

**MALTA**

**Summary**

**Country Report on the Vocational Education and  
Training system, REFERNET Cedefop**

**and**

**Summary report on Vocational Education and Training  
(VET) for learners with Special Educational Needs  
(SEN)**



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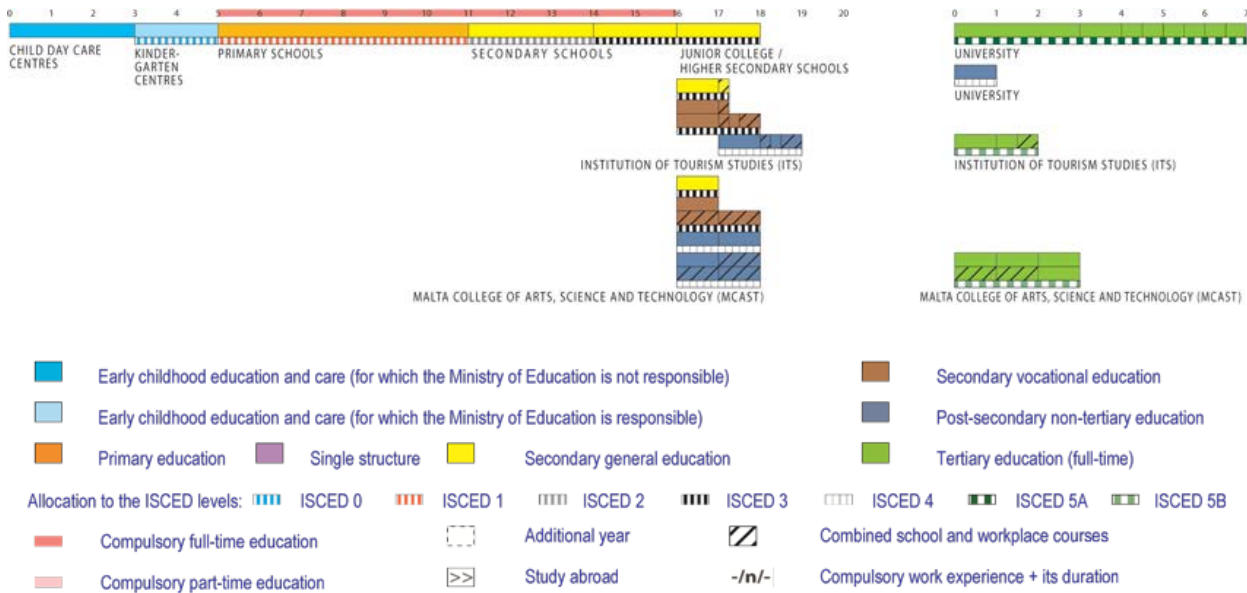


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# 1 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

## 1.1 Diagram of the education and training system



(Eurydice, 2013)

## The right to Education

Chapter 2 of the Maltese Constitution recognises the right to education and safeguards the rights of “capable and deserving students, even without financial resources” to “attain the highest grades of education”. To attain this end the State awards scholarships, and “gives contributions to the families and other provisions on the basis of competitive examinations”. The Constitution also states that “Disabled persons and persons incapable of work are entitled to education and vocational training”.

Chapter 327 of the Laws of Malta – the Education Act (1988) as amended in 2006 is the main legislative instrument which regulates education in Malta. Article 4b of the Act states “that is the duty of the State to ensure the existence of a system of schools and institutions accessible to all Maltese citizens catering for the full development of the whole personality including the ability of every person to work”. In respect of special needs education the Act states that: “... it shall be the duty of the State to provide resource centres, whose specialised role will be the provision for children with special educational needs who would benefit more from being in such centres than in mainstream schools, for such time as may be appropriate depending on their needs.” The Act defines special education needs in terms of a minor who “has special difficulties of a physical, sensory, intellectual or psychological nature.” The Maltese education actively encourages and implements an inclusive education system. The Education Act stipulates that: “The Minister shall ensure that the national policy on inclusive education is being applied in all schools and that there are available the resources, tools and facilities required so that this may be given as effectively as possible. Further to this “the Minister shall ensure the existence of specialised centres of resources which support schools and Colleges in the implementation of the policy of inclusive education, which give a service to students having specific learning difficulties, and others which provide



education and training services to students with individual educational needs whose educational entitlement may be better achieved in such centres.”

In view of the above, “the Minister may give such directives and make such regulations as may in his/her opinion be required to provide students with individual educational needs, including the multi-disciplinary assessment of their condition, the process of statementing, the formulating arrangements on the assessment, tests and examinations of concerned students, the programmes in specialised centres of resources or special schools, the application of therapies or the giving of medicines as prescribed by competent professional persons according to any law in force to students while at a school or centre, means for the reconsideration of and appeals from decisions on an application for the statementing of a student, and on any other matter connected with the implementation of the policy on inclusive education”. (Cap. 327 of the Laws of Malta)

Moreover, Chapter 413 of the Laws of Malta - *The Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act* enacted in 2000 - and subsequent amendments state that it shall be unlawful for an educational authority or institution to discriminate against an applicant for admission as a student on the grounds of his disability.

## **1.2 Objectives and priorities of the national development areas of Vocational and Educational Training (VET)**

The pre-budget document 2013 emphasises the need to increase investment in education and training as net contributors to job creation and economic advancement. “For the coming years government is committed to continue providing a strong policy framework centred on a job-rich recovery and a socio-economic model through an increased investment in education, training and employment as the main tools for success.” (p.20) One of the instruments that will be utilised is an increase in “opportunities for apprenticeships” at the same time it will review “the existing barriers which may hinder the complete success of this system. Thus, students will be given the possibility of training-on-the-job.” (p.23). Since young people are staying longer at school it is critical that the transition from school to the world of work is facilitated as much as possible to eliminate any barriers. Therefore schools must “act as bridges between the acquisition of knowledge and skills, the demands of the labour market and the needs of society. Such measures are to be co-ordinated at all levels of schooling in partnership with industry and the voluntary sector.”(p.24)

In order to enhance further the sustainability of jobs it is critical that “linkages are created between industries and training institutions (particularly MCAST) such that industry’s needs and requirements are met.” (p.13)

## **1.3 Institutional and legislative Framework for VET**

### **Compulsory Education**

The National Minimum Curriculum (NMC) for compulsory education - *Creating the Future Together* - published in 1999, underscores the importance of lifelong education as a means whereby “students emerge from the obligatory curricular experience with skills and attitudes that enable them to continue to learn and live effectively and productively in a world which, though exciting, is unpredictable” (p.27). As regards the world of work, it states that “Education must respond to the world of work in the same way that it responds to the requirements of democratic citizens”. Further it promotes the concept that “Education should be closely connected to the world of work and to



enable students to develop their skills and to transfer them to new job contexts whenever necessary” (p 28).

In 2008, a review process of the NMC was initiated and the new curriculum framework was published in 2011 as a consultation document. One of the key ideas in the new National Curriculum Framework (NCF) – *Towards a Quality Education for All* - is “the development of lifelong learners who are engaged and responsible citizens and active in the economy”.

One of the aims of the NCF is to develop learners who are capable of sustaining their chances in the world of work. More specifically this will require the development of employability competencies and capacity-building to achieve gainful employment and sustain:

- The ability to communicate effectively and confidently
- Competence in using new and information and communication technologies
- The ability to train, re-train and develop new skills
- Economic stability and independence
- Innovation and entrepreneurship
- The ability to readily embrace mobility and exchange
- A systems view of reality that facilitates their engagement in the promotion of sustainable development
- Active involvement in sustainable development issues. (2011, p.25)

In their report *MATSEC: Strengthening a National Examination System*, Grima, Camilleri, Chircop, Mallia and Ventura (2005, p.94) proposed the introduction of a vocational education component and certification for vocational subjects incorporated within the compulsory secondary curriculum. The Directorates of Education have thus embarked on a three-year VET pilot, starting in September 2011 and ending in July 2014. The evaluation of the pilot project will provide information regarding decisions related to the national implementation of VET programmes in all secondary schools. Four vocational subject areas – that are in line with Malta’s economic and strategic priorities – namely Engineering, Hospitality, IT and Health and Social Care – are being piloted in 10 schools – 6 state and 4 non-state schools - from September 2011 as option subjects in Form 3, alongside the other option subjects. The evaluation of each of these subjects is on going and is not based on written examinations.. The qualifications in these four VET areas are pitched at Level 3 on the Malta Qualifications Framework, equivalent to SEC Grades 1-5. This vocational pilot programme will provide information regarding the decision to extend the implementation of VET programmes nationally in all secondary schools. The ultimate objective is to develop a home grown VET qualification delivery model.

So, for the moment, vocational education and training is provided as a pathway for students at the end of compulsory education



## Further Education

In further education<sup>1</sup>, VET is provided mainly by the Malta College of Science and Technology (MCAST) and the Institution of Tourism Studies (ITS). The Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) provides VET education outside the formal education setup.

MCAST was established by public deed in 2000 but its legal status was further strengthened by means of the 2006 amendments to the Education Act, with the mission to “provide studies and training for education in the vocational and professional sectors”. The College must ensure “the implementation of the principles of inclusive education by providing an equitable access to all persons in full respect of any diversity”. It aims to “provide universally accessible vocational and professional education and training with an international dimension, responsive to the needs of the individual and the economy.” The objectives of the national development areas of VET are mirrored in Article 89.6a of the Education Act which states that MCAST shall promote “Malta’s vision as a hub of cultural, industrial, commercial and services activity for other regions of the world and in particular for the Euro-Mediterranean region”. Article 89.1 of the Education Act spells out the functions of the College in that it has to “ensure the existence of educational institutions accessible to all, and to establish such facilities and such programmes of education and training, and of work and practical experience which the College may deem necessary to provide all with the opportunity to qualify in trades, skills, artisan or technical or commercial activities and in the professions according to the socio-economic needs of the country in a lifelong learning curriculum framework and holistic personal development”.

However, the permeability pathways for VET students at MCAST to accede to the University of Malta are still to be established. “The country’s talent base is its most important asset for future economic growth and development. Continuing to promote educational advancement and training will play a foundational component in advancing Malta’s economic future. .... the University of Malta and the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology are invaluable resources, however more can be done to strengthen the connections between these institutions and the emergent workforce and with its training requirements for Malta’s targeted industries” (Vision 2015 ppt p.10) As from 2010 MCAST has introduced higher education<sup>2</sup> qualification in a number of its institutes.

Legal Notice 131 of 2012 - The Institution of Tourism Studies Regulations, 2012 - was published to regulate and provide for matters related to the Institution of Tourism Studies in accordance with article 132(2) of the Education Act as a body corporate having a distinct legal personality. The Institution of Tourism Studies (ITS) aims at developing “persons through quality learning to achieve excellence in tourism” (L.N. 131 of 2012, Art. 7.1). Besides offering practical experience abroad in many of its courses. ITS is succeeding also to open permeability pathways to higher education to its students by cooperating closely with the Institute of Tourism Studies with the University of Malta

The Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) is the national employment and training agency. The ETC was established by means of Chapter 343 of the Laws of Malta – The Employment and

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<sup>1</sup> The Education (Amendment) Act, 2012 defines further education as “all non-compulsory formal, non-formal and informal learning which serves to obtain a national qualification classified up to and including level 4 of the Malta Qualifications Framework, or a foreign qualification at a comparable level.”

<sup>2</sup> The Education (Amendment) Act, 2012 defines higher education as “all non-compulsory formal, non-formal and informal learning or research which serves to obtain a national qualification classified at level 5 of the Malta Qualifications Framework or higher, or a foreign qualification at a comparable level.”



Training Services Act 1990 and subsequent amendments. It provides “training courses and other schemes for the purpose of assisting persons desiring to fit themselves for gainful occupation, or desiring to improve or update the quality of their knowledge and skills for the same purpose”. It aims to enhance “employability by recommending policies and implementing initiatives aimed at empowering, assisting and training jobseekers to facilitate their entry or re-entry into the active employment market, promoting workforce development through skills and competency development, and by assisting employers in their recruitment and training needs.” The ETC provides a number of schemes to help both those who are unemployed and seeking employment as well to those who are newcomers to the labour market. These include the Work Trial Scheme and Bridging the Gap Scheme. The latter scheme is for persons in disadvantaged situations. Another scheme run by the ETC is the Youth Employment Programme (YEP) which has been specifically designed for the needs of the young jobseeker (16 to 24 years of age). The ETC also runs the *I Can Employability Programm*, which is part financed by the European Social Fund and is available to all actively employed, inactive, or registered unemployed individuals eligible to work. One of the main aims of this programme is to reintegrate registered unemployed or inactive individuals into the labour market through training programmes. Further training is available in the field of basic skills, office related subjects, IT, technical courses and care working courses amongst others. It also offers actively employed individuals the opportunity to further their existing skills in order to adapt to changing labour market requirements.

This programme also provides the opportunity for men and women who have been absent from the formal economy for a relatively long period of time to regain their confidence and brush up on their skills through a series of training programmes that will ultimately facilitate their reintegration to employment. This will be achieved through promoting a lifecycle approach to training and education that is also expected to address gender-based segregation of subjects. The Corporation also administers in partnership with MCAST and ITS two apprenticeship schemes: the Extended Skills Training Scheme (ESTS) and the Technician Apprenticeship Scheme (TAS).

## **Social Partners**

Both MCAST and ITS as well as ETC work closely with the employers and the industry in formulating courses which meet the needs of the changing economic landscape.

## **IVET Policies**

The Technician Apprenticeship Scheme TAS (Legal Notice 82, 1990) leads the apprentice to obtain an occupational competence at technician level (level 4 according to the MQF Level Descriptors). This means that at the end of the apprenticeship, the apprentice will have the competence to supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work.

The Extended Skills Training Scheme ESTS (Legal Notice 73, 1998) offers a wide range of opportunities to young persons willing to learn a trade or skill at craftsman level (level 3 according to the MQF Level Descriptors). This means that at the end of the apprenticeship you will have the competence to take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study and adapt your own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems.

The Employment and Industrial Relations Act Chapter 452 of the Laws of Malta was enacted in December 2002 to consolidate with amendments the Conditions of Employment (Regulation) Act (Cap 135) and the Industrial Relations Act (Cap 266).





Legal Notice 347 of 2005 entitled *Malta Qualifications Council Regulations 2005* provided the foundations of Malta's Qualification Framework<sup>3</sup> and established the principle of level descriptors for nationally recognised qualifications. In June 2007 after nearly two years of widespread consultation with all stakeholders, the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) was launched. The MQF consists of an eight-level qualifications framework and level descriptors. These cover both the National and European dimensions and structures in education.

The National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE) was established in 2006 to consult and advise Government the Minister responsible for Education, to engage in a structured dialogue with all institutions and inform the public on issues relating to sustainable development of the further and higher education sectors to meet the needs of society. Its main functions in accordance with the Education Act Cap. 327 of the Laws of Malta, include:

- (a) ascertaining the needs and the aspirations of further and higher education institutions;
- (b) informing the public of issues connected with sustainable development of further and higher education sectors in Malta in order to meet the needs of society; and
- (c) providing advice to Government on any matter which is connected with the further and higher education sectors.

In the Education (Amendment) Act, 2012, the functions of the Malta Qualifications Council passed on the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE). The new responsibilities for NCFHE are enacted also in the following Legal Notices:

- Legal Notice 294/2012: Malta Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning Regulations;
- Legal Notice 295/2012: Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning Regulations;
- Legal Notice 296/2012: Further and Higher Education (Licensing, Accreditation and Quality Assurance) Regulations.

## 1.4 Type of teacher and trainer occupations in VET

VET is mainly provided at MCAST and ITS, those teaching in these institutions are in their main either Assistant Lecturers or Lecturers. Some of them come from industry while others come from formal educational institutions. Those not having a teaching qualification follow an in-service course in pedagogy as part of their professional development - the Post-graduate Course in Vocational Education and Training. This one-year course gives participants the opportunity to develop practical teaching methodologies based on researched knowledge. Those completing this course can opt to complete their Master degree at the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft, a world-renowned German research institution that undertakes applied research of direct utility to private and public enterprise in Germany. They may also follow the BTEC Certificate in Further Education Teaching. This is an eighteen-month intensive course in pedagogy at further education level specifically designed for a vocational and training institution. The certificate is offered to Assistant Lecturers as part of their continuous professional development.

There are also some teaching staff who are designated as facilitators working at MCAST. These are attached to the Inclusive Education Unit and assist students with developmental delay.

IVET trainers facilitate learning outside the formal classroom or VET institution-based workshops by providing support to VET students and apprentices during their work placement.

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<sup>3</sup> The Education (Amendment) Act, 2012 defines the *Malta Qualifications Framework* as “the national framework for lifelong learning, being the national instrument for the development and classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria, established through descriptors and applicable to a different set of levels, as provided by this Act or any regulation made under this Act.”



## 1.5 Guidance and Counselling for learning, career and employment in IVET

Within compulsory education the Student Services Department within the Directorate for Educational Services is responsible for the Education Psycho-Social Services offered to students and their parents. One of these services is the Guidance and Counselling Service. This service is provided by College Counsellors, Career Advisors and Guidance Teachers. This service is provided both at primary and secondary levels of education. Students are assisted in their choice of subjects at the end of their second year in secondary education as well with their choice of their educational or career pathway. College Career Advisors and Trainee Career Advisors support students in career education. Counsellors help students in their personal problems and may refer students to other professionals within the service such as school psychologists, family therapists, social workers or with National Support Agencies. The Student Services Department also organises an annual career expo whereby students can have first-hand experience in careers and education pathways that are available to them once they finish compulsory education. To ensure a smoother transition from compulsory education to further education and/or the workplace, career guidance is provided to students in their final year of compulsory education. This includes visits to industry and further education institutions, seminars on the job interview and the preparation of a c.v. as well as talks by speakers from the various job opportunities and educational institutions.

During the pre-final year (4<sup>th</sup> year of secondary education) students are given the opportunity of a week-long job shadowing experience in various workplaces. This provides students with a brief work-place experience which is a further opportunity to help them in their choice of career and in developing employability skills.

Both MCAST and ITS provide a guidance and counselling service to their students. The MCAST Team of Counsellors and Career Advisors works together to run and offer the optimum service both to prospective students and their parents and to MCAST students following courses in the nine different Institutes and at the Gozo Centre.

### *Vocational Guidance*

Malta has recently experienced a huge increase in educational opportunities in all sectors and at different levels. There is also a shift from traditional jobs in the manufacturing sector to entrepreneurial opportunities in the services industry. These changes in the job market underline the need for an informed choice regarding career pathways.

In a College like MCAST, where students are trained for the career of their choice, vocational guidance is of utmost importance. Students who have taken an informed decision and are sure of their choice need support and encouragement to go on along the chosen path. Students who are not very sure or have found difficulties along the training course need to be aware of alternative paths. MCAST Career Advisers assist students through this process of development by giving them individual appointments to help them explore alternative career paths and decide on the right one in order to reach their goals.

Moreover students who are not fulfilled by their choice of study programme at MCAST or at any other post secondary / tertiary institution, need to clarify their aspirations. MCAST Career Advisers explore with them alternative study programmes available at MCAST or elsewhere. Adults who are considering to further their studies or are searching for alternative careers may also make use of MCAST career guidance services.



## *Personal Counselling*

Counselling can be used as a vehicle for students to get more out of life. Personal counselling at MCAST is more growth oriented and focuses on the future, on the goals that provide direction in life and on the ability of the students to create their own destiny.

Students are encouraged to seek help and make use of the counselling service. In some challenges encountered in life, support, encouragement and understanding can help the students cope better with their emotions. Counselling is effective to the degree that students, through Student-Counsellor interaction, are in a better position to manage their challenging situations and / or develop the unused resources and opportunities of their lives more effectively.

The process includes:

- Identifying, exploring and clarifying their challenging situations and unused opportunities.
- Helping students develop goals, objectives or agendas based on an action-oriented understanding of the problem situation - establish priorities.
- Helping students develop action strategies for accomplishing goals, opportunities that will make a difference.
- Helping students act on what they have learnt both within and outside the counselling session.

MCAST Counsellors believe that their students have the energy and it is up to all adults involved to remove constraints and let them maximize their potential for their personal satisfaction and to bring positive benefits for society.

## *Group Activities*

Counsellors see both to the individual needs of students as well as to the group / class needs. In all classes and workshops especially, it is important that students help each other and work as a team. This teamwork leads to optimum individual and class results. The MCAST teamwork experience prepares students to adapt and collaborate with their colleagues when, in future, they will implement their aspirations in their chosen careers.

## *Enrichment Groups*

Life experiences can be many and vary from ones that occur directly to us, to those that are experienced by our friends or family and still affect us. Enrichment groups help students work through such encounters in a way that they can become richer and more empowered persons.

These groups are offered throughout the year and involve up to ten students working with a group facilitator (counsellor) in weekly sessions of just one hour each. The characteristics of group work enable a type of interaction that is not possible in one-to-one work. Thus, the experience can also be a highly respected manner of addressing emotional distress.

The topics dealt with depend on students' requests. Some examples are sexual abuse, learning difficulties/ dyslexia, relationship breakdowns and ADHD.



### *Helping Skills - Student-2-Student*

MCAST encourages its students to develop their full potential by supporting them in acquiring the skills which will fit them to make a valuable contribution to society and to be active, thoughtful learners in their life. This certified course is organized annually, and is delivered by the College Counsellors. It consists of 30 hours of training and is open to all full-time students at MCAST. Participating students have the opportunity to increase their communication skills, creativity, reflectiveness and ethical responsibility amongst others. They generally obtain an increase in confidence when they find themselves talking to friends who confide in them.

Following this training, College Counsellors organize and coordinate a Student-2-Student network. This consists of a voluntary network wherein students who would have completed the training course in Helping Skills can apply to become a volunteer in this network. It involves a variety of interpersonal helping behaviours assumed by students who undertake a helping role with others. This network is regularly supervised by the College Counsellors. Counsellors offer their services all through the year to encourage students persevere in their coursework until they finally reach their goals.

Career guidance at the ITS is provided by the registrar's office. Students are given advice about career prospects and educational pathways. There is also the service of a Counsellor who supports students with personal issues.

Job seekers who register with the ETC are offered a range of services provided by the Corporation. Upon registering, the individual will provide personal details as well as her/his job preference and details of any permits or licences held. Subsequently the individual attends a Job Search Seminar and assigned to an Employment Advisor who supports and guides the job seeker in the search for work and training opportunities. The advisor together with the job seeker draws up a personal action plan which includes those steps that one has to take with the aim of enhancing the employability of the job seeker and the job search activity. During this time the job seeker is referred to training programmes or to employment schemes or other initiatives. These are important activities which increase the chances of finding employment and thus the job seeker must participate actively in these activities. Individuals who do not participate may be taken off the register. On first registering with the ETC job seekers are issued with a magnetic card by means of which they register at a stipulated time and place and receive chit messages of upcoming activities organised for them.

### **1.6 Funding for initial vocational education and training**

Funding of MCAST and ITS is centrally-based. Each year during the budget estimates funds are voted for the two institutions under the Ministry of Education and Employment budget. These funds cover both recurrent and capital expenditure.



## 1.7 References

Education (Amendment) Act, 2012: National Commission for Further and Higher Education.

Legal Notice 294/2012: Malta Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning Regulations.

Legal Notice 295/2012: Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning Regulations.

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## **2 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET) FOR LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

### **2.1 Population**

The target group consists of learners with SEN, between 16 and 25 years of age, who have special difficulties of a physical, sensory, intellectual or psychological nature. This is in line with the official definition given in the Agency document “Special Needs Education – Country Data, 2010”.

In Malta the compulsory school leaving age is 16 years, that is, after completion of secondary education. All VET courses, programmes and employment support services are post 16.

### **2.2 Organisation and Provision of Vet programmes**

#### *2.2.1 IVET system options for SEN learners: lower and upper secondary levels, apprenticeship training and other youth programmes*

Inclusive VET options for SEN learners are:

1. Mainstream courses run by the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST). Individualised support is provided by the Inclusive Education Unit within MCAST. In 2010/11 the number of students with SEN enrolled in these courses was 328.
2. Mainstream courses run by the Institute for Tourism Studies.
3. Apprenticeship schemes run by the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC), which is the national employment training provider.
4. Mainstream employment training and support programmes provided by ETC.

#### *2.2.2 Different types of educational/VET settings*

- a) Mainstream educational/VET settings, where learners with SEN are included in mainstream VET courses,
  - b) Special VET units attended by learners with SEN within mainstream educational/VET settings,
  - c) Special educational/VET settings addressed to learners with SEN.
  - d) Others
- a) Mainstream educational/VET settings, where learners with SEN are included in mainstream VET courses, are provided by MCAST, ITS and ETC
- b) The Pathway course is run by MCAST for students with an intellectual disability. It is a Special VET Unit within a mainstream educational/VET setting.

Some years ago ITS had a successful project involving training for students with intellectual disabilities. A new special course is expected to be included in the institute’s prospectus.

c) As a result of The Special Schools Reform, a Resource Centre for Young Adult Education was set up. In September 2010, a new programme for students with severe intellectual disabilities who have completed the compulsory education (16+) was launched.

The ETC through its Supported Employment Division provides an employment support service for youngsters with special needs to help them join the labour market.

d) Training and support programmes for learners with SEN are also organised by NGOs in collaboration with ETC



2.2.3 *The curricula of VET programmes, the assessment procedures, types of qualifications and assessment criteria (e.g. flexibility on curricula composition and individual adaptations, diplomas etc.)*

MCAST Pathway Programme.

The Pathway to independent Living Programme is a two year full time course intended to offer training in independent living skills to students with mild to moderate learning disabilities. Students will develop the knowledge and practical skills needed to gain and maintain employment. Assessment is ongoing throughout the course and students are required to participate in suitable work placements.

Young Adult Education Resource Centre Programme.

The programme, which runs over 6 years, aims to prepare students for an independent and active adult life. The focus is on the enhancement of the students' independence through Personal Development learning experiences including community based activities. The programme also includes vocational preparation sessions to help students enhance their employability skills.

Since both programmes were recently introduced, assessment procedures, qualifications and assessment criteria are still being developed. Both programmes focus on the individual needs of students with the aim of facilitating their transition to further studies, training and/or employment.

## **2.3 VET programmes and employment**

*2.3.1 Strategies and practices used to match the local labour market needs with the skills acquired by learners in the course of the VET programmes*

MCAST, ITS and the ETC maintain a strong link with industry in order to match their practices with the local labour market needs. Representatives from industry form part of their Boards of Directors.

The Pathway Course and the Resource Centre programme cater for students with SEN. Courses do not aim at the acquisition of specific job competences but focus on enhancing the students' independence and employability. For Pathway students, work exposure helps them practice specific work routines that will eventually help them find a related job opportunity. Vocational preparation helps Resource Centre students to acquire basic employability skills.

## **2.4 Data (relating to learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 years old and enrolled in VET programmes for the academic year 2010/2011 and relating to their transition to employment)**

*2.4.1 Data on the number of learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 years old who are enrolled in VET programmes, at national and/or local level.*

In 2010/11 the total number of learners with SEN (16 -25 years of age) who were enrolled in VET programmes was 611.

*2.4.2 Data on how many of these learners are enrolled in mainstream VET programmes, how many are enrolled in special units within mainstream VET settings and how many are enrolled in special VET programmes.*

In 2010/11 learners with SEN (16 -25 years of age) were enrolled in VET programmes as follows:

### Mainstream VET programmes

328 in MCAST mainstream Courses

169 in ETC training courses & employment support

**(497 in total)**



## Special VET programmes

34 in MCAST Pathway programme

80 in Resource Centre programme

**(114 in total)**

*2.4.3 Data on the number and percentage of learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 who are enrolled in VET programmes, in comparison with the number and percentage of the general youth population of the same age enrolled in VET programmes, at national and/or local level*

The total number of young adults (16 and 25 years of age) who were enrolled in VET programmes (MCAST, Resource Centre and ETC) was 14,870. This included 611 learners with SEN i.e. **4.1%**.

*2.4.4 Brief definition and explanation of “drop out”. Data concerning the drop out rate of learners with SEN aged between 14 and 25 who are enrolled in VET programmes, in comparison with the drop out rate of the general youth population, at national and/or local level.*

Our definition of a “drop out” is a student who does not finish the course of study he/she was following.

In 2010/11 the “drop out” rate was as follows:

### Students with SEN

MCAST mainstream courses	Not Available
MCAST Pathway course	3 out of 34 i.e. 8.8%
Resource Centre programme	2 out of 80 i.e. 2.5%
ETC mainstream training courses	2 out of 169 i.e. 1.2%

### General

MCAST courses	713 out of 6,072 i.e. 11.7 %
ETC courses	227 out of 8,718 i.e. 2.6 %

*2.4.5 Data on the transition rate of learners with SEN from VET to employment in comparison with the transition rate of the general youth population from VET to employment at national and/or local level*

Students who had a successful transition to employment after completing their studies/training in 2011 were as follows:

### Students with SEN

MCAST mainstream courses ..... Records are not available

MCAST Pathway programme..... 9 out of 13

Resource Centre programme..... Not applicable\*

\*This new programme was introduced in September 2010 and students from ex-Special Schools and some students from the mainstream Secondary Schools joined the programme. The programme duration is 7 years i.e. until students reach the age of 22. No student has as yet completed this programme.

At the end of the scholastic year, the students (ex-special schools) who reached the age of 22 were retained and thus there were no transitions to employment as yet.

ETC mainstream training courses.....51 out of 169

General youth population





MCAST courses..... Records are not available

ETC courses..... 2,124 out of 8,718. Persons who were attending training in 2011 could have also continued with their training or dropped out.

Please note that the number of persons employed refers to persons who were still in employment as at 26th April 2012.

## **2.5 Legislation and policy**

### *2.5.1 Brief description of existing legislation*

#### Legal framework

In Malta the rights of disabled persons are protected mainly by the Equal Opportunities (persons with disabilities) Act 1 of 2000, Chapter 413. The law prohibits all forms of disability discrimination in employment, education, access, provision of goods or services, and accommodation. The law defines also reasonable accommodation and lays down the functions and composition of the National Commission for Persons with Disability (KNPD). This government agency is the watchdog for disability issues.

Other legislation in force to protect disabled persons includes:

Chapter 210 Persons with Disability (Employment) Act

Chapter 342 Employment and Training Services Act

Chapter 318 Social Security Act

The right of every Maltese citizen, without any distinction, to receive education and instruction is enacted by the Education Act Chapter 327

It is the duty of the state to ensure the existence of a system of schools and institutions accessible to all citizens catering for the full development of the whole personality including the ability of every person to work.

#### International legal framework

Being an EU member state, Malta adheres to EU legislation, directives and action plans.

Malta is expected to shortly ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability.

#### Institutional framework

Education, training and transition to employment of students with SEN fall within the remits of the Ministry of Education & Employment and the Ministry of Social Policy.

In Education, Training and Employment sectors, the Directorate for Educational Services (DES), the University of Malta (UoM), the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) and the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) are the executive arms of the Ministry of Education & Employment.

The National Commission for Persons with Disability (KNPD), the Directorate for Social Security, The Foundation for Social Welfare Services and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) who provide special educational programmes and/or employment training and support services for persons with disability, fall under the Ministry for Social Policy.

*2.5.2 Main objectives and priorities of the national/regional policy relating to VET for learners with SEN and the transition from VET to employment*

1. Ministry of Education: Inclusive education – policy regarding students with disability. 15.01.2000. This policy document describes the function of an individualised education



programme (IEP). It also regulates the setting up, composition, functions, procedures of the statementing panel, and the Appeals Board.

2. Special Schools Reform Document: This guides the transformation of the last remaining special schools into Resource Centres, one of which is the Young Adult Education Resource Centre at Wardija.
3. The KNPD National Policy on Education of Persons with Disability: This lays down the guiding principles and sets out the provisions needed to safeguard the rights of the students with SpN.
4. KNPD National Policy on Disabled Persons and Employment: This gives an overview of the employment situation and recommends a number of measures to be put in place.

### *2.5.3 Roles and responsibilities within the institutional framework*

Malta is a parliamentary democracy. The House of Representatives enacts legislation and approves the Government budget. It is assisted by a number of House Committees such as the one for Social Affairs. Ministries set out policies, direct and provide funds to directorates, agencies, boards and commissions falling within the respective remits, to implement their policies. Interdepartmental committees ensure coordination and ministerial committees and working groups are set up to develop policies and make recommendations.

The Student Services Department within the DES, is responsible for the provision of specialised support services to facilitate inclusive education. It also caters for the management and development of the newly set up Resource Centres.

The University of Malta (UoM), the national VET provider (MCAST) and ITS, also have the duty to facilitate inclusion of SEN in mainstream courses of studies and in the case of MCAST to provide special courses (Pathway Course)

The Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) is the national provider of the training services. It caters for the needs of persons with a disability through its supported employment division and schemes to encourage employers to engage persons with disability.

The Ministry of Social Policy, and the Ministry of Education & Employment, encourage and financially assist NGOs working in the disability sector. Both DES and ETC have service agreements with a number of NGOs, to run specialized VET programmes and/or employment support services.

### *2.5.4 The actors involved in improving standards and evaluating the VET programmes on offer for learners with SEN, relating to the job market*

Different measures are used to improve standards and evaluate VET programmes and employment support services for students with SEN. For example, MCAST has an Inclusion Committee to monitor the implementation of the College inclusive policy, monitor student support services and developments in the Pathways course.

A coordinating committee (K16+) set up by KNPD, includes all representatives of educational, training and service providers for young adults. This committee meets regularly to discuss developments in the provision of services to young adults with SEN. The Ministry of Education & Employment, and the Ministry of Social Policy are represented in national bodies. Ministerial representatives sit on Board of Directors of all the relevant government agencies and institutions.

KNPD plays a very important role in this regard. This Commission receives and follows up complaints and is authorised to initiate investigations on alleged infringements under the provisions of the Equal Opportunities law.



The National Audit Office has recently published a performance audit on the employment opportunities for registered disabled persons. This audit reports on the effectiveness of the initiatives taken by the ETC to enhance and sustain the participation rate of persons with disability in the labour market. The report also includes recommendations to help the Corporation address the strategic, management and operational concerns raised by the performance audit.

## **2.6 VET teachers, trainers and other professionals**

### *2.6.1 Information on the VET staff (teachers, trainers, career counsellors, transition officers etc.)*

- A) the qualifications required
- B) initial training
- C) in-service training possibilities

The professional training course for University students reading for B Educ. i.e. future teachers, includes a module re special education needs students.

The Vocational Teacher Training unit within MCAST runs a professional training course leading to a Certificate in Education for the College lecturing staff. MCAST also organises in-service training courses.

The Directorate for Student Services organises induction and in-service training for Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) who support classes where there are special needs students. To progress in their careers, LSAs need to successfully complete a diploma course at the University.

KNPD runs short courses on disability awareness.

Career guidance practitioners are generally graduates in education or psychology who have obtained a Postgraduate Diploma in Lifelong Guidance and Development.

Youth workers qualified in Youth and Community Studies are being deployed in post 16 educational institutions.

The ETC assessment team includes professionals such as Occupational Psychologists and Occupational Therapists. Psychology and/or HR Development graduates are recruited for posts of employment support coordinators/managers.

### *2.6.2 Information on the careers/employment guidance and counselling services offered to learners with SEN who are enrolled in VET programmes*

The Directorate for Educational Services provides career guidance services in its schools.

At MCAST a team of counsellors and career advisers help their students and parents. Students with SEN following mainstream and special courses benefit from such services.

The ETC Career Advisors within the Supported Employment division give assistance and job search guidance to persons with disability who are seeking employment.

The new Resource Centre programme aims to equip students with SEN with an individual vocational profile so as to help them move on to employment training and support programmes leading to job placement in open work settings or alternative employment opportunities.

## **2.7 Funding**

- a) Financial support and/or incentives for learners with SEN and families
- b) Financial support and/or incentives for companies to employ young people with SEN

a) All learners with SEN and their families receive disability social benefits.



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Students with SEN attending MCAST and ITS receive a stipend like other students attending post secondary and VET institutions.

Trainees participating in the ETC work exposure “Bridging the Gap” scheme (definite duration) receive an allowance. ETC also provides job coaching support as needed.

During training, specialised transport is made available to clients as needed

b) ETC runs an Employment Aid Programme

Through this programme, employers will receive a subsidy equivalent to 50% of the wage costs i.e. half the basic salary excluding bonuses, allowances, commission or overtime together with half the employer’s national insurance.

The aid intensity of all Target Groups is 52 weeks except for registered disabled persons (RDPs) where the assistance offered is of a maximum of 156 weeks. Aid is offered for 3 years or until September 2013 - whichever comes first.

However, in the case of persons with disability the subsidy will rise to 75% of the actual wage costs for the first year, and 60% of the subsequent second and third year. This subsidy will be offered for up to three years, or until September 2013 - whichever comes first. In such instances, employers will be requested to retain the disabled person in employment for a further one year after the subsidy period. Furthermore, employers who engage an ETC Registered Disabled Person are eligible to claim their part of Social Security Contribution for the first 3 years of employment.