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EUROPEAN SOCIAL CHARTER

13th National Report on the implementation of
the European Social Charter

submitted by

THE GOVERNMENT OF MALTA

Articles 1, 9, 10, 15, 18, 20, 24 and 25

for the period 01/01/2015 - 31/12/2018

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

submitted by the

Government of Malta

Thematic Group

Employment, training and equal opportunities

(1 January 2015 – 31 December 2018)

2019

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I. INTRODUCTION

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

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

II. PROVISIONS OF THE REVISED EUROPEAN SOCIAL CHARTER

Article 1 – The right to work

Paragraph 1 - Policy of full employment

Employment situation

Despite Malta experiencing strong economic growth, the GDP growth rate in Malta decreased from 10.8% in 2015 to 6.6% in 2018, but was well beyond the EU-28 average (2% in 2018). Based on the European Commission's winter 2019 economic forecast the Maltese economy is expected to sustain strong economic growth and is projected to grow the fastest in the EU.

Table 1 Real GDP growth rate – volume Percentage change on previous year

geo\time	2015	2016	2017	2018
EU (28 countries)	2.3	2	2.5	2
Malta	10.8	5.6	6.8	6.7

Source: Eurostat, 2019

The employment rate increased from 69.0% in 2015 to 75.0% in 2018 but was beyond the EU-28 average of 73.1%).

Table 2 Employment rates, % from 20 to 64 years

geo\time	2015	2016	2017	2018
EU (28 countries)	70.0	71.0	72.1	73.1
Malta	69.0	71.1	73.0	75.0

Source: Eurostat, 2019

The employment rate for older workers (aged between 55 and 64) increased from 42.3% in 2015 to 49.7% in 2018 (table 3). However, it remained low compared to the EU-28 level (58.7% in 2018). As to the female employment rate (age group from 20 to 64 years), Malta recorded with 63.4% the sixth lowest within the EU-28. The male employment rate (population aged 20 to 64) stood in 2018 at 85.7% thus showing a difference by sex as wide as 22.3% (tables 4 and 5).

Table 3 Employment rate of older workers, % age group 55-64

geo\time	2015	2016	2017	2018
EU (28 countries)	53.3	55.3	57.1	58.7
Malta	42.3	45.8	47.2	49.7

Source: Eurostat, 2019

Table 4 Employment rate by sex, % females

geo\time	2015	2016	2017	2018
EU (28 countries)	64.3	65.3	66.5	67.4
Malta	55.3	58	60.6	63.4

Source: Eurostat, 2019

Table 5 Employment rate by sex, % males

geo\time	2015	2016	2017	2018
EU (28 countries)	75.9	76.9	78.0	79.0
Malta	82.1	83.5	84.7	85.7

Source: Eurostat, 2019

The unemployment rate decreased from 5.4% in 2015 to 3.7% in 2018 thus being considerably lower than the EU-28 average of 6.8%. The NEET (young people neither in employment nor in education or training) rate also decreased from 10.5% in 2015 to 7.3% in 2018 (tables 6, 7 and 8).

The long-term unemployment rate (as a percentage of unemployment) decreased from 48.5% in 2015 to 34.2% in 2018 (table 7).

Table 6 NEET rate, % Total – Age of class from 15 to 24 years

geo\time	2015	2016	2017	2018
EU (28 countries)	12.0	11.6	10.9	10.5
Malta	10.5	8.8	8.6	7.3

Source: Eurostat, 2019

Table 7 Long-term unemployment, % of unemployment Age of class from 20 to 64 years

geo\time	2015	2016	2017	2018
EU (28 countries)	49.8	48.2	46.5	44.7
Malta	48.5	43.5	43.6	34.2

Source: Eurostat, 2019

Employment policy

The expenditure on Labour market policies in 2015 was 42 Million € and 43 Million € in 2016 (table 8). In recent years government has adopted a making work pay approach in an effort to increase labour market participation, in particular female participation, and reduce dependency on social benefits. As matter of fact, government effort in this regard is not fully reflected since expenditure on Active LMP is in reality higher than the quoted figures as a number of active LMP fall outside the scope of LMP database.

Table 8 LMP expenditure - summary tables

Year	M€	% of GDP
2015	42.928	0.450
2016	43.579	0.427

Source: LMP_EXPSUMM, 2018

Long term unemployed

The Work Programme Initiative is targeted towards the long-term unemployed who are seeking full or part-time employment. These individuals need to be either: registering for 12 months over the last two years (not necessarily consecutive) or inactive individuals not registering during the past 12 consecutive months.

Jobsplus, together with three private sector service providers, are working to help long-term job seekers to integrate or re-integrate in the labour market. The Work Programme structure is based on a process that should lead the participant to improve his/her employability skills, with the final aim of placing the person in sustainable employment. During 2018, 166 Work Programme contracts were signed and a similar amount of participants were profiled. Out of these participants, 70% were women and the remaining 30% were men. 164 of those profiled were Maltese residents whilst two were Gozitan. 125 participants attended a total of 1,020 course instances.

138 participants who finished their mandatory training course as required by the tender regulations were placed into employment. From the beginning of the project till end 2018, 1,550 Work Programme contracts were signed with 981 men and 569 women (Table 9). Since 2015, 1,522 profiles were drawn up and 1,115 participants started a training course, amounting to 3,597 course instances. Engagements forms processed up till 2018 show there were 410 placements after mandatory training and 342 placements before mandatory training, adding up to 752 placements, distributed amongst 501 participants.

Table 9 Participants of the Work Programme Initiative per year and by gender

Year	Males	Females	Total
2015	144	36	180
2016	721	265	986
2017	68	150	218
2018	48	118	166
Total	981	569	1550

Source: Jobsplus, 2019

The table below shows the impact of the measures on reducing long-term unemployment, in three years the percentage of LTU dropped down by more than 14 points, positioning itself 10 points below the European average.

Table 10 Long-term unemployment, % of unemployment

geo\time	2015	2016	2017	2018
EU - 28 countries	49.8	48.2	46.5	44.7
Malta	48.5	43.5	43.6	34.2

Source: Eurostat, 2019

As regards youth long-term unemployed, also in this case, thanks to the measures implemented, there has been a steady decline over the past three years. On a national level, the drop is almost two points and compared to the European figure, Malta records a better performance with a difference of more than two points.

Table 11 Youth long-term unemployment rate, % from 15 to 24 years

geo\time	2015	2016	2017	2018
EU - 28 countries	6.5	5.4	4.7	3.9
Malta	3.5	2.5	3.0	1.6

Source: Eurostat, 2019

The Youth Guarantee scheme contributed to the achievement of such records. In the local context, NEETs are generally youths who are not in education, employment or training, but can be categorised into the following subgroups: single parents, persons with disability, long-term registered unemployed, and the unregistered unemployed. This cohort is at risk of social exclusion or of becoming long-term unemployed. The Youth Guarantee scheme provides NEETs with opportunities for education, training and personal assistance, thereby facilitating their transition to further education and from education to gainful employment, and consequently improving their quality of life and social integration. This EU-funded project, developed for young people aged 15 to 24, consists of education and employment related initiatives: the NEET Activation Scheme II, SEC Preventive Classes and the ICT Summer Courses. Based on preventive and assistive measures, each opportunity is designed to help young people continue their education, or increase their chances of finding satisfaction and success in the world of work.

Older workers

Jobsplus has in place a scheme that targets older workers. With the Mature Workers Scheme, employers, including self-employed individuals, who as from 2014 employ persons aged between 45 and 65, and who have been registering for work on Parts 1 and 2 of the unemployment register for the preceding six months, will have their income tax deducted pro-rata, as per the following information.

Employers will receive up to a maximum of €11,600 in tax deductions on the chargeable income for the first two years of employment for each eligible employee. This will result in savings of €5,800 per annum. Moreover, employers who engage eligible employees may benefit from a further tax deduction of 50% of the cost of training up to a maximum of €400 per employee. In 2015, 83 employees with 43 employers benefitted from the schemes whereas in 2016 there were 34 employees with 20 employers. In 2017, there were 22 employees with 9 employers and in 2018 there were 5 employees with 5 employers.

Female employment

The number of women in employment stood at 101,807 in July 2018 compared to 66,133 in July 2010, exhibiting a significant increase of 54% in female employment in only eight years. The labour market policies and measures proposed and/or implemented by the Maltese Government to increase female employment have had their intended positive effect.

In the last five years, Government has embarked on a series of measures aimed at incentivising women to engage in the labour market. As a result of the package of reforms launched within this period, Malta is experiencing a significant increase in the total employment rate and the female employment rate (table 12).

Table 12 Female employment rate

Year	Total Employment Rate for Women (20-64 years)
2015	55.3%
2016	58.0%
2017	60.6%
2018	63.4%

Source: Eurostat, 2019

This achievement can be attributed to initiatives such as the Free Childcare Scheme, the Tapering of Benefits, the Breakfast Club, Afternoon School Services, In-Work Benefit and an increase in Maternity Leave. Malta has also made it its mission to increase the education/skill levels through the Investing in Skills, Work Exposure and Traineeships amongst others.

The Free Childcare Scheme is a system whereby free childcare service is provided to parents/guardians who are in employment or who are pursuing their education. This measure strives to provide a better work-life balance for families with young children. It also seeks to close the gender gap in employment and assists families to gain more income therefore encouraging more women to enter in gainful employment. Since the start-up of the scheme in April 2014 until March 2019, 16,700 children have benefitted from this service at one point in time while the budget used for this scheme amounted to €72million.

Further to the Free Childcare Scheme, Government has also implemented the Breakfast Club and the Afternoon School Services which aim to provide additional help to those parents who wish to continue working. The Breakfast Club Service is open for primary school students whose parents are studying or in employment. The service, offered in Primary State Schools, gives the opportunity for pupils to have a healthy breakfast before school commences, as well as to interact with other pupils through play and organised activities. The Afternoon School Services (*Klabb 3-16*) is an after-school care service for children between the ages of 3 and 16 years, attending State, Church or Independent schools. Children benefit from a planned programme of activities where children do their homework and take part in educational fun activities. The service is given by a team of professional staff, who ensure provision of a quality programme. Children are encouraged to participate in various non-formal activities.

Another crucial scheme that had a central role in incentivising unemployed persons to engage in work has been the Tapering of Benefits Scheme. The Tapering of Benefit Scheme provides support to people who join the labour market after having been on unemployment assistance, social assistance or single parent benefits. Through the Tapering of Benefits, beneficiaries continue availing themselves of 65%, 45% and 25% of the benefits respectively in their first, second and third year of employment. The scheme had a significant role in encouraging people, particularly women to participate in the labour market, whilst reducing significantly spending on social benefits.

The In-Work Benefit is awarded to a claimant who is in employment and has children living within the household who are under 23 years of age. An applicant must have children under 23 years of age, living within the household and must have income (Year

of Assessment 2018) that falls between the following brackets: a single parent in gainful employment that earn more than €6,600 and less than €17,130 is eligible for a maximum payable rate of up to €1,350 yearly per child; a couple in gainful employment whose collective income from employment is greater than €10,000 and is less than €24,630 (if a spouse works part-time, the income of this spouse must be over €3,000) are eligible for a maximum payable rate of up to €1,300 yearly per child; a couple of whom only one is in gainful employment and whose income from employment is greater than €6,600 and less than €17,130 are eligible for a maximum payable rate of up to €550 yearly per child.

The Maternity Leave contribution came into effect as of 1st July 2015 through Legal Notice 257 of 2015 (Trusts and Trustees Act Cap 331) is being paid by Employers for all their employees in the private sector. The rate of the contribution is 0.3% of the basic weekly wage as published in Legal Notice 258 of 2015, which is an addition to the Tenth Schedule of the Social Security Act (Cap 318). Employers pay a monthly grant on behalf of each employee (irrespective of gender) and who then make a claim for reimbursement for the 14 weeks maternity leave paid to the employee availing of such leave. The contribution is being paid for all employees for whom the Class 1 Social Security contribution is paid and for all employees (including Part Timers) who are not eligible to pay social security contributions but who are eligible for Maternity Leave according to the Employment and Industrial Relations Act (Cap 452).

The Investing in Skills Scheme was launched to promote the training of persons actively participating in the labour market in order to increase productivity and enhance adaptability. This scheme falls under the ESF project with a budget of €5million available until 30th June 2023. The scheme is available to partnerships, companies, family businesses, associations, individual self-employed, NGOs and Social Partners on the condition that they meet the stipulated eligibility criteria.

The Work Exposure Scheme is a scheme coordinated by Jobsplus and part financed by the ESF. It is intended to facilitate transition into employment by providing jobseekers with initial hands on training that will help individuals obtain the knowledge, skills and competences required to find and retain employment. The scheme is offered to all registered unemployed persons and inactive job seekers. From January 2016 till December 2018, Jobsplus paid the amount of €624,901.85 in training allowances. Further to this, the Traineeship Scheme, part financed by the ESF, provides jobseekers with initial vocational training (pre-employment training) that help individuals obtain the knowledge, skills and competences required to find and retain employment. Traineeships are based on a combination of on-the-job and off-the-job training. Traineeships are available for both registered unemployed persons and inactive jobseekers. From January 2016 till December 2018, Jobsplus paid the amount of €1,027,996.25 in training allowances.

The Access to Employment Scheme provides employment aid to enterprises in Malta and Gozo to promote the recruitment of the more challenged amongst jobseekers and inactive persons. Employment-related subsidies are given to employers who recruit disadvantaged, severely disadvantaged or registered disabled persons. From the start of the scheme until the end of June 2019, Jobsplus received 1,703 applications for 1,824

participants of which a total of 1,135 unique participants were still on the scheme, which means that a participant is either in the subsidy period or in the retention period as established by the Access to Employment Guidelines:

Table 13 Subsidy period

Duration of Subsidy	Retention Period
26 weeks	2 months
52 weeks	4 months
104 weeks	8 months
156 weeks	12 months

Source: Jobsplus, 2019

Since the beginning of the scheme €4,833,305.46 has been disbursed. Participation of women in the Access to Employment Scheme represents 50% of all participants.

A Labour Market Analysis Unit (LMAU) has been established within Jobsplus in the past years. The LMAU conducts periodical reviews on the labour market, the services offered and the skills needed by economic industries.

According to published LMP (Labour Market Policies) data, the activation rate for 2015 stood at 17% and increased to 18% in 2016. Only activation measures included in the LMP database were considered in the computation of such rates.

Paragraph 2 - Freely undertaken work (non-discrimination, prohibition of forced labour, other aspects)

Equality

In relation to equality in employment, the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) works towards ensuring a society free from discrimination based on:

- Sex and family responsibilities, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief, racial or ethnic origin, and gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics
- Freedom of movement for workers in the EU.

In 2016, NCPE's remit was widened as per *Legal Notice 173 – Exercise of Rights Conferred on Workers (Freedom of Movement) Regulations* to cover freedom of movement for workers in the EU. These regulations cover:

- “(a) access to employment;
- (b) conditions of employment and work, in particular as regards remuneration, dismissal, health and safety at work, and, if workers become unemployed, reinstatement or re-employment;
- (c) access to social and tax advantages;
- (d) membership of trade unions and eligibility for workers' representative bodies;
- (e) access to training;
- (f) access to housing;

(g) access to education, apprenticeship and vocational training for the children of workers; and

(h) assistance afforded by the employment offices.”

NCPE works towards equality for all at the workplace, through the following:

- **Investigating complaints:** NCPE is empowered to investigate complaints of alleged discrimination and to initiate ex officio investigations when necessary.
- **Training** on the rights and responsibilities related to equal treatment with respect to the grounds that are covered by NCPE’s remit. Training is provided to various groups such as employers and employees from the public and private sectors, students, teachers and others.
- **Awareness raising initiatives** on equal treatment by means of:
 - Regular participation on **TV and radio programmes** to discuss specific subjects related to equal treatment.
 - **Social media** to pass on targeted messages to a wide range of audiences.
 - **NCPE’s website** as a source of information.
 - **Articles and press statements** published in the printed media.
- **Reviewing and giving feedback** from an equality perspective to both national and international documents.
- **Replies to requests for information** by various stakeholders such as students, academics, researchers and the general public.

Information on any discrimination cases brought before the courts or before the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality, including the grounds of discrimination addressed as well as any remedies provided or sanctions imposed.

Complaints lodged with the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality																
	2015				2016				2017				2018			
	Women	Men	Ex Officio	Total	Women	Men	Ex Officio	Total	Women	Men	Ex Officio	Total	Women	Men	Ex Officio	Total
Gender- Sexual Harassment	6	2	1	9	4	0	0	4	2	1	0	3	5	1	5	11
	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Race/Ethnic Origin	0	3	1	4	0	2	0	2	1	1	1	3	0	1	4	6
Gender Identity/ Gender Expression/ Sex Characteristics	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Age	0	2	0	2	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	2	1	0	1	2

Sexual Orientation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Religion or belief	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1
Freedom of Movement	/	/	/	/	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	4
Total Complaints Lodged	14*				8*				9*				23*			

*Some complaints covered more than one ground and some were lodged by the same individual.

As per Chapter 456 Equality for Men and Women Act, Art.18 (1):

“After carrying out an investigation the Commissioner may –

(a) Dismiss the complaint, or

(b) Find that the complaint is proved and thereupon, shall:

(i) Where the action complained of constitutes an offence, make a report to the Commissioner of Police for action on his part; or

(ii) Where the action complained of does not constitute an offence, call upon the person against whom the complaint is directed to redress the situation and mediate between the complainant and such person to settle the matter.”

In relation to compensation, as per Article 19 (1) of Cap 456 “... a person who alleges that any other person has committed in his or her regard any act which under any of the provisions of this Act is unlawful, shall have a right of action before the competent court of civil jurisdiction requesting the court to order the defendant to desist from such unlawful acts and, where applicable, to order the payment of compensation for such damage suffered through such unlawful act.”

NCPE Commissioner “requests from any person any information as may be deemed by the Commissioner to be required for the carrying out of the investigation” (LN 316 of 2011). Moreover, as per Article 19 (2) of Cap 456 “ ... it shall be sufficient for the plaintiff or the person instituting the said proceedings to establish, ... , facts from which it may be presumed that he or she has been treated less favourably, directly or indirectly, on the basis of sex or because of family responsibilities, and it shall be incumbent on the defendant or on the person against whom such proceedings are brought to prove that there has been no breach of the principle of equal treatment, or that such less favourable treatment was justified in accordance with the provisions of this Act, and the Court or other competent authority shall uphold the complaint if the defendant or the person against whom the proceedings before the competent authority are brought fails to prove that he did not commit an illegal act.”

For instance, in a case of alleged discrimination on the grounds of sex investigated in 2018, following review of evidence submitted by the complainant, a report was requested from the company. Following an investigation taking into consideration facts submitted and evidence available, an Opinion was issued by NCPE Commissioner.

Further details on the case are available on NCPE's Annual Report:

https://ncpe.gov.mt/en/Documents/Our_Publications_and_Resources/Annual_Reports/NCPE_Annual_Report_2018.pdf

Discrimination

The Department of Industrial & Employment Relations regularly conducts investigations into companies to ensure that no form of discrimination in employment is occurring. Action is taken by the Department where breaches of such regulations are found.

Requirement to accept the offer of a job or training

Reasons for losing unemployment benefit does not fall within Jobsplus' remit. Notwithstanding as per Article 13 of the Employment and Training Services Act of 2018, Chapter 594, a persons is struck of the unemployment register if a person who is registering for employment refuses to avail himself of any suitable opportunity for employment. However, such person shall retain his right to continue registering for employment, during the first (3) months from date of registration. This does not apply where the registrant refuses, without a good and sufficient reason, any training or any other assistance or service offered to him by Jobsplus. In the event that any person who has been registering for employment for a period exceeding three (3) months from the date of registration refuses, without a good and sufficient cause, to avail himself of any suitable opportunity for employment or training or of any other assistance or service offered to him by Jobsplus such person shall be struck off the register with immediate effect for a period of six (6) months. Furthermore, any person who fails to acknowledge any communication by any means as may be determined by Jobsplus from time to time, with respect to any suitable opportunity for employment or training or any other assistance or service offered to him by Jobsplus shall be struck off the register with immediate effect for a period of six (6) months.

Domestic work

It should be noted that in Malta, the exaction of forced or compulsory labour is prohibited in terms of Section 35 of the Constitution of Malta.

Another legislation is Subsidiary Legislation 452.40-Domestic Service Wages Council Wage Regulation Order, which regulates minimum wages and conditions of work for domestic workers.

Two new labour laws came into effect on the 1st January 2019, which enhance workers' rights:

Subsidiary Legislation 452.115 – Annual Leave National Standard Order sets clear procedures on the cancellation of leave, special leave, the accrual of leave during maternity leave and the payment of the leave balance in case of termination of employment. It also increases the obligations of employers in instances of forced leave.

Subsidiary Legislation 452.116 – Itemised Payslip Regulations requires employers to issue payslips to employees on a monthly basis. Payslips issued to employers should include the number of hours worked, number of hours worked at overtime rates and leave balances, amongst others. Failure to abide by these conditions will subject employers to a fine of not less than €500 and not more than €1,165. The new law will facilitate the collection of data by national enforcement bodies, mainly the Malta Police Force and the DIER, during the investigation of potential cases of forced labour.

Privacy at work

In the Telework National Standard Order 2008 (L.N. 312 of 2008), it is specifically stated that the employer shall respect the privacy of the teleworker. The employer may only put in place any kind of monitoring system if this is agreed to by both the employer and the teleworker in a written agreement and that such monitoring system is proportionate to the objective and is introduced in accordance with Council Directive 90/270 on the minimum safety and health requirements for work with display screen equipment.

Paragraph 3 - Free placement services

Jobsplus is the only free public employment agency in Malta. Jobsplus collects statistical information regarding registered unemployed and provides a number of measures to combat unemployment. The corporation is established through the Employment and Training Services Act, 1996 (Cap 343), now amended in 2018 becoming Chapter 594.

The affairs and business of this Corporation are conducted by a board of directors, appointed by the Minister responsible for labour. Persons representing the interest of trade unions and employers' associations are appointed on this Board. A representative from the entity responsible for persons with disability also forms part of Jobsplus' Board of Directors. The Corporation provides and maintains an employment service to assist persons to find suitable employment and to assist employers to find suitable employees. The Corporation registers persons seeking employment, taking note of their qualifications, experience, skills, aptitude etc. by interviewing also their physical and vocational capacity. The Corporation also assists persons seeking employment by giving advice on the choice of employment and training and retraining which may be necessary. The Corporation obtains information from employers on vacancies and on the skills to be met by the employees they require.

In 2015 Jobsplus has received a total of 21,645 vacancies while the number of applications received was 91,659. In 2016 the number of vacancies was 24,768 while the number of applications received was 103,215. In 2017, Jobsplus has received a total of 28,480 vacancies, while in 2018 30,047 vacancies were received. In 2017, the number of applications received was 108,636 while in 2018, the number of applications received was 126,206. This is calculated as per the number of engagement forms received, which is mandatory for employers to submit to the Corporation upon employing an individual.

To this end the below is a table of the total number of placements that Jobsplus has recorded segregated by gender in *Table 1* and by age in *Table 2*.

Table 7 Placements recorded by Jobsplus by gender

Placements	Males	Females	Total	Of Which registered Disabled Persons
2015	1,796	2,307	4,103	166
2016	2,092	2,298	4,390	267
2017	2,609	3,161	5,770	212
2018	2,473	3,145	5,618	138

Source: Jobsplus, 2019

Table 8 Placements recorded by Jobsplus by age

Year	Youths	25-39	40-54	55+
2015	2,018	1,321	596	168
2016	1,901	1,486	772	231
2017	2,614	1,854	991	311
2018	2,577	1,762	969	310

Source: Jobsplus, 2019

Data requested by the Committee on:

- unemployed persons registered with Jobsplus

Table 9 Unemployed persons registered with Jobsplus

Year	Registered Unemployed Persons
2015	4,615
2016	2,912
2017	2,167
2018	1,765

Source: Jobsplus, 2019

- number of placements for number of vacancies and rate;

Table 10 Number of placements for number of vacancies and rate

Year	Placements N.	Vacancies N.	Rates placements/vacancies %
2015	4,103	21,645	19
2016	4,390	24,768	18
2017	5,770	28,480	20
2018	5,618	30,047	19

Source: Jobsplus, 2019

- information on the initiatives taken to improve the reliability of the counting system relating to vacancies and placements operated by Jobsplus;

When a vacancy reaches the Recruitment Services and Schemes unit within Jobsplus for the first time, the vacancy is opened as new. When the employers ask the unit to extend

the vacancy, it has to be within the same week of the closing date. Following such request, the unit extends it and reminds the employer to send feedback to Jobsplus on clients who were already submitted. The unit extends the same vacancy for a further two weeks. There are instances where the employer asks for a longer extension. When a vacancy is extended Jobsplus always rematches the vacancy with clients. If the employer asks for an extension later than a week upon the closing date the unit opens the vacancy as new one.

As from July 2016, Jobsplus launched a new website containing a job matching engine which created a new virtual labour market platform. This new platform provided the necessary tools to all employers in Malta and Gozo to create a vacancy on the fly' and see how many jobseekers could be matched there-and-then using the online job matching engine. The job-matching engine was designed in conjunction with the Flemish PES (VDAB) in order to allow instantaneous matching of job vacancies with any available jobseekers that registered their profile (including skills and competencies, educational background and other factors) on the system. Matched jobseekers could be directly contacted by employers without the intervention of PES, hence allowing a free virtual labour market to flourish. In this regard, vacancies matched 'on the fly' are not recorded as placement by the PES. However, those employers submitting a formal vacancy on the same system are captured and registered by the PES.

During the last five years, the Maltese Islands experience an economic boom which witnessed a declining pool of registered jobseekers and a number of unfilled vacancies. This resulted in a tight labour market, almost a full-employment situation, which in turn triggered the need for importing additional human resources from Europe and elsewhere. This could have contributed further to the drop in Jobsplus' placement-vacancy ratio.

- information on the average time taken by Jobsplus to fill a vacancy;

Jobsplus cannot calculate the average time taken to fill in a vacancy. There are a number of factors that can affect the actual date of commencement since employers would require someone to start on specific dates, persons already in employment need to work their notice etc. Therefore, any data that Jobsplus tries to extrapolate can be erroneous. However, Jobsplus has set a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) which specifies that *'Employers are referred suitable candidates within 48 hours of notifying the vacancy to Jobsplus'*, and performance of the unit is rated based on compliance with this KPI. The referral mentioned in the KPI is either a list of potential candidates or else notifying the employer that there were no suitable candidates on Jobsplus lists and that Jobsplus will continue to advertise their vacancy.

- the number of persons working in Jobsplus (at central and local level)

Table 11 Number of persons working in Jobsplus

Years	Nº Of Staff
2015	309
2016	307
2017	309

2018	313
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Source: Jobsplus, 2019

Table 12 Number of persons working in Jobsplus at central and local level, 2018

Employees	N ^o Of Staff
Central level	237
Local level	76
Total	313

Source: Jobsplus, 2019

Table 13 Number of persons working in Jobsplus per location, 2018

Location	N ^o Of Staff
Birgu job centre	4
B'kara job centre	3
Floriana	3
Gozo, Għajnsielem	2
Gozo, Victoria	25
Hal Far	206
Hal Far training centre	31
Marsa job brokerage	2
Mosta job centre	3
Msida	23
Pembroke	3
Qawra job centre	4
Valetta, leap centre	4
Total	313

Source: Jobsplus, 2019

- the number of counselors involved in placement services;

Jobsplus has 4 allocated recruitment advisors that work specifically on the matching between vacancies and potential candidates (these are for private vacancies, those working solely on parastatal vacancies are not included here). However, it is worth mentioning that all employment advisors and also job centre staff also carry out matches between the clients they have in front of them or in their caseloads and therefore also play a role related to placements.

- the ratio of placement staff to registered job seekers.

Placement staff for the last couple of years have been 4 as per above. Notwithstanding, previously Jobsplus matched results with potential candidates whose profiles matched 100% with the vacancy requirements based on occupation, experience, qualifications and other preferred working conditions (e.g. part-time, full-time etc.). However, Jobsplus identified gaps in two main areas; the candidates still did not have the right skills, and fast moving technology developments paired with a dynamic labour market brought about a search for particular and at times highly specialised competencies.

Thus, in 2016 Jobsplus launched a matching system which included also matching on the skill and competency level.

Article 9 - Right to vocational guidance

Vocational guidance within the education system

All students have access to career guidance through the Career Guidance Programmes organised at College level within compulsory education. These programmes aim to enhance students' learning and supporting their career choices. Career guidance services are delivered in schools by Principal Education Support Practitioners (Career Advisors), Education Support Practitioners (Career Advisors) and guidance teachers through a variety of face-to-face provisions, such as on a one-to-one basis as well as in small and large groups. These interventions contribute towards the career development as well as personal and social development of students, within a holistic approach. This includes initiatives to support students' subject/career option choices and transitions from primary to secondary education and from secondary to post-secondary education and/or work. A transition co-ordinator supports Year 11 students with IEN, so that they can make the appropriate choices for their future be it completing further studies or employment and the appropriate transitions which are required. Orientation meetings and transition meetings are organised by the transition co-ordinator and the appropriate functional skills required for the transition are also supported.

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

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

The National School Support Services organises the 'I Choose' Fair in collaboration with the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) in both Malta and Gozo. Post-Secondary Institutions and other entities set up stands and provide information about the courses and the support they can offer to students and adults on the career options available. Qualified Career Guidance Practitioners also provide one-to-one career guidance sessions to individuals at the fair. Ongoing information talks are delivered by speakers coming from different sectors of employment and education/training. Students, parents and adults are invited to attend those talks which interest them. Euroguidance Malta, which falls under the remit of the National Schools Support Services within MEDE in collaboration with other entities such as the Malta Career Guidance Association, organises continuous professional development

opportunities for career guidance practitioners within the education and employment sectors so that practitioners are better equipped to guide students or adults accordingly.

During scholastic year 2018-2019, the National School Support Services in collaboration with a local NGO has worked on developing an interactive career website with the aim of addressing the information given to young people aged 11-15 about their future career choices. This career guidance platform, (www.exploremoreproject.eu/mt), provides all the information needed, such as careers within specific sectors by means of videos, a quiz/personality test which determines one's career aptitudes and a description of several post-secondary courses and the respective entry requirements for students to decide on which career path they will choose, online and on an app. Information on the educational reform 'My Journey' is also available to help students choose between the academic, vocational and applied routes. This information is accessible to students, parents and teachers.

In 2007, MCAST set up a specialised unit for career guidance entitled "Career Guidance Unit". The Unit provides career guidance service to (prospective, current and alumni) MCAST learners. The service is currently operated by two full time experienced and fully qualified (level 7) career advisors. Moreover, a Student Liaison Manager also contributes to the team's efforts in its daily activities. In mid-2018, the team contributed to the drafting and adoption of an updated MCAST Career Guidance Policy. This policy strengthened the professionalization of the Career Advisor and updated the ethical considerations.

MCAST provides timely, accurate and confidential career guidance service. This service entails of 20 to 45 minute in-depth sessions. These sessions are often the first introduction of MCAST VET provision and its support measures. Hence these in-depth sessions provide opportunities for referrals to other MCAST support services namely the Inclusion Unit. Moreover these confidential sessions provide the prospective client the right circumstances to explore this important transition, thus mitigating the risk of course drop outs. The MCAST career guidance provision is reliable and actively contributes to MCAST positive ethos.

From October 2017, to September 2018, 746 clients made use of such service. More often than not, a client is provided with more than one session. As expected the majority seek such service in light of upcoming application periods.

The MCAST Career guidance unit has from its onset adopted the view that media engagement is part and parcel of career information. It is a proven and effective method of making VET more attractive and reaching the general public.

MCAST also carries put school outreach visits and takes part in career fairs. These information events are mostly held at or in conjunction with other educational institutions. In the academic year 2017-2019, the MCAST team took part and/or coordinated 60 schools visits thus the majority of feeder schools (Church, state and Independent).

Moreover, during academic year 2018-2019, a more direct approach of informing the school based front-liners was adopted. During the first semester, several groups, specifically school based career guidance teachers visited the MCAST campuses to have first-hand “experience” of VET provision. Moreover in June 2018, a highly successful and well attended half-day seminar was organised. During this event several MCAST directors addressed the attendees and informed them about the major changes in our VET provision. These events are direct actions to push the message of VET’s parity of esteem.

The Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) is a vocational institution that specialises in the Hospitality Industry. This means that ITS is focused on a particular field of trades and professions and providing skilled and professional workers in this field. In spite of the specialisation area, the Hospitality Industry encompasses a huge number of trades and professions, not to mention ranks and levels of responsibility.

This reality necessitates the need for a proper guidance service whereby prospective applicants as well as current students can be guided into choosing the career and/or training programme most suitable for their needs, abilities and ambition.

In this light, the ITS has a professional career guidance officer, who is very highly qualified and experienced in this field as well as the field of guidance and support. The career guidance officer is involved in one to one guidance with prospective students, students and parents. Guidance is also delivered via electronic means of communication. The career guidance officer also delivers interview skills sessions to both classes as well as individuals who need extra support, attends educational fairs, career fairs, expos, and other activities in secondary and post-secondary schools. The career guidance officer is also responsible for organising show arounds to visiting students and staff at the Institution.

The Institute of Tourism Studies has also recognised the need to expand this service and will be investing in this section in the coming months so as to be able to provide a more holistic approach to career guidance than is currently being offered.

At the University of Malta, the Student Advisory Services provide the necessary career-related information to prospective and current students of the University of Malta to help them make informed decisions.¹

Vocational guidance in the labour market

The Jobseekers’ Advisory Services (JAS) Unit within Jobsplus offers career guidance services to both jobseekers and job changers.

Jobsplus offers both:

- Individualised Career Guidance
- Support in developing a Personalised Action Plan (PAP) for employment

¹ <https://www.um.edu.mt/counselling/careerguidance>

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

Among other things, the advisor can help a jobseeker:

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

As part of a general PAP, the initial session also involves the provision of information on where to search for jobs, local training opportunities and relevant Jobsplus services such as short courses, work exposure schemes, traineeships and any other Jobsplus initiatives.

Mainstream Jobsplus advisors currently focus on:

- Youth (from school leaving age to 24 years old)
- Adults (aged 25+).

Within the mainstream there are also advisors that focus on:

- Job Changers (i.e. those already in employment but seeking an alternative career or employment)
- Migrants (specifically those that fall under international protection).

In addition to these mainstream services, Jobsplus also offers specialized Inclusive Employment Services which are specifically designed to help disadvantaged individuals who have a harder time finding work. These include:

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

The assessments conducted by Jobsplus' advisory services are then reflected in the training opportunities that the client is referred to, as well as the job notifications sent. A multi-disciplinary team is involved in this assessment. Additionally, Jobsplus has developed Career Tests and Mock Interviews.

The aim of the career test is to help the registrant identify a suitable career or career path. This may be achieved through the exploration and eventual identification of careers that specifically match one's work interests and skills. The career test helps in the exploration of potential jobs that best suit the needs of the person undergoing the test. It can either be completed online or through the assistance of an employment

advisor supplied by Jobsplus. The duration of the test is around one hour and it requires answers that determine the registrant's working preferences and aptitude. Following an initial set of questions, the system issues a brief report with a list of potential careers. The report also provides additional details such as general descriptions for each of the shortlisted options and a comparison between such alternatives. Results can also be filtered by employment type (e.g. part-time, self-employed etc.) or through additional questions which optimise job search opportunities further. The career test is another tool which together with the employment advisor can be used to develop a more personalised career plan and outline any training and/or skills that may be needed prior to the chosen career path.

The aim of a mock interview is to give an experience of attending a job interview. Individualised feedback is also provided. The mock interview allows clients to practice their job interview skills and gain feedback. It will also help them gain confidence and provide them with experience of what it is like to attend an actual employment interview. If clients are already attending interviews but have not yet managed to land a job, then it can also be used to provide them with additional insight into what recruitment managers are after. Since this interview mimics an actual interview it will enable the employment advisors to provide constructive feedback on all aspects of the interview process. These include how well clients answered the questions, if their attire was appropriate and other tips one can adopt in order to perform better during job interviews.

Through Jobsplus, Malta has opened the Job Brokerage Office, which aims to tackle the problem of irregular work and exploitation of migrant workers. As one of the services part-financed by the European Union under the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) 2014-2020, AMIF 11.01 project – Employment Support Services for Migrants) through the Job Brokerage Office, employers who require occasional labour market services from migrants for short term periods can do so in a regularised manner by offering the migrant a short-term exposure placement. PES personnel carry out migrants' registration for short term placements taking into account their qualifications and experience. A database of job opportunities including information related to the length of services being provided, description of service, full details of the employer requesting such service as well as details about when the employer requires such service is maintained by the Job Brokerage Office. Following the request from employers, potential jobseekers are matched with service request.

Under this AMIF project, since 2017 the Jobseekers' Advisory Services has strongly collaborated with various migrant NGOs in order to closely work together to assist in the integration of migrants into the labour market. Likewise, NGOs informed the migrants about Jobsplus' services offered including training, jobseekers' guidance and the Job Brokerage Unit. A number of information sessions were also carried out in collaboration with a number of NGOs. Such sessions focused on employability skills, including CV writing, interviewing skills, identification of soft and hard skills, the value of volunteering to mention a few. The project will also be increasing the services currently offered to migrant to include a team of professionals and suitable informational leaflets/booklets etc.

Older workers are also seen as a disadvantaged group. Through the Mature Workers Scheme, employers, including self-employed individuals, who as from 2014 employ persons aged between 45 and 65, and who have been registering for work on Parts 1 and 2 of the unemployment register for the preceding six months, will have their income tax deducted pro-rata. Employers will receive up to a maximum of €11,600 in tax deductions on the chargeable income for the first two years of employment for each eligible employee. This will result in savings of €5,800 per annum. Moreover, employers who engage eligible employees may benefit from a further tax deduction of 50% of the cost of training up to a maximum of €400 per employee.

In addition, with the aim of facilitating the entry into the labour market of the long-term unemployed, Jobsplus is collaborating with three private providers through three stages: profiling, training and job placements. This initiative has also been extended to long-term inactive to enter or re-enter the labour market. The objective of the Work Programme Initiative (WPI) is to find sustainable employment for its participants and seeks to ensure that their employment is retained. Private providers are outreaching this group by informing them of the benefits of participation. Following the profiling stage, the participant attends training courses, amongst which mandatory courses to improve one's employability skills. In the third stage, s/he is placed in employment. Through the Youth Guarantee, young people (15-24 years) who are not in education, employment or training are assisted to integrate or re-integration in education or in finding quality employment.

2018 saw the launch of the Occupational Handbook which is available online on Jobsplus's website. This Handbook assists those providing jobseeker advisory and career guidance functions and jobseekers by providing information about the most sought after occupations, the qualifications and competencies required of the job incumbent, the median pay and anticipated demand for a particular occupation. It is also useful to employers as it can be used to guide them in the development of job descriptions and selection criteria in recruitment.

To enhance quality assurance, statistical data is used to track the movement of jobseekers from unemployment to employment. Additionally, a manual of procedures has been provided to advisors in order to assist and standardize staff operations. Additional protocols explaining particular processes, new ways of operating, together with regular emails informing advisors about procedures, are also carried out. The unit manager in charge of the guidance services also carries out random quality checks on both the quality of the created profiles and the developed personalised action plans. Any errors or inconsistencies are discussed with the individualised advisors and if a common issue is noted, a staff meeting is set in order to tackle the issue.

Data requested by the Committee on:

- The expenditure of the Job Seekers Advisory Department, including the Outposts centres (on initiatives and operational).

Table 14 Expenditure Job Seekers Advisory Department

Year	Amount
2015	€550,252
2016	€563,728
2017	€613,697
2018	€557,368

Source: Jobsplus, 2019

- Personal action plans for registering jobseekers in Malta and Gozo

Table 2 Personal action plans for registering jobseekers in Malta and Gozo

Personal Action Plan	2015	2016	2017	2018
Personal Action Plan New	1,814	3,313	2,627	3,518
Personal Action Plan Review	15,505	14,687	10,081	11,999
Total Personal Action Plan	17,319	18,000	12,708	15,517

Source: Jobsplus, 2019

- The number of staff currently involved in vocational guidance and their qualifications

Table 3 Number of staff currently involved in Vocational Guidance and Qualifications

Qualifications	MQF Level	N ^o of staff
Master in Translation	7	2
MBA	7	2
Masters in Sociology	7	1
MA in Social Policy	7	1
Postgraduate Diploma in Lifelong Career Guidance & Development	7	1
MA Literary Tradition & Popular Culture	7	1
Master of Arts in Disability Studies	7	1
BA Psychology	6	1
BA (Hons) Social Administration	6	1
BA (Hons) Philosophy and Psychology	6	1
Bachelor of Commerce. (Hons) Banking and Financial Services	6	1
BA (Tourism Studies)	6	1
BA (Hons) in Youth and Community Studies	6	1
BA (Hons) General	6	1
BA (Hons) in Health & Social Care	6	1
Bachelor of Commerce (Hons)	6	1
Career Guidance and Counselling	5	7
Diploma in Youth Studies	5	1
Training & Development	5	1
Human Resource Management	5	1

Diploma in Professional Counselling	5	1
Middle Management Diploma	5	1
A-Levels	4	1
Total		31

Source: Jobsplus, 2019

- The number of beneficiaries of vocational guidance through the public employment services of Jobsplus

Table 4 Beneficiaries of vocational guidance

Year	Guidance given
2015	9004
2016	6977
2017	4162
2018	7008

Source: Jobsplus 2019

The figures above show the total unique number of persons who have benefitted from the vocational guidance services at Jobsplus per each given year. There were cases where beneficiaries had more than one appointment, nonetheless each person is counted only once.

Article 10 - Right to vocational training

Paragraph 1 - Technical and vocational training; access to higher technical and university education

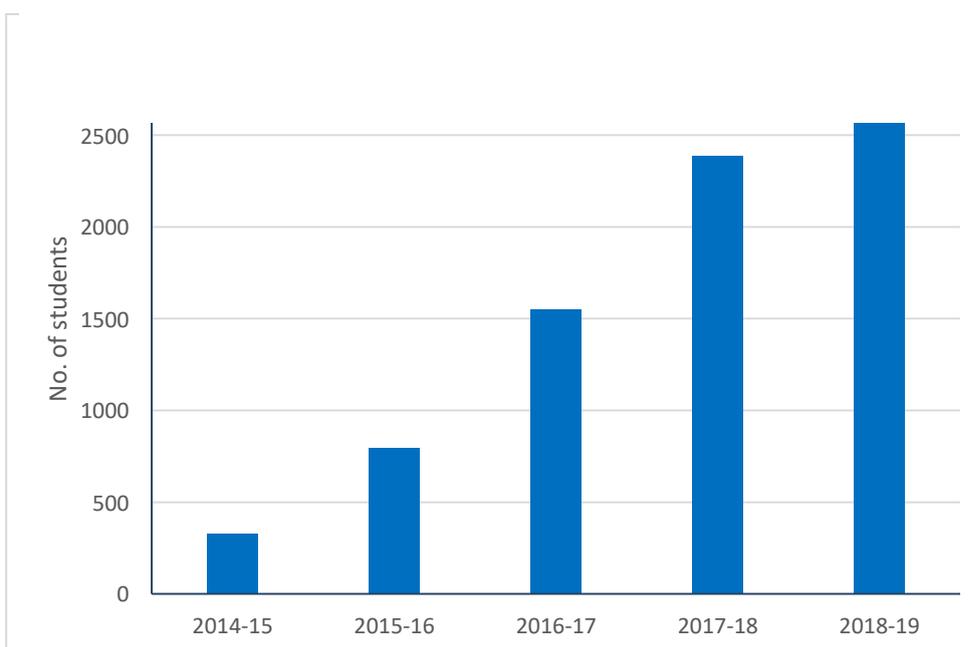
Secondary and higher education

Vocational Education and Training (VET) subjects in upper secondary compulsory education

VET subjects were mainstreamed in 2014/2015 as part of the national curriculum framework and in line with Malta's education strategy after successful pilot in 2011, which included training to prepare teachers. Since then all compulsory education students aged 14 to 16 in State, church and some independent schools, have the option to select up to two VET subjects. These subjects respond to several studies and policy documents advocating their reintroduction². Industry priorities and labour market needs informed the offer: agribusiness, engineering technology, health and social care, hospitality, and information technology.

²Trade schools offered programmes with VET components (Sultana, 1992; Ventura and Murphy, 1998; Ventura, 2005; Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, 2005).

Take up of VET subjects 2014-2015 to 2018-2019



Source: Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) VET Unit 2018

Outstanding results show how much learners engage to VET pedagogy and obtain good results: data based on the first three cohorts of year 11 students show 92% of them passing with 70% obtaining the highest grade. Since their national introduction in 2014/15, take-up has increased exponentially in all types of secondary schools. In 2018/19, over 2,700 students in Years 9 -11 studied VET subjects, more than an eight-fold increase over the five years since their mainstreaming as per table above.

With regard to the percentage of students who opted for vocational subjects and obtained the VET SEC qualification at the end of compulsory education, in 2018, as per MATSEC Examinations Board SEC examinations 2018 Statistical Report³, the following SEC passes Grades 1 to 5 were recorded: Agribusiness 71%; Engineering Technology 76%; Health and Social Care 79%; Hospitality 87%; Information Technology 72%. In 2018, these percentages were higher than the percentage of SEC passes in the core subjects (Maths, English, Maltese and Physics).

Approximately 40% of all Year 8 students in state schools opted for vocational subjects for scholastic year 2019/20.

Practical training in school-based VET in upper secondary compulsory education

In the reporting period, measures to support the work on all forms of work-based learning for young people and adults include partnerships with social partners and other stakeholders. In this respect, the Ministry for Education and Employment is entering into partnership agreements with economic operators to provide work-based learning experience for students in lower and upper secondary (13-16 years). The partnerships will be extended further to include students following applied learning pathways once

³MATSEC report available online at https://www.um.edu.mt/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/398427/SECReport2018.pdf, page 36

these are launched in October 2019. More specifically, by September 2018 the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) established twenty partnership agreements with four and five star hotels. The hotels offer the use of facilities, equipment and support from their staff to all state and non-state students and their teachers following hospitality studies (at EQF/MQF level 3) at compulsory education. The hotels' staff support and reinforce the assimilation and assessment of the learning outcomes of each unit of the subject. In addition, other similar partnership agreements are being negotiated with economic operators in the areas of Engineering Technology, Health and Social Care, Agribusiness, Information Technology and Retail.

My Journey: achieving through different paths: equitable quality education for all⁴

As of September 2019, through the *My Journey reform*, secondary school students are allowed to choose from academic, vocational and/or applied subjects in addition to the core curriculum. During scholastic year 2019/20, 38% of Year 9 students will have different combinations of a vocational, applied and academic subjects. A national careers web portal⁵ and events such as I Choose⁶ were developed. Students and parents/guardians are guided through the subject choosing process and have access to all information on the different subject options through the 3 routes.

The *My Journey* reform involves moving from a 'one size fits all' system to a more inclusive and equitable programme. The aim is to respond to different education needs and give parity of esteem to general, vocational and applied subjects. The new system builds on the current one but ambitiously moves forward in democratising academic, vocational and applied learning for all students within a framework of parity of esteem. It retains key competences and sustains traditional academic learning programmes. Complementarily, vocational subjects and applied learning programmes leading up to MQF Level 3, are also made available to all students and are provided within the same school and in all secondary schools. Applied learning is comparable and equivalent to the academic and vocational education and accredited up to MQF Level 3. Following compulsory education, students may opt to continue their studies at the University of Malta (UoM), Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) or another higher education institution of their choice.

The introduction of equitable learning programmes enables more quality time for in-depth learning whilst increasing learning opportunities, eliminating dead ends and easing labour market entry. *My Journey* seeks to promote increased links between education and industry. Close cooperation between schools and workplaces assures the currency of subject learning outcomes (SLOs), provides real-life work environments thus warranting the assimilation of the aims of work life, establishes fruitful relationships with companies and facilitates the learning of entrepreneurship competencies. These processes contribute to their development of expertise in the occupation that cannot be simulated in a school-based environment. The reform offers the possibility to choose vocational and/or applied paths at the age of 12, and is implemented in a manner that intends to make learning more inclusive, flexible and

⁴The project was launched by the Ministry for Education and Employment in 2016 <http://www.myjourney.edu.mt/>

⁵<http://exploremoreproject.eu/en/>

⁶<https://education.gov.mt/en/IChoose/Pages/I%20Choose.aspx>

without dead-ends, to give more young people opportunities to develop employability and skills for personal and social development. In order to avoid that students may leave compulsory education not being well equipped with those key competences that could allow later re-skilling and up-skilling, the *My Journey* reform will also include new learning programmes in the core subjects (Mathematics, English, Maltese and Science) targeted at students following applied programmes. In this regard, a new certification is being introduced. The Secondary Education Applied Certificate (SEAC) run by the MATSEC board will certify 9 applied option subjects and 5 core subjects.

The Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (VINFL) in Malta is regulated by Subsidiary Legislation 327.432, Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning regulations of September 2012. Under the remit of this legislation and as per Article 6(1) of SL327.433, the National Commission for Further and Higher Education has been entrusted with VNFIL in Malta. Subsidiary Legislation 327.432 determines that the NCFHE must establish Sector Skills Units (SSU), the members of which must include representatives from a number of industry relevant stakeholders. The main roles of the SSU are to develop national occupational standards, a set of job related standards for occupations in their respective sectors.

By the end of 2018, the NCFHE had set up a total of 8 SSUs covering the following industries/ sectors:

- Automotive;
- Health and Social Care;
- Education Support;
- Hospitality and Tourism;
- Hair and Beauty;
- Construction and Building Services;
- Printing and Digital Media;
- IT;

Throughout 2018, validation assessment was expanded to new areas such as hairdressing, block laying and beauty which gave the chance to individuals from a wider range of occupations to apply for validation. All individuals who passed their validation assessment were given an award for their occupation and MQF level.

The Government has a developed qualification system where through the Referencing Document it is possible to obtain level rating on the qualifications framework of every qualification obtained. The Malta Qualifications Framework is also used within the labour market. All employment calls within the public service are issued with qualification levels referenced to the Malta Qualifications Framework. This is also being taken up by employers.

The Committee further notes from Cedefop that addressing skills shortages and skills gaps in the labour market is one of the Government's highest priorities as stated in the National Reform Programme. Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) and the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS), as the main vocational training providers make an effort to maintain close links with industry.

Regarding measures to make general secondary education and general higher education qualifications relevant from the perspective of professional integration in the job market; consultation with industry is mandatory for programme development and review at MCAST.

In order to monitor and react to developments in demand for skills, a the National Skills Council (NSC) has been established under the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) by means of Subsidiary Legislation 327.547 of the Laws of Malta with the aim to first review the past and present available skills within the labour work force and evaluate the changes required to meet current and future needs. The main aim is to minimise the skill gaps that exist in some of the demanding and rewarding sectors such as the digital, technical and financial sectors where Malta is, and can maintain, excellence. It is the council's task to recommend policy changes to the government that would reduce these gaps and prepare the labour force with the right skills, to meet the future challenges. The council is composed of educational institutions, social partners and industry leading experts. The National Skills Council is in the process of drafting a national skills strategy that aligns itself to the existing strategies (including the Lifelong Learning strategy) while identifying individual transversal skills that should be integrated into all streams of education and training.

According to the Strategy, various initiatives supporting entrepreneurship amongst students will be introduced by MCAST. The initiatives are aimed at creating real tangible avenues for students to setup their business idea. MCAST will be cooperating with the business community in order to support start-ups within the centre. During the academic year 2014/2015, MCAST signed a Memorandum with Malta Enterprise and set up the MCAST Entrepreneurship Centre. This serves as an incubation centre for MCAST students who develop business ideas with market potential. All MCAST students at Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) Level 4 and Level 6 study entrepreneurship as part of their programme of studies, and work in multidisciplinary teams from the various institutes to develop a business idea and a prototype. This business idea is pitched to boards made up of academics, employers and business representatives. This year out of 80 groups of MQF Level 6 students, 500 students pitched their ideas to the boards.

On the other hand, the Institute of Tourism Studies in 2018 has set-up “The Hatch”, an entrepreneur incubation hub that supports students interested in the area of entrepreneurship. The aim of The Hatch is to support students as well as alumni in utilising in-house expertise to, develop, test and market ideas.

In supporting the entrepreneurial endeavours of its students, the Institute has introduced various modules in its programmes that are of direct benefit to such these ambitions. Typically such modules can be found on programmes offered at Malta Qualification Framework Levels 5 and above. At Level 6, a module specific on Business start-ups can also be availed of by the students, whereas at Level 7, students will have compulsory modules that tackle the enterprising mind.

Regarding mechanisms for the recognition/validation of knowledge and experience acquired in the context of training/working activity in order to achieve a qualification or

to gain access to general, technical and university higher education; MCAST has an Electronic Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning (EAPEL) process in place whereby prospective candidates can draw up a portfolio against pre-established criteria as set by MCAST in order to demonstrate Prior and Experiential learning against programme learning outcomes. Candidates would then only need to take the missing credits.

This process is separate from Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) or Recognition for Prior Learning (RPL) that is carried out based on documents issued by other educational institutions and credits taken in transfer.

Measures to facilitate access to education and their effectiveness

It is the right of every citizen of Malta to receive education and instruction without any distinction of age, sex, disability, belief or economic means.⁷ The right for education is also enshrined in Malta's Constitution.⁸ It is the right of every parent of a minor to give his decision with regard to any matter concerning the education which the minor is to receive.⁹

Malta persists in its work for equality of opportunity and accessibility for all. Malta's education policy is built on two main premises: equity and quality. This commitment is evidenced by an inclusive policy at all levels of education. The state subsidises Church schools, which do not charge tuition fees, and grants tax rebates to parents whose children attend independent schools. Compulsory education in Malta is between the age of 5 and 16.

In 2014, Malta set up the free childcare scheme, offering free childcare services to children up to the age of 3 years, whose parents are in employment or education. This initiative serves as an opportunity to provide young children with safe and quality child care, stimulating learning environment, establish school going habits and school readiness under the care and guidance of professionals. All children are offered a personalised service of quality care. Working in partnership with primary caregivers, each child is empowered to develop a lifetime of learning in a fun, caring and stimulating environment.

The *Alternative Learning Programme* (ALP) was created in the scholastic year 2013-2014 in order to cater for about 250 Year 11 students who were not sitting for any SEC examinations at the end of compulsory schooling and were thus potential early school leavers. Education psycho-social practitioners are involved in the recruitment process of prospective ALP students: career advisors contact them personally with the assistance of social workers. Career advisors with the support of schools' Senior Management Teams offer one-to-one sessions with prospective ALP students in order to help them decide on the vocational route they wish to follow during the programme. Students attending ALP are also monitored closely as well as supported through the provision of therapeutic and/or social work interventions whenever required.

⁷ Education Act Chapter 327

⁸ Constitution of Malta: <http://justiceservices.gov.mt/DownloadDocument.aspx?app=lom&itemid=8566>

⁹ Education Act Chapter 327

The ALP programme is generally aimed at students who are at risk of becoming early school leavers, are in their last year of compulsory school (Year 11) and have an interest in vocational education. Students are offered lessons in two vocational areas of their choice as well as academic subjects (English, Maltese and Maths), PSCD, PE, ICT, Home Economics, Religion/Ethics and Art/Drama/Music. In the near future the ALP will be strengthened as a compensatory reintegration route into general and applied training.

The two institutions offering post-secondary vocational education and training are the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) and the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS). Both institutions offer a wide range of full-time courses such as Foundation, Certificate and Diploma courses leading to Higher National Diploma level, Bachelor's Degree and Master's Degree level. A wide range of evening part-time courses are available to allow interested participants to further their studies in vocational areas even if already working. Currently both institutions also offer students the possibility to enrol in apprenticeship schemes.

MCAST offers Foundation Certificate Programmes at MQF levels 1 and 2 leading to the possibility of attaining an MQF Level 3 diploma.

MCAST is providing qualifications at Masters' level to further meet industry demands while equipping its students with higher-level knowledge, skills and competences. Through the introduction of these Masters programmes, MCAST wants to enable students acquire a body of knowledge, critical thinking and help them improve significantly in the local industry, improving the functioning of the communities in their societies, while enhancing their personal satisfaction. Furthermore, the development and provision of Masters programmes at MCAST will provide a pathway for students to continue the pursuit of additional life-long learning experiences. Below are various Master programmes at MQF level 7 on VET.

The Master of Science in Lean Enterprise includes lean problem-solving methodologies, demonstrates contemporary lean thinking principles, lean enterprise development and value stream mapping, including modern enterprise improvement techniques such as Six Sigma, theory of constraints and business process reengineering. This was launched in October 2018 and there was an intake of 30 candidates.

The Master of Science in Information Technology and Systems provides fundamental skills in a variety of advanced ICT areas such as cloud computing, big data and the Internet of Things (IoT), with a focus on developing intelligent solutions through a blend of hardware and software. The programme focuses on software as a service infrastructure, information management, enterprise systems and e-Logistics. This was launched in October 2018 and there was a student intake of 34 candidates.

The Master of Science in Environmental Engineering programme takes an interdisciplinary approach into the investigation of processes that control the earth and its environment. A special focus on environmental auditing and impact assessment shall be made, particularly in water, energy, noise and traffic auditing. This will be launched in March 2019.

The Master of Science in High Performance Buildings (HPB): This programme provides for advanced skills in specialization and scientific research of building physics coupled with architectural design, preparing students for professional, as well as research and development settings at national and international levels. This gives candidates the opportunity to develop optimized building concepts, integrating various components of holistic design methodology, building physics, etc. This will be launched in March 2019.

The Master of Science in Integrated Water Resource Management programme shall impart in-depth knowledge and practical experience in applied science aspects of water systems in small island states, with a focus on water measurement, water sustainability, water consumption, water chemistry, microbiology and analytics. This will be launched in March 2019.

The Master of Arts in Product Design programme develops the artistic and humanistic skills belonging to design culture together with the technical expertise that relates to production technology, materials, and manufacturing costs. This will be launched in March 2019.

The Master of Science in Mechatronics programme provides students with a broad range of knowledge and skills in the field of automation and control of production processes and equipment, as well as in the field of mechatronic devices and systems control. This will be launched in March 2019.

The Master of Science in Exercise and Sport Science presents a multidisciplinary focus to help students understand the relationship between health and human performance. As an academic program, the Masters of Science will introduce translational research and provide essential foundations from the bases of physiology, biomechanics, motor behaviour, and psychology. This will be launched in March 2019.

MCAST has been encouraged to embark on applied research to provide value-driven, real-world solutions, which will enable it to acquire, manage, and execute educationally relevant and economically sound research programmes. MCAST has embarked on research topics, which include Water, Energy/Renewables, Assisted Living, Entrepreneurship, Environment, Ecology and Maritime.

Tertiary education in Malta is also provided by the University of Malta which is an autonomous and self-governing body funded by the Government. The university structure has been reviewed according to the Bologna Process Framework which envisaged the establishment of the European Higher Education Area by 2010. The governing bodies of the university are the Council and the Senate.

Tertiary education is also provided by the recently established American University of Malta and a number of private tuition centres which provide tertiary and/or higher education programmes through distance learning in collaboration with foreign universities. In recent years, government has encouraged the take-up of tertiary and post-graduate education both locally and abroad through various scholarship schemes.
Targeting Low-skilled adults

The Maltese Government is also taking a strategic position in coordinating efforts in order to encourage more adults into lifelong learning. Malta has recently set up a Lifelong Learning Strategy and Upskilling Pathways Working Group which is aimed at coordination of policy and provision to help ensure that public policy interventions in adult learning achieves specific goals. This working group ensures the involvement of a diverse range of stakeholders to identify gaps in adult courses provision while also sharing best practices. Adult education and basic skills provision are delivered by various providers and the range of provision differs according to the target sub-groups and priorities as identified in the Malta National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020¹⁰.

High take up for Lifelong learning courses:

Learners enrolling for Lifelong Learning Courses offered by the Adult Learning Centre in 2017-2018				
Age Group Minimum Age	Age Group Maximum Age	Female	Male	Total
0	16	45	35	80
17	24	402	242	644
25	30	828	438	1266
31	40	1203	696	1899
41	50	895	426	1321
51	65	1482	575	2057
66	100	782	325	1107
Total		5637	2737	8374

Source: Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability within MEDE

In 2017 Government public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP was 4.9% (as against the EU average of 4.6% for the same year).¹¹

The Students Maintenance Grants and Scholarships Unit within the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) manages various scholarship schemes aimed at providing opportunities to promote further specialisation at higher levels of education particularly at a Masters’ and Doctoral level thus increasing the availability and employment of high-level graduates in the priority sectors of the knowledge-based economy in Malta. This Unit also provided a post-doctoral scholarship enabling further specialisation and to promote research.

Funding on VET 2018:

Within the annual budget for recurrent and capital expenditure of the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE), as yet there is no specific vote-line for VET upper secondary compulsory and further education.

¹⁰ <https://education.gov.mt/en/Documents/Malta%20National%20Lifelong%20Learning%20Strategy%202020.pdf>

¹¹ Source: Eurostat

The expenditure on VET in upper secondary compulsory and further education is incorporated in MEDE's budget and is worked mainly on:

- the salaries of the VET teachers in state and church schools;
- teacher training;
- resources and specific grants for VET resources to state and church secondary schools in compulsory education;
- students' maintenance grants to students attending further education VET programmes – ALP+ and Youth .inc.

VET lifelong learning courses for adults organised by the Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability within the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE).

The Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), the main VET provider in further and higher education is allotted a vote-line amount in the budget (recurrent and capital) of the Ministry for education and Employment.

Revised expenditure on education 2018

Revised recurrent expenditure:	259, 928, 000 Euro
Expenditure on VET (MCAST and Compulsory Education)	43,169, 030 Euro

Source: Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE)

Expenditure on VET as a percentage of the expenditure on education: 17%

Financial Estimates for MCAST per annum

Year 2018		
Vote 13 (6457) Contributions to Gov. Entities	€25,530,000.00	
Vote 5 (7836) Capital EU Structural Funds	€4,903,000.00	
Vote 5 (7936) Capital EU Structural Funds	€1,226,000.00	
Vote 5 (7023) Capital EU Structural Funds	€350,000.00	
Grants/stipends/supplementary stipend to MCAST Students	€6,132,551.00	€38,141,551.00

Source: Ministry for Finance (MFIN)

Ministry for Tourism

The Institute for Tourism Studies (ITS), which is the second main VET provider in further and higher education, is allotted a Vote-line amount out of the Ministry for Tourism's budget (recurrent and capital).

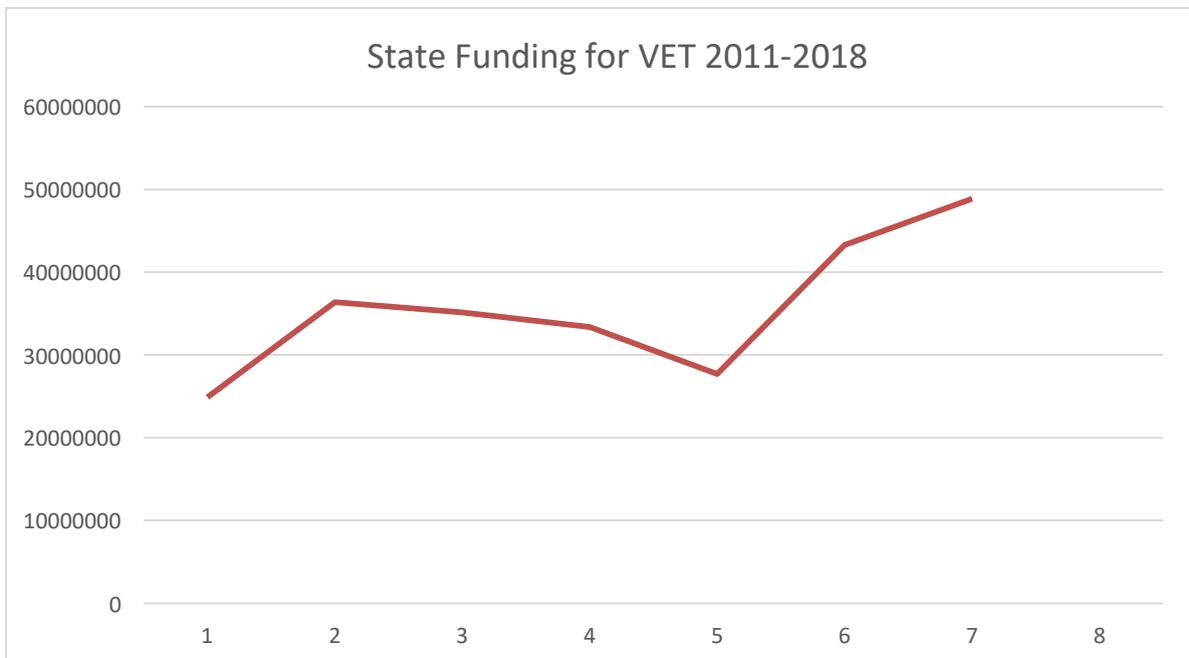
Revised recurrent expenditure:	101,836,000 Euro
Expenditure on VET (Institute of Tourism Studies)	5,697, 000 Euro

Expenditure on VET as a percentage of the expenditure on tourism: 6%

Financial Estimates for ITS per annum

Vote 2018		
Vote 38 (6804) Contributions to Gov. Entities	4,650,000.00	
Vote 38 (5083) Stipends to ITS Students	947,000.00	
Vote XIV (7067) Capital expenditure - Upgrading works	100,000.00	5,697,000.00
* ITS moved to temporary premises at Luqa Airport		

State funding for vocational education 2010 - 2018			
2015	2016	2017	2018
Euro	Euro	Euro	Euro
33382545.64	27,703,656.48	43,293,085.00	48866030



Sources: Ministry for Finance, Financial Estimates 2018. Government of Malta/Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) VET Unit, 2018. Unpublished data.

According to the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE)’s “Annual further and higher education statistics 2015/16”¹², the total number of students who were enrolled for a full qualification at licensed providers in Malta were as follows: Further academic: 10685; Further VET:10350; Higher Education: 14626.

¹² <https://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/research/Pages/FHE-Statistics.aspx>, accessed on 14 August 2019.

Graduates who completed a qualification during academic year 2015/16 were:
Further Academic: 8012; Further vocational: 6466; Higher Education: 5658.

While these figures represent student enrolments during 2015/16 (not necessarily new entrants) and graduates who completed their studies, the completion rates are not available.

MCAST launched its first degree programmes at MQF Level 6 in 2011, whereas degree programmes at ITS have been launched in academic year 2017/2018.

In 2016/17 – MCAST had in total 2942 graduates, of which 342 graduated in either a Bachelor's Degree or Masters Level course (Level 6 and 7).

In 2017/18, the number of MCAST graduates was 2618 graduates.

In academic year 2018/2019, there were 11,723 students enrolled at MCAST (6997 full time learners and 4726 part-time adult learners).

The Institute of Tourism Studies has graduated a total of 261 and 265 in academic years 2016/17 and 2017/18 respectively in levels ranging up to MQF 5.

In academic year 2018/19, the number of enrolled students at the Institute of Tourism Studies was:

Full-time: 537 students;

Part-time: 776 students.

Links for further information

<https://www.mcast.edu.mt/> accessed on 5 April 2019

<https://education.gov.mt/en/Pages/educ.aspx>, accessed on 5 April 2019

<https://www.um.edu.mt>, accessed on 5 April 2019

Eurydice: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/organisation-education-system-and-its-structure-49_en, accessed on 15 March 2019.

Paragraph 2 – Apprenticeship

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

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

- setting definitions and operational parameters for work placements, apprenticeships and internships;
- outlining responsibilities and governance structures (such as National Skills Council, Sector Skills Units);
- defining rights and obligations for VET providers, employers and learners;

- highlighting the role of employers as responsible learning partners;
- setting a compulsory minimum number of hours for all forms of work-based learning and linking remuneration to the minimum wage;
- using ECVET/ECTS in all forms of work-based learning;
- introducing a single EQF-based apprenticeship qualification replacing the dual certification currently in place;
- launching a training agreements register to support data collection and policy-relevant analysis by the national skills council.

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

Through this Act, Malta has now introduced a system where apprentices get first-hand knowledge of how the industry works, and are able to see clearly, what they would like to pursue as a career. All apprentices now have the opportunity to obtain the qualifications they need in the specific field chosen, while being able to put the skills they learn into practice at the same time, with the assistance of experts who are always on-hand to show them how things are done.

MCAST currently has 820 students registered on apprenticeship programmes. Students are expected to undertake from 700 -1400 hrs in industry depending on their programme of studies and the tripartite contract signed with their employer and the college. In the majority of cases this translates into 3 days of study and two days in industry during the academic year and then 40 hours weekly in summer for two years.

Apprentices Intake at MCAST:

Year	Apprentices
2016/2017	849 Apprentices
2017/2018	819 Apprentices
2018/2019	820 Apprentices to a total of 3,400 students doing some form of Work-Based Learning (Placements, internships, apprenticeships). MCAST also has 1,500 registered industry partners.

COSTINGS: MCAST currently has 68 supervisors visiting 820 placed apprentices over 2 academic years. Apprentices are entitled to 4 visits (2 per year) at €26/visit (1hr/student) + 1hr commuting time = €52/apprentice x 4 visits = €208/student.

Total cost: 820 apprentices x €208 = €170,560 (over a period of 2 years)

In relation to work-based learning, MCAST is also implementing a project on ‘Achieving Vocational Excellence through enhanced Work Based Learning’ which aims to making VET more attractive to students, whilst providing a more competent workforce that can cater for current and future industrial requirements.

The project will involve the development and delivery of a mentoring training programme to MCAST lecturers and staff. Furthermore, training and information sessions will also be organised for industry sponsors. MCAST will map out the number of apprenticeship per area and the learning outcomes which can be offered by each participant employer. This monitoring will be achieved through the development of a comprehensive competency framework and use of an analysis tool.

In addition, six emulative centres will be set up with the main aim to tackle labour market mismatches and provide students with innovative work-based competences by simulating real working environments.

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

Paragraph 3 - Vocational training and retraining of adult workers

Unemployed persons

To facilitate occupation mobility, Jobsplus offers a number of courses aimed at helping individuals acquire transversal or specific skills which are labour market oriented. Moreover, Jobsplus has introduced a number of training schemes and other measures to facilitate occupational mobility. According to Eurostat statistical data the rate of adults (25-64 years) participating in learning increased from 7.4% in 2015 to 10.8% in 2018 (Table 1).

Table 1 Adult participation in learning, % of population aged 25 to 64

Geo\Time	2015	2016	2017	2018
EU (28 countries)	10.7	10.8	10.9	11.1
Malta	7.4	7.8	10.6	10.8

Source: Eurostat, 2019

The Investing in Skills scheme with a €5 million budget until 2023, seeks to promote the up-skilling of persons who are already active within the Maltese labour market. The aim of this scheme is to encourage local employers to up-skill their workforce by actively participating in training programmes and courses through financial incentives. As of the 4th June 2018, NGOs and Social Partners are eligible to apply for the Investing in Skills irrespective if these conduct and economic activity or not. Nonetheless, in all instances, training must be delivered to the direct employees of the applicant entity in

order to be eligible.

Another initiatives is the Work Exposure Scheme which is intended to facilitate the transition into employment by providing jobseekers initial hands on training that helps them obtain the knowledge, skills and competences required to find and retain employment. Another initiative is the Traineeship Scheme that equips jobseekers with initial vocational training (pre-employment training) to help obtain knowledge, skills and competences required to find and retain employment.

The Work Placement Scheme seeks to provide hands-on training to participants following a course offered by Jobsplus, which includes a practical component training. Namely: Vocational Education and Training Award in Child Care (0-3years); Vocational Education and Training Award for Care Workers for Persons with Disability; Vocational Education and Training Award for Care Workers for the Elderly. The on-the-job training take place at the employer’s premises with whom the trainee is placed. The classroom training programmes are recognised by the NCFHE (National Commission for Further and Higher Education) and pegged at respective levels with the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF). Participants are paid a training allowance, payable by Jobsplus for every hour attended, which is calculated on the national minimum wage. The Training Pays Scheme aims to increase the number of adults participating in lifelong learning. Persons will be refunded 75 per cent (excluding VAT) of the training costs incurred (up to a maximum of €1,000), when attending a training programme with the intent of improving their level of competence or acquiring new skills. Both the training programme followed, and the training provider need to be accredited and licensed by the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE). These measures help strengthen the labour supply by increasing the versatility in skills and knowledge of the local workforce. The Work Exposure Scheme, the Traineeship Scheme and the Work Placement Scheme are part-financed by the European Social Fund.

Table 2 Number of participants in various schemes, 2015-2018

Scheme Name	Year											
	2015			2016			2017			2018		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Work Exposure Scheme (WES)	186	140	326	176	176	352	71	76	147	105	148	253
Traineeship Scheme (TRN)	360	253	613	247	135	382	84	48	132	16	23	39
Work Placement Scheme (WPS)	0	0	0	3	65	68	1	47	48	1	18	19
Training Pays Scheme	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	27	34	79	219	298

(TPS)*												
Investing in Skill (IIS)**	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1385	1140	2525

Source: Jobsplus, 2019

* TPS was launched in March 2017

** IIS was launched in March 2017. Data on Participants refers to unique participants supported (paid) in 2018.

On another note, through the Youth Guarantee, young people who are at risk of social exclusion and or at risk of becoming long-term unemployed can benefit from initiatives specifically targeted at youth. The project focuses on both the current stock of NEETs as well as on those at risk of becoming NEETs. Both registered jobseekers and economically inactive young people can benefit from the Youth Guarantee measures, administered jointly by Jobsplus and the Ministry of Education and Employment. The total number of applications to the Youth Guarantee in 2017 amounted to 1,270, were males amounted to 741 and females to 529. Of this total 1,198 exited in the same year, with 694 being males and 504 being females. Out of all exits (*Table 2*), 49 individuals found an employment offer, of which 21 participants found the offer within 4 months. 763 young people exited to education, with 750 of them taking up the offer within 4 months. 64 participants undertook a traineeship, of which 55 were offered the experience within 4 months.

Table 3 Youth Guarantee exits 2017

Exit to:	Males	Females	Total
Employment	33	16	49
<i>within 4 months</i>	14	7	21
Education	419	344	763
<i>within 4 months</i>	408	342	750
Traineeships	46	18	64
<i>within 4 months</i>	41	14	55
Total	498	378	876

Source: Jobsplus, 2019

With the Work Programme Initiative Scheme (WPI), Jobsplus, in collaboration with the private sector, is assisting long-term unemployed individuals to re-enter into the labour market (*table 4*). The Work Programme Initiative's main objective is that of re-integration the long-term unemployed into the labour market. This initiative consists of three phases: profiling, training and job placements. If any participant is not placed in employment for at least 6 out of 24 months from the date of the signing of the WPI contract, s/he is referred back to Jobsplus.

Table 15 WPI Training unique participants

Participants\Time	2015*	2016	2017	2018
Female	-	195	95	94
Male	-	588	116	31
Total	-	783	211	125

Source: Jobsplus, 2019

*Training commenced in 2016

Data requested by the Committee on:

According to published LMP (Labour Market Policies) data, the activation rate for 2015 stood at 17% and increased to 18% in 2016. Only activation measures included in the LMP database were considered in the computation of such rates. With reference to the indicator '*the number of participants in labour market measures per 100 persons wishing to work*', Jobsplus would like to highlight that this indicator is not fully reliable and does not necessarily fully capture MT's efforts of activation measures given that a number of ALMPs are excluded from the data collection since they do not fall within the scope of the LMP database (example the Free Childcare Scheme). Furthermore, MT (through the Jobsplus) is currently in cooperation with the Commission and the LMP team regarding revisions of LMP historical data for the period 2010 – 2014 due to methodological errors in past data. In view of this, the fluctuations quoted cannot be explained at this stage and should be addressed in the future once the revisions are concluded.

Paragraph 4 - Long term unemployed persons

The Work Programme Initiative is targeted towards the long-term unemployed. Jobsplus, together with three private Service Providers, are working to help long-term job seekers to integrate or re-integrate in the labour market. To be eligible for the scheme the individual has to be a long-term unemployed/inactive individual aged 25 years and over who is currently seeking full or part time employment. Such individual needs to fall under one of the following categories:

- Been registering for work for 12 months over the last two years (not necessarily consecutive);
- Inactive individuals who were not registering during the past 12 consecutive months.

The Work Programme structure is based on a process that should lead the participant to improve his/her employability skills, with the final aim of placing the person in sustainable employment. During 2018, 166 Work Programme contracts were signed and a similar amount of participants were profiled. Out of these participants, 70% were women and the remaining 30% were men. 164 of those profiled were Maltese residents whilst two were Gozitan. 125 participants attended a total of 1,020 course instances. 138 participants who finished their mandatory training course as required by the tender regulations were placed into employment.

From the beginning of the project till end 2018, 1,550 Work Programme contracts were signed with 981 men and 569 women (*Table 1*). Since 2015, 1,522 profiles were drawn up and 1,115 participants started a training course, amounting to 3,597 course instances. Engagements forms processed up till 2018 show there were 410 placements after mandatory training and 342 placements before mandatory training, adding up to 752 placements, distributed amongst 501 participants.

Table 16 Participants of the Work Programme Initiative per year and by gender

Year	Males	Females	Total
2015	144	36	180
2016	721	265	986
2017	68	150	218
2018	48	118	166
Total	981	569	1550

Source: Jobsplus, 2019

In the table below is well evident the impact of the measure on reducing long-term unemployment, in three years the percentage of LTU dropped down by more than 14 percentage points, positioning itself 10 percentage points below the European average.

Table 17 Long-term unemployment, % of unemployment

GEO/TIME	2015	2016	2017	2018
EU - 28 countries	49.8	48.2	46.5	44.7
Malta	48.5	43.5	43.6	34.2

Source: Eurostat, 2019

As regards long-term unemployed young people, also in this case, thanks to the measures implemented by the Maltese Government, there has been a steady decline over the past three years. On a national level, the drop is almost two percentage points and compared to the European figure, Malta records a better performance with a difference of more than two percentage points.

Apart from offering the usual guidance, personalised action plan, basic training, mock interviews, career tests, exposure schemes, traineeships etc..., Registering Youth (and especially long-term unemployed youth) are specifically referred to the NEET Activation Scheme II (*described hereunder*). This scheme was specifically developed in order to tackle the needs of disadvantaged youth and forms part of the Maltese Youth Guarantee. Since a number of these cases may require additional support, in addition to the NEET Activation Scheme services, Jobsplus also offers the additional service of a Job Coach to youth that require some additional handholding. The intensity of the service provided varies depending on the needs of the youth, examples include outreaching towards potential employers that are ready to take them on a placement, preparing and encouraging the youth prior to an interview, providing on-site support and help integrating during a placement and also once a transfer to employment takes place. The Job Coach also takes on the role of a mediator between the youth and the employer.

Table 18 Youth long-term unemployment rate, % from 15 to 24 years

GEO/TIME	2015	2016	2017	2018
EU - 28 countries	6.5	5.4	4.7	3.9
Malta	3.5	2.5	3.0	1.6

Source: Eurostat, 2019

Youths in Malta benefit from an inter-institutional approach between multiple actors that aim to provide a holistic service. The Ministry for Education and Employment

(MEDE) and Jobsplus (Malta's PES) engage with different stakeholders through partnerships to better target youths and improve the design and implementation of the various schemes under Malta's Youth Guarantee (YG) Scheme.

The Jobsplus' YG Unit has also partnered up with Malta College of Arts Science and Technology (MCAST) on the NEETs Activation Scheme (Further Education) where as part of the scheme, participants are offered the opportunity to further their education at MCAST or other accredited institutions. In light of this, MCAST is in a position to retain youths that are experiencing difficulties and avoid that they exit the educational system, hence becoming NEETs.

Another partnership is with the Institute for Tourism Studies (ITS) offering a variety of programmes at various levels, covering the necessities of the Tourism and Hospitality Industry. ITS provides a student centred-curriculum which promotes creativity, innovation, self-reflection, and personal independence. Youths develop specialised technical, leadership and entrepreneurial skills. As a result from this partnership, the YG is able to provide its participants an alternative vocational route.

The Youth Guarantee in Malta is administrated by Jobsplus and youths, aged 15 to 24, who are interested in the programme can either go to job advisors within Jobsplus who would later on refer them to the initiatives of the Youth Guarantee or they can go directly to the Youth Guarantee Office within the Ministry of Education and Employment in Valletta. The Youth Guarantee consists of three education and employment related initiatives which include the NEET Activation Scheme II, SEC Revision Classes, and the ICT Summer Courses, all aiming at increasing educational level and employment prospects of youths.

- SEC Revision Classes: SEC revision classes aim to encourage young people to re-enter education and training after failing school exams. Revision classes are provided in core subjects which include Maltese, English, Mathematics Physics and Biology. Participants can apply for up to three subjects. These classes are provided free of charge during the summer period and last for five weeks. At the end of the classes participants sit for an exam. Successful participants gain the "missed" qualification (EQF 2 or 3) and are encouraged to continue with their studies
- ICT Summer Courses: The ICT Summer Courses aim to help participants improve their ICT skills. Participants are obliged to attend a minimum of 80% of the course and upon successful completion they gain a qualification and receive an allowance. In addition to the educational opportunity to acquire new and valuable ICT skills and knowledge, throughout the programme, participants are assisted by an LSA II and on-going mentoring by the ICT Summer Courses coordinator. In cases where participants would require additional assistance they are referred to the NEET Activation Scheme II, throughout which they would have access to other psycho-social services. Following completion of the Summer ICT Course, young people are encouraged to either enrol in an educational institution or participate in the NEET Activation Scheme II
- NEET Activation Scheme II: The aim of this initiative is to promote the re-integration of NEETs by means of targeted intervention. There are three phases

to the scheme. The initial phase is individual profiling of participants. The profiling interviews are conducted by psychologists whose aim is to draw up the main characteristics of each individual. The assigned youth worker then receives the drawn profiles. Youth workers ensure that the professionals working with the youths can provide personalised assistance which caters to the background of the youth. On the basis of these profiles, participants are offered tailor-made training with the aim to improve specific skills over a six-week timeframe. Topics covered under the training provided include motivational and behavioural training, guidance on employment, communication skills, CV writing and interview skills. The engagement of these specialised professionals ensures that the personalised assistance is tailored not only to the participants per se, but also taking into consideration their background and any other issues that need to be considered. Participants are required to choose whether they would like to further their education by enrolling in one of Malta's educational institutions or proceed to a 240-hour work placement either in a simulated or actual work place during the second phase of the initiative. Participants are provided with both on and off-the-job training to further gain the necessary employability skills and increase their prospects of accessing the labour market. Upon completion of the work exposure phase, participants enter phase three which consists of a traineeship whereby participants will be able to put into practice what they have learnt during the previous two phases.

Statistical data shows that the NEET rate in Malta is decreasing, in effect the rate in 2015 for NEETs was of 10.5% which went down to 7.3% in 2018 (*Table 4*). This shows that the services provided by the Jobsplus' YG Unit together with the mechanisms in place have had a positive impact on NEET youths in Malta.

Table 19 Young people aged 15-24 neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET) - annual averages

GEO/TIME	2015	2016	2017	2018
EU - 28 countries	12.0	11.5	10.9	10.4
Malta	10.5	8.8	8.6	7.3

Source: Eurostat, 2019

Additionally, all Jobsplus training initiatives are made available to migrants and the latter are given the same services that are offered to locals and/or European nationals. Consequently, migrants have the same opportunities to avail from provided that they submit supporting documentation with their application and subject that the eligibility criteria to participate in such initiatives are fulfilled. Jobsplus offers migrants including long-term unemployed persons all of its courses, which go beyond training in the Maltese and English languages. They are entitled to participate in employment-related education opportunities, which include short courses, traineeships, work exposure, as well as trade testing. It is worth noting that there is no requirement to satisfy a labour market test to participate in any of the employment-related education opportunities.

Detailed information on the labour market test requirement:

Jobsplus is the entity responsible for carrying out Labour Market Tests in respect of

Third Country Nationals who require an authorisation to be able to take up employment in Malta. Such tests do not apply to TCNs that have an automatic right to work in Malta. There are many aspects to labour market consideration, with the three main areas of testing relating to the situation of the Maltese Labour Market in terms of shortages or surpluses in a specific occupation; the reputability of the employer in terms of recruitment and redundancy patterns, investments and contractual commitments; as well as the suitability of the TCN in terms of relevant experience and qualifications for the post offered. While in general there are no restrictions on the number of foreign workers an employer may sponsor, certain areas are subject to quotas such as in the case of chefs, where an employer may employ a restricted number of foreign chefs according to the number of covers of the catering establishment. It should be noted that apprentices and trainees are also exempt from aspects of the labour market test (vacancy requirements and suitability) if evidence of such apprenticeship is provided and endorsed by the prospective employer and the training institution.

For each application the authorities conduct a labour market test in order to determine whether the post can be filled in by a Maltese / EEA / Swiss national and/or Third Country National who has an inherent right to work in Malta. There are certain posts (such as cleaners or waiters) where, due to a lack of local workforce, the labour market test is not conducted in its entirety and the employer can take responsibility for the competence of the TCN to perform low skilled jobs... To fulfil the vacancy requirement as part of the Labour Market test, the employer is required to advertise the job, at least twice, within the appropriate media or with Jobsplus. Exemptions apply for this requirement for shortage occupations. TCN applicants need to provide copies of qualification certificates accredited by the local authorities or reference letters attesting to at least three years of work experience. Both qualifications and references need to be related to the post offered. Exemptions to this requirement apply to low skilled workers, where the assessment of the TCNs' suitability is fulfilled by a declaration of suitability that is submitted by the prospective employer. Documents related to the Labour Market Test must be kept for each recruitment method used and presented to the Jobsplus when asked to do so.

Paragraph 5 - Full use of facilities available

Efficiency of training

Jobsplus' Monitoring Unit conducts monitoring visits for Work Exposure Scheme (WES), Youth Guarantee (YG), Traineeship Scheme (TRN), Work Placement Scheme (WPS) and Work Programme Initiative (WPI).

For each scheme visits are conducted as below:

- WES – 3 visits of which one is unannounced
- TRN – 4 visits of which 1 visit is unannounced
- WPS – depending on the course which entails different placement hours
- WPI – depending on course schedule however all visits are unannounced
- YG – 2 visits both announced

During each visit, the Monitoring officer meets both the participant/s and employer/service provider. During such visit, the Monitoring officer checks the necessary documents and checks whether the placement is leading to the desired results. Monitoring Officers reports / gives feedback to other Jobsplus / MEDE personnel. During the last visit, Monitoring Officers are required to conduct an exit questionnaire where both employer and participant give their feedback on the scheme. Employers and workers organisations do not participate in the monitoring visits.

Article 15 - Right of persons with disabilities to independence, social integration and participation in the life of the community

Paragraph 1 - Vocational training for persons with disabilities

The National School Support Services (NSSS) within the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) provides support for students in mainstream schools with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and psychosocial challenges.

Vocational training

At the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS), during academic year 2018/19, the amount of students with diverse abilities was a total of 48, which also amounts to almost 10% of the full time cohort of students. The conditions were varied and widely ranged with the most common being ADHD or ADD. A considerable number of students also reported dyslexia as a condition which affects them. The most challenging cases were cases of severe autism which affects four different students as well as one case of Downs.

As of academic year 2018, the Registrar, who is also responsible for the Student Support Services, reformed the support ITS provides in a way to empower the student to gain independence rather than remain dependent on third parties. The primary objective sported at ITS is to transform the student into an employable individual where employability and independent living are given priority over attainment of full certification.

To this extent the ITS Registrar has developed alternative programmes for students who need such support. The alternative programmes are in no way a watered down version of the actual courses, but instead the option taken was to create a mixture of existing modules which, in agreement with the parents/guardians as well as the student, are deemed attainable. Students who manage to pass these modules will be given an award and a transcript of modules which they can present to prospective employers on their CV. All modules are of course accompanied by an MQF level. The alternative programmes are only offered to those students who are unable to complete full courses due to their condition. An evaluation of these programmes is carried out continuously with parents and students as well as learning coaches and interested parties.

In the meantime ITS supports its students with in class support as well as one to one tutorial sessions with a team of highly dedicated learning coaches. Learning coaches

are the equivalent of LSE's in mainstream education with the difference that ITS does not allow one to one support and babysitting. Learning coaches rotate in different classes and this ensures wide spread support and moreover it ensures that students get used to different faces and people. The idea is that when in industry as full time workers the students will not be supported and will rarely be in a position whereby they only see the same co-workers. A valuable partner in this journey is the Lino Spiteri Foundation that assists in supporting students on placement.

As of academic year 2019/20 the Institute of Tourism Studies will also be launching an admissions board as set up by the Board of Governors. The aim of this board is to evaluate students with different abilities and guide ITS on how to best support them. Moreover students who apply for courses which are obviously not fit for their condition may be advised to choose another study option or route.

In 2017 – 2018 the programme was reviewed and aligned according to NCFHE Referencing report levels Intro A and Intro B. As of July 2019, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) has 2 Awards at Intro A and Intro B and 4 Awards at Level 1 in Office skills, Hospitality, Retail and Agribusiness. As part of the programme of studies students spend time in industry on placements.

Table below is a breakdown of students with disability benefitting from MCAST current programmes:

Intro A (Malta)	5
Intro A (Gozo)	7
Intro B (Malta)	3
Intro B (Gozo)	3
Hospitality Award	4
Office Award	6
Retail Award	3
TOTAL	31

The Inclusive Education Unit (IEU) within the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) aims at creating an inclusive environment where learners are provided with the educational support that allows them to develop their full potential. Learners with any particular needs (e.g., dyslexia, autism, visual/hearing impairment), may require specific provisions which enable them to demonstrate their real abilities. The IEU ensures that reasonable arrangements are in place for students requesting support. All support is optional and could be reduced or discontinued upon a responsible request. Information provided remains strictly confidential and lecturers are informed upon learners' consent.

Table below shows the total number of MCAST IEU Students between 2011 - 2018

Year	Male	Female	Total
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2011	280	143	423
2012	343	170	513
2013	388	223	611
2014	469	272	741
2015	529	294	823
2016	535	299	834
2017	538	298	836
2018	535	302	837

Work is a fundamental right that should be available to all. The world of work offers particular challenges to people with disabilities. In this regard, Jobsplus (Malta's PES) through its divisions particularly the Inclusive Employment Service Division provides an opportunity for persons with disabilities to continue developing their skills or receive training to learn new skills.

The Inclusive Employment Services Division is specifically designed to assist persons with disability, former substance abusers, former prison inmates, and individuals with other socio-economic difficulties to integrate into the labour market.

Persons with disability who are either actively seeking employment or are already in employment and wish to have their name entered/retained in the register for persons with disability as per LN 156 of 1995 can apply to be part of this register. Upon application the client is referred to a Placement Medical Officer who will assess the employability of the client within the context of their disability. The person is then referred to an occupational therapist (OT) who will assess the abilities of the client and suggest the ideal path to employment (sheltered, supported, or mainstream). Following this assessment, the client is referred to the Lino Spiteri Foundation (LSF) who will further assist individuals in their job search.

The Lino Spiteri Foundation is a public social partnership between Jobsplus and Empower, a leading cooperative that employs persons with disability in collaboration with the private sector. This partnership aims to draw on Jobsplus' resources together with the experience and expertise of the corporate sector to create employment opportunities for persons with disability. The LSF's role is to keep close corporate relations with employers and deal with individual persons with disability.

This is achieved by providing:

- initial registration services
- profiling and occupational guidance to each registered person with disability
- support to employers to promote the employment of persons with a disability by understanding the company's requirements and together explore employment opportunities through job carving. Through job carving work tasks within a company are re-arranged in order to create tailor-made employment opportunities.
- Job coaching support during the transitional and gainful period of employment.

The Lino Spiteri Foundation also offers The Headstart Programme. The aim of the Head

Start Programme is to serve as a launch pad into employment. The programme is aimed at replicating employment in order to support individuals in increasing skills and employability. Quality and production outputs of participants are measured and opportunities of employment are targeted accordingly. A job coach assists the group in order to support in the attainment of their personal goals and a quality coach is also on board to ensure quality levels are achieved according to expectations. Candidates enrolled in this programme should attend at least 80% of the overall programme. Failure to do so without reasonable justification may lead to dismissal from the programme. Participants are given a stipend of €110/month. Prior to enrolment in the programme, candidates will need to undergo a 'selection week' where their employability standards and production targets are measured and assessed. Eligibility depends on the outcome of this 'selection week'. Referrals for Headstart are done through the LSF Profiling and Guidance Executives. Headstart aims to ensure that a) the individuals fit within the employers' needs and b) are supported until such time that they are fully included into the workforce.

Additionally, Jobsplus assists persons with disability by offering the following programmes and schemes;

The Sheltered Employment Training (SET) is a one-year programme aimed at preparing individuals with mental, physical and/or intellectual disabilities for employment. The job coaches assist the clients through hands-on work related training and other training to enhance their soft skills including their work ethics, independent living, communication and social skills.

The Pre-Employment training assists disadvantaged jobseekers including persons with disability to acquire pre-employment skills in order to adapt to labour market changes and requirements. Currently there are three (3) accredited courses offered; Award in Pre-Employment Skills, Award in Basic Clerical and Award in Life and Communication Skills. Another course offered is Basic ICT.

The Bridging the Gap scheme is designed to support disadvantaged groups such as registered persons with disability who are registering as unemployed, and former substance abusers, former prison inmates, and individuals with other socio-economic difficulties., in the transition period from unemployment to employment. It allows the employer to evaluate the performance of the client in the workplace, prior to proper engagement. The scheme offers participants a period of work exposure with an employer to learn on-the-job the skills needed for a particular job. The employer and Jobsplus enter into an agreement regarding the work exposure period, whereby participants are placed on the scheme with the prospect of employment.

Furthermore, Jobsplus offers courses aimed at helping individuals acquire transversal or specific skills which are labour market related. Different types of courses are available, varying from short courses to vocational courses pegged to the Maltese and European Qualification Frameworks.

The Work Exposure Scheme is intended to facilitate transition into employment by providing jobseekers with initial hands on training that will help individuals obtain the

knowledge, skills and competences required to find and retain employment. Participants are paid a training allowance, payable by Jobsplus for every hour attended, which is calculated on the national minimum wage.

The Traineeship Scheme is intended to provide jobseekers with initial vocational training (pre-employment training) that will help individuals obtain the knowledge, skills and competence required to find and retain employment. Traineeships are based on a combination of on-the-job and off-the-job training. The programmes offered are labour market driven, whereby the job preferences of the jobseekers are matched with the requests made by employers participating in the scheme.

Table 20 Students with disabilities who attended courses organised by Jobsplus between 2015 and 2018,

Vocational Training	2015	2016	2017	2018	TOT
Number of students with disabilities who attended courses organised by Jobsplus	217	95	92	101	505
Percentage of students with disabilities entering the labour market following mainstream or special education and/or training	9.41	6.11	3.56	5.34	24.43%

Source: Jobsplus, 2019

The number of students with disabilities who had attended a Jobsplus course between 2015 and 2018 and were still in employment by the end of June 2019 was 255.

Fostering a more inclusive employment environment, while ensuring dignified, gainful and long-term employment for persons with disability, is currently a priority for Malta, in line with the requirements of Chapter 4 of Malta’s 2014 National Disability Policy. Vocational training is also covered by Action 8 of Malta’s 2020-2030 National Disability Strategy, entitled ‘Work and Employment’, specifically through sub-actions 8.1: ‘Building holistic coordination among stakeholders and PwD’, and 8.2: ‘Strengthening existing and developing new programmes for job training, matching and retention’.

The vocational rehabilitation and the employment of persons with disability is implemented by Jobsplus, the national employment corporation, through its Inclusive Employment Services Division. The functions carried out by this Division include the keeping of a register of persons with disability; the medical examination of persons seeking to be registered; occupational and other professional assessment and specialized training.

Through the partnership held with the Lino Spiteri Foundation, set up in 2015, it also provides vocational guidance for persons with disability, placement in suitable employment of registered persons with disability; support throughout the process of employment from the interviewing process through to induction at which point the support of a Job Coach can then be introduced, and to hands-on at the place of work or off-site support to the individual. The Foundation is a public-social partnership aimed at engaging the expertise of the corporate sector, to create employment opportunities for persons with disability. It collaborates with employers and provides targeted services to

persons with disability on a one-stop-shop basis.

The Parliamentary Secretariat (Junior Ministry) for Persons with Disability and Active Ageing is responsible for overarching general policy in the field, including overseeing the implementation of the National Disability Policy and the National Disability Strategy, through its Office for Disability Issues (ODI), and supporting initiatives undertaken by disability-specific entities such as Aġenzija Sapport, Malta's national service provision agency for persons with disability. JobsPlus and the Lino Spiteri Foundation specifically fall within the remit of the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE).

The Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability, Malta's monitoring mechanism in terms of the UNCRPD, is tasked with monitoring and periodic review of relevant national policy.

As of December 2019, out of a total of 19,500 persons with disability registered with the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD), 7760 persons fell within the 15-64 year age bracketed, and thus fell within the remit of the material being discussed in this section.

Legislation and Definitions

Persons with disability who are either actively seeking employment or are already in employment and wish to have their name entered in the register for persons with disability, can request this to JobsPlus, which administers said register, as per the provisions of the Persons with Disability (Employment) Act (Chapter 210 of the Laws of Malta). Following an assessment by JobsPlus, an applicant is given the option to participate in a number of schemes detailed further below in this document.

The right to vocational training, including the provision of reasonable accommodation and appropriate adjustments in receiving such, also emerge from the Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act (Chapter 413 of the Laws of Malta), specific anti-discrimination legislation also encapsulating elements of the UNCRPD and the EU Employment Equality Directive (2000/78/EC), and will be further strengthened following the passage of a new UNCRPD Act.

For the purposes of the work carried out by JobsPlus and the Lino Spiteri Foundation, the definition contained in the Persons with Disability (Employment) Act (Cap. 210) is used, whereby a "person with disability" is defined as 'a person, being over compulsory school age, who, by reason of injury, disease, congenital deformity or other physical or mental incapacity, is substantially handicapped in obtaining or keeping employment or in undertaking work on his own account, of a kind which apart from that injury, disease, deformity or incapacity would be suited to his age, experience and qualifications; and the word "disability", in relation to any person, shall be construed accordingly'.

For all other initiatives, such as those described later as being undertaken by Aġenzija Sapport, the national service provision agency for persons with disability, and the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability, the definition contained in the

Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act (Cap. 413) prevails, having been more closely aligned with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), and defining "disability" as a 'long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which in interaction with various barriers may hinder one's full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others'.

Persons with mental health conditions or difficulties are also considered to be persons with disability in terms of prevailing legislation, in keeping with Malta's UNCRPD obligations, and further to a Memorandum of Understanding signed recently between the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD), the Office of the Commissioner for Mental Health, and several NGOs in the mental health field in Malta.

Vocational Training in Post-Secondary Institutions/ Life=Long Learning Schemes

Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS):

78 Full-Time Students, mainly Students with Disabilities, are currently enrolled under the 'SPC' designation

23 identify as Female, and 55 identify as Male

By Course

C-AP (Certificate – Alternative Programme)	3
C-EL (Certificate – Events and Leisure)	4
C-FPS (Certificate – Food Preparation Services)	15
C-RD (Certificate – Rooms Division)	1
C-TT (Certificate – Travel and Tourism)	2
D-ELO (Diploma – Events and Leisure Operations)	2
D-FPPO (Diploma – Food Preparation and Production Operations)	21
D-RDOP (Diploma – Rooms Division Operations)	1
D-TTO (Diploma – Travel and Tourism Operations)	4
F-HT (Foundation Programme in Hospitality and Tourism)	16
H-TG (Higher National Diploma in Tour Guiding)	2
UG-CA (Higher National Diploma & Bachelor's Degree – Culinary Arts)	4
UG-IHM (Higher National Diploma & Bachelor's Degree – International Hospitality Management)	3

The Alternative Programme at Certificate Level is awarded to students, mainly students with disabilities, who are assessed to have been facing certain difficulties in their originally chosen programme of study – it would combine elements from different existing programmes ex. Certain food preparation modules from the Certificate in Food Preparation Services with certain modules from the Certificate in Rooms Division ex. Telephone techniques.

The Alternative Programme for every student is tailored with the involvement of the student themselves, their family as applicable, as well as the Registrar and relevant Director of Studies at ITS, and any Learning Support Educators involved, having also considered documentation such as psychological reports, and engaged with other relevant entities ex. Lino Spiteri Foundation re: job coaching at summer placements.

Upon graduation, students following and successfully completing this track are then awarded the Certificate – Alternative Programme, a qualification at Undergraduate Certificate level (MQF/ EQF Level 5).

Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) – Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability

While the Directorate is in the process of consolidating collection of specific data on adult learners with disability, it has ensured, during the past year, that all of its centres were rendered accessible to persons who need to use wheelchairs, as a first step towards ensuring full accessibility.

The Directorate is also in the process of setting up a psycho-social team to assist students, since it became apparent to the Directorate, through different observation sessions, that, for example, in Basic Skills courses, there were students in need of this kind of assistance.

This Directorate also opened a dialogue with the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability, to explore modes of outreach to disabled persons and their supporters

Vocational Training through State Schemes/ Public-Social Partnerships

JobsPlus

Jobsplus' Inclusive Employment Services Division encompasses various specialized services to different groups of persons in situations of vulnerability, including registered persons with disability in terms of the Persons with Disability (Employment) Act (Cap. 210), to enter the labour market. To ensure that clients receive a good and effective service, the team within the Inclusive Employment Services Division also works in close collaboration with other specialized organizations which in turn offer counseling and additional related services, such as the Lino Spiteri Foundation.

The Inclusive Employment Services' team of employment advisors work with individuals to create tailor made Jobseeking Action Plans. Furthermore, it has also developed, and runs, the following initiatives. For which persons with disability are either the principal target group, or else a specific focus group:

The **Bridging the Gap** Scheme is designed to support disadvantaged groups such as registered persons with disability who are registering as unemployed, , in the transition period from unemployment to employment. It allows the employer to evaluate the performance of the client in the workplace, prior to proper engagement. The scheme offers participants a period of work exposure with an employer to learn on the job the

skills needed for a particular job. The employer and Jobsplus enter into an agreement regarding the work exposure period, whereby participants are placed on the scheme with the prospect of employment.

The **Sheltered Employment Training (SET)** Scheme is a one-year programme aimed at preparing individuals with mental, physical and/or intellectual disabilities for employment. The job coaches prepare the clients through hands-on work-related training and other training to enhance their soft skills including work ethics, independent living, communication and social skills.

A **Job Bridge Training Centre** was also set up, offering various training opportunities to vulnerable jobseekers and persons with disabilities, to enhance their prospects for gainful employment. Various outreach initiatives are held in order to increase awareness on the services and schemes available to prospective jobseekers. The Job Bridge Training Centre houses a number of fully equipped training rooms, a computer lab and a well-equipped ‘common area’ for both trainers and trainees. The premises are equipped with ramps and toilet facilities for wheelchair users.

The current services implemented by this centre include training for disadvantaged jobseekers and outreach initiatives in LEAP (anti-poverty and social exclusion) centres. The aim of this training is to assist disadvantaged jobseekers to acquire pre-employment skills in order to adapt to labour market changes and requirements. Currently there are three (3) accredited courses offered – Award in Pre-Employment Skills, Award in Basic Clerical Skills and Award in Life and Community Skills. Another course offered is Basic ICT. As for the outreach initiative, the Job Bridge Training Centre offers a weekly outreach service within the LEAP centers. The aim of these sessions is to create awareness about Jobsplus’ services for vulnerable jobseekers.

JobsPlus also implements the **Headstart Programme**, which is aimed at replicating employment in order to support individuals in increasing skills and employability. This programme aims to ensure that participants fit within the employers’ needs and are supported until such time that they are fully included into the workforce.

Further to the above mentioned schemes, below is a table which outlines the number of persons with disability who benefited from the schemes for the year 2017 and 2018 segregated by gender (while an option in Malta, none of the service users in question identified as ‘Other’ when reporting gender):

	Schemes	Males	Females	Total	Of Which Registered Disabled Persons
2017	Access to Employment	194	171	365	98
	Sheltered Employment	30	21	51	81
	Headstart	15	12	27	27
	Job Bridge Training	105	39	144	94

2018	Access to Employment	154	165	319	60
	Sheltered Employment	25	20	45	45
	Headstart	18	13	31	31
	Job Bridge Training	45	18	63	32

In addition to the measures mentioned above, Jobsplus also offers training programmes or refer their clients to other bodies and organizations offering courses in literacy, life skills, computer literacy and prevocational skills for persons with intellectual disabilities and mental health difficulties and conditions.

Agenzija Sapport

Agenzija Sapport also manages two EU-funded projects in this field – **INK** provides training placements, while **JESS (Job Enhancing Skills Scheme)** combines this with further training for both employers and prospective employees following job matching. Job coaching and mentoring is provided for both initiatives.

Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD)

The Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability has also initiated a local pilot project as part of the **100 Mirrors** initiative, an EU-funded venture that aims to promote inclusive entrepreneurship for women with disability, by developing a methodology based on coaching, mentoring and job shadowing of women willing to become entrepreneurs or obtain a degree of independence in their everyday life. Coaching and mentoring is done by successful disabled women entrepreneurs supported by trainers.

Staff Training

JobsPlus' Inclusive Employment Division, as well as the Lino Spiteri Foundation, organise regular trainings for their own staff, as well as for external applicants, to qualify or top up their qualifications vis-a-vis the roles of job mentors and job coaches.

These have also been organised in conjunction with bodies such as the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability, as well as civil society organisations. European priorities outlined by the European Social Fund were also met in the process, leading to certain initiatives coming within such mechanism's funding remit.

Agenzija Sapport also organise regular in-house training for staff involved with their INK and JESS programmes.

Furthermore, the first national Positive Supported Employment Programme, which the Ministry of the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity signed a memorandum and programme contract for with the Malta Association for Supported Employment (MASE) in 2015, also provides for sensitisation of staff responsible for training, guidance, placement and employment of persons with disability.

Paragraph 2 - Employment of persons with disabilities

Measures to encourage the employment of persons with disabilities

A number of policy measures and schemes launched by the Maltese Government over the past years have contributed to the increase in the number of persons with disability in employment. According to Jobsplus' administrative data, persons with disability in employment increased from 1,797 in 2013 to 3,578 in 2018. Of which in 2018 2,474 were males and 1,104 were females.

The vocational rehabilitation and the employment of persons with disability is implemented by Jobsplus through the Inclusive Employment Services Division. Jobsplus carries out the following functions to meet adequately the needs of persons with disability:

- The keeping of a register for persons with disability.
- Medical examinations of persons seeking to have their names on the register.
- Occupational and professional assessment
- Sheltered Employment Training
- Pre-Employment Training

Through the partnership held with the Lino Spiteri Foundation (LSF) it also provides vocational guidance for persons with disability, placement in suitable employment of registered persons with disability; support throughout the process of employment from the interviewing process through to induction at which point the support of a Job Coach can then be introduced and to hands-on at the place of work or off-site support to the individual. Throughout 2018, Jobsplus and the Lino Spiteri Foundation continued the implementation of the VASTE Project funded by the European Social Fund. This €11 million Project consists of measures focused on enhancing and promoting the skills and abilities of persons with disability and vulnerable individuals (former inmates, former substance-abusers and other socially-challenged individuals).

Professional assessments are carried out to offer services to clients according to their specific needs. Since 2016, 931 unique disabled persons and vulnerable individuals, including 108 Gozitans, received one or more of the following support or training measures:

- Sheltered Employment Training
- Pre-Employment Training
- Basic ICT Training and mentoring of clients prior and during employment as necessary.

During 2018, Jobsplus and Lino Spiteri Foundation focused on supporting employed disabled persons on-the-job, increasing retention in employment while concurrently creating new employment opportunities for more individuals. By the end of 2018, 175 vacancies were generated through 600 visits to various companies. LSF placed 138 disabled persons in employment, of which more than half benefited from LSF's job carving method. The number of private companies that satisfy the 2% quota for disabled

employees increased by 12% between December 2016 and December 2017.

Circa 30,000 job coaching hours were spent on supporting the transition and retention in employment of clients through ongoing assessments and follow-up plans. Pre-employment preparation for specific job opportunities was tailored for individuals that needed further support.

Over the years, Jobsplus has identified specific categories of persons, such as persons with disability that experience particular challenges in securing employment. Jobsplus is implementing a number of measures aimed at tackling the constraints to integrate in the labour market.

- The Access to Employment scheme seeks to promote an equal and inclusive labour market through providing wage incentives to employers for a number of weeks in a bid to ensure the integration, retention and progression of individuals into the Maltese labour market. This programme offers the possibility of augmenting the productivity and employability of vulnerable groups, such as persons with disability, that are furthest away from the labour market and with low employment rates through facilitating access to employment and upgrading skills through work. Such programme enhances the financial independence of disadvantaged persons and prevent their social exclusion and marginalization. As from the 4th June 2018, NGOs and Social Partners are eligible to apply for the Access to Employment Scheme irrespective if these conduct an economic activity or not.
- The possibility to keep the disability pension whilst in employment, following changes introduced to the Social Security Act in 2017;
- Fiscal incentive for employers hiring persons with disability; This incentive was introduced in 2015. An employer who employs a registered person with disability is eligible to claim a fiscal incentive equivalent to 25% of the disabled person's basic wage up to a maximum of €4,500 for each person with disability. Employers benefiting from the Access to Employment Scheme (A2E) are not eligible to benefit from the referred fiscal incentive. In 2016, Jobsplus received applications from 12 employers while 101 applications were received in 2017 of which 95 have been paid a total of € 216,518. During 2018 Jobsplus, received 173 applications in relation to the fiscal incentive from 64 different employers. These employers have paid the amount of €433,536.36 in fiscal incentive in relation to 209 disabled employees.
- Sheltered Employment Training which is a one-year programme aimed at preparing individuals with mental, physical and/or intellectual disabilities for employment, with the aim of moving to open employment; The job coaches assist the clients through hands-on work related training and other training to enhance their soft skills including their work ethics, independent living, communication and social skills.
- Bridging the Gap scheme which is designed to support the client in the transition period from unemployment to employment, through a work exposure experience; It allows the employer to evaluate the performance of the client in the workplace, prior to proper engagement. The employer and Jobsplus enter into an agreement regarding the work exposure period, whereby the client is

placed on the scheme with the prospect of employment. Clients receive a weekly allowance of 80% of the minimum wage from Jobsplus. The client will have to renounce the rights to any social security benefits if the work exposure period exceeds the twenty-eight weeks. Employers participating in this scheme are exempted from social security contributions, wages and sick leave benefits. Throughout this work exposure phase, the employer can benefit from the support of Jobsplus officials. The scheme throughout the years of 2015 and 2016 provided support to a total of 82 and 60 registered disabled persons respectively. In 2017, 75 persons with disability and 52 vulnerable clients benefited from this scheme while 45 persons with disability and 20 vulnerable jobseekers participated in 2018.

- Job Bridge Training Centre offers pre-employment training and outreach activities with local education institutions and NGOs; Current services being offered through our centre: Pre-Employment Training: The aim of this training is to assist disadvantaged jobseekers to acquire pre-employment skills in order to adapt to labour market changes and requirements. The Pre-Employment Programme consists of four modules: Award in Pre-Employment Skills; Award in Life & Communications Skills; Award in Basic Clerical Training; Basic ICT Skills.

Outreach initiatives: Job Bridge Training Centre delivers various information sessions to local educational institutes (secondary and post-secondary) and various NGOs. The aim of these sessions is to create awareness about Jobsplus' services for vulnerable jobseekers.

The enforcement of the legal quota which denotes that for employers hiring more than 20 employees, at least 2% of the workforce must be persons with a disability; Employers who fail to adhere to this legislation are requested to make an annual contribution for every person with disability they should be employing. This contribution is capped at €10,000 per employer. An employer who employs a person with disability will be exempt from paying the employer's share of social security contributions for such employee and may also be eligible to claim a fiscal incentive equivalent to 25% of the disabled person's basic wage up to a maximum of €4,500 for each person with disability. Employers benefiting from the Access to Employment Scheme (A2E) will not be eligible to benefit from the referred fiscal incentive. On 28th April 2016, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) acknowledging the financial and tax incentives granted at employers to favour employment of registered disabled persons, has been signed between the Employment and Training Corporation, now Jobsplus, Malta Employers Association and Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry. The contributions for 2015/2016 were settled in 2018 whereby €1,637,200 were collected. In 2018, Jobsplus issued invoices to 487 different enterprises in relation to the contributions for 2017, whereby till end December 2018, 246 enterprises paid the amount of €888,400 in contributions.

Implementation of the Headstart Programme is aimed at replicating employment in order to support individuals in increasing skills and employability. This programme aims to ensure that participants fit within the employers' needs and

are supported until such time that they are fully included into the workforce. In 2018 there were enrolled 31 disabled persons.

The below tables include statistical data on the number of persons with registered disabilities who have participated in one of the schemes offered by Jobsplus.

Table 21 Number of persons with disabilities and schemes

Year	Schemes	Total	Of Which Registered Disables Persons
2015	Bridging the Gap	117	82
	Access to Employment	60	34
	Sheltered Employment	77	77
	Headstart*	-	-
	Job Bridge Training	26	26
2016	Bridging the Gap	111	60
	Access to Employment	399	120
	Sheltered Employment	40	40
	Headstart	31	31
	Job Bridge Training	172	72
2017	Bridging the Gap	127	75
	Access to Employment	365	98
	Sheltered Employment	51	51
	Headstart	27	27
	Job Bridge Training	144	94
2018	Bridging the Gap	65	45
	Access to Employment	319	60
	Sheltered Employment	45	45
	Headstart	31	31
	Job Bridge Training	63	32

Source: Jobsplus, 2019

* *Not implemented in 2015*

Further to the above mentioned schemes, below is a table which outlines the number of firms compliant with 2% quota.

Table 22 Number of firms fully compliant with quota

Year	Total	% of number that are compliant with the quota
December 2014	96	11.0%
December 2015	207	24.0%
January 2016	344	39.0%
February 2017	675	45.6%
December 2017	822	60.0%

Source: Jobsplus, 2019

National Disability Policy

Fostering a more inclusive employment environment, while ensuring dignified, gainful and long-term employment for persons with disability, is currently a priority for Malta, in line with the requirements of Chapter 4 of Malta's 2014 National Disability Policy. Inclusive Employment is also covered by Action 8 of Malta's 2020-2030 National Disability Strategy, entitled 'Work and Employment'.

Below employment data of disabled persons: 37% i.e. 1,345 disabled persons increase in the last 3.5 years (Source: JobsPlus)

(RDP = Registered Disabled Person (registered on the Register kept by JobsPlus in terms of the Persons with Disability (Employment) Act (Chapter 210 of the Laws of Malta))

RDP Employed Full time & Part Time

As at December 2015	Under 25	25-39	40-54	55+	Grand Total
Males	53	335	538	672	1,598
Females	19	230	258	213	720
Grand Total	72	565	796	885	2,318

DP Employed Full time & Part Time

As at June 2019	Under 25	25-39	40-54	55+	Grand Total
MALE	196	586	767	972	2,521
FEMALE	109	373	390	270	1,142
Grand Total	305	959	1157	1242	3,663

The employment of persons with disability is also a specific responsibility of Jobsplus, the National Employment Corporation, through its Inclusive Employment Services Division. The functions carried out by this Division include the keeping of a register of persons with disability; the medical examination of persons seeking to be registered; and occupational and other professional assessment.

Through the partnership held with the Lino Spiteri Foundation, it also provides vocational guidance for persons with disability, placement in suitable employment of registered persons with disability; support throughout the process of employment from the interviewing process through to induction at which point the support of a Job Coach can then be introduced, and to hands-on at the place of work or off-site support to the individual.

The Lino Spiteri Foundation is a public-social partnership set up in 2015 to offer support to both persons with disability and employers, through its three primary service streams: profiling & guidance, job coaching and corporate relations. Together with Jobsplus' resources, schemes and incentives, and together with the experience and expertise of the corporate sector, the Foundation creates employment opportunities for persons with disability.

The Foundation’s role is to keep close corporate relations with employers and work with individual persons with disability, providing initial registration, advisory assistance and job search support to each individual which includes job coaching services. Through this procedure it is ensured that clients receive targeted intervention and are followed by qualified staff throughout the whole process.

A number of policy measures and schemes launched by the Maltese Government over the past years have contributed to the increase in the number of persons with disability in employment. These include:

- the possibility to retain the disability pension (now termed ‘allowance’) whilst in employment, following changes introduced to the Social Security Act (Chapter 318 of the Laws of Malta) in 2017;
- fiscal incentives for employers hiring persons with disability;
- exemption from paying the employer’s share of Class 1 National Insurance contributions in respect of employees who are registered persons with disability;
- the enforcement of the legal quota (since 2015, after the activation of a 1969 law) which denotes that for employers hiring more than 20 employees, at least 2% of the workforce must be persons with a disability, in which respect the below data is also being presented:

No. of firms fully compliant with quota as at:	Total Companies/Employers more than 20 employees	Compliant	% compliant with the quota	Non Compliant	% non compliant with the quota
Dec-16	1124	377	34%	747	66%
Dec-18	1293	785	61%	508	39%

According to data for December 2016 and December 2018, the companies in compliance with this legislation increased by more than 25%. Persons with disability represented in this table are employed across different sectors.

Fines collected from non-compliant companies by JobsPlus are invested into creating better opportunities for inclusive employment within the Maltese labour market, such as through supporting the work of the Lino Spiteri Foundation.

The Parliamentary Secretariat (Junior Ministry) for Persons with Disability and Active Ageing is responsible for overarching general policy in the field, including overseeing the implementation of the National Disability Policy and the National Disability Strategy, through its Office for Disability Issues (ODI), and supporting initiatives undertaken by disability-specific entities. JobsPlus and the Lino Spiteri Foundation specifically fall within the remit of the Ministry for Education and Employment

(MEDE).

The Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability, Malta's monitoring mechanism in terms of the UNCRPD, is tasked with monitoring and periodic review of relevant national policy.

Legislation and Definitions

Persons with disability who are either actively seeking employment or are already in employment and wish to have their name entered in the register for persons with disability, can request this to JobsPlus, which administers said register, as per the provisions of the Persons with Disability (Employment) Act (Chapter 210 of the Laws of Malta). Following an assessment by JobsPlus, an applicant is given the option to participate in a number of schemes detailed further below in this document.

The applicant is referred to a Placement Medical Officer who will assess the employability of the applicant within the context of their disability. The person is then referred to an occupational therapist (OT) who will assess the abilities of the applicant and suggest the ideal path to employment. Following this assessment, the applicant is also referred to the Lino Spiteri Foundation (LSF) which will further assist individuals in their job search.

The current assessment system will eventually be integrated into a revised, holistic national system for disability assessment and eligibility determination, being coordinated by a multi-stakeholder working group chaired by the Office for Disability Issues (ODI), and which JobsPlus forms part of.

The right to inclusive employment, including the provision of reasonable accommodation and appropriate adjustments, also emerge from the Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act (Chapter 413 of the Laws of Malta), specific anti-discrimination legislation also encapsulating elements of the UNCRPD and the EU Employment Equality Directive (2000/78/EC), and will be further strengthened following the passage of a new UNCRPD Act.

The Act also provides for the power to investigate complaints, in terms of the Act, with such power vested with the Equal Opportunities Compliance Unit (EOCU) within the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability, legally defined as Malta's monitoring mechanism in terms of Article 33(2) of the UNCRPD, through the 2016 amendments to the Act. Said power to investigate complaints, on the basis of which the EOCU was set up, emanates from Article 22(1)(i) of the Act.

Most complaints are solved amicably. However, certain complaints do proceed to the courts, and the Commission is also involved in such matters. EOCU or the Commission are not empowered to provide redress, compensation or rehabilitation to victims in terms of current legislation. Nonetheless, they assist victims in obtaining any redress, compensation and rehabilitation that they are entitled to, from the appropriate source, in terms of current legislation, and have also assisted victims in pursuing separate civil actions.

For the purposes of the work carried out by JobsPlus and the Lino Spiteri Foundation, the definition contained in the Persons with Disability (Employment) Act (Cap. 210) is used, whereby a "person with disability" is defined as 'a person, being over compulsory school age, who, by reason of injury, disease, congenital deformity or other physical or mental incapacity, is substantially handicapped in obtaining or keeping employment or in undertaking work on his own account, of a kind which apart from that injury, disease, deformity or incapacity would be suited to his age, experience and qualifications; and the word "disability", in relation to any person, shall be construed accordingly'.

For all other initiatives, the definition contained in the Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act (Cap. 413) prevails, having been more closely aligned with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), and defining "disability" as a 'long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which in interaction with various barriers may hinder one's full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others'.

Persons with mental health conditions or difficulties are also considered to be persons with disability in terms of prevailing legislation, in keeping with Malta's UNCRPD obligations, and further to a Memorandum of Understanding signed recently between the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD), the Office of the Commissioner for Mental Health, and several NGOs in the mental health field in Malta.

Additional Measures

The steady increase in the number of people with disabilities in employment has been the result of a number of policy measures and schemes launched by the Maltese Government over the past years, some of which have already been discussed in the previous sections.

Furthermore, although not a disability-specific measure, a particular JobsPlus measure is also available to employers wishing to employ persons with disability, highlighting them as a priority beneficiary group. Offered as a Wage Subsidy for employers hiring persons with disability, the **Access to Employment (A2E) Scheme** seeks to promote an equal and inclusive labour market through providing wage incentives to employers for a number of weeks in a bid to ensure the integration, retention and progression of individuals into the Maltese labour market.

This programme offers the possibility of augmenting the productivity and employability of vulnerable groups, such as persons with disability, that are furthest away from the labour market and with low employment rates through facilitating access to employment and upgrading skills through work. Such a programme enhances the financial independence of disadvantaged persons and prevents them from social exclusion and marginalization.

Amongst the different target groups, the Access to Employment schemes is available to any person of age 24 and over who has been unemployed or inactive for the previous 6 months or 12 months with the latter having had to participate in a traineeship programme. Persons who live as a single adults and have one or more dependents and is

not in full-time employment together with persons lacking upper secondary education, inactive persons over 50 years of age or registered disabled persons not working in full time employment can also apply to participate in this scheme.

As from the 4th June 2018, NGOs and Social Partners are eligible to apply for the Access to Employment Scheme irrespective if these conduct an economic activity or not.

Furthermore, following the signing of a **Memorandum of Understanding between JobsPlus and the Malta Employers' Association** in 2015, Government, through JobsPlus, is now focusing its efforts on adopting measures to give further effect to the relevant heads of agreement reached, including through the adoption of relevant policy and legislative measures.

The first **national Positive Supported Employment Programme**, which the Ministry of the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity (MFCS) signed a memorandum and programme contract for with the Malta Association for Supported Employment (MASE) in 2015, also provides for sensitisation of staff responsible for training, guidance, placement and employment of persons with disability.

In particular, there has been good cooperation between MASE and the Malta Employers' Association, as to dissemination of information among employers, and subsequently also as to engaging them in participating in the programme. It was extremely important for the national employers' association to realise that workplace diversity fosters mutual respect among employees, and that employers themselves also gain immensely from the resulting environment in the end.

Consultation with and Engagement of Persons with Disabilities

The **Board of Jobsplus** includes representatives from the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability, trade unions and employers' associations.

Furthermore, the **Malta Business Disability Forum** was launched in December 2018, as a joint initiative between the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability, the Malta Chamber of SMEs – GRTU, the Malta Employers' Association and the Malta Chamber of Commerce.

The principal aim of said Forum is the building of lasting relationships between the disability and business sectors, whilst encouraging deeper cooperation. The Forum will also eventually see stakeholders engage in initiatives such as drafting and implementing policies in a number of fields, that would then be implemented in the business environment.

This would not just extend to on-boarding and creating appropriate working environments for employees with disability, but also focus on creating an appropriate climate for those persons who would want to make headway in the world of entrepreneurship, by ensuring adequate training and supports, including at the start-up phase, by creating accessible business incubation structures.

Paragraph 3 - Integration and participation of persons with disabilities in the life of the community

Interim Reform of Existing Social Security Benefits

The 2019 and 2020 State Budgets, which also resulted in the largest allocation of funds towards the disability sector undertaken so far in Malta's history, also earmarked further funds for the social security sphere.

The first concrete initiative undertaken by the Department of Social Security was to revise the rules for awarding of increased disability allowance for persons with intellectual or psychosocial disability with higher support needs. Previously, only persons with physical disability with higher support needs were covered by the eligibility criteria for increased disability allowance. This was done by first modifying the assessment system used, and then widening criteria.

Benefit rates for persons deemed 'unfit for work' were also revised upwards, with the aim of equalising these with the national minimum wage.

Disability Assessment Reform

A multi-stakeholder Working Group was initiated, with representatives of different government departments engaged in different areas of disability assessment and service delivery, together with civil society representatives. The working group has so far mapped the different and, at times, divergent assessment systems offered by these different entities, as a means to obtain services from said entities. The intended outcome is to agree on a unified system for a single gateway assessment based on functional and social criteria, relevant departments then acting upon the reports issued in virtue of such.

Under the aegis of the Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity (MFCS), and coordinated by the Office for Disability Issues (ODI) it brings together the Directorate-General (Social Policy), Department for Social Security, Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD), Aġenzija Sapport, the National School Support Service (NSSS) within the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE), the Inclusive Employment Division within JobsPlus (National Employment Corporation), and the Office of the Commissioner for Mental Health, together with civil society representatives from 2 national federations, the Malta Federation of Organisations of Persons with Disability (MFOPD) and the National Alliance for Rare Disease Support (RDM).

Said system would ensure Malta's compliance with its UNCRPD obligations, save costs in the longer term and ensure dignity to persons with disabilities, while also addressing the recommendations made by the UNCRPD Committee following its review of Malta in 2018. The inclusion of civil society directly in said Working Group also aims to ensure adherence to Article 4(3) UNCRPD, as further developed by General Comment No. 7 issued by the UNCRPD Committee in October 2018.

Agreement was reached so far to commence with a phased-in pilot project that would

see the EU Disability Card system, disability benefits system, parking concessions scheme, and access to funding for personal assistants and independent and community-based living, as well as a number of residential and community-based living schemes, included in the first phase of this changeover.

Enhanced support to Civil Society Actors

The Meeting Place, a social initiative by the Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity (MFCS), and managed by The Marigold Foundation, was also inaugurated, offering civil society organisations active in the disability sector a space to meet and organise activities, while providing facilities such as a multi-sensory space.

Increased Access to Goods and Services

This is a key policy priority for Malta, as also evidenced by its stance during the negotiations within the Council of the European Union on the proposed Directive on the accessibility of products and services within the internal market – the European Accessibility Act, eventually adopted as Directive (EU) 2019/882. This was also highlighted as one of the main areas of focus during Malta's 2017 Presidency of said Council. Malta is currently undertaking efforts to transpose this Directive.

Increased Access to Services of Public Sector Bodies

Malta has also passed legislation to transpose Directive (EU) 2016/ 2102 (Web Accessibility Directive), in connection with the accessibility of websites and mobile device applications of public sector bodies, putting in place a phased plan, including training and support to facilitate the changeover, while designating a competent oversight authority, with the power to receive and act upon complaints from the public, and to also administer effective sanctions.

In order to finalise the Directive's transposition into Maltese law, the Malta Communications Authority Act (Chapter 418 of the Laws of Malta) was amended this year, through the addition of the new Art. 4(3)(u) specifying that the Authority shall "(u) monitor and ensure the accessibility of websites and mobile applications in accordance with the provisions of this Act", and through other amendments to ensure jurisdiction of the authority in matters related to oversight, handling of complaints, adjudication and administering of sanctions in connection with Malta's enforcement of the Web Accessibility Directive.

The technical specifications relevant to the implementation of this Directive shall be factored in through the Authority's cooperation with FITA (Foundation for IT Accessibility), as the national body having the required technical expertise and personnel in this field, while said implementation is being rolled out further to prescribed timetables, after all necessary structures have been put into place.

Increased Access to Emergency Services

Discussions are ongoing with the Civil Protection Department, in ensuring a strong disability perspective in the resulting updated General Emergency Plan that Malta is working on. This exercise also aims to align Malta's obligations in the area of disaster risk reduction with the relevant provisions of the UNCRPD and the UN's Sendai Framework.

Furthermore, a cross-departmental initiative led by the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) and the Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security (MHAS), with strong civil society input, particularly involving the Sign Language Council of Malta and the local Deaf community, is under way, in order to further reform and fine-tune accessibility of the 112 emergency number, including through an update of Government's 112mt mobile device application. In this regard, focus groups are also being held with persons with disability, in order to gather feedback, and test out different revisions to the app, before the next version is released.

Increased Access to the Built Environment

When tackling accessibility of the built environment, Malta has obligated adherence to national guidelines for a good number of years, said guidelines being constituted as Malta National Standard SM 3800:2015 in 2015. These have recently been elevated to the status of subsidiary legislation, as the Access for All in the Built Environment Regulations, 2019, to allow petitioners to rely on the contents of said Standard when filing disability discrimination complaints in terms of Article 9 of the UNCRPD.

In order to assess exceptions to the rule, Malta also created the Test of Reasonableness Board in 2016, through amendments to the Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act. This Board has a particular role in assessing reasonableness and disproportionate burden within the context of accessibility of the built environment.

Increased Access to Education

Accessibility of educational buildings is guaranteed, with the Foundation for Tomorrow's Schools (FTS) being tasked with designing new school buildings which are completely accessible, and also with undertaking repairs and modifications to allow existing schools to become more accessible.

Furthermore, when a student with a mobility impairment is about to start school, any accessibility issues are required to be addressed within the school, to allow for full access and inclusion.

Furthermore, the concept of accessibility of the built environment is being shifted from including merely physical aspects – such as the inclusion of ramps for wheelchair users, to also sensorial aspects – such as ensuring that school classrooms are designed in a minimalist manner, making them accessible to students with intellectual and developmental disability.

Aside from already being undertaken by entities such as FTS, this matter will also be covered specifically in documents such as Malta's upcoming National Disability Strategy and National Autism Strategy.

ICT Accessibility

In its efforts to ensure inclusive education for all, Malta has, for a number of years, operated an Access to Communication and Technology Unit (ACTU), now housed within Agenzija Sapport, Malta's national service provision agency for persons with disability. The Unit is responsible for contributing towards an accessible scholastic experience, through the provision of assistive technologies, and of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) technologies.

These are intended to be used side-by-side with the national curriculum, which is constantly being adapted to factor in the use of such technologies.

Government's electoral manifesto emphasised increased access to such devices. Towards implementation of said pledge, a Working Group was launched in 2017, with the twin aims of:

- i) mapping students within the primary and secondary education system, and conducting a needs analysis, while also;
- ii) mapping and determining the options available internationally, and how these would match with the needs identified.

The Working Group will make recommendations as to how the State could implement concrete support in light of the findings, especially with regard to financial considerations.

The experience of primary school students was also evaluated, as to their use of tablets provided by the State, further to a previous electoral pledge. Through this pro-active approach, students would be able to have their tablets, and apps provided, fine-tuned to their individualised educational needs, including through ensuring that their educational experience is made as accessible as possible through these devices. Nevertheless, the procurement of specialised AAC devices, over and above said tablets, will continue to be assessed and effected, whenever necessary, by the Unit.

Holistic Life-long Service Delivery Coordination

The State negotiates public-social partnerships with a number of non-governmental organisations and service providers, on a case-by-case basis. Ad hoc funding requests by organisations are similarly entertained on a case-by-case basis. These are cross-cutting services, spanning the realms of health, education and social services – with appropriate professionals, and government entities, working jointly. Coordination, in this regard, happens through a specialised Disability Unit within the Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity, which incorporates the

Inter-Ministerial Administrative Committee on Disability and the Inter-Ministerial Interdisciplinary Professional Board on Disability, the operations of which are regulated by subsidiary legislation adopted earlier this year.

Increased Access to Healthcare

In the area of sexual and reproductive health services:

- the national Genitourinary Clinic has taken steps towards ensuring that its procedures are more disability-sensitive, both through ensuring accessibility of its new premises, as well as by ensuring that services are rendered more accessible to persons with intellectual and developmental disability;
- physical accessibility has also been factored in at the Malta Breast Screening Centre;
- the new national Gender Clinic is physically accessible, and works closely with civil society entities, such as the Malta Gay Rights Movement's Rainbow Support Services, which have a history of being disability-sensitive, including in the psychosocial field. Furthermore, the fact that Malta no longer requires a psychiatric diagnosis of 'gender dysphoria' to access the clinic, makes accessing its services easier for all.

Support towards Living Independently

In line with the precepts of Article 19 of the UNCRPD, persons with disability can also apply to the Empowerment Scheme managed by Aġenzija Sapport, which offers funds to support a person's right to live independently and within the community. Equipment such as assistive technological devices, as well as adjustments to one's living environment are funded.

Similar schemes are also operated by, for example, the Housing Authority.

Aġenzija Sapport furthermore operates the Personal Assistance Fund (PAF) and Independent Community Living (ICL) Schemes, allowing for the funding of personal assistants, as well as support staff such as carers and live-in carers.

The Sonia Tanti Independent Living Centre (STILC), previously managed by the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD), was passed over to Aġenzija Sapport as a service provider, thus also divesting the Commission of service provision responsibilities, towards its becoming a fully-fledged regulator.

These schemes run side-by-side with the Agency's in-kind community services delivered by its staff, as well as initiatives such as Sharing Lives, a socialisation and community integration programme.

Increasing Community Support Services

Reach, a project offering services aimed at empowering persons with disabilities to transition from institutional living to independent or supported community-based living arrangements, and including family and significant others as part of this project, was also recently launched by Aġenzija Sapport, as an initiative co-funded through European Regional Development Funds (ERDF), as was Narcis, a similar initiative aimed at persons with disabilities who also have complex medical support needs, many times due to their disability having been acquired.

Increased Access to Transportation

It is also worth mentioning that public transport is heavily subsidised for persons with disability, and work is in progress to render this free of charge, in furtherance of a Government electoral pledge. Specific legislation on parking concessions for persons with disability (Blue Badges) was adopted, and rules for obtaining designated parking spaces facilitated.

Furthermore, exemptions from road licence fees and circulation tax exist for persons with disability, to offset costs involved in obtaining specialised vehicles, or modifying these for accessibility purposes.

This initiative is being implemented side by side with efforts to implement legislation – including European legislation – regulating accessibility of transport services for persons with disability and persons with reduced mobility (PRM), in the strongest terms, including through application of formidable sanctions administered by Transport Malta.

Increased Involvement in Sports

Special Olympics Malta continued to grow, and as at today, it has over 1000 athletes under its patronage. In 2019, Maltese athletes participated in the Abu Dhabi World Games where they managed to achieve extremely positive results.

Furthermore, the Malta Paralympic Committee was made as an independent body in 2017.

Increased Access to Justice

In furtherance of ensuring better access to justice, in terms of Article 13 UNCRPD, and further to the UNCRPD Committee's recommendations, the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), with the participation of the Office of Disability Issues (ODI) and an international expert, organised a Disability Equality Training (DET) for members of the Maltese judiciary, as well as for lawyers and civil society. As a result of the close cooperation fostered with the judiciary following this initiative, discussions are under way to ensure that court access fees are more accessible for persons with disabilities, and also vis-à-vis the allocation of disability discrimination sittings within the domestic court system. This DET also builds upon several other DETs which the Commission has been delivering over the past years, tailored to

different sectors of society, such as to Police Academy recruits, and private sector employees, among others.

The Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD), following discussions with the Faculty of Laws at the University of Malta, also ensured that, as from this year, and further to said Article 13 UNCRPD, and to the awareness-raising requirements in Article 8, first-year law students were given compulsory content in disability rights, during lectures on Human Rights Actions, delivered by representatives of CRPD and of the Office for Disability Issues (ODI).

Increased Rights for Deaf People

In 2016, Parliament unanimously adopted the Maltese Sign Language Recognition Act, making Maltese Sign Language (LSM) Malta's third official language. The Act also provided for the setting up of the Sign Language Council of Malta (KLSM), to oversee efforts related to implementation of this legislation in all spheres of public life, in close cooperation with Government, relevant stakeholders and Malta's Deaf community.

Upcoming Legislative and Institutional Reforms

The Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD), Malta's monitoring mechanism in terms of Article 33 UNCRPD, has also undergone a restructuring process, in virtue of which a new Directorate for Investigations, Compliance and Enforcement was set up, and with legislation planned to further give effect to said reform, while aligning the Commission with the Paris Principles, also in fulfilment of the recommendations issued by the UNCRPD Committee to Malta in this regard.

The UNCRPD Bill, together with a Bill revising the Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act, are also to be shortly launched for public consultation, in an accessible manner, having been fine-tuned following said recommendations, providing wider mechanisms for redress nationally vis-à-vis alleged violations of the UNCRPD, while also providing a legal basis for Malta's restructured national UNCRPD focal point, the Office for Disability Issues (ODI), and Malta's UNCRPD National Coordination Mechanism.

This follows on from the 2016 amendments to the Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act, which vested legal personality in the rebranded Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD), creating it as Malta's monitoring mechanism in terms of Article 33(2) UNCRPD. The amendments also introduced a non-justiciable Bill of Rights into the Act, while further altering the Commission's governance structures, including the creation of an advisory multi-stakeholder Council. A superseding clause was also written into the Act, vis-a-vis any instance of disability-specific discrimination.

The Personal Autonomy Bill has also been restructured, following said recommendations, and further internal input received both locally and from external sources, and this draft legislation, that will move away from interdiction, incapacitation and guardianship, towards juridical equality backed up by supported and co-decision-making mechanisms, will be eventually launched for an accessible public consultation.

This will be done side-by-side with the Protection of Adults in Situations of Vulnerability Bill, draft legislation that would allow Malta to ratify the 2000 Hague Convention on the International Protection of Adults, while ensuring that it stays in line with its obligations emanating from the UNCRPD.

National Disability and Autism Strategies

Malta's first National Disability Strategy 2020-2030 has been completed and will be formally launched shortly, having been announced during Disability Week 2019. The document's provisions have been laid out in alignment with Malta's 2014 National Policy on the Rights of Persons with Disability, as well as with relevant provisions in the UNCRPD, the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the UN's Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction, and the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the 'Istanbul Convention'), all of which Malta is bound by.

Malta's first National Autism Strategy will also be launched in 2020, following a multi-stakeholder consultation process undertaken by the Autism Advisory Council, representing different government ministries and academic faculties, as well as the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD), Aġenzija Sapport and civil society representatives. Feedback was gathered through one-on-one meetings with representatives of stakeholder groups, as well as through events organised, such as at schools, for services providers, and with MEP candidates. This followed the passage of the Persons within the Autism Spectrum (Empowerment) Act in 2016.

Article 20 - Right to equal opportunities and equal treatment in matters of employment and occupation without discrimination on the grounds of sex

Equal rights

There is nothing in the Employment and Industrial Relations Act precluding the Industrial Tribunal (which has exclusive jurisdiction to hear and decide cases on unequal pay) from investigating and determining whether there is the equal pay for work of equal value. Inspectors look at the pay structure and compare pay slips and time sheets of employees, which are required by law. The job history is also requested from the public employment agency (Jobsplus) to compare years of service and the employee's position in the company. It has also competence to look into collective agreements, which in Malta, are reached only at the level of the enterprise, to establish whether the law is being adhered to.

Equal Rights

NCPE received one complaint of pay discrimination on the ground of gender in 2015. In this case, comparison was made in the same company whereby NCPE's Commissioner noted that while all of the managers' wages differ in amount, the gap between the male managers' wages is smaller than the one between the average male manager wage and the complainant's wage. Following the opinion issued in relation to this complaint,

NCPE was informed that negotiations between employer and employee (complainant) resulted in a substantial increase in salary when compared to her male counterparts.

Equal Opportunities

NCPE is working on a set of **initiatives to address the gender gaps across the life cycle** as part of the EU co-funded project ‘Prepare the Ground for Economic Independence’. In particular, two research studies will be carried out: one on equal pay tools to develop a similar tool for the national context; and another on how European Trade Union representatives embrace the principle of equal pay for women and men during collective agreement negotiations. The Equality Mark will be enhanced through the equal pay tool; training will be given to trade union representatives, and awareness raising campaigns on the gender pay and pension gaps will be developed.

In addition, as part of this project, a **train-the-trainers course to career advisors and career guidance teachers** was carried out with the aim of empowering young students to make wise choices. The course deals with providing students with a holistic picture of their desired career, including the demand of the occupation in the labour market, job prospects, career progression, financial gain, and work-life balance. Such tools will empower and guide students to have the knowledge necessary to be able to choose subjects and eventually their career path wisely. Moreover, the training deals with obstacles which girls might encounter when they start their professional working life. Such information will inevitably aid in developing critical thinking skills in decision-making.

NCPE published a **newsletter on the gender pay gap** in March 2018 delineating information on work of equal value; what is and what causes the gender pay gap; what can be done to prevent and combat the pay gap; and NCPE’s role in investigating cases of gender discrimination in pay. The newsletter is available on NCPE’s website and it was also disseminated to various stakeholders.

In 2018, NCPE also published a **newsletter on gender segregation in education and the labour market**. The newsletter featured an interview with College Career Advisors and Career Guidance Teachers on how gender affects school subjects’ choice and career opportunities; the experiences of three professionals who were successful in breaking gender stereotypes and opted for professions that they enjoyed irrespective of gender; and other interesting facts and statistical data on the topic.

In November 2017, NCPE organised a short campaign **PayM€qually** in line with the European Equal Pay Day to raise awareness on the gender pay gap. Throughout this campaign NCPE participated in TV and radio programmes, issued regular posts on the social media, and published articles on the topic in the traditional media.

NCPE organised a **conference on the gender pay gap** in 2015 that was the first public event during which the issue was discussed in Malta. This conference continued raising awareness on the importance of addressing the gender pay gap. It delved into this matter from various perspectives including the causes of the gender pay gap in Europe and in Malta; how the gender pay gap is calculated as well as the effects and repercussions of

the gender pay gap on pensions.

The Malta government is committed to ensure that ‘**equal pay for equal work**’ is being safeguarded in practice in line with its work on combating gender discrimination in employment. An appropriate structure is being set up in the Department for Industrial and Employment Relations to compile necessary information and investigate complaints of unequal pay.

Gender Mainstreaming Reports Received from public administration entities and departments by NCPE:

2018 - 115 reports; 2017 – 99 reports; 2016 – 110 reports; 2015 – 58 reports

In its evaluation, the NCPE positively noted that reporting on gender mainstreaming from Government departments/entities increased along the years, and that their knowledge of the gender mainstreaming strategy improved. However, the NCPE also noted that, overall, Government departments/entities are finding the implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy in their daily operations challenging.

The **Directory of Professional Women** is a free online database with profiles of professional women to give them visibility and more opportunities for appointment on boards and committees, and/or to assume decision-making positions in the labour market. As at July 2019, there are 263 professional women registered on the Directory.

In 2015, NCPE carried out a **mentoring programme** to thirty women aspiring to hold decision-making positions. Mentees were also given training on communication skills for leaders, self-confidence and assertiveness, critical thinking for decision-making skills, and emotionally intelligent leadership.

Following the mentoring programme, ‘*Empowering Career Development through Mentoring – Reflections on Mentoring for Aspiring Decision-Makers*’¹³ was published to showcase the planning and the outcome of NCPE’s mentoring programme, as well as providing detailed information on the participants’ experiences.

NCPE published **two research studies** with respect to women in decision-making. The first study ‘Gender-Balanced Representation in Decision-Making’ focused on gender-balanced representation in boardrooms of both the public and private sectors in Malta. The second study ‘Gender quotas and other measures’ analysed measures in boardrooms and gender electoral quotas, as well as any other relevant / accompanying measures aimed at achieving gender balance in decision-making. The studies were published on NCPE’s website: [https://ncpe.gov.mt/en/Pages/Projects and Specific Initiatives/Gender Balance in Decision Making.aspx](https://ncpe.gov.mt/en/Pages/Projects_and_Specific_Initiatives/Gender_Balance_in_Decision_Making.aspx)

Since the publication of the findings, NCPE has been working to **raise awareness** in order to enhance gender balance in decision-making positions. NCPE issued various articles on the printed media to promote the gender balance in decision-making

¹³[https://ncpe.gov.mt/en/Documents/Projects and Specific Initiatives/Gender Balance in Decision Making/Empowering Career Development through Mentoring.pdf](https://ncpe.gov.mt/en/Documents/Projects_and_Specific_Initiatives/Gender_Balance_in_Decision_Making/Empowering_Career_Development_through_Mentoring.pdf)

positions at the workplace, as well as posts on social media with targeted messages.

In addition, NCPE participated in the consultation process on a green paper ***Gender Balance in Parliament Reform Consultation Document*** compiled, following intensive research, by a technical committee which included NCPE Commissioner. The green paper proposes various positive measures to promote and enforce equality amongst men and women in parliament and address current hurdles. The green paper was officially presented during a Business Breakfast with the participation of an OSCE consultant, representatives of the Parliament of Malta and other stakeholders.

The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) carried out the following EU co-funded **projects**, which focus on gender equality at the workplace:

- **Prepare the Ground for Economic Independence** (2018 – 2020) focuses on addressing the gender gaps over the life cycle. The following are the main objectives of the project:
 - Increase awareness on both the gender pay gap and the gender pension gap;
 - Increase knowledge through various training and outreach initiatives;
 - Provide information to students on subject and future career choices;
 - Revamp and re-launch the Equality Mark Certification, following the development of an equal pay tool;
 - Empower union representatives with knowledge on equal pay for women and men.

- **Equality Beyond Gender Roles** (2016-2017) included a set of initiatives to raise awareness on the importance of men's role in gender equality, to break down stereotypes tied to traditional gender roles and to highlight the benefits of sharing family and domestic responsibilities by men and women:
 - A Business Breakfast for employers to discuss family friendly measures and flexible working arrangements;
 - Consultation Sessions for employers to debate issues concerning the provision and uptake of family friendly measures including the management of flexible working arrangements;
 - A drama activity 'Theatre in Education' reaching over 2,000 secondary school students on sharing caring and domestic duties in the family, challenging traditional gender stereotypes and educating students on work-life balance measures;
 - A roving van situated in 6 post-secondary and tertiary schools whereby 900 male students were asked for their feedback on the topics of the project which was subsequently uploaded on NCPE's Facebook page;
 - An event for post-secondary and tertiary students 'Equality beyond Uni': 6-hour programme including a photo exhibition, debates by employers, academics and students; the screening of the movie 'Burning Bikinis', and live music;
 - An open air event 'Noti Kkuluriti' for the general public with the aim of counteracting gender stereotypes in the Maltese language through a mixture of music, art and literature where prominent artists showcased work related to gender equality

- An online social media campaign to raise awareness on gender equality, equal economic independence, the sharing of domestic duties and care responsibilities by both men and women, and the importance of the creation of balance between work and private life.
- Video: 10 minute feature portraying 5 men role models (men who are benefiting or have benefitted from family-friendly measures to care for children or dependent adults): <https://vimeo.com/212548876/e0356310a7>
- **Gender Balance in Decision-Making** (2013 – 2015) sought to facilitate gender-balanced representation in decision-making positions. The main components with which the project was carried out were:
 - Two **research studies**: one analysing the gender-balanced representation in decision-making in various fields and what is hindering this balance; and another one on gender quotas and related measures that enhance the gender balance in the boardrooms and gender electoral quotas.
 - **Mentoring Programme** whereby women who wanted to advance in their careers were encouraged, guided, supported and motivated to experience decision-making roles.
 - The **Directory of Professional Women** to give visibility to these women for appointment in boards, committees and other decision-making positions.

NCPE awards the **Equality Mark** to the companies that foster gender equality, following an assessment of set criteria. Certified companies can use the Equality Mark logo in all their correspondence, including adverts in the printed media, thus raising further awareness on the Equality Mark and on NCPE's role in this regard. There are currently 91 certified organisations with over 22,600 employees working in certified conditions.

Article 24 - Right to protection in case of dismissal

Maltese law holds that the first six months of any employment shall be probationary employment unless otherwise agreed by both parties for a shorter probation period. In respect of employees holding technical, executive, administrative or managerial posts and whose wages are at least double the minimum wage, such probation period shall be one year unless otherwise specified in the contract of service or in the collective agreement.

During the probationary period, the employment may be terminated at will by either party without assigning any reason. However, a week's notice of the termination of employment shall be given to the other party in the case of an employee who has been in the employment of the same employer continuously for more than one month. Indeed, both the employer and the employee have the option to terminate the employment contract without giving a valid reason. This is not only beneficial for the employer but also for the employee since the latter can easily terminate his employment if he does not feel comfortable in the job or has found another more suitable job. In any case, an employee who is dismissed during probation still has a right of redress if he or

she claims unfair dismissal and will not lose the right to register for work. Such employees also have the right to claim unpaid wages should there be a discrepancy in pay given during the probation period.

Maltese law is in conformity with EU law and case law of the CJEU in that this does not constitute discrimination on the basis of age, since this is an objective and justified reason related to the dynamics of the labour market and considered ‘on the basis of legitimate aims’. As highlighted in our previous replies, persons recruited after reaching the pensionable age still enjoy the full protection of law, including in so far as dismissal is concerned.

Article 25 - Right of workers to protection of their claims in the event of the insolvency of their employer

The Guarantee Fund Regulations (S.L.452.84) stipulate that the Guarantee Fund can intervene when a request has been made for the commencement of proceedings for bankruptcy of the employer under Part III of the Commercial Code (Cap 13) and the Court has established that the employer’s undertaking or business has been definitely closed down and that the available assets are insufficient to cover the payment of the claims or the Court has either appointed a provisional liquidator or administrator, or a liquidator after a winding down order in terms of the Companies Act (Cap 386).