially among the younger generations²⁴.

There are also, as detailed in the Country report, growing numbers of foreigners in the Maltese population. Of the total population, 4.8 %, are non-Maltese nationals. In recent years, new groups of foreign nationals, whether seeking work, or as asylum seekers and refugees have vastly increased the number of languages spoken in Malta. The arrival of immigrants from North Africa to Southern Mediterranean countries is a well-known phenomenon and these migratory movements have affected Malta significantly given its geographical position. Most of these immigrants originate from the Sub-Saharan African Regions (91.1 %), while another recent phenomenon is the arrival of young adults from Eastern European countries who are employed in various sectors of the local community. These newer arrivals pose different challenges for Malta, and are not always viewed so positively as the traditional groups of non-Maltese (see section 3.4).

2.2. A detailed regulatory framework

The **Constitution** of the Republic of Malta recognises Maltese as the National language and grants co-official status to English:

(1) The National language of Malta is the Maltese Language.

(2) The Maltese and the English languages and such other language as may be prescribed by Parliament (by a law passed by not less than two-thirds of all the members of the House of Representatives) shall be the official languages of Malta and the Administration may for all official purposes use any of such languages²⁵.

The main body responsible for the standardisation of the Maltese language is the Maltese Language Council which was established in April 2005 with the enactment of the Maltese Language Act (Chapter 470 of the Laws of Malta), in order to promote the National Language of Malta and to provide the necessary means to achieve this aim²⁶. The Council was established to promote a suitable language policy and strategy for the Maltese islands for the benefit and development of the national language and the identity of the Maltese people.

In the educational sphere there are a number of official documents and policies outlining the principles and structures of education, including the role of Bilingualism, and confirming the importance of foreign languages.

According to the **National Minimum Curriculum (NMC)** of 1999 bilingualism is considered as-

²⁴ Caruana, S. (2003) Mezzi di comunicazione e input linguistico. L'acquisizione dell'italiano L2 a Malta. Milano: Franco Angeli.

Caruana, S. (2006) Trilingualism in Malta. Maltese, English and 'italiano televisivo'. *International Journal of Multilingualism* 3 (3).

²⁵ *Constitution of Malta*, <http://www.constitution.org/cons/malta/chapt0.pdf>.

²⁶ <http://www.kunsilltalmalti.gov.mt/eng>

the basis of the educational system... entailing the effective, precise and confident use of the country's two official languages: Maltese, the national language, and English. This goal must be reached by the students by the end of their entire schooling experience. (Principle 10)

Each school is asked to develop a linguistic strategy, taking account of the particular linguistic needs of its students and ensuring "equal importance" for the "teaching of the first and second languages at all levels." This strategy is to be included in the Development Plan of every secondary school and to present "a clear picture of the general situation concerning the school in this particular area" indicating "the strategies being adopted to improve language teaching".²⁷

More specifically the NMC encouraged teachers at primary level to use English when teaching English, Mathematics, Science and Technology, and in secondary schools it recommended that

teachers of Maltese, Social Studies, History, Religion and PSD teach these subjects in Maltese; teachers of foreign languages teach in the language in question; and teachers of the remaining subjects teach in English.

Code-switching is mentioned in the NMC, but is not greatly encouraged. At primary level it is said that it can be used "as a means of communication" in situations where teaching subjects in English poses difficulties; at secondary level code-switching is accepted only in cases where otherwise there would be "great pedagogical problems"²⁸

The NMC further states that knowledge of foreign languages is to be developed at secondary level "following one's knowledge of the native and national language, Maltese". In addition to teaching the main European languages - Italian, French, German and Spanish, "the Education Division must ensure that the country can avail itself of a nucleus of people who have a mastery of languages deemed strategically important. These include Chinese, Japanese, Russian and Arabic."

More recently the **National Curriculum Framework for All** (2012)²⁹, sets out the principles, aims and structure of teaching and learning throughout compulsory education. It is based on six **General Principles** (p.32).

1. Entitlement: Every child is entitled to a quality education experience and therefore all learners need to be supported to develop their potential and achieve personal excellence;
2. Diversity: The NCF acknowledges and respects individual differences of age, gender, sexual orientation, beliefs, personal development, socio-cultural background, geographical location and ethnicity;

²⁷ Ministry of Education. (1999). *Creating the future together. National Minimum Curriculum*. Malta: Ministry of Education p 51

²⁸ *ibid.* p. 53

²⁹ Ministry of Education. (2012). *Towards a quality education for all: The National Curriculum Framework 2011*. Malta: Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family. Henceforth NCF.

3. **Continuum of Achievement:** The NCF embraces a developmental approach to education whereby within and across all learning areas and subjects, the curriculum meets the needs of learners according to their stage of development;
4. **Learner-Centred Learning:** The NCF promotes the development of a learner-centred approach to learning and teaching;
5. **Quality Assurance:** Quality Assurance is to be realised through a system of ongoing self-evaluation, monitoring and review within schools complemented by an external review system that together foster school improvement;
6. **Teacher Professional Support:** The NCF requires that appropriate internal structures are available to provide support to meet the needs of learners, teachers, school administrators, families and other stakeholders in schools and colleges.

Of particular relevance to Languages Education are Principle 1 (Entitlement), which affirms the importance of “ the ability to communicate in the context of bilingualism and multilingualism”, and Principle 2 on Diversity. In Principle 1 the context of bilingualism is extended to include multilingualism (so languages other than Maltese and English); similarly in the Learning Area of Languages, other languages are also included, albeit to a lesser extent than the two official ones. The importance attached to languages in the NCF may be deduced from the fact that this is the first of the defined Learning Areas for the Junior and Secondary Years. (p.34). Maltese is treated as the main mother tongue and English as the second language of most pupils, but one which also “provides access to a near-universal knowledge and culture”.

Expectations for each language are, however, identical -

Communication in languages is the ability to understand, express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form. This linguistic fluency and competence is expected in both the mother tongue (L1) and the second language (L2), which in the Maltese context generally refer to Maltese and English respectively.

The National Curriculum Framework does not give specific guidance on code-switching or the languages of education, but recognises the complexity of the issue and notes 5 areas for future consideration as part of the process to develop a National Languages Policy³⁰

Alongside the **National Curriculum Framework**, a consortium was set up to develop Learning Outcomes³¹ for all subjects, including languages, in line with the principles outlined in the NCF - the **Learning Outcomes Framework**. Learning Outcomes are “statements of what a learner knows, understands, and is able to do at the end of a learning process ; they are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences set according to the categories of the level descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework.”

³⁰ NCF p. 41. mentions issues of entitlement, culture, implementation, professionalism, economics. It also refers to the Ministerial working group on a Language policy

³¹ http://curriculum.gov.mt/en/Resources/LOF_Project/Pages/default.aspx

Other important official documents include -

An Early School Leaving Strategy for Malta (2012) , a consultation document highlighting the need to address the learning needs of potential early school leavers in the state secondary sector.

The Core Curriculum Programme (2013) . Launched by the Curriculum Management and eLearning Department this is a specially designed learning programme which ensures that learners are given opportunities to acquire the core components of the curriculum including the key competences, through a more task-based methodology .It provides learning programmes that have a strong element of continuous assessment whilst leading to an Malta National Qualifications Framework Level 1 certification, with the possibility of progression to other levels.

The National Literacy Strategy for All (2013) is aimed at ensuring that all citizens in Malta are able to acquire literacy skills. This strategy considers literacy as an important element in the field of social inclusion. It proposes concrete measures to ensure that everybody has the opportunity to obtain the skills required for them to participate fully in society.

The Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta (2014-2024)³² (2014). This document proposes a strategy for lifelong learning opportunities from early childhood education 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. It has four broad targets that are intended set the education agenda in Malta for the next decade:

- To reduce the gaps in educational outcomes, decrease the number of low achievers and raise the bar in literacy, numeracy, and science and technology competence;
- To 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;
- To raise levels of student retainment and attainment in further, vocational, and tertiary education and training;
- To increase participation in lifelong learning and adult learning.

2.3. A supportive education system

Compulsory education in Malta consists of a 6 year primary cycle (5-10+ years) and five years secondary education (11-16). Pre-primary education is also freely available, but not compulsory. Post-Secondary education - dependent on examination performance at 16 - takes place mainly in Sixth Forms (state and private) , but also in other institutions notably The Malta College of Science and Technology (MCAST) Educational policy in Malta is based on two main principles: equity and quality.

³² <http://education.gov.mt/strategy/Documents/BOOKLET%20ESM%202014-2024%20ENG%2019-02.pdf>

Free education is available to all from kindergarten to tertiary education. The system is a tripartite one with three different providers: the state, the church, and the private sector. Following the 1991 Church-state agreement, all Church-run schools provide free tuition. Entry to such schools is by means of a lottery system. Independent schools are fee paying schools. The Government subsidises Church schools which do not charge tuition fees and gives tax rebates to parents sending their children to private schools. Parents and other carers who send their children to Church schools are encouraged to make regular financial contributions in the form of donations.

		%
State Schools	101	56
Church Schools	55	31
Independent Schools	24	13

Table 3 Number of Schools in Malta
Source DQSE

2.3.1. The school curriculum

Pre-Primary education catering for children aged between 3 and 5 years is provided in kindergarten centres that are attached to primary schools and fall under the responsibility of the Head of the primary school. Educational activity is aimed at developing the children's social attitudes, language and communication skills in preparation for primary education. Although not compulsory, around 98% of 4 year olds attend kindergarten classes³³.

Primary education is co-educational in State and Independent Schools and covers the ages 5 to 10-11. Secondary education is available to all students who successfully complete primary education. As from 2013, State Secondary schools have been coeducational. Church Secondary schools are single sex schools³⁴. In the Primary Years, a common learning programme is proposed for all students, who are given the opportunity to master Maltese and English, Mathematics, a Science subject and Digital Literacy. Learning areas are introduced in the Junior Years and extended into the Secondary Years, where learners also choose a number of optional subjects according to their interests. The following diagram illustrates the Learning Areas and the Cross-Curricular themes presented in the NCF:

³³ <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Malta:Overview#>

³⁴ In 2010 the 11+ exam was abolished for a more inclusive educational system. Prior to 2010, at the age of 11, students would generally sit for a qualifying examination. Those who passed were admitted into Junior Lyceums, which were schools for higher achievers, while the other students attended General Secondary Schools.

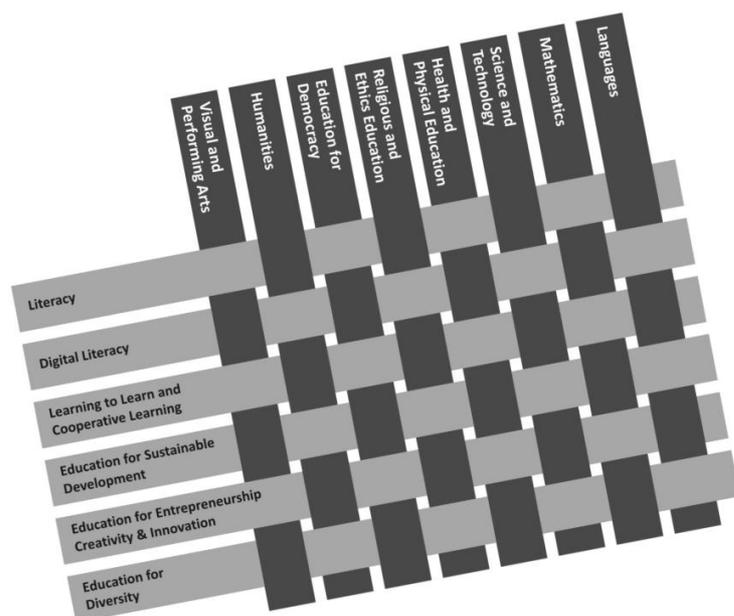


Table 4: The Learning and the Cross-Curricular Themes in the National Curriculum Framework NCF (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2012, p.39).

The Junior Years Curriculum is divided into the following main learning areas:

- Languages: Maltese and English and awareness of a foreign language (school- based decision)
- Mathematics
- Science and Technology : Science and Design and Technology
- Religious and Ethical Education
- Humanities: Geography and History
- Education for Democracy
- Visual and Performing Arts
- Health and Physical Education

The Secondary Years Curriculum embraces all subjects that will lead students to completing compulsory schooling. It is divided into these main learning areas:

- Languages: Maltese and English
- Mathematics
- Religious and Ethical Education
- Humanities Education: History and Geography
- Education for Democracy: Social Studies
- Visual and Performing Arts
- Home Economics, Personal and Social Development (PSD) and Physical Education (PE)

During the first year of the secondary cycle, the students generally study one foreign language which may include:

- Arabic, French, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish

During the final three years of the secondary cycle, students make further choices in their subject options, including subjects such as Accounts, Computing, Design and Technology, Drama and another language. From 2014 new subject weightings came into force as outlined in the following table:

40-Lesson Curriculum

Effective as from 2014/15

New subject weightings come into force in phased-in manner starting with Year 7

Subject	College Middle and Secondary Schools				
	Number of Lessons				
	Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10	Yr 11
Maltese	5	5	3	4	4
English (First foreign language)	6	6	6	5	5
Mathematics	5	5	5	5	5
Religion/Ethics	2	2	2	2	2
Social Studies	1	1	1	1	1
Integrated Science	4	4			
Physics			4	4	4
History	2	2	1	1	1
Geography	1	1	1	1	1
Information and Communication Technology	1	1	1	1	1
PHE	5 *	5 *	3 **	3 **	3 **
Expressive Art	2	2			
PSCD	2	2	2	2	2
Second foreign language	4	4	3	3	3
Elective subjects offered during the final three years of secondary education (Option 1)			4	4	4
Elective subjects offered during the final three years of secondary education (Option 2)			4	4	4
Total	40	40	40	40	40

* 3 PE and 2 HE/DT(RM&E) on alternate weeks

** 2 PE and 1 HE

Table 5 The 40-lesson curriculum, effective from 2014-2015. Each lesson lasts 40 minutes.
Source: DQSE

2.3.2. Decision making and Collaboration between schools

Both the National Minimum Curriculum and the National Curriculum Framework stress the importance of flexibility and school and teacher autonomy:

The authorities should generate a culture of participation in the different areas of the curriculum by maintaining the policy of decentralisation and by helping schools to strengthen their identity and gain in autonomy. (NMC Principle 15)

(A key principle is that there should be)... flexibility in the management of schools and the classroom so that College Principals, Heads of Schools and educators within the classroom can be creative, innovative and provide for individual needs of learners. (NCF p. xiii)

In line with this philosophy, in 2008, a College system was implemented. Ten Colleges were created³⁵ with the aim of further decentralisation, networking, sharing of good practice and the raising of standards. Each College embraces a number of Primary and Secondary schools in a particular geographical area where the Primary schools are feeder schools to the Secondary schools. To further consolidate the idea of the College system the system did away with the Junior Lyceum examination and replaced it with the benchmarking examination at the end of primary. This system is intended to move away from the isolation of schools and to promote networking and exchange so that education becomes a joint enterprise for all and not only for the most able.

³⁵ A list of colleges can be found on

<https://education.gov.mt/en/education/Pages/Colleges/Colleges.aspx>.

2.4. A key role for languages education

As noted above (Section 2.2.) the **National Curriculum Framework** attaches great importance to the teaching and learning of languages. Languages are the first of the defined Learning Areas and communication in languages is described as “the ability to understand, express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form”. The same competences are expected for both Maltese and English.³⁶ Language teaching and learning will enable young people to:

- use questioning, information, critical thinking, decision-making and memory to organise thoughts, ideas, feelings, and knowledge;
- communicate with others and respond to how others communicate;
- formulate, express and present their arguments, feelings and ideas in a persuasive manner;
- appreciate and enjoy the literary heritage of the languages they learn.

The NCF recommends that at least 30 % of the time during the Junior Years Cycle, the Lower Secondary Years Cycle and the Senior Secondary Years Cycle should be dedicated to the teaching of languages.

2.4.1. Maltese and English

Although the same competences are prescribed for both Maltese and English, there are some important practical distinctions, both explicit and implied. Since one of the main outcomes of education is for young people to be able to acquire a sense of Maltese identity, the teaching of Maltese language and literature is specifically aimed at developing such a sense of identity. By contrast the NCF also states that the main aim of teaching the English language in schools is to “*provide access to near-universal knowledge and culture*” (NCF p. 34). Since English is considered to be an international language, English cultural identity is by implication less important. This distinction in turn has an impact on the languages of schooling, since English is in practice the language of access to many “hard” subjects, such as Mathematics and Science.

So whereas there are many similarities in both the underlying principles and the objectives for Maltese and English language learning, for example the development of skills and linguistic knowledge to use the language in different contexts, the consolidation of grammatical and lexical knowledge underpinning communicative competence³⁷ there are also some important differences, arising from the socio-linguistic context of Malta and the prevailing views about each language. As explained in the NCF -

The teaching and learning of the mother tongue (generally Maltese) at secondary level strengthens the learners’ sense of identity and conceptual development. The teaching and learning of the second language (generally English) at secondary level, reinforces the acquisition of an important international language of communication.³⁸

³⁶ NCF p.34

³⁷ For more detail on the teaching of Maltese and English see the Country Report 2.2.1. and 2.2.2

³⁸ NCF p. 60

The way in which Maltese and English are presented as formal subjects to young children varies according to the school sector. In State Schools, literacy in Maltese is introduced in the first term of Primary School (September to December), along with English oracy, English literacy is then introduced in the second term (January-April). Speaking and listening activities take place in both Maltese and English. This is not the case in the independent sector or in many Church schools, where children are taught to read and write first in English.

2.4.2 Other languages

The curriculum also encourages the learning of foreign languages. This has long been considered a major asset of Maltese educational policy and it is described in the National Curriculum Framework as “a strength in our local system which needs to be sustained”. (p.58)

Foreign Language learning may now begin in primary schools through the Foreign Language Awareness Programme (FLAP), which was initiated in 2007 and offers Italian, (Year 5) , French and German (Year 6). The aim is to enable pupils to gain an awareness of foreign languages with the aim of becoming open to other languages and cultures. ³⁹

All students attending secondary schools study at least one foreign language. As demonstrated in the table below showing the number of pupils studying foreign languages in state schools in 2013-2014, Italian remains by far the most popular language being learnt at school, although in recent years there has been an increase in interest in other languages, particularly Spanish and German. At present students following the Core Curriculum Programme also study Italian, although there are plans to extend this to other languages.

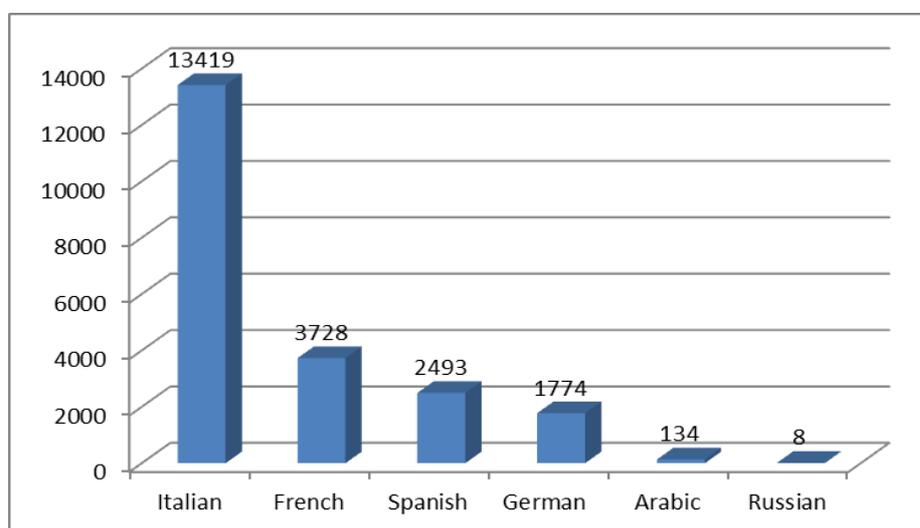


Table 6: Number of students studying languages in state secondary schools. Source: DQSE

³⁹ NCF p.53 Country report 2.2.3

2.4.3. Migrant learners

In response to the increasing numbers of students in Maltese schools whose first language is neither Maltese nor English, courses have been developed in recent years to teach Maltese as a foreign language, in order to enable such groups to integrate in society. The Department of Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE), offers language support for migrant children, which takes the form of a six-week intervention programme consisting of partial or full withdrawal from schools, so that students can follow basic language courses in English and to a lesser extent in Maltese. The courses focus mainly on spoken interaction. The emphasis is on survival Maltese and English, so that these students can initiate their integration process within schools.

In most state primary schools, complementary education and literacy support teachers are also asked to support the language acquisition of such learners so as to facilitate their social, cultural and educational integration. In the secondary sector some of these learners are provided with Maltese as a second or additional language programme or assigned to a Core Competences Support Programme.⁴⁰

2.5. An evolving assessment regime

Assessment - some of it very high stakes - plays an important role in the Maltese educational system. There have been a number of changes in recent years and others are currently under discussion. In the Junior Cycle Years, from Years 3 to 6 the NCF recommends school-based assessment, incorporating the assessment of oral/aural skills. The assessment process is intended to provide parents, teachers and the school administration with an overview of each child's development in terms of levels of achievement. At the end of Primary Education pupils sit for the **End of Primary Benchmark Examination** introduced in 2011⁴¹. This form of assessment is designed, implemented and reported on in such a way as to inform students, parents and schools about the achievement of learners in the different skills areas in Maltese and English and also in Mathematics.

At the end of formal schooling (16), students are awarded a **Secondary School Certificate and Profile**, where all types of formal and non-formal learning that takes place during the secondary years is accredited. The main aim of this document is to validate and document learning in order to give a holistic picture of the individual student's development over time. More formally pupils also sit for the **Secondary Education Certificate (SEC)** qualifications. These are intended as an external form of certification for the subjects studied at school⁴². They are high-stakes examinations, as passes in the Core Subjects

⁴⁰ See Country report 2.6 and 2.7

⁴¹ More information about the End of Primary Benchmark can be found on <https://curriculum.gov.mt/en/Benchmark/General-Information/Pages/default.aspx>

⁴² Candidates opt for a Paper II A or a Paper II B. Paper A is more challenging than Paper II B. Candidates sitting for Paper I and Paper IIA may qualify for a grade within the range 1 to 5 (i.e. grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5), the results of candidates who do not obtain a grade 5 shall remain Unclassified (U). Candidates sitting for Paper I and Paper IIB may qualify for a grade not higher than 4 (i.e.

form part of the prerequisites for access to most post-secondary institutions. They are administered by the Matriculation and Secondary Education Certificate (MATSEC) Examinations Board, established in 1991 by the Senate and the Council of the University of Malta, to develop an examination system in place of the GCE Ordinary and Advanced level examinations set by UK examination boards.

Finally, students in the post-secondary sector sit the **Matriculation Certificate**, based on the International Baccalaureate model and encompassing both the Humanities and the Sciences, as well as “Systems of Knowledge”⁴³. In order to matriculate students study two subjects at Advanced level and another four at Intermediate level, including Systems of Knowledge⁴⁴. The Matriculation Certificate is the obligatory entry requirement for the University of Malta.

A significant number of pupils do not take the final SEC qualifications: some 40% of pupils do not present for final examinations in any subject and the percentage of early school leavers is 22% (nearly double the EU average of 12.8%)⁴⁵. There are therefore an increasing number of students with no accredited certification in languages - whether Maltese, English or other languages - despite many years' study.

One proposed solution to this is the development and roll out of the **Subject Proficiency Assessment (SPA)** programme which was introduced in September 2014 for Italian and which it is intended to extend to 5 other languages including Maltese and English in 2015. It seeks to provide a clear description of what individuals ‘can do’ with language in terms of speaking, writing, listening, and reading in real-world situations. Aligned with the Maltese Qualifications Framework at levels 1, 2 and 3, SPA will eventually become a more functional alternative to the Secondary Education Certificate.

2.6. A strong commitment to teacher education

2.6.1 Initial Teacher Training

The initial training of teachers from primary level up to secondary level takes place at the University of Malta, Faculty of Education. All students following a teaching course must also obtain passes in proficiency tests in Maltese and English. Prospective students must satisfy the General Entry Requirements for admission, namely, the Matriculation Certificate and Secondary Education Certificate passes at Grade 5 or better in Maltese, English Language and Mathematics. The two key components of all Bachelor of Education (B.Ed (Hons.)) programmes are hands-on school experience in each year of the programme and a dissertation in the final year of the programme. In 2013, there were 1084 students

grades 4, 5, 6, 7), the results of candidates who do not obtain at least a grade 7 shall remain Unclassified (U).

⁴³ Systems of Knowledge is a subject which enables students to develop critical thinking skills, for higher education by serving as stimulus for a critical appreciation of culture within an interdisciplinary programme premised on the breaking down of departmental borders and specialisation. For more information visit <http://www.jc.um.edu.mt/sok>.

⁴⁴ https://www.um.edu.mt/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/152428/mcstat11.pdf

⁴⁵ Country Report p.21 and discussions with Education Officers and College Principals 16/6/14

following a course in education, including 73 for Secondary Language Teaching and 43 for the Post Graduate Certificate in Education for Languages.

Early Years Teacher Training

Teachers following the course in education in Early Years take a Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Early Childhood Education and Care course which is offered on a full-time (4 years) or on a part-time basis (five years). Students receive training in a theoretical understanding of how young children develop & learn and pedagogical knowledge. Qualifications in languages are encouraged. There is also a MCAST-BTEC National Diploma in Children's Care, Learning and Development or the Certificate in Pre-School Education Learning and Development, which enables students to work in a professional capacity with children in child care and kindergartens.

Junior Years Teacher Training

Primary teachers normally take a four year Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Primary Education. Apart from general areas of study, students are prepared for teaching the Primary curricular subjects, namely, Maltese, English, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Religion and Ethics, Health and Physical Activity, Visual and Performing Arts, the Humanities (History, Geography and Citizenship). A Certificate in the Teaching of Primary School Learning Areas is also offered and this is a one year part-time evening course offered specifically for practitioners who are currently employed as supply teachers in primary schools and who hold a Secondary school teaching qualification.

Secondary Years Teacher Training

Two routes are available for Secondary teachers:

The Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Secondary Education is a four year full-time course. Applicants who choose Secondary Education as their area of specialisation are also required to choose one or two subject areas. Students focus on general areas of study and are also prepared for teaching the subjects that they are going to specialise in. The main languages catered for are English, French, German, Italian, Maltese, and Spanish.

The Postgraduate Certificate in Education course is a professional training course, consisting of instruction on educational issues and teaching methodology coupled with practical work in schools. It is intended for students who are already in possession of a degree in languages, such as the Bachelor of Arts (General or Honours).

Master's in Teaching and Learning (MTL)

In June 2014, it was officially announced that as from October 2016, the Faculty of Education will offer a Master's in Teaching and Learning (MTL) for prospective students seeking to find employment as graduate teachers. The MTL will replace the B.Ed. (Hons) and PGCE routes as the latter two courses will be phased out gradually. Successful completion of the MTL will be the recognised qualification for eligibility to join the teaching profession from 2018 onwards. As a result of these changes, the qualifications for entry into the teaching profession will be raised to a Master level.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ For details of the new Masters see Country report 2.9.1. pp. xx

2.6.2 Continuing Professional Development for teachers

There is a tradition of continuous professional development for teachers in Malta, and a range of courses are offered each year both by the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education, and by other providers including private providers. All teachers are obliged to attend three days of CPD every year, and this is fully funded. Many courses are focused on languages - in 2014 for example there were courses on the Communicative Approach in the Teaching of Foreign Languages, Language Awareness and receptive skills in Italian, among others.⁴⁷

The **National Curriculum Framework for All** emphasises the importance of continuing education for teachers and furthermore makes the case for a more structured and comprehensive offer in the future -

..the sustained and continued upskilling and re-skilling of educators' competencies to deliver the new pedagogies requires a structured professional development programme that goes beyond what the current structure for training permits (p.xvi)

In response to this and in order to oversee CPD an Institute for Education was set up in 2014. Guided by the principles outlined in the *Framework for the Education Strategy*⁴⁸ the Institute will also offer support to Newly Qualified Teachers through an Induction and Mentoring programme.

As in other areas of educational policy in Malta the crucial field of teacher development is going through a period of change and potential transformation. It is thus appropriate that we now move on to consider in more detail some of the challenges and possible solutions relating to Language Policy, many of which have already been signposted in this section.

⁴⁷ For a fuller list see the Country report.2.9.2.

⁴⁸ Country report 2.1.9 and see above 2.2.

3. KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

This very schematic overview of language education in Malta, which should be supplemented by the much more detailed exposition of the Country report, provides the basis for further reflection and the development of an action plan. One central concern which was identified in the course of the profile investigation and which manifested itself in a number of different ways was the concern of both government and the main stakeholders to overcome what was seen as a decline in standards, affecting not only language proficiency in itself but also general intellectual and cognitive capacities within the school system. This was often expressed in terms of the need to strengthen capabilities in terms of the desired “Balanced Bilingualism” which has such an important place in Maltese educational values.

Important as this is - and we will pay considerable attention to the issue in this section - we also suggest that it is actually a subset of a number of wider challenges relating to the proper functioning of a mass education system in the 21st century. Needless to say these challenges are not easy ones, nor are they unique to Malta, as they are being faced by all countries seeking to develop a modern, relevant and rewarding learning programme for all citizens. Clearly such questions go beyond the languages brief of the LEPP. We do believe, however, that there is an important contribution to be made by languages education both in general as the route to wider learning, especially of the more advanced kind, and more specifically because of Malta’s strong multilingual context and traditions. On this basis we have identified three broad headings under which we classify the key issues.

- Quality and Standards across the curriculum
- Languages Education and Languages in Education
- Support for Policy and Practice - Implementation issues

QUALITY AND STANDARDS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

3.1. Achievement in languages and in other subjects

The issue of standards - usually described as “falling” standards - is common to many educational jurisdictions. Many plans, strategies and frameworks have been developed to address this perceived problem, with varying degrees of measurable success. A major theme in many European and other OECD countries is that of a decline in literacy, in particular at higher academic levels, which it is believed has a deleterious effect on learning⁴⁹. A number of explanations have been adduced for this alleged decline - lack of interest in reading, “dumbing down” of the curriculum and assessment systems and in particular the influence of electronic communications - e mail, texts and social media. Other observers have argued that this is not in reality a decline but a change in communication modes, creating new ways of “reading” “writing” and “speaking” which are no less fluent or cognitively challenging than the old ways but which education systems have yet to accommodate.⁵⁰ It is not our intention to enter this complex terrain here, but simply to point out that the debate in Malta is part of a broader - and as yet unresolved - educational debate. Sometimes, too, the past is viewed through rose-coloured spectacles which see a more perfect world where all learners achieved highly and spoke and wrote fluently, forgetting for the sake of this argument that until the 1970s and 80s in most developed countries only a small minority of young people received more than a basic education.⁵¹

In Malta, we found considerable support for the view that things “ain’t what they used to be”, a claim perhaps made more pressing by the challenges of bilingualism. The sense that there has been a decline in higher level language use leading to difficulties with the conceptualisation of ideas was expressed quite trenchantly by both school and university educationalists on the National Languages policy in Education Committee. Parallel concerns relating to pupil failure and drop out were expressed by the college principals, Directors of Education and Education Officers, by employers (FELTOM, Federation of English Language Teaching Organisations Malta) and by the political class. The language associations (ESU, English Speaking Union and KNM, Il-Kunsill Nazzjonal tal-Ilsien Malti in particular) also spoke of declining language standards in both Maltese and English.

This view also found an echo in the main concerns of the Education Ministry relating to literacy levels and educational drop out. As the country report describes the current situation -

⁴⁹ In England for example a major government initiative took place between 1997 and 2006 to raise standards of literacy in primary schools - The National Literacy Strategy (subsequently to become part of the Primary Strategy and Secondary Strategy), <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/literacytaskforce/implementation.html>

⁵⁰ e.g. Crystal, David (2008). *Txtng: The Gr8 Db8*. Oxford University Press.
Adolphs, S., and Carter, R.A., (2013). *Spoken corpus linguistics: from monomodal to multimodal* Routledge.

⁵¹ In the UK for example participation the University participation rate in 1963 was 6%; by 2012 it had reached 49%

There is a general consensus that over the past few years there has been a decline in standards with regard to proficiency in both written and spoken Maltese and English.⁵²

More generally it is reported that some 40% of pupils do not present for Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) examinations in any subject and that the percentage of early school leavers is 22% (nearly double the EU average of 12.8%). High levels of absenteeism are said to be common, beginning even in primary schools⁵³.

This consensual view receives some objective justification not only from the drop out and no show rates, but also from the PISA (2009+) and PIRLS (2011) surveys of pupil competence in Reading, Maths, Science and Literacy⁵⁴. According to PIRLS, “when compared to international counterparts, Maltese 10 year-olds obtained a mean reading score of 477 which was significantly lower than the international average (500)...”. The PISA data show that “the percentage (36.3) of 15 year-olds who were low achievers in reading literacy was significantly higher than the EU average (19.7)⁵⁵ In Maths and Science (which were minor studies in the 2009 PISA survey, Maltese students also scored below the EU average (461 against 497 in Science and 463 against 490 in Maths).

Now the headline figures of international comparative studies such as PISA and PIRLS should probably be treated with some caution - many experts are not convinced about the validity of the comparative model⁵⁶. This could be particularly true in the context of a bilingual/biliteral school cohort rather than a predominantly monolingual one. In Malta the situation is further complicated by the fact that PISA is tested in English and PIRLS in Maltese and English, while in other contexts (Surveylang) English is treated as a first foreign language. In Malta’s case it may also be difficult to draw definite conclusions from the tests as there are no benchmarks from previous years. Despite these caveats one striking characteristic of the Maltese figures for both PIRLS and PISA is the significant variation between performance in the different school sectors, which means that some of the highest performers (girls in the private sector) perform extremely well in all of the

⁵² Country Report: Malta p.41

⁵³ Country Report p.21 and discussions with Education Officers and College Principals 16/6/14

⁵⁴ *Programme for International Student assessment (PISA 2009+), Malta Report*, Ministry for Education and Employment, Malta (2013) ; OECD (2010), PISA 2009 at a Glance, OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264095298-en>

Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS 2011, Malta Report Ministry for Education and Employment, Malta

⁵⁵ Country report summary pp41/2

⁵⁶ Goldstein, H (2004) “International comparisons of student attainment: some issues arising from the PISA study“ *Assessment in Education*

Kreiner, S (n/d) : “Is the foundation under PISA solid? A critical look at the scaling model underlying international comparisons of student attainment”. *Research Report 11/1 Copenhagen*

tests.⁵⁷ It may also be noteworthy that reported performance in English literacy is generally higher than in Maltese (PIRLS 2011 p.vii).

In the more detailed analysis of both studies there are also a number of very interesting factors which may have a more positive medium to long term effect on literacy levels, and which to some extent belie the negative conclusions many have drawn from the surveys. These include strengths in the home reading environment, good resources and access to ICT and well trained teachers⁵⁸. Of particular interest could be the PIRLS finding on early literacy showing that according to parents -

the proportion of Maltese pupils who performed early literacy tasks very well (28%) or moderately well (50%) are (sic) considerably higher than the international average proportions (26% and 42% respectively). The proportion of Maltese pupils under-performing in early literacy tasks (22%) is around 10% lower than the international average proportion (32%).⁵⁹

It would be perverse to claim that there was no problem about educational outcomes for some pupils in Maltese schools, but as PIRLS and PISA also show the situation is rather more nuanced and there are also positives on which to build.

3.1.1. Possible explanations for the relatively poor performance in literacy

What then might be the factors which could explain this relatively poor performance? Not all of these are necessarily related to Malta's language policies, and many of them are being addressed in a number of ways already. (See Section 2) We have, nevertheless, attempted to list them briefly, if only for the sake of clarity and comprehensiveness -

- It is a truism to say that probably the main contributory factor to educational success is the teacher. Despite the obvious strengths of the teaching force in Malta, many participants in our discussions (educationalists and other stakeholders) were critical of some current teaching approaches in Maltese schools which they characterised as over formal ("top down") and not conducive to developing independent learners.⁶⁰
- It was also said that the curriculum was inappropriate and overloaded. In particular a number of stakeholders expressed the view that the curriculum remained too academic and not suitable for all pupils - this was said on many occasions to be one of the root causes of early disenchantment with education and

⁵⁷ If treated as a separate constituency these girls would score within the top 25% - well above France, Germany, Australia and comparable with England, Canada and Taipei

⁵⁸ PIRLS 2011 viii - xii PISA 2009+ 25/6

⁵⁹ PIRLS 2011 48. This finding is, however, somewhat contradicted by a later item on early literacy skills as reported by schools (Table 4.3) which again underlines the difficulty of interpreting international data!

⁶⁰ Meeting with National Language Policy in Education Committee, 5/2/14; Meeting with College principals, Directors and assistant Directors Education 16/6/14; Meeting with Education Officers 16/6/14; Meeting with FELTOM, MCESD and GWU 16/6/14

ultimate drop out and failure. In this context we have noted the reforms currently taking place, in particular the New Curriculum Framework for All (NCF), the work on literacy and school drop out and the new pilot curriculum which is being developed, but it should nevertheless be reported as a factor which causes considerable anxiety.

- A related issue could be the weight given to high stakes assessment within the educational system and the nature of some of those assessment procedures which also causes some concerns among stakeholders. Despite recent changes such as the replacement of selection at the end of the primary stage, there is still a widespread culture which sets great store by benchmarks and testing. It has also been observed that some of the most high stakes testing takes place at age 16, which is unusual in a European context and may not be entirely appropriate for a system moving towards a leaving age of 18.
- Finally we note the possible impact of the tripartite education system in Malta (see Section 2.3 above). Without wishing to take a position on this division into State, Church and Private sectors which seems to represent a strong tradition in Malta, it should be noted that in terms of pupil performance - not only in literacy/reading but also Maths and Science - there is a striking degree of differentiation between, and in some cases within, sectors. In Maths for example the PISA report states -

Student attainment in mathematics differs significantly between schools. Students attending private schools and boys attending church schools are scoring significantly higher in mathematics than EU and OECD averages; whereas, mean attainment scores for girls attending Church schools and Junior Lyceums are comparable to EU and OECD averages. By stark contrast, students attending Area secondary schools and boys attending Junior Lyceums are scoring around 100 points less on the mathematical literacy scale than their counterparts.⁶¹

An almost identical finding is presented for Science (p.xi) and Reading (p.xii) with the exception that if anything the number of underperforming pupils is rather higher.

It cannot be an insignificant factor in this respect that there is a significant variation between the economic, social and cultural status of the different sectors, as illustrated in the following table

⁶¹ PISA 2009+ [Malta Report](#)_ p. x

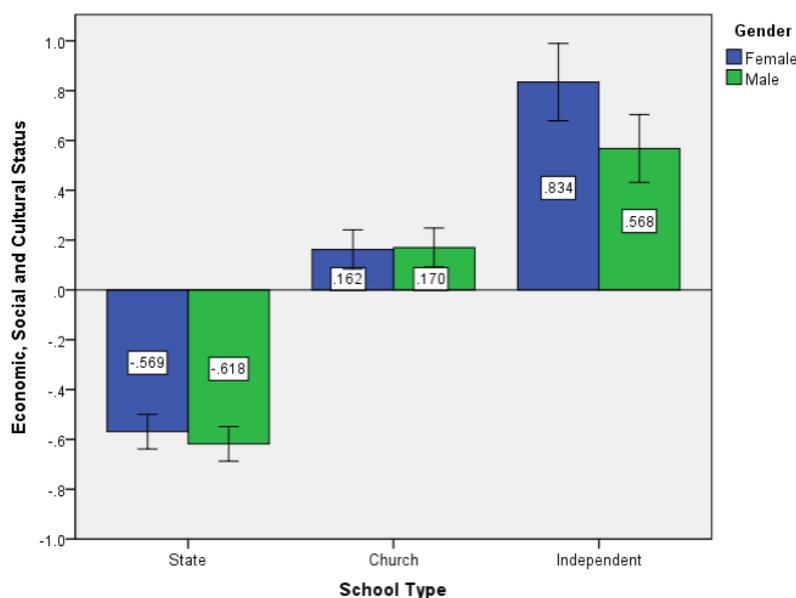


Table 7 - Socio economic status of pupils by school sector⁶²

These findings also give some credence to the views expressed by many stakeholders about the early onset of disenchantment with school learning and early drop out. It is very much to be applauded that these and other factors are under review as Malta seeks to establish an education system for the 21st century.

The key question for the Profile, however, is the extent to which this issue of general achievement or school failure may be linked to the language question and the success or otherwise of the “Balanced Bilingualism” aspiration. Put bluntly does the way in which the two languages are introduced and taught have any influence on overall achievement, or are the contributory factors different ones? Again the answer is unlikely to be straightforward as much of the apparent evidence is conflated with other factors. For example the international surveys show lower achievement in literacy for Maltese than for English, but this is also likely to be a reflection of the “better results” of the private and church school pupils where English is more dominant.

In putting forward some modest ideas about language education in Maltese schools our starting point is therefore one of noting the significant strengths and success of the Maltese population in languages. We have already pointed out that the Maltese are effectively bilingual and in many cases operationally trilingual and that this is reflected in their culture, in the media, in everyday life and in administration and politics. We also note the relative success of Maltese school children in international measurements of language competence⁶³.

⁶² European Commission (2012) European Survey on Language Competences - Malta report p. 27

⁶³ European Commission: *First European Survey on Language Competences 2012* pp 36-40. Malta performs highly in First language (English) with around 80% of 15 year old pupils achieving at least B1 in all skills. Italian (second language) was also above average but less than 40% reached B1 or B2 See below Section 3.3.2

Given the enviable strengths of Maltese bilingual (in some cases plurilingual⁶⁴) competences, it would be counter intuitive to suggest radical systemic change. However we suggest there could be some areas for improvement and clarification in language policy which would in turn affect some of the wider issues of learning and performance noted above which are strictly speaking outside our sphere of interest. Of particular importance may be the development of literacy and language use in the acquisition of knowledge and skills (both existing concerns of teachers and authorities), and these and other issues will be examined further within the context of what are undoubtedly the central issues for languages education in Malta: the language of schooling and the maintenance and development of what has been described as balanced bilingualism.

⁶⁴ In the report we use the terms Plurilingual and Plurilingualism in the sense used in Council of Europe texts to refer to the plural language competences/ repertoires of the individual, whereas the term “multilingualism” refers to the plurality of languages in a social or institutional context. The European Union uses the term “multilingualism” for both meanings.

LANGUAGES AND EDUCATION AND LANGUAGES IN EDUCATION

Let us now consider more specifically language questions within the education system. What is the impact of specifically language issues on attainment, achievement and learning?

3.2. Balanced bilingualism and the language/s of schooling

3.2.1 “Balanced” bilingualism in the Country report

One of the key issues raised in the Country report is the question of how “balanced bilingualism can be attained” (Country report p.64). Analysis of this issue demonstrates that there is a strong political and societal desire to maintain Maltese-English bilingualism, as well as an understanding that this is an ideological as well as a purely linguistic question. Four specific issues are mentioned.

- **Current concerns in relation to standards in both national and international assessment**

This raises key questions about the effects of the languages of schooling on knowledge construction in the different disciplines. Although not specifically articulated in official documentation, this problem is all the more important for Malta, as for other bi/plurilingual jurisdictions, because this knowledge construction is taking place in two languages. As we have suggested in section 3.1. there can be a tendency to attribute apparent shortcomings in performance (as reported in comparative tests) to the impact of bilingual education, even though there could be other factors involved, such as methodology, teacher training and socio-economic distinctions among pupils. It would therefore seem important to take a range of factors into account before proposing solutions to this perceived problem.

- **Ways in which individuals can attain adequate proficiency in two languages in order to be considered “balanced bilinguals”**

There are two issues here, both of which cause some concern among educators in Malta. Firstly - the definition of proficiency and secondly the concept of balance.

Many stakeholders observed that standards of both Maltese and English have declined in recent years. We have already considered the element of nostalgia in such views, and the range of factors which need to be taken into account. That said, it would seem that there is an argument for devoting greater resource and attention to the linguistic training of teachers in both languages, since the competence and understanding of teachers are perhaps the most critical factors in enabling pupils to develop linguistically. In relation to English, there appears to be some confusion over whether it should be treated in schools as a mother tongue, a second language or a foreign language. In fact it seems to have all three functions - for the majority it is a second language, while for minorities it is either the mother tongue or a foreign language. In this case it would appear logical that the

predominant pedagogic approach should treat it as a second language, with appropriate differentiation for the minority groups.⁶⁵

Secondly it seems to us that the concept of balance in relation to a “bi” or “plurilingual” individual is rather problematic. Research shows that balanced bilingualism - in the sense of an equilibrium - is not very frequent nor very stable. An individual’s linguistic repertoire can change over time, depending on circumstances and his or her language practices. Some languages (including the first language) can virtually disappear from this repertoire, while others learned later in life can take a more dominant role. As far as educational bilingualism is concerned, it would seem more helpful to consider this issue in terms of equity and of the right of all pupils to quality education. These are values which are supported by the Council of Europe and which are also core principles set out in the New Curriculum Framework (Principle 1: Entitlement p.32). In this sense a kind of equilibrium, which paradoxically may in some contexts be “unbalanced” can best be guaranteed by offering all pupils the opportunity to develop to the maximum their linguistic repertoire, their subject knowledge and competences and their cultural and intercultural education. It should perhaps be noted in this respect that in terms of societal use and educational policy Maltese and English can be seen as complementary languages performing a range of sometimes parallel, sometimes different functions without any clear differentiation, except for the use of the Maltese in the most families that ensures its intergenerational transmission. And that this can be seen as some kind of guarantee of the future stability of this bilingualism in the Maltese context⁶⁷. It should also be added that although school and educational practice can do a great deal to provide a solid basis for language learning, in reality it is the linguistic practice of individuals, in particular outside school, that creates the shape of their bi or plurilingualism. School can do much to support bilingualism. It can not do everything.

● **Further research to provide a review of the current situation in line with recent policies**

This is a fundamental point, which is actually less a problem to be solved than a solution to be found. Existing research in Malta to which the expert group from the Council of Europe had access shows that this work is already under way and that it would be desirable to continue and expand this process.⁶⁸ It would for example be most useful to

⁶⁵For a definition of English as a second language, cf. Kachru, Braj B. (1981) American English and Other Englishes. In Charles A. Ferguson and Shirley Heath (eds), *Language in the USA*. Cambridge University Press, p 21-83.

⁶⁶ Cf. Grosjean, F. (1982) : *Life with Two Languages - An Introduction to Bilingualism*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, Harvard University Press; Grosjean, F. (2008): *Studying Bilinguals*, Oxford, Oxford University Press; Grosjean, F. (2010) : *Bilingual - Life and Reality*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, Harvard University Press. Grosjean, F. and Li, P. (2012): *The Psycholinguistics of Bilingualism*. Hoboken, Wiley-Blackwell.

⁶⁷ From a sociolinguistic point of view, “When intragroup bilingualism is stabilized to that X-ish has its functions and Y-ish has its functions and these two sets of functions overlap minimally, then X-ish will have its own space, functions in which it and it alone is normatively expected.” (Fishman, J. A (1991): *Reversing language shift*, Clevedon, Multilingual Matters: 85).

⁶⁸ Ref Vella, Gauci, Camilleri Grima, Farrugia, Brincat etc

examine the processes involved in knowledge construction using two languages. Such research on actual practice will in our view be the main way in which the bi/plurilingual model of Maltese education will be able to progress. There are no recipes from elsewhere which will be able to create or improve a bilingual education system appropriate for the very specific context of Malta.

● **Ways in which schools can provide further support for the development of the second language**

This is also a key point which demonstrates that the authorities are well aware of the extent to which the challenges of bilingual education need to be addressed at school level, taking account of specific contexts. Malta is actually composed of quite different socio-cultural micro contexts: town, country, rich, poor, involving first speakers of dialect, standard Maltese, English and other languages. All of these contexts require different language policies if quality education is to be guaranteed for all in which each child has the opportunity to reach similar goals despite their different repertoire and starting points. This ambition is reflected in the *National Minimum Curriculum Principle 15. (p.36)*

The authorities should generate a culture for participation in the different areas of the curriculum by maintaining a policy of decentralisation and by helping schools to strengthen their identity and gain in autonomy. Though not by any means a smooth process, school autonomy can help generate a more humane education. It can lead to the development of new skills connected with greater participation and can help foster greater dialogue with the rest of the community.

This implies that a central role is to be played by the Head Teacher as a driver of innovation (as outlined by NCF⁶⁹), and also requires systematic training for teachers in the bi and plurilingual dimensions of the education system

3.2.2. The Maltese Educational Model

From this starting point of the concerns raised in the Country report, let us now consider the Maltese bilingual/plurilingual education model in order to highlight its particular characteristics and to identify any changes which could be made. To this end, we have drawn on a fairly recent modelling approach devised by Ofelia García⁷⁰ (Table 8)

Each characteristic of bilingual/plurilingual education, indicated in the first column, has been analysed with respect to the Maltese model. Three documents on Maltese education policy have been used in making this analysis:

- National Minimum Curriculum (1999) (hereafter NMC)
- A National Curriculum Framework for All (2012) (hereafter NCF)
- A National Literacy Strategy for All in Malta and Gozo 2014-2019 (hereafter NLS).

⁶⁹ Cf. Leadership of Key practitioners (03.1.7. Support Structures) p. 44 - 45

⁷⁰ García, O. (2009) : Bilingual Education in the 21st Century - A Global Perspective, Malden (MA), Wiley-Blackwell, 496.

Integrative Table: Bilingual Education					
1	Theoretical Framework	Subtractive	Additive	Recursive	<i>Dynamic</i>
2	Language Goal	Monolingualism; monoglossic	Bilingualism; monoglossic	Bilingualism ; heteroglossic	<i>Bilingualism ; heteroglossic</i>
3	Literacy Goal	Monoliteracy	Full biliteracy	Functional biliteracy	Functional biliteracy
4	Cultural Goal	Monocultural	Bicultural	Bicultural multiplicity	Transcultural
5	Initial Linguistic Position of Children	Monolingual	Monolingual	Different points of bilingual continuum	<i>Different points of bilingual continuum</i>
6	Language arrangements	Flexible convergent	Strict separation	Separation to flexible multiple	<i>Flexible multiple to separation</i>
7	Models of Bilingual Pedagogy	Convergent	Immersion	Immersion	Multiple

Table 8: Maltese Bilingual Education Model compared to other models

The table gives an overall picture of the classification of the Maltese model (cells in dark or light grey) compared to other possible models. A more detailed justification for this analysis and categorisation is to be found in Appendix 5.

The theoretical model and learning goals - some unresolved tensions⁷¹

The theoretical model adopted by Maltese bilingual education appears to be the dynamic model which “encourages communicative and dynamic bilingualism” (Ofelia Garcia, 2009).⁷² In point of fact, the NCF invariably refers not only to “bilingualism” but also to “multilingualism”, unlike the 1999 NMC which referred exclusively to “bilingualism”. The NCF takes account of the demographic changes that have recently occurred in Maltese society and puts forward a decidedly plurilingual (according to the Council of Europe definition) language education policy. Alongside bilingual Maltese-English education, a first foreign language is mandatory and a second foreign language is offered as an option.

However, the focus on and target of “balanced bilingualism”, are more indicative of an additive type of theoretical model - in both senses of the word “additive”:

⁷¹ See theoretical model in table Points 1-4

⁷² The subtractive model “moves towards monolingualism”, the additive model “attempts *balanced bilingualism*” and the recursive model “accepts the *flows of bilingualism*”.

- in the traditional - and entirely positive - sense whereby the school extends the learner’s initial repertoire with other languages, and first and foremost English;
- in the modified sense conferred upon it by Ofelia García since, in her approach, in the additive model, the two languages are juxtaposed ($L1 + L2 = L1 + L2$), referring to monolingual perceptions of bilingualism as the sum of two monolingualisms. Or, in other words, in this model, it is by developing a dual monolingualism that bilingualism is attained.

This dual classification of the Maltese bilingual model indicates a conflict between the current shift towards a more dynamic and genuinely plurilingual model and the persistence of a more traditional, additive model. It would be prudent to resolve this conflict if the model is to be implemented in a consistent manner.

A similar tension is to be found in the stated goals of languages education, whether relating to language, literacy or culture. Analysis of the **language** goals of the NCF for example (see appendix 4) shows a continuing tension between on the one hand a dynamic shift towards a plurilingual concept and a continuing monolingual and equilingual vision of the two languages taught with regard to the competences which pupils should acquire and the outcomes to be obtained. In **literacy** bilingual education would appear to aim for dual and full literacy with no functional distinction between the skills to be acquired in both languages (NCF p 51 and p.53), despite the fact that in reality children enter school with different language repertoires (predominantly but not solely Maltese) and that literacy is introduced in different ways depending on school and sector. It would indeed appear that the deciding factor in terms of which variety of literacy (Maltese or English) is introduced first to young children is rather the school sector than the linguistic background and needs of the learner. It might therefore be desirable to examine a more child-centred approach which introduced literacy 1 in the predominant home language of the individual, to be followed by literacy in the second language. It seems likely that this would have a positive effect on later language and cognitive development.

By contrast the **cultural** goals set out in the core documentation do not appear to be restricted in the same way to “biculturalism” but to lead more resolutely to a transcultural goal, illustrating the desire to maintain Maltese culture, but also to take into account the growing cultural diversity in Maltese society and a commitment to ensure social cohesion and social inclusion.

Linguistic repertoires on entry to school

Both the official documentation and the comments made by experts and stake holders during the Expert visit attest to a complex linguistic spectrum among school entrants. It is widely affirmed that the first language used by the majority of Maltese children is Maltese, and that English is generally a second language. Maltese is described as the language which expresses Maltese identity and English as a second language which “provides access to near-universal knowledge and culture”.⁷³ On the other hand English is the first language of some children, and increasingly other languages are to be found as first languages. The initial linguistic position of the child would therefore appear to be one

⁷³ NMC p.30,59 NCF p. 34, 41

of a relative personal monolingualism, but in different languages: Maltese, English and other languages. This implies that classes are already multilingual at the outset as they are attended by children with different language repertoires. However, we need to ask whether this strictly monolingual view of the children's repertoires should give way to a more plurilingual view of those same repertoires. The sociolinguistic situation in Malta is undoubtedly one of a diffuse social multilingualism, with the very strong presence, differentiated depending on the field in question, of the two official languages - Maltese and English - and the diffuse presence of other languages: Maltese dialects, the languages of immigration and variants thereof, and Italian through the media. The question therefore needs to be asked whether it would be more accurate to speak of plurilingual repertoires with languages at different points on the bilingual continuum.

3.2.3 The languages of schooling - separation of languages or code-switching?⁷⁴

The NMC of 1999 already made provision for a strict separation of languages: Maltese is the medium of instruction for certain subjects (Maltese and humanities generally) and English for others (English, Mathematics, Science, Technology). This choice of language arrangements also reflects the dual monolingual model (= bilingualism achieved by the sum of two monolingualisms or equilingualism).

This arrangement is based on the separation of languages in accordance with, at least, two principles: "one language - one person", "one subject - one language". This idea of the strict separation of languages is inconsistent with the discursive - and cognitive - functioning of plurilingual speakers and, specifically in the case of Malta, the language practices of Maltese society as a whole, where the alternation of languages (Code-switching) is common practice. Indeed such code-switching is a practice widely shared in all multilingual situations and by all plurilingual speakers.

There is some agreement among policy-makers on the need to alternate languages or code-switch, but generally only in problematic situations:

Only in those cases where this poses great pedagogical problems, does the National Minimum Curriculum accept code-switching as a means of communication.
(NCF p. 62)

This rather categoric view seems to be in contradiction with the more positive views on code-switching expressed in the National Literacy Strategy, which refers to the ability to code switch as "an essential element of a bilingual country" allowing people access to a range of languages and to a "wide and varied linguistic heritage" providing a "head start in literacy skills..."

Increasingly we need to refer to plurilingual individuals, as promoted by the Council of Europe, who have competence in more than one language and can switch between languages, according to circumstances. (NLS pp.28/9)

⁷⁴ Table 8 point 6

This positive description is confirmed by research in Maltese schools showing that code-switching is extremely beneficial for the effective management of learning processes and teaching activities.⁷⁵ For some time now, research into bilingual/plurilingual teaching has been in favour of developing plurilingual and uncompartimentalised practices in the classroom. Recent publications also provide pointers for adapting such practices for teaching purposes.⁷⁶

Of course a prudent use of code-switching is not at all the same as blanket permission for the pupil always to use the language in which he or she (and often the teacher as well) feels most comfortable. In this case pupils would be deprived of the amount of quality input needed for them to construct their linguistic knowledge and competences and they would be less likely to access a quality education available to all. This is a field in which research and action research would allow educationalists to identify the most successful practice in code-switching currently being used by teachers, to work with them in problematic or difficult areas and to develop new ideas on what can work best. In such a framework a training programme could be developed in order to trial various approaches to code-switching in knowledge acquisition. In our view such a programme would help to diffuse current tensions and concerns around the issue and at the same time to facilitate the teaching and learning of subject content. From a pedagogic point of view, a clearly agreed learning contract could be established between teachers and pupils relating to the alternation of languages in the classroom, setting out a framework for the use of L1 and L2 and for multilingual communication. The main thing would be to ensure that language problems of any kind should not be an obstacle to the potential for pupils to learn or to express themselves. This is the minimum condition to ensure that learning takes place. The ultimate aim of bilingual education is to develop bilingual people who are able to function as such, in other words to use either Maltese or English appropriately in a monolingual context but also to operate using both languages in alternation, depending on the context and the linguistic repertoire of interlocutors⁷⁷. This question, and the implications for schools is discussed at greater length in Appendix 3.

Models of bilingual pedagogy (cf table 8 point 7)

Malta has in practice adopted the immersion pedagogical method. The characteristics of this approach are best defined in the National Literacy Strategy and can be summarised as follows: beginning bilingual education at an early age and continuing it over time, using two languages to learn subject content and ensuring the contribution of bilingual education to the development of not only language but also cognitive competences. We think it useful to quote this passage at length (our underlining)

⁷⁵ Camilleri Grima, A (2012) “ A select review of bilingualism in education in Malta”, *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* Routledge

Gauci H, Camilleri Grima A, (2012) “Codeswitching as a tool in teaching Italian in Malta”, *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 1-17. Routledge

⁷⁶ Cf. amongst others, García, O. and Li Wei (2014): *Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism and Education*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

⁷⁷ For these two modes of operation by bilinguals see Grosjean (op. cit.).

A Bilingual Policy⁷⁸

An early start in language learning is essential for young children to gain appropriate levels of competence and for shaping children's overall progress. It means that learning can take place over a longer period, ensuring more permanent results in language learning and an enhanced capacity to learn languages. Some concern has been shown that a child exposed to more than one language may become confused and mix them up, inhibiting their language development process. This should not happen if there are favourable circumstances. Research has shown that children tend to transfer into the second/foreign language the concepts and terms they have learned through their first language/mother tongue, stimulating cognitive competences.

In early language learning we need to consider issues of equity, quality, consistency and continuity. In order to ensure that these are in place, the appropriate pedagogical processes are to be adopted. These processes need to be age-specific, sound and measurable. Language immersion can help children to acquire language spontaneously.

Language learning methods to be adopted may include **Language Exposure** where students are immersed in the target language, **Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)** where the second language is used as a medium in the teaching and learning of non-language content, and **Language Tandems** where different staff use different languages. This is usually based on the 'one person-one language' principle.

The National Literacy Strategy for All focuses on the range of literacy skills required to ensure competence in Maltese and English. In order to develop dual literacy skills, where learners can switch freely between the Maltese and English languages, learners need to be provided with specific learning opportunities that will help to ensure proficiency in both languages. They should also have access to learning materials in both languages to engage in meaningful tasks and within a range of subject-specific contexts as appropriate. The National Literacy Strategy for All supports dual literacy and seeks to ensure that it is fully embedded within the education system in Malta.

This may perhaps highlight the tensions which we identified above (section 3.2.2). In other documentation, notably the NCF, the specificity of bilingual education is not really addressed. It is as though the use of two languages as vehicles of knowledge transmission has no effect on the teaching and learning process. This is in any case a very delicate process with dimensions which are affective, cognitive and linguistic, and the use of two languages makes it even more complex. It would seem crucial therefore to ensure that all favourable conditions are combined in order for this complexity to be the asset described by the NLS and not a handicap for learners. This would imply two areas of further reflection and research - firstly into the specific language dimensions of each subject, and secondly into the actual and potential use of each language in knowledge construction. In

⁷⁸ NLS pp 28-9

this way codeswitching could become seen not simply as a way of facilitating acquisition in either language, but as a means to enrich, consolidate and diversify learning in subject areas.⁷⁹

3.2.4 Resolving the tensions

It must again be stressed that there is much about the Maltese language situation which is unique and a great deal of positivity in the attitudes of policy makers, educationalists and the public at large. At the same time we have suggested that there remain some unresolved tensions - a positive direction of travel which is hampered by an older and more traditional conception of bilingualism. When compared with other similar contexts, the Maltese bilingual/plurilingual education model presents several features typical of the classic models, based largely on a widespread monolingual view of this type of education (cf. the cells in dark grey in the third column of Table 8). Nonetheless, many of the statements made to the group of experts and some of the practices seen during their one-week visit, would seem to indicate that change is not only possible but actually happening (cf. the cells in light grey in the 5th column of the table); we think therefore that this bilingual/plurilingual education model can be directed, without any major break with existing policy or practice towards a more systematic embracing of bilingual/plurilingual concepts and practices. This would take advantage of pupils' initial linguistic repertoires, and focus greater attention on aspects of the plurilingual construction of knowledge in school subjects. These elements still need to be made more explicit in key documentation and to be put into practice more consistently by Maltese schools. But it is a reorganisation of this kind that will ensure that the Maltese bilingual/plurilingual education system will be better able to guarantee the right to high-quality education and academic success for all pupils.⁸⁰

3.3. Teaching other (“foreign”) languages

As we observed in Chapter 2, languages play an important role in Malta's education system, due in large part to the importance of international communication for Malta and also the resulting positive attitudes among the population. Levels of language competence are high, with some 60% of the population speaking at least 3 languages and only 5.2% describing themselves as monolingual (compared to 61% in the UK, 54% in Spain and an EU average of 46%)⁸¹. Although the range of languages spoken is quite extensive (11 languages are cited by Vassallo and Sciriha in their 2006 research) in actual fact three languages dominate public perceptions and practice - Maltese, English and Italian. Only French - which is known by 20.6% of the population - even comes close to these three, with other languages being spoken by very small numbers of people.

According to this same research the arguments most often put forward in support of learning languages tend to be about cultural enrichment and personal communication

⁷⁹ See Appendix 2 (section 6) and Appendix 6

⁸⁰ See Appendix 2 for Council of Europe instruments which can assist this process

⁸¹ Vassallo, M & Sciriha, L (2006) *Living Languages in Malta*, Malta, print it. Cf, also, Special Eurobarometer 386 *Europeans and their Languages* (2012), Brussels.

rather than, for example, their vocational utility. Perhaps this is because of the omnipresence of English, which is often described in terms of its importance as an international language of communication and language of access to knowledge. It might also suggest a widespread familiarity with operational plurilingualism and a view that a multilingual environment is the norm.

Whatever the explanations for these social representations of languages, we can be confident in saying that they show a positive attitude towards multilingualism which potentially goes beyond an appreciation of Maltese-English bilingualism. This should be something on which to build in developing the offer of languages within the school system. Of particular importance here is the position of Italian which has a special place in public opinion for historical, cultural and geographical reasons.⁸²

3.3.1. Language learning objectives and levels

As described in the Country report and in Section 2 above, languages occupy a significant part of the primary and secondary curriculum in Maltese schools. Maltese and English are present from the beginning of primary school and other languages are introduced initially through the Foreign language awareness programme (FLAP) and then as discrete subjects. In secondary education, in addition to the significant amounts of curricular time devoted to Maltese and English as discrete subjects (5 and 6 lessons per week) and the teaching of all other subjects in Maltese and English, from 2014 four lessons per week are devoted to the third language (in years 7 and 8) and then three lessons for the remainder of secondary school. There is also provision for a fourth optional language in Years 9,10 and 11. Despite this, and despite the propitious context outlined above, there is, however, some evidence that outcomes are not always as successful as might be expected. This is a question we consider below.

- Primary

The stated objective at primary level - through the FLAP programme - is for pupils to gain an awareness of foreign languages with the aim of becoming open to other languages and cultures with a positive disposition towards mobility and new experiences”

(Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012, p. 33)⁸³.

Given the weight of curricular time devoted to Maltese and English this seems a sensible approach and one which should enable pupils to make more informed choices about languages in the secondary sector.

- Secondary

The National Curriculum Framework for All (2012) sets objectives for language learning to enable learners

⁸² See Section 2

⁸³ Country report p. 36

to develop an awareness of the nature of language and language learning, of literature and literature learning, as well as widening their personal, social and cultural understanding ».

Secondary level foreign language study

provides for the acquisition of further communication tools that are useful to appreciate cultural diversity and to facilitate interaction within the European and international contexts. Opportunities for the development of multilingualism, directly related to the world of work, are provided in the Secondary Years. (p 34)

The National Curriculum Framework also makes some important statements about education for diversity which will “include multiple perspectives and voices within the learning environment, provides spaces for learning about the languages, histories, traditions and cultures of non-dominant groups in a society, encourages team work and cooperative learning in multicultural, multi-ethnic and other diverse contexts, combines traditional and local knowledge and know-how with the advanced science and technology, and values the practice of multilingualism. In doing so it encourages an understanding of global issues and the need for living together with different cultures and values.” (p 38). This aspiration of education for diversity and for social cohesion and the role of languages as significant contributors to that aim is very much in accord with the orientations of the Council of Europe.

What is less clear yet is how this aspiration is translated into actual practice and real outcomes. One very concrete issue here is a lack of specificity about expected levels in language learning at various stages in the learning process, despite a relatively high stakes and sometimes onerous assessment system. It would in this respect be helpful if the proposed Learning Outcomes Framework (LOF) were to provide transparent and realisable learning objectives for the different languages linked to the *Common European Framework of Reference*.

3.3.2 Pupil performance in languages

When it comes to pupil performance in languages, the situation in Malta is contradictory. On the one hand there is a high level of school drop out and lack of achievement, at least in any formal sense. On the other the results for Maltese pupils in foreign language learning (not even including English) are some of the best in Europe.

According to the Country Report only 44% of students pass the six examinations required to take up post-secondary studies and 50% pass fewer than 5 examinations or do not even turn up for the assessment. The school drop-out rate in Malta was 22.7% in 2012, almost twice the European average (12.8%) with a higher number of boys (27.5%) than girls (17.6%). The Country report states that languages (English, Maltese, and also foreign languages) may be a factor in this drop-out since “a significant percentage of students are not obtaining minimum qualification in both Maltese and English (among other subjects)” (page 41). As we have already suggested the tripartite school system may be an important factor here, as academic failure is particularly prevalent in the state system. During the expert visit many respondents maintained that languages (which take up 30% of the overall curriculum) are a significant factor in the lack of success in the SEC examination,

not least because of what was of the described as unengaging and over formal approaches to teaching... Some of these problems have been tackled head on, since the Ministry of Education and Employment has drawn up two plans: *A National Literacy Strategy for All in Malta and Gozo (2014-2019)* and *A Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Early School Leaving in Malta (2014)*. Both plans take account of the overall context and put forward systemic proposals to improve literacy and prevent school drop-out.

Yet for those pupils who do benefit from schooling, performance in language is enviable. According to the *European Survey on Language Competences (ESLC)*, carried out for the European Commission in 2012, Malta is one of the very few countries which had results above the European average in the two foreign languages tested. We shall not dwell on the excellent results in English, which is in practice a second language for which the competences acquired by Maltese pupils are undoubtedly due to a number of facilitating factors (official status of the language, the fact that it is in their immediate environment, early teaching and use in school subjects for knowledge acquisition). We shall focus rather on the second foreign language, Italian.

The Maltese sample comprised 1,175 boys and 1,200 girls: 51.5% were tested in English and 48.5% in Italian. There were many interesting findings from this survey; we shall take just a few, in particular summary results in reading, listening and writing, broken down by gender and by school type.⁸⁴ In reading the overall B1-B2 average was 34%, i.e. 7% above the European average. In listening the overall B1-B2 average was 46%, i.e. 19% above the European average. For writing the overall B1-B2 average was 23%, i.e. 1% above the European average. As expected the Church and Independent schools performed significantly better than the State schools but interestingly Church school pupils - both boys and girls - performed better than those in the independent schools, especially at the highest level. For example in listening the figures are as follows:

CEFR LEVEL	Males			Females		
	State	Church	Independent	State	Church	Independent
Pre – A1	27.23	7.89	6.12	22.22	9.45	7.14
A1	25.74	9.21	18.37	27.49	22.83	14.29
A2	11.39	9.21	20.41	7.60	16.54	32.14
B1	16.83	17.76	24.49	15.79	16.54	21.43
B2	18.81	55.92	30.61	26.90	34.65	25.00

Table 9. Attainment in Italian Listening for Malta categorised by school type and gender (European Survey on Language Competences, Malta report p.22)

⁸⁴ For fuller tables see Appendix 5

Similar results are found for reading and writing (see Appendix 5). This requires some further investigation but it might be due to a factor not unknown in other contexts, namely the preference for Italian in Catholic schools.

These data confirm what the Council of Europe’s team of experts was told during the week-long visit:

- There is a school-type effect due in part, with regard to State Schools, to the fact that they take in pupils with the lowest socio-economic and cultural status. The performances in the Church Schools are very interesting insofar as, while they were better than the Independent Schools despite the lower ESCS of their pupils (cf. Table 7 above).
- There is also a gender effect, since while in most contexts girls perform better than boys especially in languages, in Italian this does not seem to be the case, especially in the Church Schools. It would be worthwhile carrying out further research into this to identify more precisely the factors leading to this undoubted success among boys and to consider the possibility of transposing them to other situations.

Clearly, these two effects are noteworthy and warrant the full attention of the Ministry of Education and Employment if equitable and high-quality education is to be secured.

It may be of interest to note that these results serve as the basis for the outcome objectives set by the NCF for 2025/2026 (page 67):

ESLC	2012	2025/2026
English (A2 - B2)	91%	95%
Italian (A2 - B2)	50%	70%

3.3.3. Challenges for foreign language education

We will now review some of the main challenges for foreign language education in Malta, and by implication consider some of the options that could help improve and facilitate modern language teaching in a bilingual education system, questions which will be summarised in Section 4.

- **Competence levels**

Undoubtedly, language teachers would be greatly assisted in their teaching and assessment approaches, and pupils in their learning and self-assessment processes, if the competences to be attained in each language were laid down in a clearly defined progression throughout the various stages of schooling using the CEFR descriptors. Parallel objectives should also be developed for Maltese and English, taking account of the fact that these are also languages of schooling. This would be an enormous help for assessment processes and for tracking progress across school phases.

The Council of Europe (including the ECML) has considerable CEFR-related material available for the practical production of such descriptions of competences.⁸⁵

- **Convergence between languages**

Multilingual educational contexts are often faced with a large proportion of the curriculum being taken up by languages. Despite its bilingual education and the plurilingual offer, Malta has managed to keep this proportion to a relatively low level (30%) compared with other multilingual education systems. It is also necessary to address the cognitive burden of a curriculum comprising many languages and its effects on the teaching-learning processes. All Bilingual education requires measures to rationalise language teaching, to show points of convergence between the languages and ensure synergies with other school subjects so that the approach adopted is favourable to all pupils and does not constitute cognitive overload. These measures are all the more essential when this bilingual education also takes on a plurilingual perspective: up to two foreign languages in addition to Maltese and English!

There are many synergies to be exploited, deriving from the very rich history of the Maltese language and also the global reach and versatility of English. These include common Latin - Romance - roots, in particular from Italian, as well as the influences of Arabic and Germanic languages and the very many loan words for which English is noted. By exploiting these innate advantages of the two languages in an explicit way, cognitive bridges could be created for pupils which would show them the benefits to be gained from their rich language repertoire. This should inspire confidence in their ability to learn languages and motivate pupils to learn them.

At primary school level, pupils already have the experience of acquiring two languages (Maltese and English), and the FLAP programme has raised their awareness of “genuine” foreign languages: it should now be easy to begin showing them, through activities of inter-comprehension, the extent to which, with these foundations, they can understand a written text in a foreign language. It would be particularly productive to adopt the evaluative philosophy of the CEFR, to show pupils the extent to which they are capable of understanding, reading and communicating, and to help them assess and be aware of their progress.

All this presupposes that teachers take full account of the plurality of language competences of the learners and that they work together to ensure progress. The impression given by the official texts, by what the experts we met had to say and by the classroom visits we were able to make is that the teaching of the various languages is juxtaposed, rather than being connected and convergent. We believe this is an important area for reflection, research and work for the Maltese education system. With 30% of the

⁸⁵ See for example Reference Level Descriptions for national and regional languages (Language Policy Unit) - www.coe.int/lang

curriculum devoted to languages, it is essential that the various approaches to teaching are co-ordinated to facilitate learning.⁸⁶

- **Teaching approaches**

There should be different teaching-learning approaches for a third or fourth language taught in an education system, especially where such a system is bilingual from an early age. The different choices made could take into account, on the one hand, the language taught and its relative presence in the environment. Clearly, Spanish, German, Russian and Chinese are less in evidence in Maltese society than Italian. Thought should therefore be given - for the first of those languages mentioned - to a slower pace of progression and a lower level of requirements. On the other hand, consideration could be given to activities for Italian - and for other languages - drawing on the CLIL methodologies offering material for the different disciplines. This would make it possible to significantly expand the semantic areas in which to use the language and give greater motivation to language learning.

- **Non European Languages**

There is some interest but little sustained practice in offering world languages in Maltese schools. This mainly concerns the introduction of Chinese, as in many European jurisdictions in the early 21st century. While maintaining this interest, it would appear sensible also to pay attention to Arabic, with which Maltese shares common roots. There are thus linguistic reasons as well as very powerful economic and intercultural reasons for expanding the teaching of Arabic in Malta. Clearly, work would have to be done on the negative perceptions of the Arabic language and its speakers. It would also require language syllabuses which sought to give prominence to Arabic. In other countries, in order to give Arabic a positive image specialisation streams have been established in higher secondary schools promoting important but less widely taught world languages. This would doubtless be an interesting avenue to explore.

- **Vocational Languages**

Young people attending vocational schools will be the first to enter the world of employment where knowledge of languages is increasingly becoming a requirement, especially in an economic system such as Malta's in which economic relationships and trade with foreign countries and players, whether at home or abroad, are essential. Ensuring that these young people, as well as those not in employment or education (so-called NEETs) are also given the opportunity to obtain qualifications in languages could help improve their chances of finding employment. This should also be an important consideration in the developing "alternative curriculum" and in appropriate educational provision for the group of children identified as school drop outs. Such provision would of

⁸⁶Three Council of Europe tools would be of particular help in moving towards this plurilingual context: the *Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe* - from linguistic diversity to plurilingual education (2007), the *Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education* (2010) and the European Language Portfolio (see [Appendix 2](#)).

course have significant implications for both the content of the curriculum and the teaching and learning approach.

3.4. Languages and access to education for non-Maltese children (and adults)

One very specific language challenge identified in the Country Report is the provision of language education - and thus access to the learning curriculum - for non-Maltese nationals, in particular those with little or no Maltese or English as a language of communication. Although this is not an entirely new phenomenon in Malta, as there have always been members of other language groups in the island, the current major population movements, both within and from outside the European Union do create particular challenges, for which a number of respondents have said that the country is not yet well prepared.⁸⁷ Malta is not alone in this respect and a number of recent reports have indicated that the educational integration of migrants is a major fault line in Europe, both in terms of appropriate provision and in relation to the potentially difficult political implications of immigration in the current socio-economic context.⁸⁸ Having said this it also seems to be the case that until recently at least the response to increased immigration -in particular that of third country nationals (economic migrants and asylum seekers) has been rather ad hoc in Malta.

3.4.1 “Elite” and “non-elite” migrants

It may be important to distinguish between approaches to what have been called “elite” migrants - British nationals, families (usually European) of business people and diplomats for example - and other “non-elite” or non-valued language groups. Although evidence on home languages may not be entirely reliable, according to the 2011 Census as quoted by UNHCR⁸⁹ 32% of the 20,624 non-Maltese living in Malta at that time were from the UK. The largest other groups were from Somalia and Italy (5%), Bulgaria and Germany (4%), Eritrea, Russia and Serbia (3%). We also know that in recent years there have been arrivals from Syria and also from countries in West Africa. More recent figures made available by the Ministry of Education and Employment show an increase in “migrant learners” in primary schools - in particular in Years 4 and 5. The largest number is from the United Kingdom (185), but there are significant numbers from Bulgaria (95) and Italy (62); from beyond Europe the main countries of origin are Egypt, Libya, Nigeria, Somalia and Syria.

As far as the “elite” European migrants are concerned, there is some, generally informal, provision of tailored language education. For example according to ISA , the Independent

⁸⁷ Meetings with Jon Hoisaeter of UNHCR (16/6/14) and Neil Falzon , ADITUS (17/6/14); Discussion with Green Party (16/6/14)

⁸⁸ Extra,G and Yagmur,K (2012) : *Language Rich Europe Trends in Policies and Practices for Multilingualism in Europe*. Cambridge University Press p. 12
King, L., Byrne, N., Djouadj, I., LoBianco,J., Stoicheva,M., (2011) *Languages in Europe Towards 2020. Analysis and proposals from the LETPP consultation and review*. London: The Languages Company p.36

⁸⁹ Malta Asylum Trends 2013

Schools Association, the independent sector teaches a number of non Maltese nationals, attracted also by the preponderance of English as a language of instruction, and in a number of cases (French and Italian were quoted) provision is made to enable pupils to reintegrate with their national curriculum. The cultural institutes - notably the Russian Culture Centre - also offer courses to maintain national languages.

The rest of this section, however, considers policy and practice relating to the newer “non-elite” immigrants, from Somalia, Eritrea, Syria, West Africa and some parts of Eastern Europe, for whom provision is rather less certain.

3.4.2 Current mainstream initiatives

Although the advent of mass immigration patterns is a relatively new phenomenon in Malta, it would not be at all true to say that there is no support for or interest in language provision for new arrivals. According to the National Curriculum Framework consultation there was -

Quasi universal agreement that Malta has become a multicultural society and that all schools should be in a position to provide children and their parents with language support in Maltese and English so that they achieve a basic working knowledge of these languages at the earliest possible in order to allow them to integrate quickly.⁹⁰

As reported in the Country Report there have also been a number of recent initiatives and policy proposals aiming to support migrants in general and specifically in developing the communication skills needed for access to education and social and civic life. The working group set up in 2011 by the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) to work on a National Strategy addressing the different needs of immigrant children placed particular emphasis on language learning and identified the particular communication problems which they experienced. Recommendations were made for schools to tackle these challenges both inside and outside the classroom.⁹¹ The Report continues to describe how DQSE offers language support for migrant children in the form of a six week programme involving partial or total withdrawal from school. During this time they follow basic language courses in Maltese and English, with the emphasis on survival language which will help the children to begin integrating in the schools. This programme was also mentioned favourably by colleagues from the UNHCR and by the Teachers’ union (MUT).⁹²

The National Curriculum Framework also supports the idea of multiculturalism as a positive force in Maltese society. One of the stated six principles of education is Diversity, and the document clearly states that

Education for Diversity respects the cultural identity of the learner through the provision of culturally appropriate and responsive education for all...It will ensure the inclusion of multiple perspectives and voices within the learning environment ,

⁹⁰ Ministry of Education and Employment *A National Curriculum Framework for All, 2012*

⁹¹ Country Report p. xx

⁹² Meetings 16/6/14 and 17/6/14

provides spaces for learning about the languages, histories, traditions and cultures of non dominant groups...⁹³

In this context some impressive materials have been produced for use in schools by UNHCR and the IOM - “Not Just Numbers” which is a toolkit aiming to help pupils “understand issues surrounding migration and asylum in the EU”.

It would, however, appear that such developments are still at an early stage. Indeed it is not entirely clear how widespread or effective the DQSE language support programme has been and a recent report by ADITUS might suggest that despite good policy intentions rather less is actually done in practice⁹⁴. A number of agencies also reported that nothing is being done to support migrants’ home languages and cultures - according to the representatives of UNHCR it is just too early for such as an initiative given that Malta has less than a decade of experience in accepting significant groups of migrants.⁹⁵ The NCR itself - despite its very encouraging statements on support for diversity - does not mention such home language support as even a desirable possibility.

Beyond school there does not seem to be much systematic provision of language or cultural support. There are courses for adult migrants - in English mainly but also Maltese - which are facilitated by state institutions through the provision of premises for example, but they are mainly provided by NGOs and the Churches.

3.4.3 Some key challenges

We think that there are a number of factors which could begin to explain the relatively low level of activity in this area, remembering of course that this is a challenge for many if not all countries in the EU.⁹⁶

- **A controversial issue**

Firstly it should be noted that, as in much of Europe at the present time, immigration is a highly charged issue. As one of our political respondents pointed out, there are few votes in supporting immigrants - and in fact the opposite might be the case. As we have discovered in other contexts it is probably more likely that pragmatic solutions will be found at local level than that a high profile national campaign will be launched in support of migrant needs, much as this could be desirable.

- **Lack of resources/expertise**

This political delicacy is compounded by a lack of appropriate experience in the education system. As we have already pointed out the new kind of “non-elite” and increasingly volatile immigration is a relatively new phenomenon for Malta. There are few existing

⁹³ NCF p. 38

⁹⁴ Camilleri, C and Falzon, N : *Malta Integration Network A way forward for a National Integration Policy in Malta*. ADITUS foundation 2014. p.22

⁹⁵ *ibid* p. 22

⁹⁶ See for example Council of Europe (2014): *Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants: Guide to policy development and implementation* and *The linguistic integration of adult migrants - from one country to another, from one language to another*. www.coe.int/lang-migrants

Newby D and Penz H (2009) *Languages for social cohesion: Language education in a multilingual and multicultural Europe*. ECML. Graz

resources and to date there has been little training, for example in initial teacher education programmes, to enable the development of a coherent response to immigration. As some respondents pointed out there is not much previous experience of teaching Maltese as a foreign language (see also section 3.3). In this context it is worth pointing out also that although basic communicative skills in the two languages of schooling can be acquired by immigrant children relatively quickly (2 years), the acquisition of the linguistic competences needed for knowledge construction needs more time (5-7 years). Just as for their other pupils, but to an even greater degree, teachers have to teach not only the content of their subject but its language.⁹⁷

- **An ad hoc policy response to a “temporary” phenomenon**

Although in very recent years, there have been a number of positive policy statements or initiatives relating to the support for immigrants,⁹⁸ it was forcefully pointed out by the main organisations working in the field that there is no clear overall perspective on integration. According to Neil Falzon of Aditus, there is no systematic support for school children or their parents and no basic information for non Maltese or English speakers on Health, Social Services or Civil Society in general.

One suggested reason for this is that this new immigration is still widely regarded as a temporary or even accidental phenomenon - a process essentially leading to transit elsewhere. As Falzon said to the Council of Europe team

*“there is a general view that migrants are poor and not here to stay”.*⁹⁹

⁹⁷ For discussion on this distinction between basic communicative language (BICS) and Academic language (CALP) see for example - Cummins, J. (1979) “Cognitive/academic language proficiency, linguistic interdependence, the optimum age question and some other matters.” *Working Papers on Bilingualism*, No. 19, 121-129. and Cummins, J. (1981a) Age on arrival and immigrant second language learning in Canada. A reassessment. *Applied Linguistics* 2 132-149.

⁹⁸ *Malta’s National Strategy for the Promotion of Cross-Cultural Understanding and Management of Cultural Diversity*, 2009; Camileri and Falzon 2014 op.cit ; N.Falzon, M. Pisani, A. Cauchi: *Research Report: Integration of Third Country Nationals*, Foundation for Educational Services, 2012; National Curriculum Framework for All 2012 (op.cit)

⁹⁹ Discussion 17/06/14

SUPPORT FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE - IMPLEMENTATION

In this final section we consider some key issues relating to the implementation of languages education policy, first in relation to the critical question of teacher education, and secondly on the ways in which policy is actual implemented and promoted.

3.5. Teacher education

It has often been observed that the role of the teacher is central to the implementation of educational policy¹⁰⁰ In a rich and complex linguistic context such as that of Malta this is undoubtedly even more the case. The admittedly limited opportunities of the Expert Team to meet with teachers during their visits suggest that many teachers in Malta are highly motivated and dedicated professionals and that it would be possible as well as desirable to involve them in any proposed future curricular developments. We also came away with a sense that the educational system is a complicated one and that responsibility lines could be confused (see also 3.6).

3.5.1 Initial Teacher Education

The programme of initial teacher education prepares a solely graduate work force - whether through the Bachelor of Education route or the Post Graduate Certificate of Education (for secondary) It is offered by one single provider - the University of Malta , whose Education Faculty is divided into 4 Departments -

- Arts and Languages
- Education studies
- Maths, Science and Technical Education
- Early Childhood and Primary Education

There is also a Unit for Inclusion and Access.

Courses at the University are in English and Maltese. According to research carried out by Caruana (2007) on language attitudes among first year students, and cited in the Country report, the use of Maltese is much more widespread than English among intending teachers who also claim higher levels of proficiency in Maltese than in English or Italian. In sum however it is said that “most future teachers (stressed) their Maltese identity (but) also expressed positive attitudes towards English”¹⁰¹

It is not clear in this context whether teachers are prepared in any systematic way for bilingual/plurilingual teaching. Certainly in discussion with colleagues from the

¹⁰⁰ See for example Rowe, K (2003) “ The Importance of Teacher Quality as a Key determinant of Students’ Experiences and Outcomes of Schooling” *Australian Council for Educational research* - http://research.acer.edu.au/research_conference_2003/3

“ the quality of teaching and learning provision are by far the most salient influences on students’ cognitive, affective and behavioural outcomes of schooling - regardless of their gender and backgrounds”.

¹⁰¹ Country Report 11 p. 69)

education faculty the whole issue of code-switching was described as a “delicate” subject and there are concerns about the consequences of code-switching in particular in Science and Technology. It was also reported that as yet the impact of migrant pupils is not being addressed and that education for cultural diversity is not at present part of the programme.

Despite the central role of the University in teacher education, there are, as in many countries, competing influences on future teachers, not least the schools in which teaching practice takes place. Directors of education and the Colleges also influence the teaching force (see 3.6). As things are currently arranged, there is little opportunity for the University to influence the continuing professional development of teachers - there are for example no award bearing post graduate courses in aspects of teaching pedagogy.

An opportunity for rethinking and redesigning the teacher education curriculum arises in the near future as initial teacher education is moving to a new structure - a Masters involving 3 years undergraduate plus 2 post including teaching practice. Courses will again be through Maltese and English

3.5.2. Continuing Professional development

Overall the situation concerning Continuing Professional development (CPD) in Malta is rather positive in terms of quantity (provision). It is specifically promoted by the NCF with a requirement that

continuous professional development programmes are organised for all practitioners within Colleges and Schools as well as on going professional development to address national and strategic issues (page 32 Principle 6)

All teachers are obliged to undertake 3 days CPD each year and this is fully funded by the state. Other opportunities are also available, including language refreshment and trips abroad. The Country Report lists the courses available with relevance to languages education during 2014 (p. 49). These are invariably interesting and relevant to language teaching. However with the exception of a number of courses relating to literacy it is not obvious how these address key questions relating to bi/plurilingualism and the languages of schooling. There is also a sense that these are rather “top down” courses on key national priorities and that opportunities for teacher reflection or even action research are not common.

3.5.3 Some issues for further consideration in teacher education

● Specific training needs for the Bilingual context

We have already identified one key question which is the apparent absence of education for bi/plurilingualism, whether in initial or continuing education. Related to this would also be the need to understand better the nature and validity of code-switching as outlined in section 3.2. Of particular importance for teacher education is the language dimension in teaching individual disciplines and the need for teachers and future teachers to be able to reflect on and understand the ways in which subject knowledge can be constructed using two languages.

● **Training and reflection on early literacy**

As we have argued above there is also a great need for teachers at primary level to deepen their understanding of literacy - in particular in the Maltese context of bi-literacy. This - even more than materials or curricular guidance - will be critical to ensuring a more sustained and consistent access to learning in primary schools, which it is commonly agreed provides the basis for future learning.

● **Lack of parity and contact between sectors**

In the discussions which took place during the experts' visit to Malta it became clear that provision for CPD in the Private and Church sectors is more extensive than in the State sector (6 days minimum was quoted). It would be desirable if this imbalance could be rectified.

There also appeared to be little contact between sectors and even between schools in the same sector. The view was expressed that the competition between schools and between subjects tended to make this difficult, even though there was a genuine desire for greater degrees of collaboration in particular in relation to materials development and methodological approaches.

● **Involving schools in the process of change**

The Maltese authorities emphasise the importance of decentralisation and the role of Head Teachers in driving change - for example through the School Development Plan. Although the Council of Europe experts also detected some uncertainties in this respect (see section 3.6), overall the school authorities seem to relish this autonomy. Within a framework of national reform it would therefore seem essential both to involve Head and senior teachers and also to provide them with opportunities for appropriate professional development themselves.

● **Professionalising the teaching force**

Furthermore practising teachers should be more involved in curricular and methodological research and development. We have already suggested that the controversial challenge of code-switching (among others) could be best addressed through an action-research programme involving real teachers as well as researchers. Greater opportunities for teachers to reflect on practice, to learn from research and to experiment with new ideas could transform teaching and learning and have a major impact on languages education in Malta. Already there are plans for teacher sabbaticals which is a good step. There has, however, been mixed experience of such approaches in the past and it would seem that a key component of any new programme would have to be a system of accreditation and recognition for participating teachers.

3.6. Decision making processes and awareness rising.

Finally we should briefly mention another critical “push” factor in relation to the potential for change in the Maltese context - the all important mechanisms relating not only to policy development but to implementation and to contact with the population

(“awareness raising”). These comments are very much based on perceptions from the outside, not least because those involved directly in a process may not notice fault-lines as they have always been there. In that sense familiarity can breed neglect. Of course the corollary to this is that the actual system may be misunderstood as seen by outsiders - in which case these remarks may be taken as the honest questions of sympathetic friends!

3.6.1 Small is beautiful

One striking consequence of Malta’s size is that contact between government, agencies, stakeholders and indeed the general public can be infinitely easier and more informal than in a larger centralised state, such as those in Western Europe. Put simply, people know each other and talk to each other as a matter of course. This is shown by the relative ease of access to policy makers and the apparently frequent interchanges between different political and social groupings (including personal contacts). It is also manifested in the impressive range of consultations and the quantity and quality of responses (for example the consultation on the new curriculum). The expert group also gained the impression that contacts between policy making and implementing bodies and the media and social partners were relatively frequent and relaxed. At the level of the citizen many people seemed to be informed and interested in what is happening in the body politic. At a time when many jurisdictions report apathy or antagonism among large numbers of people, this vibrant openness and interchange is something to value and respect and on which to build.

3.6.2 A plethora of policy drivers

The downside could be that within this modern “citizen’s state”, there are actually a rather large number of policy related bodies, potentially driving change or elements of change. In addition to the Ministry which appears to have considerable direct influence on the implementation as well as the development of policy, the experts were introduced to the Colleges and College Principals, the Education Directorates, the Education Officers and MATSEC (qualifications body), all governmental or ‘close to government’ agencies. Other key players who have considerable influence on policy include employer bodies such as FELTOM, the powerful teachers’ union MUT, the University, Head Teachers and their associations (different ones for the different sectors). Other influential groupings represented particular language interests - ESU and NCM - parents and of course the media.

It could of course be said that there is nothing unusual about such pluralism in a democracy, and probably even longer lists could be established for other Western countries. However, given Malta’s small population and the very positive observed relationships this set of overlapping bodies could be a recipe for some confusion. It was interesting that in our very rich discussions it was often difficult to determine who was responsible for what, for example in relation to curricular priorities or teacher continuing professional development.¹⁰² In a similar vein we were on the one hand highly impressed with the thoroughness and thoughtfulness of the consultative process in Malta - over the new curriculum, the literacy strategy for example. Yet at the same time there appear to

¹⁰² Discussions with College Principals, Directors of Education and Education Officers. 16/06/14

have developed a number of overlapping strategies without a very transparent indication of how and by whom they will be implemented. Both the Head teachers who were involved in the Profile discussions and the MUT seemed unclear about what had actually been implemented and when.

3.6.3 A clear driver for languages and a unifying message?

The question is therefore posed as to whether, without interfering unduly in the structures which have been built up over years, the implementation of a languages strategy and the necessary public awareness campaign that would accompany it, could be simplified in some way. Could there be a central driver for a languages strategy, just as there is for the current literacy strategy? In which case - who or what would it be? This will be something for the Maltese administration and colleagues to determine in the light of what is appropriate and acceptable in Malta and it will need to be rooted in the consensual and devolved approach to policy which we have noted above, but we are convinced that whatever the precise model if a new languages regime is to be developed implementation and promotion will be key objectives.

A key related issue here is the kind of promotion that will be needed to support change. We have discussed at length the importance and the operation of Maltese bilingualism. Whatever the details of a new policy it would seem self evident that one major message which needs to be promoted is about Malta as a bilingual - actually multilingual - country, rather than one characterised by separate but parallel monolingualisms. Again, viewed from the outside Malta is operationally multilingual (at least trilingual) and its government, teachers and population and media should perhaps beat that drum more loudly.

To conclude: for a strategy to be successfully implemented a number of questions will need to be answered -

- Who or what drives the strategy?
- How does this body or person relate to existing policy bodies?
- What resources are available not least for a publicity campaign?
- How will key stakeholders be involved in the process?
- How will the message “Proud to be Multilingual” be articulated and promoted?

These and other questions will be part of the action plan which we will now consider.

4. LOOKING FORWARD

What follows is in no sense a blueprint. It is rather a compilation of some suggestions for future action, and in many cases reflection, based on the discussions between the expert group and the Maltese team, the wealth of material and contacts made available in the production of the Profile and the many examples of practice observed. It is hoped that it may provide a framework for further public debate in Malta and eventually for the development of a coherent strategy for languages education.

4.1. Building on the positive

As the report continually states there is much that is positive on which to build. In particular we have noted

- **A favourable context for multilingualism**
Public attitudes to languages are largely positive and there is a long tradition of openness to other cultures in Maltese society. This is reflected also in high levels of language competence, and in many cases effective operational trilingualism.
- **A clear sense of Maltese identity**
In general terms the Maltese population appears at ease with its rather complex identity, affirming its specifically Maltese character which includes intercultural and interlanguage competences as important aspects.
- **A definite institutional commitment to the development of languages education**
A range of instruments and policies have been developed in support of languages education, and these have broad support from key stakeholders and policy makers. Malta is also committed to the principles relating to languages education established by the Council of Europe and plays an active part in the European institutions.
- **A commitment to equality of opportunity**
Equality of opportunity is a fundamental principle of Maltese education. This provides an important basis and rationale for future reform in support of all children.
- **Concern about the quality of the learning experience**
There is widespread dissatisfaction with educational outcomes for some children (underperformance and drop out) and questioning of the social, institutional and educational causes of this. Far from being a negative factor this is a guarantee that positive change is possible.
- **A tradition of consensus building and a desire for collaboration**
There is a strong and admirable tradition in Malta of consultation and consensus building as a basis for policy. We also believe that there is a genuine desire among teachers and stake holders to work together in order to address perceived shortcomings in the system and to develop a languages education which is truly “for all”.

These are major assets for any future policy developments, on which we believe it would be prudent to build.

4.2. Addressing the challenges

We also identify a number of key challenges facing languages education in Malta. These are analysed in the Country Report and in some detail in Section 3. We are aware that some of these challenges are broader than the languages issue which are the remit of the Profile, but we note them as important factors to be considered. In summary the main challenges are as follows -

- **A perception that standards are falling**

This is a commonly expressed concern from policy makers, educational leaders and practitioners. Specific examples which give some objective basis to the concerns are the relative performance of Maltese pupils in PISA and PIRLS and the rates of school drop out and non presentation to the examinations. In our analysis we have suggested that there may be multiple reasons for this perceived decline - notably socio-economic differences between the different educational sectors in Malta and the inappropriateness of some international literacy tests to a bilingual situation - and that there is a counterbalancing high performance in languages. This is clearly a question which goes beyond the focus of the Profile but we note it as an important variable in analysing pupil performance and outcomes (Sections 3.1, 3.3.3)

- **Mixed pupil performance in languages**

One key element of these concerns about falling standards is the observation that the language competences which are regarded as so important in Malta are in decline. This is said to be the case for the two main languages and also for other languages. Although our analysis is rather more nuanced we have made some suggestions on how better to manage a languages curriculum in the bi/plurilingual context (3.3.3) .It was also a commonly expressed view among teachers in schools that there was little opportunity for common reflection among teachers of different languages (including the two official languages). As we point out this could also have an effect on teaching approaches (for example the use of intercomprehension) and on the development of appropriate objectives for each language taking account of children’s linguistic backgrounds and exposure levels to languages in school. (3.3.3)

- **Specific concerns about the maintenance of “balanced bilingualism” and the languages of schooling**

The conditions needed to maintain and strengthen “balanced bilingualism” are a central concern of policy makers and educationalists alike. It is highlighted in the Country report, and was raised in many contexts during the expert visits. We have suggested that the nature of this bilingualism is rather more fluid than suggested by the epithet “balanced” (3.2.2) and identified a tension between differing models of bilingualism (3.2 in general and 3.2.3 in particular). We have also suggested ways to address competence issues in Maltese and English (3.2.1)

One critical aspect in the development of bi and plurilingual citizens is the introduction of early literacy. We have noted the concerns and also the progress being made in this area (National Literacy Strategy). The practices observed show that there are different approaches, including the major question of which language to introduce as the first language in school. (3.2.2)

We also feel that there is a lack of detailed reflection on the language dimension in school subjects and in the processes involved in knowledge construction in the two languages - whether in official documentation, teacher education or in the views of stakeholders. In this context we have noted conflicting opinions about “code-switching” and by implication the languages of schooling. Code-switching often appears to be the “elephant in the room”. It is widely practised both in society and in educational practice. Some of that practice is self-evidently successful. Yet it does not have more than grudging official sanction, and good practice is not systematically analysed as a basis for teacher education. (3.2.2, 3.5.1, 3.5.2)

- **Excessive formality in teaching and the curriculum**

Many interlocutors mentioned a rather formal teacher-centred approach to teaching as a possible cause for pupil disenchantment and poor performance. Although the profile team observed much progressive and interactive teaching, this is a factor to be considered (along with the nature of the curriculum and assessment regime) as a possible brake on pupil development in languages (3.5.3). More use of CLIL for example could be beneficial for languages such as Italian (3.3.3). Related to this and often mentioned in the same breath are concerns about a rather academic curriculum and heavy assessment regime. We have noted progress in this area - the proposals in the National Curriculum Framework and the National Literacy Strategy as well as the experimental alternative curriculum and assessment procedures, but there would certainly appear to be space for more curricular development and a relaxation or rationalisation of some of the rather high stakes assessment (3.1)

- **Inexperience in dealing with migrant and non-European languages**

As in many jurisdictions migration has become a pressing and controversial issue in Malta. It is said that there is little experience, either in teaching Maltese as a foreign language or in supporting Migrant languages (3.4.2, 3.4.3). Despite the linguistic links between Maltese and Arabic and the importance of Arabic commercially, strategically, and socially there are few examples of learning Arabic in the educational system (3.3.3)

- **Gaps in teacher training programmes - initial and in service**

Although bilingualism is implicit in teacher training given the bilingual nature of the teacher training itself and the undoubted practice of code-switching at University also, there is little apparent specific training for bilingualism. There would undoubtedly therefore be considerable benefit from an explicit and researched teacher training programme for bilingualism, indeed plurilingualism). Similarly in the field of continuing professional development there is little support for aspects of bilingualism such as early literacy, knowledge construction in two languages and code-switching. In general also there was a commonly expressed view among teachers that they would welcome more opportunities for collaborative working across languages, sectors and schools. (3.2.2., 3.3.3 3.5.3)

- **Administrative overlap**

Finally, while noting many positive aspects to public debate and decision making in Malta, not least the commitment to consensus building, and school autonomy, the expert team was also confronted with a plethora of agents and in their view it would

be important to clarify decision making and consultative approaches if an effective strategy for languages is to be developed. (3.6.2, 3.6.3)

4.3. Proposals for further action

On the basis both of these positive factors and of the challenges faced by language education in Malta we put forward the following 16 proposals for further research and action. We do so as a contribution to ongoing debate in the very open, vibrant and democratic Maltese context.

We have organised our proposals under the three main headings of our analysis in Section 3. Our guiding principle which underlies all three of these aspects has been the need to establish for the Maltese Education system, a clearly articulated and widely understood and supported **Language Education Policy**, one which can also be interpreted and appropriately applied taking account of the circumstances of individual schools. With that in mind we see the involvement of Heads and teachers along with other stake holders as critical to the success of these endeavours. To this end we propose -

QUALITY AND STANDARDS

- 1. Develop a more varied curriculum**, building on the proposals of the NCF and NLS and the “alternative curriculum”. This should include a valid vocational route with languages for employment, and may usefully include input from employers, employees and other stakeholders. It should also allow for a variety of appropriate communicative teaching/learning approaches for languages (including 3rd and 4th languages). This could provide the basis for offering language courses to non-specialists in further and higher education (ITS, MCAST and University).
- 2. Review the current heavy assessment load**, especially in early years, and at 16+. Consideration could be given to more teacher assessment and a greater emphasis on formative rather than summative “high stakes” assessment. A review might also consider whether there is currently too much duplication of assessment models.

LANGUAGES IN EDUCATION

- 3. Strengthen approaches to early literacy.** While maintaining the current literacy and reading campaigns - including digital literacy - it would be helpful to carry out a research and development programme into the current varied practice in introducing children to Maltese, English and biliteracy not only in school but also in child care centres and kindergartens, stressing the importance of programmes based on learner needs. Teachers, early childhood assistants and teacher educators should be involved in this process, which should lead to some more sustained teacher and early childhood assistant education.
- 4. Review current teaching approaches to Maltese and English.** Building on the strategy for bi-literacy, it would be useful to review appropriate teaching approaches for Maltese and English taking into account their statuses as Mother Tongue, Second Language and Foreign Language for different pupil populations.
- 5. Validate code-switching.** A pilot programme of research and action research would allow educationalists to identify the most successful practice in code-switching currently being used by teachers, to work with them in problematic or difficult areas and to develop new ideas on what can work best. On this basis a clearer rationale could provide the impetus for new training programmes in order to trial and promote more effective approaches to code-switching in knowledge acquisition.
- 6. Research and develop guidelines** on the languages of schooling - both Maltese and English. Of particular value would be greater clarity on the language needed for knowledge construction in both languages and linked to this appropriate training for future and practising teachers.
- 7. Pilot assessment tools and on line resources for teaching and learning subjects in Maltese.** A small-scale pilot could be carried out to create optional materials for assessment in Maltese, initially in one additional subject. The pilot should be evaluated to see what effect if any this has on cognitive development. In parallel, a school and teacher based pilot should be set up for developing and sharing teaching and learning resources using Maltese as the language of schooling. In the first instance

this should be restricted to one curricular area. It too should be evaluated to gauge the effect on subject knowledge and also on competence in English.

- 8. Research and agree appropriate and realistic objectives (outcomes) for Maltese, English and other languages.** Language teachers would be greatly assisted in their teaching and assessment approaches, and pupils in their learning and self-assessment if the competences to be attained in all languages were laid down in a clearly defined description of progression throughout the various stages of schooling. The Council of Europe (including the ECML) has a large amount of CEFR-related material available for the practical production of such descriptions of the competences to be attained.
- 9. Increase the range of languages learned.** It could be beneficial to support some pilot schools, working with appropriate agencies to work on a number of approaches to language learning - using ICT, Content and Language Integration, contact with pupils abroad for example - which could strengthen the intensive experience of learning a third or fourth language without taking more curricular time. This could be especially important for some major world languages - for example Chinese and in particular Arabic, a language which has links with Maltese as well as being an important world language. Support for the promotion of Arabic in a relatively small number of institutions could provide the basis for a development which would eventually benefit Maltese society in a range of ways.
- 10. Increase opportunities for links and exchanges at all levels.** Despite the significant contact with other nations through tourism, Maltese educational establishments could benefit from more opportunities for school linking, virtual and real exchanges of pupils and students and a programme of student language assistants.
- 11. Promote national discussion on good practice on migrant languages.** If a national policy cannot at this time be implemented there should at least be a framework for support and ongoing research and development, if possible agreed by the Ministry for Education and Employment and the Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties. A number of supporting documents and initiatives are available for this process.¹⁰³

SUPPORT FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

- 12. Integrate training and research into bilingual education and biliteracy more explicitly in initial teacher training.** The University, working with schools could play a leading role in articulating the requirements of bilingual education and in developing a workforce capable of supporting bilingual and plurilingual pupils in the Maltese context.
- 13. Develop more professional opportunities for teachers.** In addition to the proposed Teaching Masters attention could be given to the ways in which practising teachers are made more professional, for example by the establishment of teaching research

¹⁰³ For example the Council of Europe website on The Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants: www.coe.int/lang-migrants

fellowships (possibly leading to an in service Masters) and lead teachers in all sectors. This would require some minimal adaptation of University awarding procedures.

- 14. Strengthen current CPD arrangements.** If meaningful reform is to be carried out then dedicated time for teacher reflection and professional development would be needed. As a minimum requirement we would suggest that the statutory right to CPD in the public sector should be increased to the norms currently operating in Church and Private schools. In addition facilitating structures might be simplified with a priority of enabling teachers and schools and departments to work collaboratively.
- 15. Fund a public and media campaign to promote multilingualism as part of the unique Maltese identity.** Such a campaign could enlist the support of media organisations, schools and pupils the private sector, and civil society, all of whom have an interest in a successful languages education policy in Malta
- 16. Establish a clear and high level implementation process understood by all.** If any strategy is to be successful, an effective and credible implementation arm will be needed. This means finding a way to **coordinate language policy on a national scale.** A good beginning has been made with the establishment of the *Language Policy in Education Committee* involving a range of stakeholders and reporting to the Minister. It seems appropriate to build on this essentially consultative process (through a commission, a centre, agency, NGO or some other recognised national mechanism) to oversee the co-ordination and implementation of a languages policy. Such an agency should be linked to the Ministry and have direct access to the Minister, although it should not necessarily be part of the Ministry. It could address many of the specific issues raised in this report, developing its activity through close cooperation with administrative bodies, with key agencies in the public and private sectors, with Head teachers, teachers and parents and with NGOs and international organisations as a basis for a languages education policy.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Documents formulating the position of the Council of Europe on language education policy

Appendix 2 – Council of Europe instruments: presentation

Appendix 3 - Bilingual education and Subject Knowledge

Appendix 4 - Some stated goals of the National Curriculum for All

Appendix 5 - Performance of Maltese pupils in FL2 (Italian)

Appendix 6 - A selective Council of Europe bibliography

Appendix 7 - National authorities and Council of Europe Expert Group

Appendix 8 - List of persons met during study visits of the Council of Europe expert group in Malta, 16-20 June and 10-13 November 2014

Appendix 9 – Programme of Expert Group’s study visits

Appendix 1 – Documents formulating the position of the Council of Europe on language education policy

CONVENTIONS:

- [European Cultural Convention](#) (1954)
- [European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages](#)
[www.coe.int/minlang]
- [Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities](#)
[www.coe.int/minorities]

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS:

- ***Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe*** - www.coe.int/T/CM
 - o Recommendation CM/Rec(2014)5 to member States on the importance of competences in the language(s) of schooling for equity and quality in education and for educational success
 - o Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)13E to member States on ensuring quality education
 - o [Recommendation R \(2008\)7](#) on *The use of the Council of Europe’s Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the promotion of plurilingualism*
 - o [Recommendation R \(98\) 6](#) based on the results of the CDCC Project ‘Language Learning for European Citizenship’ (1989 - 1996)
 - o [Recommendation R \(82\)18](#) based on the results of the CDCC Project N° 4 (‘Modern Languages 1971-1981’)
- ***Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*** www.assembly.coe.int
(Recommendations are addressed to the Committee of Ministers)
 - o [Recommendation 2034 \(2014\)](#) on Integration tests: helping or hindering integration?
 - o Recommendation 1740 (2006) on [The place of the mother tongue in school education](#)
 - o Recommendation 1598 (2003) on the protection of [Sign languages](#) in the member states of the Council of Europe
 - o Recommendation 1539 (2001) on the [European Year of Languages 2001](#)
 - o Recommendation 1383 (1998) on [Linguistic Diversification](#) (CM(99)97)
- ***Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education***
 - o [Resolution](#) on the *European Language Portfolio* adopted at the 20th Session of the Standing Conference (Krakow, Poland, October 2000)

These instruments and recommendations provide the legal and political basis for language education policies at all levels which not only facilitate the acquisition of a repertoire of language varieties - linguistic diversity for the plurilingual individual - but also ensure that attention is paid to diversification of the options for language learning. The latter refers to the need to encourage and enable the learning of a wide range of languages, not only those which have been dominant in language teaching traditions, and not only the contemporary demand for English.

Attention is drawn to the recent Recommendation CM/Rec(2014)5 on languages of schooling as so far, most documents have mainly considered modern/foreign languages. There is, however, a need to include national/official languages in language education policies because they are part of the linguistic repertoire of individuals when these languages are the language(s) of schooling / instruction. In the third part of the *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe*, options for the implementation of policies include the teaching and learning of national/official languages, which for many, but not all individuals, are their mother tongue/first language.

Appendix 2 – Council of Europe instruments: presentation

Modern Languages

1. *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR)*
2. *The CEFR and language examinations: a toolkit*
3. *Manual for relating Language Examinations to the CEFR*
4. *European Language Portfolio (ELP)*

Languages in Education, Languages for Education

5. *Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe and related Reference Studies*
6. *Platform of resources and references for plurilingual and intercultural education*
7. *Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education*

These documents and instruments and further resources are available on the Language Policy Unit's website: www.coe.int/lang

MODERN LANGUAGES

1. *[Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment \(CEFR\)](http://www.coe.int/lang-CEFR) www.coe.int/lang-CEFR*

Developed through a process of scientific research and wide consultation, this document provides a practical tool for setting clear standards to be attained at successive stages of learning and for evaluating outcomes in an internationally comparable manner. The CEFR provides a basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications, thus facilitating educational and occupational mobility. It is increasingly used in the reform of national curricula and by international consortia for the comparison of language certificates. The CEFR is a document which describes in a comprehensive manner

- the competences necessary for communication
- the related knowledge and skills
- the situations and domains of communication

The CEFR facilitates the clear definition of teaching and learning objectives and methods. It provides the necessary tools for assessment of proficiency. The CEFR is of particular interest to course designers, textbook writers, testers, teachers and teacher trainers - in fact to all who are directly involved in language teaching and testing. It is the result of extensive research and ongoing work on communicative objectives, as exemplified by the popular 'Threshold level' concept. The success of this standard-setting document has led to its widespread use at all levels in Europe and across the world.

English version of the CEFR: *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*, 2001, Cambridge University Press. ISBN: Hardback 0521803136 Paperback: 0521005310.

The CEFE exists to date in 39 language versions¹⁰⁴.

2. The CEFR and language examinations: a toolkit

The CEFR is accompanied by a number of supporting publications which are available on the Unit's website (section '*Resources*').

In relation to the CEFR's particular influence on language assessment, a number of tools were developed and made available to assessment providers and other practitioners with an interest in language testing.

The section *Toolkit* on the website includes tools such as material illustrating the levels of the CEFR, for example compendia of case studies on the use of the CEFR, and the following Manual.

3. Manual for Relating Language Examinations to the CEFR

This *Manual for relating language examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) has been produced by the Language Policy Unit in order to assist member states and national/international providers of examinations in relating their certificates and diplomas to the CEFR.

The primary aim of the Manual is to help providers of examinations to develop, apply and report transparent, practical procedures in a cumulative process of continuing improvement in order to situate their examination(s) in relation to the CEFR.

The Manual is supported by illustrative material (video/DVD and CD-ROM) for the levels in a number of languages.

In addition, it is complemented by a *Reference Supplement* which provides users of the Manual with additional information that will help them in their efforts to relate their certificates and diplomas to the CEFR, and by *Further Material on Maintaining Standards across Languages, Contexts and Administrations by exploiting Teacher Judgment and IRT Scaling*.

4. European Language Portfolio (ELP) - www.coe.int/portfolio

The European Language Portfolio was developed as a tool to support the development of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism. An accreditation system by a Council of Europe Validation Committee was set up, later followed up by a Registration system: over 130 models were validated by December 2014. The development of further Portfolio models is being supported by guidelines and templates available from the ELP website.

¹⁰⁴ October 2014

What is a European Language Portfolio?

The ELP is a document in which those who are learning or have learned a language - whether at school or outside school - can record and reflect on their language learning and cultural experiences. The Portfolio contains three parts: i) a *Language Passport* which its owner regularly updates; ii) a detailed *Language Biography* which describes the owner's experiences in each language and iii) a *Dossier* where examples of personal work can be kept to illustrate one's language competences.

Aims

The ELP seeks to promote the aims of the Council of Europe. These include the development of democratic citizenship in Europe, i.a. through the protection and promotion of linguistic and cultural diversity; the promotion of lifelong language and intercultural learning for plurilingualism; the clear and transparent description of competences and qualifications to facilitate coherence in language provision and mobility in Europe.

Principles

All competence is valued, whether it is gained inside or outside formal education. The European Language Portfolio is the property of the learner and it is linked to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*.

A set of common *Principles and Guidelines* have been agreed for all Portfolios (see web site) and a number of documents have been published to assist developers.

LANGUAGES IN EDUCATION, LANGUAGES FOR EDUCATION

5. From linguistic diversity to plurilingual education: Guide for the development of Language Education Policies in Europe

The aim of the *Guide* is to offer an analytical instrument which can serve as a reference document for the formulation or reorganisation of language teaching in member states. Its purpose is to provide a response to the need to formulate language policies to promote plurilingualism and diversification in a planned manner so that decisions are coherently linked. It deals, for example, with the specification of guiding principles and aims, analysis of the particular situation and resources, expectations, needs, implementation and evaluation. Accordingly, the *Guide* does not promote any particular language education policy but attempts to identify the challenges and possible responses in the light of common principles.

To this end the *Guide* is organised in three parts:

- Analysis of current language education policies in Europe (common characteristics of the policies of member states and presentation of Council of Europe principles)
- Information required for the formulation of language education policies (methodologies for policy design, aspects/factors to be taken into account in decision making)

- Implementation of language education policies (guiding principles and policy options for deciders in providing diversification in choice of languages learned and in promoting the development of plurilingual competence; inventory of technical means and description of each ‘solution’ with indicators of cost, lead-in time, means, teacher training implications, administration, etc.)

In order for the proposals made here to be accessible to readers with different needs, the *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe* is available in two versions to suit the needs of specific groups of readers:

- the *Main Version* (reference version), which discusses, argues and exemplifies all the principles, analyses and approaches for organising European language education policies, as they are conceived in the framework of the Council of Europe. This version is designed for readers interested in all aspects of these issues, including their technical dimensions. It provides the means of answering the question: *How can language education policies geared towards plurilingualism actually be introduced?* This version is itself extended by a series of [Reference Studies](#) which have been produced specifically for the *Guide* by specialists in the relevant fields. They are published separately and provide a synthesis of the issues dealt with in this version or take them up in more detail.
- an *Executive Version*, which has been written for those who influence, formulate and implement language education policies at any level, e.g. individual institution, local government, national education system or international public or private institution. It is a document not for language specialists but for policy makers who may have no specific specialist knowledge of technical matters in language education.

6. Platform of resources and references for plurilingual and intercultural education - www.coe.int/lang-platform

After producing reference documents such as the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* taught as "foreign" languages (see previous section), a new instrument is proposed, in the form of a *Platform*, enabling member states to benefit from the experience and expertise of other member states in formulating their programmes relating to languages of schooling and all language teaching.

The *Platform* offers an open and dynamic resource, with a system of definitions, points of reference, descriptions and descriptors, studies and good practices which member states are invited to consult and use in support of their policy to promote equal access to quality education according to their needs, resources and educational culture. The *Platform* contains several boxes and most of them (e.g. ‘Language(s) of schooling’ or ‘Language(s) in other subjects’) are of particular relevance for reviewing language education policies and may offer instrumental support to policymakers and practitioners (See [Appendix 6](#) for further details).

The ideas and proposals put forward in the Guide described in the section below form part of the Council of Europe Language Policy Unit's project, "Languages in education - languages for education", contributions to which are published on the *Platform*.

7. Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education

This Guide, accompanied by [two satellite Studies](#), is intended to facilitate improved implementation of the values and principles of plurilingual and intercultural education in the teaching of all languages - foreign, regional or minority, classical, and languages of schooling.

The text comprises three chapters. The first provides a general picture of the issues and principles involved in designing and/or improving curricula, and of pedagogical and didactic approaches which open the way to fuller realisation of the general aim of plurilingual and intercultural education. The next two chapters look more closely at two basic questions raised in the first: How can the specific content and aims of plurilingual and intercultural education be identified and integrated within the curriculum, while also respecting the specific content and aims of teaching individual languages? How can curriculum scenarios be used to project the spacing-out in time of this content and these objectives? Finally, several appendices provide tools and reference lists. All of this can also be supplemented by consulting the ancillary documents available on the above-mentioned platform.

Appendix 3 - Bilingual Education and Subject Knowledge

Aim of bilingual education

The ultimate aim of bilingual education is to train, not two monolingual individuals embodied in a single person with perfectly symmetrical proficiencies in both languages, but actual bilingual individuals. Now, bilinguals are differentiated from monolinguals in being able to function differently when employing the monolingual mode in either language - in Malta's case Maltese and English - or when using the bilingual mode where they alternate their use of the two languages. In these ways they can adjust to the communicative context and to the linguistic repertoire of their interlocutors¹⁰⁵. These are complex cognitive and discursive capabilities. In that sense, the duty of school is to help pupils construct their own linguistic repertoire and know how to use it flexibly in the two modes. *Code-switching*, one of the possible manifestations of the bilingual mode and a characteristic typifying the bilingual individual, can be used at school - more extensively and systematically in the early stages of learning - as a didactic strategy which helps the construction of this repertoire. Of course, alongside this bilingual mode of functioning of which it can make use, school also has the responsibility to support pupils' acquisition of the monolingual mode in both languages, which is essential for academic success. These considerations are all the more important in that the aim in the Maltese education system is not only the acquisition of linguistic knowledge and skills but, through them, the construction of knowledge and proficiencies in the other disciplines, at all educational levels.

The Language dimension of school subjects

The language dimension of subjects other than language is often neglected in the teaching process. Concerned with teaching the contents, methods and instruments and techniques of each subject, few teachers are aware that their subject also consists of a specific language, which is peculiar to it and distinct from the ordinary language used in day-to-day speech. Above all, few of them undertake to teach this language to their pupils as one of the core components of their teaching, which contributes to their learning and to academic success in general. Many failures in school subjects are nevertheless attributable to inadequate knowledge of the language which is being used. The Council of Europe offers numerous studies and is finalising a handbook¹⁰⁶ for addressing this cross-curricular dimension of languages (see Appendix 2: 6 and Appendix 6). These studies and this handbook propose an approach which permits a "re-reading" of each discipline on the basis of the *textual genres (oral and written)* which it uses: demonstration in mathematics, experimental report in science, literary criticism in literature, the essay in philosophy For each textual genre it is possible to show *the type of sequences* of which it is constituted (narrative, descriptive, explanatory, argumentative and so on), the *type*

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Grosjean, op. cit.

¹⁰⁶ Handbook for policy making, curriculum development and teacher training (publication foreseen in 2015)

of cognitive operation and speech act involved (narrating, describing, explaining, arguing, justifying, analysing, observing ...), the *morphology, syntax* and *lexis* used. For each subject it is helpful to make pupils aware of these language resources, teaching them to analyse and above all to acquire them. The same type of cognitive effort (awareness, analysis, acquisition) will apply to the non-linguistic semiotic and representational resources used by each discipline (diagrams, graphs, plotting, maps, ...).

Bilingual subject teaching

The other area to consider is how two languages are used for the construction of knowledge, given that Maltese and English play a variable part in all lessons despite the assignment of each of these languages to particular subjects. From this perspective, it would be important to analyse each subject carefully in order to understand to what extent languages contribute to knowledge construction and also the extent to which the subject can contribute to the enrichment of the two languages.

There are many activities which, in the various subjects, assume a degree of redundancy between action and word (cooking, drawing, gymnastics, woodwork, drawing a circumference with a compass ...). These form the ideal contexts for learning the lesser known language. This redundancy between action and word in fact facilitates an easier and quicker acquisition of language, of instruction phrases, of action verbs and of specialist vocabulary relevant to the subject. It might indeed be thought that the use of a second language would be less “spontaneous” than the use of the first language and would spoil the pleasure taken by learners in these practical activities. On the contrary, however, using English, for example, in the context of physically engaging and motivating activities, should help learners to overcome any possible inhibitions.

In other types of school subject, “natural” language is the starting point for the elaboration and use of a highly specialised technical language (formulae in algebra, chemistry and physics for example.): here the use of two languages will show the learners that, whichever language is used, the same rigour is required in reasoning and choice of language resources, and the same use of for example discussion techniques and logical connectors is required. In this way comparative approaches may reinforce such awareness as well as embedding rigour and exactitude of expression.

In other subjects (history, geography, philosophy, religious instruction), language will constitute the actual locus where concepts are constructed, develop greater complexity, and gradually settle over time: the alternation of languages is of even greater interest here in that each language carries different connotations which, if thoroughly explored in class, will contribute not only to conceptual enrichment in the subject, but also to pupils’ intercultural education. An obvious example of this is the interest in tackling a historical subject with using textbooks in Maltese and English (from various English-speaking countries).

Thus code-switching could be thought of not only as a means to assist language learning in either language but as a means to enrich, diversify and consolidate the learning of each subject.

Another merit of these comparisons between textbooks is the realisation by most teachers that knowledge construction in one subject area may take different routes according to the cultural and educational traditions of a given country. This epistemological awareness may enable them to vary their own way of teaching their subject and enrich it with new inputs.

All of this requires an awareness of the issues, action research projects on current practices, and subsequent initial and in-service training schemes.

Reflections from the Expert Group drawing on language policy projects' outcomes

Appendix 4 - Some stated goals of the National Curriculum for All

1 Language Goals

The stated language goal of the NCF would appear to lie somewhere between bilingualism and plurilingualism. The first of its principles (*Entitlement*) refers, amongst other things, to:

- The ability to communicate in the context of bilingualism and multilingualism (page 32)

And, with regard to the goals of the Junior Years Cycle:

Bilingualism and multilingualism (Junior years, page 51)

In addition to the simultaneous development of Maltese and English, in the later years of the Junior Years cycle, children are encouraged to experience a foreign language awareness programme. The learning of two languages other than the mother tongue from an early age is linked to the development of multilingualism. (Barcelona Conclusions, 2002).

However, where, for example, the NCF defines the linguistic competences for Junior and Secondary years, it would appear that the dual monolingualism perception in respect of Maltese and English resurfaces:

Languages (page 34)

Communication in languages is the ability to understand, express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form. This linguistic fluency and competence is expected in both the mother tongue (L1) and the second language (L2), which in the Maltese context generally refer to Maltese and English respectively and to a somewhat lesser extent to foreign language(s).
[...]

Issues related to the language of instruction (page 41)

entitlement issues - students need to become proficient in Maltese and English and preferably in another language for their full social, cultural and economic integration

The dual monolingualism that is aimed for can be seen in the qualifying statements used when referring to foreign languages (“to a somewhat lesser extent”, “preferably”): there are never any such qualifying statements, nuances and differentiations in respect of the two official languages, despite acknowledgement of their different cognitive statuses, depending on the pupil (cf. point 5 below).

With regard to outcomes, it appears that there too there is a degree of equilingualism, in the sense of an expectation of symmetrical competences in the two languages learned:

Learning outcomes for the Junior Years Cycle (page 57)

Children who competently use the range of age-appropriate language skills in both Maltese and English

Learning outcomes for the Secondary Years Cycle (page 66)

Young people who are able to communicate effectively in at least three languages including Maltese and English

Once again, there would appear to be some conflict between a shift towards a plurilingual concept and a still monolingual and equilingual vision of the two languages taught with regard to the competences which pupils should acquire and the outcomes to be obtained.

2 Literacy goals

According to the NCF, bilingual education would appear to strive for dual and full literacy. The following examples taken from the NCF seem to show that no functional distinction is made between the skills to be acquired in both languages.

Aims of Junior years cycle (page 51)

Through programmes which build upon the initial skills inculcated during the Early Years, children become proficient in speaking, listening, reading and writing in both Maltese and English.

Aims of Junior years cycle (page 53)

Languages encourage children to develop:

- Listening, speaking, reading, writing, and presentation skills.
- Abilities to organise thoughts, ideas, feelings, and knowledge; communicate with others and respond to how others communicate.
- As competent users of both Maltese and English, who are able to appreciate and enjoy the literary heritage of both languages.
- Intellectual skills which allow learners to explore and effectively use questioning, information, critical thinking, decision-making and memory.

3. Cultural goals

This would not appear to be restricted solely to “biculturality” but to lead more broadly and resolutely to a transcultural goal. The following extracts from the NCF illustrate the desire to maintain Maltese culture, but also to take into account the growing cultural diversity in Maltese society and a commitment to ensure social cohesion and social inclusion.

General principles (NCF page 32)

Principle 2: Diversity

The NCF acknowledges Malta’s growing cultural diversity, and values the history and traditions of its people. It acknowledges and respects individual differences of age, gender, sexual orientation, beliefs, personal development, socio-cultural background,

geographical location and ethnicity. The NCF affirms that all children can learn, grow and experience success by:

- respecting diversity in all its forms.
- promoting an inclusive environment.
- ensuring policies and practices that address the individual and specific needs of the learners and learning community

Appendix 5 - Performance of Maltese pupils in FL2 (Italian)

European Survey on Language Competences (2012)

The Maltese sample comprised 1,175 boys and 1,200 girls: 51.5% were tested in English and 48.5% in Italian. The following tables give results in reading, listening and writing, broken down by gender and by school type.

Italian reading

The overall B1-B2 average was 34%, i.e. 7% above the European average

CEFR LEVEL	Males			Females		
	State	Church	Independent	State	Church	Independent
Pre – A1	26.63	6.45	9.80	15.91	6.35	3.23
A1	42.71	23.87	39.22	42.61	28.57	35.48
A2	10.55	12.90	21.57	17.05	15.08	9.68
B1	6.53	10.97	5.88	5.68	14.29	19.35
B2	13.57	45.81	23.53	18.75	35.71	2.26

Italian listening

The overall B1-B2 average was 46%, i.e. 19% above the European average

CEFR LEVEL	Males			Females		
	State	Church	Independent	State	Church	Independent
Pre – A1	27.23	7.89	6.12	22.22	9.45	7.14
A1	25.74	9.21	18.37	27.49	22.83	14.29
A2	11.39	9.21	20.41	7.60	16.54	32.14
B1	16.83	17.76	24.49	15.79	16.54	21.43
B2	18.81	55.92	30.61	26.90	34.65	25.00

Italian writing

The overall B1-B2 average was 23%, i.e. 1% above the European average

CEFR LEVEL	Males			Females		
	State	Church	Independent	State	Church	Independent
Pre – A1	43.02	16.33	17.02	34.16	16.26	12.00
A1	27.91	18.37	14.89	25.47	24.39	28.00
A2	15.12	23.13	29.79	17.39	24.39	12.00
B1	12.21	33.33	31.91	19.25	23.58	24.00
B2	1.74	8.84	6.38	3.73	11.38	24.00

Appendix 6 - A selective Council of Europe bibliography

Platform of resources and references for plurilingual and intercultural education

www.coe.int/lang-platform (see also Appendix 2:6)

Section: *Language as a subject*

Ad-hoc coordination group for the platform :Aase, L., Beacco, J.-C., Byram, M., Cavalli, M., Coste, D., Crişan, A., Fleming, M., Maradan, O., Ongstad, S., Pieper, I., Samihaian, F., Vollmer and van de Ven P.-H.

Editorial board: Beacco , J.-C., Byram, M., Coste, D. and Fleming, M.

Language as a subject (2009)

Aase, L., Fleming, M., Ongstad, S., Pieper, I., Samihaian, F., [Writing](#)

Aase, L., Fleming, M., Ongstad, S., Pieper, I., Samihaian, F., [Reading](#)

Section: *Languages in other subjects*

(in chronological order)

Byram, M. (2006) : [Languages and Identities, Preliminary study for the Languages in Education - Languages for Education Project](#), Strasbourg, Council of Europe.

Vollmer, H. (2009) : [Language\(s\) in other subjects](#), Strasbourg, Council of Europe.

Beacco, J.-C., Coste, D., van de Ven, P.-H. and Vollmer, H. (2010) : [Language and school subjects - Linguistic dimensions of knowledge building in school curricula](#), Strasbourg, Council of Europe.

Lingua e discipline scolastiche - Dimensioni linguistiche nella costruzione delle conoscenze nei curricoli

Beacco, J.-C., (2010) : [History: An approach with reference points - Items for a description of linguistic competence in the language of schooling necessary for teaching/learning history \(end of compulsory education\)](#), Strasbourg, Council of Europe.

Vollmer, H. (2010) : [Sciences: An approach with reference points - Items for a description of linguistic competence in the language of schooling necessary for teaching/learning science \(end of compulsory education\)](#), Strasbourg, Council of Europe.

Elementi per una descrizione delle competenze linguistiche nella lingua di scolarizzazione necessarie all'insegnamento/apprendimento delle scienze alla fine della scuola dell'obbligo.

Pieper, I. (2011) : [Literature: An approach with reference points - Items for a description of linguistic competence in the language of schooling necessary for teaching/learning literature \(end of compulsory education\)](#), Strasbourg, Council of Europe.

Linneweber-Lammerskitten. H. (2012) : [Mathematics: An approach with reference points - Items for a description of linguistic competence in the language of schooling necessary for teaching/learning mathematics \(end of compulsory education\)](#), Strasbourg, Council of Europe.

Appendix 7 - National authorities and Council of Europe Expert Group

Liaison Person / Representative of the Ministry for Education and Employment

Prof. Charles L. MIFSUD

Chair, National Language Policy Committee

Director, Centre for Literacy, University of Malta, Msida

Council of Europe Expert Group

- Dr Elidir KING, Rapporteur

The Languages Company, London

- Prof. Jean-Claude BEACCO

Prof. Emeritus, Sorbonne nouvelle, Université Paris III, France

- Mme Marisa CAVALLI

Ancien Institut Régional de Recherche Educative du Val d'Aoste (IRRE-VDA)

- Mme Philia THALGOTT

Head of Section, Language Policy Unit, DGII, Council of Europe,
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex

Tel: +33 3 88 41 26 25 / e-mail: Philia.Thalgott@coe.int

Appendix 8 - List of persons met during study visits of the Council of Europe expert group in Malta, 16-20 June, 10-13 November 2014 and 16-18 February 2015

A) June 2014

LANGUAGE POLICY IN EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Prof Charles L. Mifsud	Chairperson	Mr David Muscat	Deputy Chairperson
Prof Manwel Mifsud	Member	Mr Joseph Cachia	Member
Ms Elizabeth A. Pisani	Member	Prof Helen Grech	Member
Chev Ray Cassar	Member	Dr Bernard Micallef	Member
Mr Joseph Fenech	Member	Ms Anita Seguna	Member
Dr Christine Firman	Member	Ms Sonia Zammit	Member
Dr Anthony Licari	Member	Prof Ivan Callus	Member
Mr John Degiorgio	Member	Ms Sharon Mifsud	Secretary
Dr Odette Vassallo	Member	Ms Lara Ann Vella	Bilingual Support Teacher
Ms Marika Farrugia	Member	Mr Daniel Cini	Programmes coordinator

AUTHORITIES, PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

– 16th June 2014

The Minister and the Permanent Secretary

Hon Evarist Bartolo	Minister for Education and Employment
Mr Joseph Caruana	Permanent Secretary

College Principals, Directors, Assistant Directors of Education

Frank Fabri	Research and Development Department
Pauline Caruana	Assistant Director for Quality Assurance
George Said Zammit	Director for Student Services
Jesmond Saliba	Assistant Director (Non-State) ERCS
Daniela Vella	Assistant Director for Adult Learning
Carmel Micallef	College Principal: St Benedict College
Marthese Cini	Service Manager Inclusion
Josette White	Service Manager Customer Care
Maria McNamara	College Principal
Kenneth Camilleri	Assistant Director QAD

Josephine Mifsud	College Principal
Anthony Sammut	College Principal
Mary Anne Spiteri	Assistant Director Curriculum Management
Desiree Scicluna Bugeja	Assistant Director Curriculum Manager
Sandra Cortis	Service Manager Education Psycho-Social Services
Louis Scerri	Assistant Director- Research and Development Department
Anthony Degabriele	Assistant Director Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE)
Victor Agius	College Principal
Mario Testa	College Principal
Maria Pace	College Principal
James Camilleri	College Principal
Ian Mifsud	Director General (DQSE)

Education Officers

John Attard	Education Officer: Drama
Kathleen Bonello	Education Officer: Religion
Antoinette Laferla	Education Officer: Religion
Chris Bugeja	Education Officer: Literacy
Antoinette Debattista	Education Officer: Primary English
Mary Anne Camilleri	Education Officer: Secondary English
Jonathan Mifsud	Education Officer: Secondary Maths
Frank Muscat	Education Officer: Secondary English
Darlene Borg	Education Officer: Inclusive Education
Amanda Schembri Muscat	Education Officer: Inclusion
Jacqueline Vanhear	Education Officer: Training and Professional Development
Michelle Attard Tonna	Head of Project: Learning Outcomes Project
Carmen Grech	Education Officer: Training and Professional Development
Edward Gilson	Education Officer: Geography
Joseph Cutajar	Education Officer: Physics
Michael Mallia	Education Officer: Graphical Communication
Bernadette Gerada	Education Officer: Documentation
Tania Mangion	Education Officer: Early Years
Lawrence Sciberras	Education Officer: Gozo
Christine Borg	Education Officer: Italian

Jane Farrugia Buhagiar	Education Officer
Tony Pace	Education Officer: Primary
Anthony Farrugia	Education Officer: Primary
Mario J Muscat	Education Officer: Science
Christine Gauci	Education Officer: Media
Dunstan Hamilton	Education Officer: PSD
David Agius Muscat	Education Officer: Maltese
Mariella Galea	Education Officer: Maths
Miriam Bugeja	Education Officer: Maths
Melanie Casha Sammut	Education Officer: Maths
Rose Marie Privitelli	Education Officer: Early Years
Mariangela Schembri	Education Officer: early Years
Christine Firman	Education Officer : Literacy

Green Party

Arnold Cassola	Chairperson
Mario Mallia	Spokesperson for Education

Malta Employers Association, MCESD, Chamber of Commerce, Federation of English Language Teachers of Malta

Julian Cassar Torregiani	Chairman- Federation of English Language Teaching Organisations Malta (FELTOM)
Genevieve Abela	CEO - FELTOM
John Bencini	Chairperson - Malta Council for Economic and Social Development (MCESD)
Victor Carachi	President- General Worker's Union (GWU)
Mireille Mifsud	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Durable Solutions Officer
Jon Hoisaeter	UNHCR representative

Foreign Languages Associations

Martha M. Gauci	Project Manager British Council
Claire Scicluna	Officer in Charge of Courses: Goethe Institute & German Maltese Circle
Arthur Ciantar	President: German Maltese Circle
Anastasia Oreshminova	Russian Culture Centre

– **17th June 2014**

St Angela Kinder, Zabbar

Sr. Alessandra Galea	Head of School
Sonia Zammit	Literacy Support Teacher
Rose Anne Cuschieri	Director for Church Schools

Bishop's Seminary

Daniela Demicoli	Assistant Head
------------------	----------------

Faculty of Education

Colin Calleja	Head of Unit (Inclusion and Access to Learning)
Duncan Mercieca	Head of Department (Education Studies)
Sandro Caruana	Head of Department (Arts & Languages in Education) Deputy Dean (Faculty of Education)
Charles Bonello	Head of Department (Mathematics, Science & Technical Education)

The Matriculation and Secondary Education Certificate (MATSEC) Examinations Board

Frank Ventura	Chairperson: MATSEC
Sandro Caruana	Head of Department (Arts & Languages in Education) Deputy Dean (Faculty of Education)
Veronica Grech	Registrar : University Of Malta
Raymond Camilleri	Director of Examinations
Dario Pirota	Administrative Director
Sean Pollacco	Principal Subject Area Officer
Carole Mizzi	Principal Subject Area Officer

NGO

Neil Falzon	Director : Aditus
-------------	-------------------

Malta Union of Teachers

Kevin Bonello	President
Joseph Fenech	Member

– **18th June 2014**

St Venera Primary School

Rita Azzopardi	Head of School
Marchita Bonnici	Assistant Head

Randolph Peresso	Assistant Head
Sandra Bajada	Teacher
Beverley Hili	Teacher
Veronique Sultana	Teacher

Floriana Primary School

Mr Stephen Miceli Head of School

Independent & Church Directors, Heads of Departments

Rose Anne Cuschieri	Director for Church Schools
Sonia Zammit	Literacy Support Teacher
Adrienne Azzopardi	Literacy Support Teacher
Deborah Galea	Literacy Support Teacher
Marisa Bonanno	Head of Department: Assessment
Marika Farrugia	Head of Department: Literacy
Elaine Siegler	Head of Department: Assessment
Maria Debrincat	Literacy Support Teacher
Stephen Spiteri	Service Manager- Church Schools
Bernice Mizzi	Director at Chiswick House School and St Martin's College and Head at Chiswick House School
Anita Seguna	Senior Leader - Head of Curriculum Design, Chiswick House School
Joe Gauci	Head of San Anton School

Shadow Minister

Joe Cassar	Shadow Minister for Education
Paul Attard	Advisor to Shadow Minister

– 19th June 2014

Chiswick House School and St Martin's College

Bernice Missy	Director at Chiswick House School and St Martin's College and Head at Chiswick House School
Anita Seguna	Senior Leader - Head of Curriculum Design, Chiswick House School

St Martin's College

Anita Seguna	Senior Leader - Head of Curriculum Design Chiswick House School
Audrey Fenech Adami	Assistant Head

Roberta Camenzuli	Teacher	Marianne Skinner	Teacher
Joselle Borg Cardona	Teacher	Maria Rosner	Teacher
Suzanne Loporto	Teacher	Tina Cassar	Teacher
Rebecca Debattista	Teacher	Neal Sammut	Teacher
Celia Schembri	Teacher	Christine Spiteri Duca	Teacher
Sandy Damato	Teacher	Dennis Aquilina	Teacher
Dalevene Caruana	Teacher	Nella Grech	Teacher
Jenny Pace Hickey	Teacher	Dorothy Calleja	Teacher
Steve Zammit	Teacher	Sue Psaila	Teacher
Paul Portelli	Teacher	Maria Camenzuli	Teacher
Mario Borg	Teacher	Enrique Jose Alvarez Sanchez	Teacher

Parents Association

Glorianne Borg Axisa	General Secretary
Melanie Farrugia	Member

Press Institute, Broadcasting Authority, Public Broadcasting Services

Pierre Cassar	Chief Executive Broadcasting Authority
Anthony Tabone	Chairman Broadcasting Authority
Joanna Spiteri	Head Monitoring Department Broadcasting Authority
Malcolm J. Naudi	Chairman, Institute of Maltese Journalists
Mario Schiavone	Treasurer
Reuben Zammit	Programmes Manager

English Speaking Union and Il-Kunsill Nazzjonali tal-Ilsien Malti

Yvette Micallef	Director of Education (English Speaking Union)
Ivan Callus	Member (English Speaking Union) & Department of English, UOM
Manwel Mifsud	Member, Il-Kunsill Nazzjonali tal- Isien Malti
Thomas Pace	Director, Il-Kunsill Nazzjonali tal-Ilsien Malti
Albert Borg	Member, Il-Kunsill Nazzjonali tal- Ilsien Malti
Ray Fabri	Chairperson, Il-Kunsill Nazzjonali tal- Ilsien Malti Institute of Linguistics, University of Malta

– **20th June 2014**

Tal-Handaq Girls' Secondary

George Mifsud	Education Officer: Malti
Christine Firman	Education Officer: Literacy
Maria Montebello	Head of School
Joanne Brincat	Teacher
Isabelle Azzopardi	Teacher
Alison Vella	Teacher
Michelle Caruana	Teacher
Cheryl-Ann Mamo	Teacher
Mariella Micallef	Teacher

Naxxar Boys Secondary

Deo Zammit	Head of School
Josephine Gauci	Assistant Head
Simone Attard	Assistant Head
Stephania Scicluna	Head of Department: Maltese
Moira Buttigieg	Head of Department: Geography
Berenice Axiaq	Teacher
Clare Burlo	Teacher
Doriella Camilleri	Teacher
Katya Zammit	Teacher
Paul Muscat	Teacher
Roderick Vella	Teacher
RaySaliba	Teacher
Stephanie Wilkonson	Teacher
Tania Bonnici	Teacher

B) November 2014

– **Monday 10th November, 2014**

Naxxar Boys' Secondary School:

Mr Steve Mifsud	Head of School
Ms Anthea Scerri	Teacher of Biology
Mr Roderick Vella	Teacher of Italian

Naxxar Co-Education School:

Mr Lino Borg	Head of School
Ms Dorianne Portanier Mifsud	Assistant Head
Ms Ruth Gatt	Teacher of Mathematics
Ms Tania Kenely	Teacher of Integrated Science
Mr Christian Spiteri	Teacher of Maltese

Dr Mario Pace: Lecturer at the University of Malta and Coordinator of the Subject Proficiency Assessment Programme.

– Tuesday 11th November, 2014

St Monica School, Birkirkara:

Sr Marica Briffa	Head of School
Ms Josephine Mifsud	Assistant Head
Ms Doriette Gauci	Assistant Head
Ms Stephanie Farrugia	Assistant Head
Ms C Vella	Teacher of Science
Ms K Borg Barthet	Teacher of Mathematics

Meeting with PGCE students of English:

Caruana Robert Joseph	Mifsud Georgianne
Cassar Farrugia Analise	Mifsud Stephanie
Cesare Leanne	Mizzi Francesca Maria
Clarke Frederick	Mizzi Yana
Coleiro Brenda	Scerri Mariella
Fenech Chiara Maria	Zarb Lara Marie
Gauci Rachel Anne	

Professor Antoinette Camilleri Grima: Professor at the Arts & Languages in Education Department, Faculty of Education

Professor Ronald Sultana: Professor at the Education Studies Department, Faculty of Education.

– Wednesday 12th November, 2014

Tal-Handaq Girls' Middle and Secondary School

Ms Maria Montebello	Head of School
Mr G Galea	Teacher of Art
Ms E Vella	Teacher of English
Ms M Muscat	Teacher of Home Economics
Mr A Saliba	Head of Department, Maltese
Mr George Mifsud	Education Officer, Maltese

St Augustine College

Mr Ruben Mifsud Head of School

Ms Marlene Briffa Assistant Head of School

Hon Evarist Bartolo, Minister for Education and Employment

By Skype 11 December 2014:

Dr Alexandra Vella

C) February 2015

– **Monday, 16th February 2015**

Prof. Charles Mifsud, Mr David Muscat, Mr Daniel Cini

– **Tuesday, 17th February 2015**

Director and Assistant Directors of the Directorate for the Quality and Standards in Education

Representatives from the Independent & Church Schools Sectors

Education Officers

Representatives from the Church and Independent School Sectors.

English Speaking Union (ESU) and Il-Kunsill Nazzjonali tal-Ilsien Malti

– **Wednesday, 18th February 2015**

Dr Michelle Attard Tonna, Project Leader of the Learning Outcomes Framework, .

Language Policy in Education Committee and Sub-committee

Assistant Director and EOs for the Early Years

Hon Evarist Bartolo, Minister for Education and Employment

Appendix 9 – Programme of Expert Group’s study visits

A) 16-20 June 2014

DATE	09:00-11:30	12:00-13:30	13:30-15:30	15:30-16:30	16:30-17:30	17:30-18:30
15 June Sun					Arrival of Council of Europe delegates	Preliminary meeting <i>Hotel Excelsior</i>
16 June Mon	8:30 – 9:30 Meeting of delegates with Minister & PS <i>MEDE, Floriana</i>	10:00 -12:00 College Principals, Directors, Assistant Directors of Education <i>MEDE, Floriana</i>	13:30 - 14:30 Meeting with Mr. Mallia, Green Party <i>MEDE, Floriana</i>	14:30 - 15:30 BREAK	Malta Employers Association, MCESD & Chamber of Commerce, Federation of English Language Teachers Of Malta <i>MEDE, Floriana</i>	Foreign Languages Associations <i>MEDE, Floriana</i>
17 June Tue	Church Schools 1. St. Angela Kinder, Zabbar 2. Bishop’s Seminary Primary and Secondary School, Rabat	Faculty of Education Dean & Heads of Dep <i>UOM, Msida</i>	Break	Student Representatives Students’ Council KSU, MCAST 1500 – Neil Falzon NGO <i>UOM, Msida</i>	Malta Union of Teachers Executive Council <i>Malta Union of Teachers, Valletta</i>	Team meeting <i>Hotel Excelsior</i> 8pm Ta’ Vitor Marsaxlokk
18 June Wed	State Primary Schools 1. Primary School, St Venera 2. Primary School, Fuzjana	Independent & Church Directors, Heads of Departments <i>Chiswick House School, Kappara</i>	Break	14:00-15:00 Shadow Minister, Dr. Joe Cassar & Paul Attard <i>PN Head Quarters Pieta</i>	Visit to the Hypogeum	Visit to the Hypogeum
19 June Thu	Independent Schools 1. Chiswick House School, Kappara 2. St. Martin’s College	Parents Associations <i>Chiswick House School, Kappara</i>	Break	Press Institute, Broadcasting Authority & PBS <i>National Curriculum Centre NCC, Hamrun</i>	English Speaking Union & Il-Kunsill Nazżjonali tal-Malti (National Council for Maltese) <i>NCC, Hamrun</i>	Team meeting <i>Hotel Excelsior</i>
20 June Fri	State Secondary Schools 1. Tal-Handaq Girls Secondary 2. Naxxar Boys Secondary	Final discussion session <i>MEDE, Floriana</i>	Break	Departure of Council of Europe delegates		

B) 10-12 November 2015

Date	8.30-13.00	13.00-14.00	14.00-15.00	15.00 – 16.00
9 Nov Sun	Arrival of Council of Europe delegates			
10 Nov Mon	Visit to State Schools: Naxxar Boys' Secondary School – 8.30-10.30 Naxxar CoEd School – 11.00-13.00	Break	Meeting with Dr Mario Pace Subject Proficiency Assessment- Foreign Languages National Curriculum Centre, Hamrun Rm 11	Meeting with Professor Mifsud, Mr Muscat and Ms Vella National Curriculum Centre, Hamrun Rm 11
11 Nov Tue	Visit to Church School - St Monica à B'kara	Meeting with Antoinette Camilleri UoM	Observation and discussion with University Students	Meeting with Professor Sultana Faculty of Education Boardroom
12 Nov Wed	Visit to Church School - St Ignatius College	Meeting with Committee Members 12.30-15.00 MEDE, Floriana		Meeting with Minister MEDE, Floriana
13 Nov Thurs	Departure of Council of Europe delegates			

