

COUNTRY SYSTEM MAPPING

Country Report: Malta

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education



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You may cite this publication as follows: European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2023. *Country System Mapping Country Report: Malta*. Odense, Denmark

The information in this document was current in May 2023.

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	5
SECTION 1. BACKGROUND TO THE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM	9
SECTION 2. THE EDUCATION SYSTEM	12
SECTION 3. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK	26
SECTION 4. SYSTEM GOVERNANCE	38
SECTION 5. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY	42
SECTION 6. STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION, CO-OPERATION AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION	47
SECTION 7. FINAL COMMENTS AND REFLECTIONS	51



INTRODUCTION

The goal of the Country System Mapping (CSM) activity is to identify, map and analyse the key features that impact the effective implementation of inclusive education policy in practice in all Agency member countries' education systems. In a departure from previous thematic activities undertaken by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (the Agency), CSM considers the **whole** education system from the perspective of implementing policy for inclusive education in practice. However, within this system-wide view, there is a focus on the specific priorities Representative Board members (RBs) have already identified in relation to monitoring and evaluation, cross-sector working and quality assurance.

The main output from the CSM work is a systematic mapping of information on each country's education system.

Information from the individual CSM Country Reports has been analysed in two ways:

- **Thematic Analysis** to highlight issues (challenges and opportunities) emerging from the reports to use as the starting point for the Agency's Thematic Country Cluster Activities (TCCA).

Challenges for inclusion are defined as things the country needs to work on to reach an inclusive education system. Strengths for inclusion are things that encourage and reinforce inclusive practice in the country and could potentially be shown as an example to other countries.

- **Mapping** to inform TCCA groupings, based on the system structures and processes countries have (or do not have) in common.

The agreed goal for the mapping element of the CSM analysis work was to highlight parameters, or comparative factors, that indicate which country systems are structured and/or working in different – or similar – ways.

The information from the CSM work will be used within the remainder of the [Multi-Annual Work Programme 2021–2027](#) (MAWP). As of autumn 2024, country cluster activities will be organised which are closely aligned to individual country approaches to key issues for inclusive education, as well as system structures and processes countries have in common.



Work within a shared vision for inclusive education systems

All Agency work is aligned with the [position on inclusive education systems](#). This agreed position states that the ultimate vision for inclusive education systems is to ensure that:

All learners of any age are provided with meaningful, high-quality educational opportunities in their local community, alongside their friends and peers ([European Agency, 2022, p. 1](#))¹.

Agency work focuses on supporting the development of inclusive education systems in member countries to ensure every learner's right to inclusive and equitable educational opportunities. This aim is directed at all learners. However, all aspects of Agency work clearly recognise that some groups of learners face obstacles and barriers that mean they should be considered **learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education in mainstream schools in their local community, alongside their friends and peers**.

UNESCO identifies the possible obstacles and barriers to education learners may face as arising from:

... gender, remoteness, wealth, disability, ethnicity, language, migration, displacement, incarceration, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, religion and other beliefs and attitudes ([UNESCO, 2020, p. 4](#))².

Many learners may face a combination of these factors and the intersectional (inter-connected) nature of learners' needs must be acknowledged. Every learner has their own unique experiences of discrimination and/or barriers to learning. Everything and anything that can marginalise learners and increase their chances of exclusion from mainstream inclusive education must be understood and recognised.

All Agency member countries are committed to working towards ensuring more inclusive education systems. They do so in different ways, depending on their past and current contexts and histories. Inclusive education systems are a vital component within the wider aspiration of more socially inclusive societies that all countries align themselves with, both ethically and politically. However, all Agency work clearly recognises that countries have differences in their ways of thinking about, identifying and making provision for different groups of learners who may be considered vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education.

All countries have undergone key conceptual changes in their thinking and policy priorities for developments as they move towards inclusive education as an approach that ensures high-quality education for all learners. Across countries, the first shift was made from the concept of special educational needs to special needs education. This shift represented a focus away from the learner (identified as having special educational needs) towards a focus on the provision they receive (special needs education for learners who experience difficulties at school). The term 'special needs education' has also widened the focus

¹ European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2022. *Agency Position on Inclusive Education Systems*. Odense, Denmark

² UNESCO, 2020. *Global Education Monitoring Report: Inclusion and education: all means all*. Paris: UNESCO



beyond learners with disabilities to include learners who appeared to be failing in school for a wide variety of reasons.

It is worth emphasising here that there have never been agreed definitions of the concepts of special educational needs or special needs education that can be consistently used across countries. The groups of learners considered as having special educational needs which require additional provision largely differ across countries.

The most recent shifts emphasise a move away from a concern with types of special needs or the categories a learner may or may not fall into, towards thinking of inclusion and inclusive education as an approach for all learners. They emphasise the barriers experienced by learners and focus overall on learners who may be vulnerable to exclusion from educational opportunities for different reasons.

Agency work focuses on supporting the development of inclusive education systems in its member countries to ensure every learner's right to inclusive and equitable educational opportunities. This aim is directed at all learners, while recognising the need to specifically address learners who may be vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education.

Overview of the Country System Mapping

The information collected in the CSM activity aims to provide evidence of and reflection on **where countries currently are** in their inclusive thinking, policy and provision for all learners, but in particular for those learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education.

CSM work focuses on the **whole** education system and how certain structures, mechanisms and processes may impact on the implementation of policy for inclusive education in practice. It aims to get insights into how the needs of all learners – including individuals or groups of learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education – are being considered. Many questions refer to learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education. Countries have opportunities to clarify what 'learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education' means for them and their systems.

However, it is acknowledged that it may not be possible for countries to provide information covering all learners and all learner groups.

The questions specifically focus on four priorities RBs have identified for wider future Agency work in relation to:

- Monitoring and evaluation
- Cross-sector working
- Quality assurance
- Effective policy implementation.

There are six main sections:

Section 1. Background to the inclusive education system

Section 2. Overview of the education system

Section 3. Legislative and policy framework



Section 4. System governance

Section 5. Quality assurance and accountability

Section 6. Stakeholder collaboration, co-operation and effective communication

Where countries have provided additional comments and reflections, these are included in a separate Section 7.

In each of these sections, relevant information was collected covering International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) levels 02 (pre-primary education) to 3 (upper-secondary education).

All questions were rephrased into statements for the purpose of this report.

System description

Sections 1 to 6 include specific questions that aim to provide a factual description of key aspects of the legislation and policy framework for inclusive education in the country. The system information aims to accurately describe the relevant policy frameworks in countries.

Different types of questions are used to collect information that describes important system features – structures, mechanisms and processes – relating to governance, monitoring, quality assurance and collaboration. The descriptive information includes sources of original material and, where possible, is supported with quotes and citations from relevant policy documents and published work.

The descriptive information will be analysed to highlight parameters, or comparative factors, that indicate how countries are structured and/or working. This mapping will be used to inform country cluster groupings based on system structures and processes that countries have in common.

The descriptive information will also be used to prepare thematic cluster activities with Agency member countries. These activities will elaborate and collect even more detailed country information for the different priority areas from 2023 onwards.



SECTION 1. BACKGROUND TO THE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM

This section provides key background information in relation to inclusive education in the country.

1.1 Overview of the historical development of inclusive education

1988 – [Education Act](#) established the role of the Learning Support Educator (LSE), formally known as facilitators and then Learning Support Assistants (LSAs)

1999 – [National Minimum Curriculum](#) with Principle 8 which focused on Inclusive Education

[Inclusive Education Policy](#) regarding students with disabilities

2005 – [Inclusive and Special Education Review](#) published

2009 – National School Support Services (NSSS), formerly known as Student Services Department, was established following a recommendation in the Inclusive and Special Education Review (MEDE, 2005). [NSSS Website](#)

2012 – [A National Curriculum Framework for All](#)

2014 – [Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014–2024](#)

2016 – [My Journey: Achieving through Different Paths](#) – Inclusive and comprehensive equitable quality learning programmes for the compulsory secondary schooling structure.

2019 – A [Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools](#): Route to Quality Inclusion & A National Inclusive Education Framework were launched.

Implementation for the policy started in scholastic year 2021–2022 and policy targets (30 targets in all) will be completed by 2030.

2022 – [Updates to A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools](#): Route to Quality Inclusion & A National Inclusive Education Framework

1.2 Legislation and policy definitions linked to key concepts within inclusive education systems

Inclusive education

[A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion](#) defines inclusive education as:

‘Available and accessible to all learners of all ages, including those facing challenges, such as those with speech needs or who have a disability, those originating from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, migrant backgrounds or geographically depressed areas or war-torn zones, regardless



of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation’.

Special needs education

‘A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion’ and its framework [‘A National Inclusive Education Framework’](#) describe 10 themes that address individual educational needs (rather than special needs education): Inclusive and Strategic Leadership; Whole School Development Planning; Whole School Inclusive Environment; Collaboration with Parents and Community Engagement; Individual Education Planning; Teaching and Learning; Learner and Staff Well-being; Continuous Professional Development; Positive Behaviour Management; Support Structure and Services.

Learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education:

Schools are transforming into inclusive settings with a required shift from a ‘one-size fits all’ educational model towards a socially just education that aims to increase the system’s ability to respond to all learners’ diverse needs

In ‘A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion’, a diversity wheel was created with six sections that describe student diversity: Cognitive & Learning Diversity, Multi-culturalism & Language Diversity, Religious Belief Diversity, Socio-Economic Diversity, Gender & Sexual Diversity, and Physical & Psychological Diversity.

[A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion](#)

Learners with special educational needs

One of the areas of the Diversity Wheel in ‘A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion’ describes learners who have cognitive & learning diversity, namely learners with intellectual disabilities, learners with profound and multiple learning difficulties, and learners who are gifted, talented or manifest high ability.

1.3 Individuals or groups of learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education focused on in the report

As indicated in the Diversity Wheel in A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion, there are a number of learners who are considered to be vulnerable to exclusion, namely:

- Learners with intellectual disabilities
- Learners with profound and multiple learning difficulties
- Learners who are gifted, talented or manifest high ability
- Learners from ethnic minorities
- Learners who need support to learn English and/or Maltese as an additional language
- Asylum seekers



- Learners with various religious beliefs
- Looked after children
- Learners who are at risk of disaffection or exclusion
- Learners at risk of poverty due to socio-economic difficulties
- Learners of different genders
- Learners with different sexual orientation
- Learners of different gender identities and expressions
- Learners with LGBTIQ parents
- Learners with physical impairments
- Learners with sensory impairments
- Learners with emotional and behavioural challenges.

1.4 Development of thinking around learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education

It has developed as vulnerable learners at risk of exclusion are not only those learners who have disabilities, but rather those learners who at some point through their education journey might become vulnerable due to other challenges that they might have or might be experiencing. Also, learners who are risk of exclusion are viewed through intersectionality. (A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion)

1.5 Future education system developments that may impact positively or negatively on inclusive education

The 30 targets presented in '[A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion](#)' will positively impact future development within the education system. As the targets are implemented, they will further enhance areas within the system that promote equity and inclusion for all learners regardless of their needs and challenges.



SECTION 2. THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

This section provides information on the structures and features of the whole education system that influence the development and implementation of inclusive education in the country.

2.1 Overview of the education system

The Education Act reinforces the state's commitment towards providing a quality holistic education for all citizens without any distinction of age, sex, belief, or socio-economic background, by ensuring accessibility to primary and secondary schools, special schools for children with individual educational needs, and learning institutions to all. The state is legally bound to promote the development of cultural, scientific and technical research, and provide for the professional and vocational training and advancement of workers. Persons with disability and/or persons who for various reasons, such as health reasons, are unable to work are also entitled to education and vocational training.

Source: [Eurydice](#)

Education in Malta is compulsory for all children aged from 5 to 16 years. This is defined in Chapter 327 of the Laws of Malta – The Education Act – and subsequent amendments. Compulsory education covers six years of primary education followed by five years of secondary education. Full-time, free education is available in all state schools, but parents can opt to educate their children in church or Independent schools. Education in church schools is also free, while parents of children attending schools in the independent sector enjoy a number of tax-relief measures.

All schools are obliged by law to follow the tenets of the [National Curriculum Framework](#) (2012) and to abide by all the regulations as listed in the Education Act. At the end of compulsory education, students can further their education and training in higher and post-secondary and tertiary educational institutions.

Successive administrations have promoted early childhood care for children from birth to 3 years of age. Following early childcare, children move into kindergarten which is provided for children 2 two years 9 months to 5 years. Although it is not mandatory, parents are encouraged to send their children to such centres.

Source: [Eurydice](#)

Pre-primary education (ISCED 0)

Pre-primary education in Malta is co-educational and is divided in two stages: early childcare education, which caters for children from birth to 2 years and 9 months, and kindergarten education, which caters for children aged 2 years 9 months up to 5 years. As at November 2019, a total of 143 childcare centres were registered. All of the childcare centres adopt the [National Standards for Child Day Care Facilities](#) (2006) and the Occupational Standards for Personnel working within Child Day Care Facilities in Malta (2012).



Kindergarten education is available in both the state and the non-state (church and independent) sectors. In state schools, kindergarten centres form part of primary schools and fall under the responsibility of the Head of the primary school. Kindergarten classes typically follow the same school calendar as primary schools and run Mondays to Fridays from 08.30 till 14.30. The 3-year-olds are grouped as kindergarten 1, while 4-year-olds are grouped as kindergarten 2. Non-state kindergartens follow a similar schedule and grouping arrangements.

The [National Curriculum Framework](#) (NCF) 2012 outlines the Early Years Cycle and emphasises the development of general competences through cross-curricular themes that contribute to the establishment of the foundations of lifelong learning.

The National Inclusion Policy, *A Policy on Inclusive Education: Route to Quality Inclusion*, defines the term 'school' as 'all state, church and independent primary, middle and secondary schools, childcare centres and other educational institutions'. It thus emphasises the importance of inclusion even at this young age. Children with individual educational needs are usually admitted in mainstream kindergarten centres, but it is also the duty of the kindergarten educators to refer any child who they consider may need extra support to relevant professionals. Such referrals are then processed by the Statementing Moderating Panel and action taken accordingly.

Furthermore, the Child Development Assessment Unit (CDAU) works in close collaboration with National School Support Services to provide early intervention for children born with a disability or whose disability is detected shortly after birth.

Primary education (ISCED level 1)

Children begin compulsory school in the last week of September in the calendar year when they are 5-years-old. Primary education is co-educational in all state and most independent schools, while some church primary schools are single-sex. In state schools, primary education is free of charge and includes the provision of free textbooks and school transport. As from September 2018, the provision of free school transport has been extended to all students attending church and independent schools. Parents sending their children to church schools do not pay tuition fees, but a voluntary donation is often requested.

State primary schools are found in all towns and villages and sometimes close to the secondary schools to which the pupils will progress after ending primary education. Since the set-up of [State College Networks](#) in 2009, primary and secondary schools form part of a College Network based on geographic proximity. Students from the primary schools within a College Network proceed to middle and secondary schools within the College. As part of the reform initiated in 2009, classes in the primary years are no longer streamed by academic ability thus ensuring that children stay in mixed-ability classes throughout the primary years.

The National Curriculum Framework (2012) lists specific learning areas for the primary years that facilitate the holistic development of each child. These learning areas include languages, mathematics, science, technology education, health education, physical education and sports, personal, social and health education, religious education/ethics, citizenship, and arts education.



Five cross-curricular themes – namely eLearning, Education for Sustainable Development, Intercultural Education, Education for Entrepreneurship, Creativity and Innovation – ensure a move away from an exclusively subject-based approach that favours fragmentation and compartmentalisation of knowledge, to a more cross-curricular, thematic, interdisciplinary and collaborative approach that reflects real life situations and encourages transfer of skills from one learning area to another.

As per the [National Policy and Strategy for the Attainment of Core Competencies in Primary Education](#), early screening ensures that pupils requiring additional support in literacy and numeracy skills get this support as early as possible to improve their learning outcomes later on. To this effect, a checklist was drawn up to record competences in grades 1 to 3 in literacy, numeracy and e-literacy.

Formative continuous assessment is the main form of assessment during the primary years. While there is no formal assessment of students in their first three years of primary education, a system of continuous assessment was introduced in school year 2018/2019. Half-yearly examinations for pupils in grades 4 to 6 of the primary cycle have been discontinued and replaced with continuous assessment as envisaged by the Learning Outcomes Framework. Learners in the primary years sit for examinations at the end of the school year in grades 4 and 5.

Additionally, at the end of grade 6 (the end of the primary cycle), learners sit for an End of Primary Benchmark assessment in Mathematics, Maltese and English, through which each pupil's attainment of competences against a national benchmark are measured. Schools in the church and independent sectors may opt for their pupils to sit for the Benchmark. Indeed, around 82% of the national grade 6 cohort sat for the Benchmark assessment in May 2019.

Records of pupil achievement from grade 1 to grade 5 are used to assess pupils' progress rather than for selection purposes. At the end of the primary cycle, pupils in state primary schools move to middle schools within their college network.

Secondary education (ISCED levels 2 and 3)

After completing their primary education, students proceed to middle schools in Year 7 at 11 years of age and then secondary schools in Year 9 at 13 years of age. In Malta, secondary education is a five-year cycle and lasts till grade 11, this being the end of compulsory schooling.

As from school year 2013/2014, the secondary cycle in state schools consists of two separate phases: an initial two-year period in a Middle School followed by a three-year period in a Secondary School. Both phases in state schools are co-educational. Some church schools, on the other hand, are still single-sex institutions, contrary to secondary schools within the independent sector which are co-educational.

With the introduction of the state College Network system in Malta, all students attend the same middle and secondary school within their college where they are grouped by academic ability into different sets for the core subjects of Maltese, English and Mathematics to receive the appropriate support in each subject. Students are in mixed ability classes and follow the same core curriculum for the other subjects.



Following the December 2017 agreement between the Government of Malta and the Malta Union of Teachers, the maximum class size in the secondary cycle has been decreased and is not to exceed 26 students. However, this number may go down to 25 or 24 depending on the set students are in, and may even be as low as 13 for classes with very low-ability students. Classes catering for subjects having a strong hands-on component or taught in a laboratory or workshop are not to exceed 16 students per class.

At secondary level, students follow a set of core compulsory subjects including the three core subjects of Maltese, English, and Mathematics together with Integrated Science (for the first two years), Physics (during the final three years), a foreign language (either French, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Chinese or Arabic), Religious Knowledge/Ethics, Physical Education, History, Geography, Art, Personal, Social and Career Development (PSCD), Social Studies, and ICT. At the end of the second year of secondary education, students choose two elective subjects which are then followed during the final three years of secondary education.

Since school year 2018/2019, students in grades 7 and 8 are assessed through continuous assessment during the year and then sit for centrally set annual exams at the end of the year. From academic year 2022/23, school-based assessment (SBA) was implemented in secondary school with students in Year 9 (that is, the first year of secondary school). This will extend to Year 10 in 2023/24 and Year 11 in 2024/25.

This change is part of the reform of the Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) examinations which most students sit, and which are set by the Matriculation and Secondary Education Certificate (MATSEC) Board of the University of Malta. The result of each SEC exam will no longer depend on a summative exam at the end of compulsory education, but will be spread out over the last three years of secondary school.

Additionally, in the middle of grade 11, students sit for their final school examinations where the marks attained form part of the Secondary School Certificate and Profile. This certification presents a record of achievement based on the students' profiling in formal, informal and non-formal educational experiences, taking into account students' attendance and development of personal qualities and abilities during the five years of secondary schooling. This certificate is recognised at Levels 1, 2 or 3 by the [Malta Qualifications Framework](#) (MQF) and the [European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning](#) (EQF). A transcript with all the necessary details is also issued by the school in the form of a Blockcert.

Post-secondary general education (ISCED level 3)

Post-secondary education is co-educational. Students can follow a programme of their choice after they have completed compulsory education and are 16 years of age and older. State general post-secondary education is provided at the [GEM 16+ School](#), the [G. Curmi Higher Secondary School](#), the [Sir M. Refalo Sixth Form](#), Gozo, and the [Junior College](#).

GEM 16+ school

The GEM 16+ School is an educational learning programme giving students a second-chance at obtaining their SEC qualifications. The programme provides an opportunity for students to revise intensely in the core subjects in preparation for the SEC exams.



Students following this intensive programme are taught in small groups of not more than 16 students. The subjects that are offered are English, Maths and Maltese and a choice between Physics or Biology. Personal, Social and Career Development (PSCD), as well as Physical Education, are also an integral part of the learning programme.

Students attending the GEM 16+ School also receive a stipend and grant.

Source: [Eurydice](#)

The **home tuition service** provides learners with compensatory educational support and aims to minimise the effect of absence from school. Learners are eligible for the Home Tuition service if they have being diagnosed as being chronically ill (but not contagious) and are unable to attend school, or they have a medical condition which requires them to be absent from school for a period of not less than four weeks, or they are recovering from a surgical intervention, fractures or an accident. ([NSSS website](#))

Home tuition is covered by the same legislation as mainstream education since it is an extension of compulsory schooling. The aim of this service is to provide continuous education covering the three core subjects of English, Mathematics and Maltese. As soon as students are fit to attend school, this home tuition service is stopped.

Source: [Eurydice](#)

ISCED level age ranges

Malta uses the same definitions as ISCED for formal, non-formal and informal education.

The following are the most common (pre)school entrance ages and (pre)school leaving ages for the different ISCED levels:

- Age range in the country at ISCED level 0 (pre-primary): 3 to 4
- Age range in the country at ISCED level 1: 5 to 11
- Age range in the country at ISCED level 2: 12 to 13
- Age range in the country at ISCED level 3: 14 to 16.

Children/learners who are considered out of formal education (meaning those not in formal education as defined by ISCED)

This may include newcomer children who are asylum seekers, refugees or economic migrants both from European Union (EU) countries and third world countries. It may also include migrant citizens who settle in Malta, but do not register their children in schools. In the case of EU citizens, due to Schengen Area procedures, very limited data is available about their arrival.

A small number of Maltese children are not registered in a local school. However, this is negligible since during the calendar year the School Information System conducts the Good Shepherd Programme to cross-check the birth register with the school registers. Social support workers contact any parents who have not registered their children in a school to ensure that they do so.



Organisation of private education

The **private sector** includes church schools, which are grant-maintained schools, and independent schools.

Private education is provided by the Catholic Church and private independent schools. Church schools are single-sex schools, while most of the private independent schools are co-educational. Church schools do not charge tuition fees as they are grant-aided schools, although parents may give donations to help the schools cover expenses. The Government also allocates an extra 10% of funds for administrative fees to these schools. Independent schools, most of which are run by a parents' foundation, charge tuition fees. The state grants tax rebates to parents on these tuition fees in accordance with Article 14B of the [Income Tax Act](#). From September 2018, [school transport](#) is provided free of charge by the state for students attending both church and private independent schools. Private schools follow the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) as well as the National Minimum Conditions Regulations (NCFMR).

At the lower secondary level, schools in the private sector provide general education. Independent schools at lower secondary level generally have two levels: a middle school and a senior school, housed in the same premises and covering the five years of lower secondary education. Four private schools also provide a general upper secondary education. Church and independent upper secondary institutions are co-educational. There is no private provision for vocational upper secondary education. Approximately 40% of Malta's primary and secondary school students are enrolled in private schools.

There are no private special schools since they follow an inclusive education policy. Some private independent schools are organised differently from state schools, where the educational cycle is divided into three levels, i.e. Early School (from 2 to 7 years), Middle School (from 8 to 11 years) and Senior School (from 11 to 16 years). The school year and school time follow that of state schools. Teachers need to have the same minimum qualifications as those stipulated for teachers in state schools. Private schools are also subject to monitoring by the Quality Assurance Department within [DQSE](#).

Source: [Eurydice](#)

Average levels of basic skills – as measured by the PISA test – are low and significantly below the EU average. A large percentage of pupils fail to achieve minimum proficiency levels. While the proportion of top performers has decreased since 2015, the percentage of underachieving pupils has remained practically unchanged and is above the EU average across the entire socio-economic distribution. Around 51% of pupils from the bottom socio-economic quartile lack basic skills in reading (EU = 36.4%). This is more than twice the rate in the top quartile — even though the rate for the top quartile is also comparatively high (24.3% vs 9.5% at EU level).

Source: [EC European Semester Malta 2022](#)

Learners with disabilities are generally included within the mainstream education system rather than resource centres. However, five resource centres (one at post-secondary level, non-compulsory education) cater for the more demanding needs of students with severe disabilities. These centres cater for primary school learners, middle and secondary school learners, secondary/post-secondary learners, and post-secondary learners, who may receive better educational provision in a centre than in a mainstream school.



It is estimated that only 0.2% of the total learner population attends resource centres. The resource centres are networked so that they can complement each other's services and facilities and work more closely with mainstream schools. The centres aim to tailor education to the needs of the individual learner. The skills covered are cognitive, gross motor, social, language (both receptive and expressive), self-help, independent living skills and others. The centres promote and give utmost importance to functional skills related to good health, personal hygiene, and training for adult life. A central unit provides educational and professional support to the resource centres.

Learning support centres support learners who are experiencing marked social and emotional behavioural difficulties.

National School Support Services

The [National School Support Services \(NSSS\)](#) are responsible for all the services provided to learners with disabilities in both mainstream and resource centres. The NSSS offer:

- services for people with visual and hearing impairments;
- home tuition;
- hospital classes;
- an Autism Spectrum Support Team;
- early intervention;
- services for learners with communication difficulties;
- multi-sensory learning room;
- REACH Units;
- Nurture Groups and Learning Support Zones

All psycho-social services are the responsibility of the NSSS. These include:

- guidance and counselling;
- school social workers;
- the School Psychological Service;
- youth workers;
- the Education Medical Service;
- the Safe Schools Programme.

The Inclusive Education and Special Education/Resource Centres sections within the NSSS collaborate with:

- non-governmental organisations;
- the Child Development Assessment Unit;
- the Commission for the Rights of Persons with a Disability;
- various professionals within the healthcare services;
- mainstream schools;



- resource centres;
- other educational establishments.

Over the years, there has been substantial investment in special schools, turning them into resource centres that support mainstream schools and provide all the required facilities and services, as per the reform in 2010. As a result, learners with disabilities in other special schools or in mainstream schools can make use of the facilities and services provided at these schools.

Source: [European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education](#) (updated 2020).

Recent developments

A Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014–2024 (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014a) was launched in February 2014, aiming to address all cycles of education from early years to adult learning. This Framework aims to unify the different frameworks and strategies, such as the National Curriculum Framework, the National Literacy Strategy for All, A Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Early School Leaving and the Strategy for Lifelong Learning. Measures aim to reach across all socio-economic sectors and different cultural, ethnic, religious, gender and sexual characteristics. The Ministry is seeking to improve learners' learning experiences by encouraging creativity, critical literacy, entrepreneurship and innovation at all levels. The Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014–2024 has four broad goals that are in line with European (i.e. Education and Training 2020) and world benchmarks:

- To reduce the gaps in educational outcomes between boys and girls and among learners attending different schools; decrease the number of low achievers and raise the bar in literacy, numeracy, and science and technology competence; increase learner achievement.
- To support educational achievement of children at risk of poverty and from low socio-economic backgrounds; reduce the relatively high incidence of early school-leavers.
- To increase participation in lifelong learning and adult learning.
- To raise levels of learner attainment and retention in further, vocational and tertiary education and training.

National Curriculum Framework

The National Curriculum Framework for All (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012a) is seen as an important tool for inclusion and employability that aims to empower learners to achieve their full potential as lifelong learners. Building on the NMC (Ministry of Education, 1999), the National Curriculum Framework replaced selective educational arrangements with comprehensive ones, and began the development of a curriculum that promotes progress for all learners. Following consultation, the latest framework sets out to:

- enable young people to work towards the acquisition of a formal qualification in key competences as the foundation for lifelong learning;



- provide more flexible and diverse pathways for all learners, increasing engagement in education;
- address the gaps in the education system that have led to absenteeism, high rates of early school leaving, and low skills and competences for a proportion of learners;
- create a Learning Outcomes Framework that moves away from stand-alone subjects to learning areas that form the entitlement for all learners towards inclusivity, citizenship and employability.

Integration of migrant children

To improve the integration of migrant children in the educational process, in 2013 a Third Country National (TCN) co-ordinator was appointed to advise schools. A number of teachers were provided with additional training in language learning through an EU co-funded project, while other EU-funded projects developed an online assessment tool, reading and spelling software and materials to support language learning, and support for parents of migrant children.

Source: [European Agency 2019 Special Needs and Inclusive Education Malta: External Audit Report](#)

Criteria for an official decision of SEN

- There has been an educational assessment procedure involving a multi-disciplinary team.
- The multi-disciplinary team includes members from within and external to the child's/learner's (pre)school.
- There is a legal document which describes the support the child/learner is eligible to receive and which is used as the basis for planning.

See: EASIE data:

- [Population and enrolment 2018-19](#) (Table 1)
- [2018/19 Children/learners with an official decision of SEN](#) (Table 2)
- [2016–2017 Population and enrolment](#) (Table 1)
- [Children/learners with an official decision of SEN 2016–17](#) (Table 3)

Source [EASIE data \(2016–17\)](#)

2.2 Specific features that are present within the education system

Early tracking of learners into a particular educational pathway (i.e. streaming learners by abilities into different types of provision or school; this includes placing children into separate schools)

Students are placed in separate schools (mainstream and resource centres) when there are severe disabilities and only after all possible strategies have been implemented in the



mainstream schools. Otherwise, all students remain in mainstream school where there is banding.

‘Double-shift’ patterns to the school day (i.e. learners attend for either a morning or afternoon session)

Not present.

Grade retention (i.e. holding learners back to repeat school years, instead of providing flexible support that enables learners to progress with their peers)

Not present.

Benchmark 2 in [A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion](#) is ‘All Educators employ effective teaching approaches that are more representative of and responsive to diversity and that foster a Universal Design for Learning Environment’. Usually there is no grade retention, however in some exceptional instances, primary school pupils can repeat the school year if this is deemed beneficial to them and after consultation with the parents, the class teacher and any other education professionals who may have followed or assisted the child during the school year. There are no official criteria which determine when a pupil should retain a grade.

Source: [Eurydice](#)

During the secondary cycle, students are promoted from one year to another on a minimum performance in the assessment of the subjects learnt. Students who fail to make the grade may be asked to repeat the year if it is considered to be in their best interest. However, this is resorted to only in rare cases and after consultation with the students’ parents/guardians.

Source: [Eurydice](#)

Multiple languages of instruction

Lessons are delivered in Maltese and English as necessary to suit the needs of the students.

Specific policies on access to compulsory education in local schools (i.e. school selection policies)

The Attendance Policy as an Annex of [A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion](#) gives guidelines on reducing absenteeism in schools. Also, one of the targets in the same policy is ‘Schools are supported to promote a culture and climate for sustained school attendance’.

2.3 Public and private authorities responsible for different types of provision

Administration and governance at central and/or regional level

The main objective of Maltese education policy is to offer all citizens equal opportunities to quality and equitable education. The Ministry for Education, Sports, Youth, Research



and Innovation (MEYR) is the highest authority and is responsible for all publicly funded education in Malta. In view of Malta's size, there is no regional level of government and therefore no regional funding takes place in the Maltese educational system. However, public schools receive funds that are administered at the school level.

The Ministry is responsible for preparing educational legislation, driving policy development, and requesting and managing funds from the state budget. In addition to educational legislation, policy direction is specified in various development documents and in the state budget. The current portfolio of the Ministry for Education, Sports, Youth, Research and Innovation includes education, youth and sport, research and innovation.

The administrative functions of the Ministry are headed by the Permanent Secretary. Four Directors General (DGs) assist the Permanent Secretary in administration duties by leading different departments, namely the Educational Services Department, the People Management Department, the Curriculum, Lifelong Learning and Employability Department, and the Education Strategy and Quality Assurance Department.

The Educational Services Department encompasses the National School Support Services, Transport Services, the College Networks and Migrant Learners Unit. The People Management Department incorporates the areas of human resources, education resources, scholarships and logistics. The Curriculum, Lifelong Learning and Employability Department incorporates the Digital Literacy and Transversal Skills and the Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability Directorates. The Education Strategy and Quality Assurance Department includes the Policy Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate, the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education, the International Relations and Programme Implementation Directorate and School Internal Review and Audits Unit.

2.4 Levels of autonomy open to educational institutions – schools, local authorities, school maintainers, etc. – within the system

All state schools in Malta now form part of one of ten [College Networks](#) where each College Network is a body corporate with its own legal and distinct personality. This is a level where the Head of College Network can take decisions concerning the schools within the College Network thus ensuring that students entrusted to the schools within the College Network receive their educational entitlement according to their potential in a full, continuous and smooth process of education. The Head of College Network chairs the Council of Heads for the schools within their college. The main aim of the Council of Heads is to nurture a spirit of collegiality in the running of the College as a network of schools, while developing a common ethos and identity.

The [Education Act](#) stipulates that every town and village should have its primary school. Nearly every primary school has a kindergarten attached to it. Since the reform, middle schools and secondary schools receive students from the feeder primary schools within the College Network.

Source: [Eurydice](#)

State College Networks have been running since September 2005. Currently, there are 11 State College Networks, 10 of which are made up of several primary and secondary



schools. On the other hand, the eleventh College Network is responsible for educational institutions falling within the remit of the Education Directorates having students beyond compulsory school age. Each network has the same managerial structure with each school within the network having its own Head of School and staff. Each college network is led by a Head of College Network who facilitates the whole network and who chairs a Council of Heads (COH) of schools making up the network.

Each public school has a school council made up of parents, students (when they are 16 years of age or older) and teachers who work together to improve the school environment and to make school a better place where students can be educated in a holistic manner. Members sitting on school councils are selected by regular school council elections held every two years. The role of school councils is a consultative one to the school's senior management team.

Source: [Eurydice](#)

2.5 General mechanisms for funding schools

In Malta, all state educational provision from early childhood education and care up to tertiary level is financed by the Government. This includes early childhood education and care provision (with this phase being completely free to parents who are in employment or in education), kindergarten education, primary, lower- and upper-secondary (both general and vocational) as well as the tertiary sector. The Government also provides funding to church schools as part of an agreement between Malta and the Holy See. Moreover, the Government also gives tax rebates to parents/guardians whose children attend private schools.

The amount of funds allocated by the Government for education is presented each year during the Financial Estimates Parliamentary debate. The main policy goal of Government funding is to provide a high quality, holistic, inclusive, relevant lifelong education to all Maltese citizens and to make it accessible to everyone irrespective of their age, ability, culture and/or socio-economic status. The ultimate aim is to provide the necessary financial, physical and human resources to facilitate the learning process of each and every individual so that all can develop to their full potential, as well as develop into workers with the required skills and competencies necessary for today's knowledge-based society.

Source: [Eurydice](#)

Public expenditure on education is above the EU average and increased in the last decade. General government expenditure on education, both as a proportion of GDP (5.3% vs EU 4.7%) and as a proportion of total general government expenditure (14.2% vs EU 10%), was among the highest in the EU in 2019. Given low education outcomes, this suggests some challenges in the efficiency and effectiveness of spending and highlights the need for strengthening the evaluation of investments in education and training. The creation of a comprehensive evaluation framework could enable the cost-effectiveness of investments to be assessed and support national decision-making on education and training. This would allow for better alignment among structural challenges, education goals and policies implemented at all education levels.



Source: [EC European Semester Malta 2022](#)

Country information for Malta – Financing of inclusive education systems

Malta spends over 5.4% of gross domestic product (GDP) on education, which is slightly above the average spent in other European countries (Source: [European Agency, 2014, CPRA – Malta Country Report, p. 3](#)). The central funding mechanism administered by the Ministry for Education, Sports, Youth, Research and Innovation ensures free schooling for all learners, irrespective of their needs.

Early intervention

Childcare centres for children aged 0–3 are generally run by both state and private institutions. Since 2014, childcare has been free for all 0–3-year-olds (Source: [IECE – Malta Country Survey Questionnaire, p. 1](#)).

Pre-primary–kindergarten

State kindergarten education is free and accessible to all, including children with disabilities. Besides this, parents may be entitled to a children’s allowance if their annual taxable income is below a certain level. Funding is provided centrally by the Ministry for Education, Sports, Youth, Research and Innovation. The funds are allocated during the parliamentary debate on financial estimates towards the end of the year.

Compulsory school

State and church compulsory school education is free. Learners receive free textbooks, milk, fruit and vegetables, some writing materials and various psycho-social, support and medical services. In primary, middle and secondary schools, tuition and textbooks are free. Transport is also provided for free, including for learners with disabilities. In state schools, a free breakfast club enables parents to drop their children (aged 3 and over) to school early on their way to work. Children have a healthy breakfast under the supervision of educators. Another initiative facilitating access is Klabb 3–16. It organises supervised activities after school for children aged 3 and over for a small fee (EUR 0.80/hour).

Parents of learners aged up to 16 may be entitled to the children’s allowance if their total reckonable income for the year before the claim is below a certain level. Funding is provided centrally by the Ministry for the Family, Children’s Rights and Social Solidarity. The funds are allocated during the parliamentary debate on financial estimates towards the end of the year.

Job orientation and preparation at the end of compulsory education

There are no tuition fees at the end of compulsory education; post-secondary education is also free. Learners do not receive any financial support, but their parents may qualify for learner’s allowance if their income is below the established threshold.

Learners attending upper-secondary education and training courses receive a maintenance grant that is not refundable. They also receive an additional sum at the start of the school year for the purchase of books/computers required for the course.



The University of Malta, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) and the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) receive funds from the Ministry's budgets. The institutions manage their respective funds. Students at the University of Malta, MCAST and the ITS receive an allowance at the beginning of the academic year, together with a monthly maintenance grant allowance for the duration of their programme of studies.

The link between school and the labour market for adolescents with special educational needs

The government finances initiatives by Jobs Plus. The Jobs Plus courses are free for the unemployed; however, a small fee is charged for some courses.

Source: [European Agency](#) (updated February 2020).

2.6 Specific mechanisms for funding the inclusion of learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education

Compulsory school for learners with disabilities and their provisions in resource centres

Families of children with disabilities receive an additional allowance from the Government to cover additional expenses. Education is free for all learners in all state and church schools. This is funded centrally by the Ministry for Education, Sports, Youth, Research and Innovation. Educational support to learners attending these schools, including allocation of a learning support educator (LSE), is also free. In 2009, the Government extended this service to learners with additional needs in mainstream independent schools. Prior to 2009, the parents of learners attending independent schools who required LSE support for additional needs benefited from income tax rebate. Now, the state funds LSE salaries in independent schools.

The link between school and the labour market for adolescents with special educational needs

The Lino Spiteri Foundation is a public social partnership between Jobs Plus and Empower, a leading co-operative that employs people with disabilities in collaboration with the corporate sector. The foundation aims to collaborate with employers and provide target services to people with disabilities, including training, on a one-stop-shop basis. It aims to bridge the gap between companies and individuals to bring out untapped potential and create employment opportunities.

Source: [European Agency](#) (updated February 2020).



SECTION 3. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

This section provides information on the overall framework of legislation and policy governing the whole of the education system in the country.

3.1 Is there a single legislation and policy framework covering all learners in all educational settings?

Yes.

3.1a Description of the single legislation and policy framework

Main legislation is the updated [Education Act 2022](#)

[Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014–2024](#) (MEDE, 2014): this strategy aligns all sectoral education strategies and policies, and has four broad but measurable targets that set the education agenda in Malta.

[A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion](#) –A National Inclusive Education Framework

Other reforms are currently in progress.

‘Regulations and initiatives can be proposed and implemented by the national Government and the Ministry through the education directorates and other officially constituted entities. The education authorities are thus responsible for such measures including the provision of inclusive educational opportunities, free childcare, the better integration in the educational process of children coming from different ethnic backgrounds, the provision of e-learning educational support, after-school programmes, further and higher educational provision and educational provision in the context of the COVID-19 situation.’

Source: [Eurydice](#)

3.1b Overview of the general education legislation and policy framework guiding the whole system

Not applicable.

3.1c Overview of the specific education legislation and policy framework impacting on the inclusion of learners who are vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education

Primary students' assessment reform

In accordance with the Core Competences Policy and Strategy (2009), as from scholastic year 2022/23, alternative annual examination papers for Maltese and English subjects will be discontinued for **primary students with learning difficulties** in Years 4 and 5. These students will be invited to sit for the standard examination paper. However, the



alternative annual examination papers for the Maths subject will be used in Scholastic Year 2022/2023 but will be discontinued as of 2023/2024. Checklists for literacy (Maltese and English) at two different levels will be carried out for students with learning difficulties to determine their level and how the class team can support them further.

Summer Catch up educational programme

During scholastic year 2020/2021, the Ministry for Education, Sports, Youth, Research and Innovation in Malta re-opened all its state schools with all the necessary preventive measures for all school children from childcare to Year 11. The Ministry provided around 12,000 lessons on demand – accessible on teleskola.mt (recorded lessons) free of charge covering all syllabi from pre-primary to Year 11, opened three virtual schools for vulnerable students from primary, middle and secondary schools, and opened a summer catch up educational programme. Around 90 educators were engaged to run the catch-up programme and 500 students from Year 1 to Year 10 were benefiting from an eight-week educational programme during the summer holidays of 2021 and 2022. The lessons were being delivered face-to-face in seven centres around Malta and Gozo, and online in a virtual school. The initiative set up by the Ministry for Education is another bid to help **eligible students catch up on education lost through the pandemic**. The specific programme includes a variety of academic and enrichment activities, from Maths, English, Maltese, and Science lessons to activities designed to build confidence, friendships and improve well-being.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Education pilot project

The Ministry for Education, Sports, Youth, Research and Innovation is working towards the implementation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Education pilot project as proposed in Malta: The Ultimate AI Launchpad – A Strategy and Vision for Artificial Intelligence in Malta 2030. The proposed project will consist of two parts: Part 1 – The development of an AI-powered adaptive learning system. This system aims to support students' outcomes through personalised learning programmes based on student performance, ambitions and needs. Teachers will be supported in building more formative assessments of the pupils' capabilities. 50 educators and 1,000 students across primary and secondary education will be participating in the project. Part 2 – The construction of a rich dataset and use AI analytics for state schools to assist in driving insights and actions to enhance the education system. Its focus will be on delivering predictive **insights to assist in identifying potential early school-leavers**. This will help educators take **preventative actions** to drive better educational outcomes for all students and reduce the risk of early school leaving.

Public consultation on A National Literacy Strategy in Malta and Gozo 2021–2030

In June 2021, the Ministry for Education, through the National Literacy Agency, launched the National Literacy Strategy for All in Malta and Gozo 2021–2030 for public consultation. The strategy's goal is to reduce the number of **individuals who are socially excluded because of a lack of or a low level of literacy skills**. It aims to consolidate and extend further the strategic goals and actions of the 2014 Strategy, build on the successful actions, recognise the challenges of an ever-evolving world, and address ways in which these can be overcome.



Public consultation on Early Leaving from Education and Training (ELET) – The Way Forward 2020–2030

In June 2021, the Early School Leaving Unit within the Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability submitted the policy document entitled Early Leaving from Education and Training (ELET) – The Way Forward 2020–2030. The policy document has been developed following extensive research and stakeholder consultations. It is based on the principles of prevention, intervention and compensation. These include ensuring **inclusive and quality education for all** and promote lifelong learning; **reducing the gaps** in educational outcomes between boys and girls, and between students attending different schools, decrease the number of **low achievers**, raise the bar in literacy, numeracy, and science and technology competence, and increase student **achievement**; supporting the educational achievement of **children at-risk-of- poverty and low socio-economic status**; raising the levels of student **retention and attainment** in further, vocational, and tertiary education and training; and increasing participation in lifelong learning and adult learning.

Towards Becoming a Dyslexia-Friendly School – Guidelines for schools

In May 2021, the Specific Learning Difficulties Service (SpLD Service) within the Directorate for Learning and Assessment Programmes (DLAP) launched a set of guidelines for primary schools interested in becoming a Dyslexia-Friendly School. A Dyslexia-Friendly School is an inclusive school which caters for the diverse needs of students within the classroom. It functions within the social model of dyslexia, which instead of accentuating the deficits of students, focuses on removing barriers to learning and on the adjustments required in teaching methodologies. While promoting understanding of the implications of dyslexia, such schools subscribe to multi-sensory teaching across all subjects. The Guidelines encourage positivity and belief in the potential of everyone, thereby inspiring students to develop their abilities in a supportive and holistic environment.

Literacy assessments in Year 3 and Year 4

In view of the possible risk of learning loss due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the College Literacy Teams within the Directorate for Learning and Assessment Programmes, in conjunction with the National Literacy Agency, have carried out [literacy assessments in Year 3 and Year 4](#) state primary classrooms to provide a snapshot of learners' literacy achievements and to identify learners who are **struggling with their literacy and who would need additional literacy support**. Different literacy skills in both Maltese and English were assessed to support class teachers in providing follow-up interventions that are appropriately matched to the learners' needs.

NOTE: A number of initiatives for vulnerable learners and others were put in place during the Covid-19 pandemic, but it is unclear if these are still in place.

Source: [Eurydice](#)

3.2 Is there a single curriculum framework covering all learners in all educational settings?

Yes.



3.2a Description of the single curriculum framework

The [Learning Outcomes Framework](#) built on the National Curriculum Framework covers a single curriculum framework for Malta.

The aim of the Learning Outcomes Framework (LOF) is to support the National Curriculum Framework (NCF). The NCF, which was translated into law in 2012, proposes universal education entitlement built around eight Learning Areas, inspired by the EU eight Key Competences Framework. It also proposes a Learning Outcomes Framework as the keystone for learning and assessment throughout the years of compulsory schooling. Both the NCF and the LOF will form the backbone of our education programmes and will serve as national benchmarks of excellence for all schools, providing parents, teachers and other stakeholders with an understanding of what children and young people should know and should be able to do during each of the three cycles – the early, primary and secondary years – and at the end of compulsory education.

The aim of the Learning Outcomes Framework is to free schools and learners from centrally imposed knowledge-centric syllabi, and to give them the freedom to develop programmes that fulfil the framework of knowledge, attitudes and skills-based outcomes that are considered national education entitlement of all learners in Malta. The LOF is thus intended to eventually lead to more curricular autonomy of colleges and schools, so as to better address the learning needs of their students.

3.2b Overview of the general curriculum framework

Source: [Eurydice](#)

Secondary

In Malta, secondary education is the second cycle of compulsory education provision and is separate from primary education; however, the LOF is the curricular framework that is still followed. As from school year 2014/2015, this secondary education cycle, which previously used to have a single five-year structure, is now made up of two separate phases:

- Following the end of primary education, students now proceed to middle schools for the first two years of the secondary cycle (Grade 7 and Grade 8).
- These are then followed by three years of secondary schools (Grades 9 to 11). The last year of secondary school marks the end of compulsory education.

Education provision in the first two years of the secondary cycle is of a general nature. However, when proceeding to Grade 9, students get to choose two subjects from a wide range of options. Since school year 2011/2012, these subjects included several vocational areas; however, as from September 2019, these now also include applied subjects. Thus, education provision in Grades 9 to 11 includes aspects of vocational and applied education if students opt for such subjects.

In the secondary cycle, results of examinations held at the end of each school year are used for students to be grouped by academic ability for the core subjects of Maltese, English and Mathematics.

Source: [Eurydice](#)



Malta has two specialised secondary-cycle schools dedicated to achieving excellence in sport and the visual and performing arts. Students attending these schools follow a different curriculum in that, besides having academic subjects, the curricula include lessons for their specialised areas. Entrance to both schools depends on proved ability in the areas of specialisation of the schools.

Source: [Eurydice](#)

3.2c Overview of specific curriculum framework(s) for different groups of learners who are vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education

The legislative framework for educational provision in Malta is the [Education Act](#), which in turn provides the legal basis for the setting up of the [National Curriculum Framework for All](#) (NCF).

The NCF specifies the supportive infrastructure that is needed by all learners to develop their full potential and for educators to implement the curriculum effectively. This supportive infrastructure implies effective student support services varying from the personal to the curricular. The underlying principles in the provision of these services are that they:

- be inclusive and address the needs of all learners;
- be personal/pastoral in nature;
- address the learners' educational entitlement and development;
- address the learners' current abilities with full respect to diversity;
- facilitate educators' knowledge and skills to effectively address the learners' needs;
- be effective in re-integrating learners into mainstream education in the event of the need of temporary withdrawal.

Although these principles are to be promoted by all personnel involved in providing education in Malta, it is the [National School Support Service](#) (formerly known as the Student Services Department) within the Ministry for Education, Sports, Youth, Research and Innovation that ensures such support services are in place in all state schools.

Amongst its objectives, this department must ensure:

- the provision of counsellors, social workers, psychologists and other professional according to the needs of students and their families;
- the resources required for inclusive and special educational programmes and for other schemes related to individual educational needs;
- the supply and the co-ordination of vocational and career guidance services, including the implementation of programmes aimed at achieving improved school-workplace links and assist in the transition stages, including those from school to work.

Source: [Eurydice](#)

The Inclusion Policy '[A National Inclusive Education Policy: Route to Quality Inclusion](#)', through its 30 targets, is being implemented in schools. The Inclusion Policy gives a vast



definition of Inclusive Education moving away from only the support towards learners with disability. The policy states that inclusive education should be 'available and accessible to all learners of all ages, including those facing challenges, such as those with special needs or who have a disability, those originating from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, migrant backgrounds or geographically depressed areas or war-torn zones, regardless of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. The said policy has four annexes with other policies, namely:

- The Attendance Policy
- The Managing Behaviour and Addressing Bullying Behaviours in Schools Policy
- The Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex Students in School Policy
- The Whole-School Approach to Healthy Living: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Policy.

Also, the Inclusion Framework 'A National Inclusive Education Framework' builds on the Inclusion Policy, where barriers towards inclusion are considered and suggestions are made on how to overcome said barriers. Additionally, 10 themes with best practice indicators and local scenarios are presented that guide schools in the implementation of inclusive practices.

Another important aspect of the education system in Malta is that students attending state and church schools receive their compulsory education (from 5 years up to 16 years of age) for free, irrespective of their socio-economic, cultural and familial background. Moreover, a large range of free courses is available at post-secondary, tertiary and adult level to promote the concept of lifelong learning.

Career guidance services are available for all learners to help them in their curricular and career choices. The guidance services aim to:

- provide career guidance programmes targeting primary, middle and secondary school learners, which aim to promote effective learning and high educational attainment and further the personal development of learners; provide career guidance to learners through individual, group or class sessions;
- help learners make appropriate career decisions by providing information and advice on available education and training opportunities;
- help learners acquire the necessary skills and competences relating to CV writing, interview skills and other career path finding strategies;
- organise career orientation visits to workplaces and post-secondary institutions according to the learners' interests;
- prepare learners for the place of work, co-ordinate and organise the career exposure experience;
- help learners in the different transition phases, in particular from primary to middle school and from secondary to post-secondary education;
- organise several career guidance events during the year which involve learners, parents/guardians and other stakeholders. ([National School Support Services](#))



These services are provided throughout the educational system.

Source: [Eurydice](#)

Academic guidance

The Career Guidance and Counselling services within the Education Psycho-Social Services aim to promote the holistic development of learners by providing personal, educational and career guidance and counselling to primary and secondary school-age students. Indeed, the Guidance and Counselling Services promote guidance in support of the education of students by facilitating the transition of students from primary to secondary school, and from secondary to post-secondary educational institutions and/or work.

Furthermore, the service provides curricular guidance regarding subject options and choice of courses, at different levels, particularly at Year 8 when students choose two option subjects as areas of specialisation.

Psychological counselling

Psychological counselling offers personal support and counselling services to learners and aims to instil in students a positive attitude towards learning by providing them with a safe and secure psycho-educational environment. Psycho-educational assessments and interventions are carried out for pupils and learners with special needs recognised as having physical, mental, perceptual, emotional, or behavioural difficulties.

Parents/guardians are involved in the assessment and interventions. At times, students are referred to external agencies for further support. Personnel involved in providing psychological counselling work in close collaboration with different entities to determine the right kind of support required for children at risk both in and out of school. Special arrangements during examinations for students with learning difficulties follow after the necessary personal counselling has been carried out.

The Psychological Counselling Services also offer the 'Safe Schools Programme' that specialises in three main areas of abuse namely: Child Safety Service; Anti-Substance Abuse Service and the Anti-Bullying Service.

Source: [Eurydice](#)

3.3 Is there a single legislation and policy framework for all teacher education and professional development?

Yes.

3.3a Description of the single legislation and policy framework for teacher education and professional development

Initial teacher education is offered mainly by the [University of Malta \(UoM\)](#) and the [Institute for Education \(IFE\)](#). UoM offers the [Master's in Teaching and Learning \(MTL\)](#), which is a two-year postgraduate degree. The Institute for Education offers a four-year undergraduate degree in Education (BEd) and a three-year postgraduate Master's degree (MEd.) for prospective teachers with exit point at Postgraduate Certificate for those who already hold a BEd(Hons) and want to teach another subject in the same area. There is



another exit point at Postgraduate Diploma for those who hold a bachelor's degree and need such a qualification in Education to be considered eligible for the position of regular teacher under the current Education Act.

Those wishing to teach at pre-primary level follow a two-year Advanced Diploma in Children's Care, Learning and Development offered by the [Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology](#) (MCAST), pegged at Level 5 of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF), or equivalent.

As from school year 2015/2016, teachers in the Early Years Cycle (incorporating kindergarten and the first two years of primary education) require a bachelor's degree (BEd) in early childhood education and care (ECEC) or a bachelor's degree in ECEC and a Master's in Teaching and Learning (MTL) in ECEC or equivalent.

Teaching staff in state pre-primary, primary and secondary schools are career public officers. The Public Service Management Code and collective agreements agreed between the Government and the Malta Union of Teachers (MUT) establish the working conditions of teaching staff employed in state schools.

The collective agreements negotiated between the institution and the teachers' unions determine the working conditions of those working in higher education institutions.

Continuous professional development for teaching staff features across all levels of education. Those teaching at pre-primary, primary and secondary levels of education are required to attend 40 hours of Community of Professional Educators (CoPE) time during school hours as agreed in the collective agreement signed between the Government of Malta and the MUT in 2017.

Source: [Eurydice](#)

3.3b Overview of the general legislation and policy framework for teacher education and professional development

Not applicable.

3.3c Overview of specific legislation and policy framework for teacher education and professional development and what and who this specific framework focuses on

All teaching grades rendering a service in state schools are required to actively participate in management-driven Community of Professional Educators (CoPE) sessions and are also encouraged to take part in self-sought continuous professional development (CPD) sessions provided that these may be undertaken during/outside normal on-site hours. The Institute for Education offers several CPD courses (face-to-face, blended and online) for teachers in their prospectus, and educators can apply for those which suit their interests.

Management-driven CoPE sessions include School Development Planning (SDP) and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) sessions. The management have at its disposition a maximum of 40 hours during normal school hours of which 12 hours are to be dedicated to whole-school development planning sessions.

Self-sought CPD may be of three broad types:

1. Professional learning opportunities in a school/college setting



2. Professional learning opportunities based on externally designed programmes
3. Professional learning opportunities based on self-development.

This form of CPD allows for flexibility and relevance as it is the teacher who chooses the area of professional development.

Source: [Eurydice](#)

Training of learning support educators

Learning support educators (LSEs) in state schools follow a compulsory evening training course in inclusive education when they qualify. This introductory course gives participants basic skills, knowledge and understanding of working with and supporting learners with disabilities in mainstream education. The course has a practical component in which LSEs are monitored and supported in their place of work. This course is now also being offered to prospective LSEs who wish to complete the course prior to employment.

Following the compulsory training course, LSEs have the option of furthering their studies up to degree level. Through these training courses, participants gain both practical and theoretical knowledge on supporting learners with disabilities.

In-service training

On-going continuous professional development training is offered by the Institute for Education in various areas of inclusive education. It is offered to all educators and support staff working in resource centres and in mainstream schools. It includes courses and workshops in communication, information and communication technology, leadership, curriculum development and planning, assessment and early intervention.

Also, a number of CoPE Sessions are offered by [National School Support Services](#).

Source: [European Agency](#) (updated 2020)

3.4 Is there a single legislation and policy framework to ensure support for all learners throughout their school careers?

Yes.

3.4a Description of the single legislation and policy framework that ensures support for all throughout their school careers

[‘A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion’](#) with its definition of inclusive education and through its diversity wheel ensures that a quality inclusive and equitable education is given to all learners. This definition considers issues around inter-sectionality.

3.4b Overview of the general legislation and policy framework that ensures support for the majority of learners throughout their school careers

Not applicable.



3.4c Overview of the specific legislation and policy framework that ensures support for learners who are vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education throughout their school careers

The four benchmarks in the Inclusion Policy and the 30 targets aim to implement equitable and quality inclusive education for all learners through accessibility of opportunities for participation in educational systems and structures, through fostering Universal Design for Learning approaches, through flexible education and training opportunities that support quality inclusive education for all educators, and through a shared culture and ethos of diversity.

3.5 Is there a single legislation and policy framework to ensure support for all learners at times of transition between phases of education and into adult life?

No.

3.5a Description of the single legislation and policy framework that ensures support for all learners at times of transition between phases of education and into adult life

Not applicable.

3.5b Overview of the general legislation and policy framework that ensures support for the majority of learners at times of transition between phases of education and into adult life

Career guidance services are available for all learners to help them in their curricular and career choices. The guidance services aim to:

- provide career guidance programmes targeting primary, middle and secondary school learners, which aim to promote effective learning and high educational attainment and further the personal development of learners; provide career guidance to learners through individual, group or class sessions;
- help learners make appropriate career decisions by providing information and advice on available education and training opportunities;
- help learners acquire the necessary skills and competences relating to cv writing, interview skills and other career path finding strategies;
- organise career orientation visits to workplaces and post-secondary institutions according to the learners' interests;
- prepare learners for the place of work, co-ordinate and organise the career exposure experience;
- help learners in the different transition phases, in particular from primary to middle school and from secondary to post-secondary education;
- organise several career guidance events during the year which involve learners, parents/guardians and other stakeholders. ([National School Support Services](#))



Also, two targets in [‘A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion’](#) address learner transition:

- Learners’ transitions are prioritised and plans are devised between schools.
- Learners and parents are aware of the different academic, vocational or applied pathways available.

A transition co-ordinator works specifically and supports Year 11 students with disabilities in their transition to work or to further their studies in a post-secondary resource centre, MCAST or ITS.

3.5c Overview of the specific legislation and policy framework that ensures support for learners who are vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education at times of transition between phases of education and into adult life

Several categories of disadvantaged learners exist, who although not officially recognised as learners requiring special needs’ support, are in fact provided with support measures to help them in their educational experience. These include children from families with socio-economic and personal challenges, immigrant children (accompanied or unaccompanied), and children of asylum seekers or given refugee status.

One measure is aimed at the integration into mainstream schools of immigrant minor children, the children of asylum seekers or of refugees. Refugees under the age of 18 who arrive in Malta unaccompanied by adult relatives are considered to be learners at risk. Support measures are aimed at eliminating or reducing the educational disadvantage that such students experience due to linguistic, social and cultural barriers. Supporting measures include the following:

1. Social workers who prepare care plans to help such children integrate into mainstream institutions and to prepare individual transition programmes.
2. Specific language support for such children to learn Maltese and/or English.
3. The raising of classmates’ awareness of the child’s native language, customs, beliefs and ethnic diversity in order to facilitate the child’s inclusion in class.
4. Liaison with non-educational social welfare institutions to ensure that such children and their families enjoy basic living requirements.
5. Continuous evaluation of such children within the Maltese education system and society at large.

Learners who are absent from school for a prolonged period of time are provided with **home tuition**. This aims to provide the learner with continuous education and to minimise the ill effects of being away from school and to help the student reintegrate back into school at the appropriate time.

This service is available for learners who are diagnosed as being **chronically ill** (non-contagious), have a medical condition which causes them to be away from school for not less than four weeks, are staying at home recovering from an injury or medical surgery, or not attending school due to school phobia.



Hospital classes are also available for learners having a prolonged stay in a Maltese hospital, providing that such activity is not deemed harmful to the learner or the educator. Both the home tuition and the hospital classes cover the teaching of the basic subjects of Maltese, English and Mathematics.

Source [Eurydice](#)



SECTION 4. SYSTEM GOVERNANCE

This section provides information on aspects of governance across and between different system levels, bodies and stakeholders in the country.

4.1 Shared responsibilities across and between central and local government

Whole system

The [Constitution](#) of the Republic of Malta and [Chapter 327 of the Laws of Malta – the Education Act](#) (1988) and the more updated Cap 605 (2022) provide the constitutional and legal framework and the main aims for the Maltese educational system.

The Education Act:

- acknowledges the right of every citizen of the Republic of Malta to receive education and instruction without any distinction of age, sex, belief or economic means;
- regulates the central government's obligations to ensure the existence and accessibility of schools and other educational institutions;
- regulates parental duties and rights in relation to their children's education including their right to choose their child's school;
- provides the legal framework for the Government's role in the provision, decision-making and regulation of educational services, such as the establishing of a national minimum curriculum framework of studies for all schools (state and non-state), the minimum conditions for all schools and colleges to operate from, and to secure compliance;
- regulates the teaching profession, the [University of Malta](#), the [Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology](#), and the [Malta Further and Higher Education Authority](#).

Educational reforms have been introduced over the years to ensure an improved holistic quality education that would help all Maltese children to succeed as active citizens and lifelong learners in a globalised world. These reforms stem from the fact that Malta's economy, in a country with no natural resources, must rely on a quality education to expand the country's intellectual capital through the effective development of its human resources.

This Education Act has undergone several amendments over the years to bring about reforms in the national education system. In 2014, a nationwide consultation on reforms to the Act was called in order to set the educational agenda for the next 10 years.

A major reform that took place in 2006 was the separation of the regulatory and provider roles of the central education authority.



The administrative functions of the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (MEYR) are headed by the Permanent Secretary. Four Directors General (DGs) assist the Permanent Secretary in administration duties by leading different departments, namely the Educational Services Department, the People Management Department, the Curriculum, Lifelong Learning and Employability Department, and the Education Strategy and Quality Assurance Department.

The Educational Services Department encompasses the National School Support Services, Transport Services, the College Networks and Migrant Learners Unit. The People Management Department incorporates the areas of human resources, education resources, scholarships and logistics. The Curriculum, Lifelong Learning and Employability Department incorporates the Digital Literacy and Transversal Skills and the Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability Directorates. The Education Strategy and Quality Assurance Department includes the Policy Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate, the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education, the International Relations and Programme Implementation Directorate and School Internal Review and Audits Unit.

Organisation of private education

Private education is provided by the Catholic Church and private independent schools. Church schools are single-sex schools while most of the private independent schools are co-educational. Church schools do not charge tuition fees as they are grant-aided schools, although parents may give donations to help the schools cover expenses. The Government also allocates an extra 10% of funds for administrative fees to these schools. Independent schools, most of which are run by a parents' foundation, charge tuition fees. The state grants tax rebates to parents on these tuition fees. From September 2018, school transport is provided free of charge by the state to students attending both church and private independent schools. Private schools follow the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) as well as the National Minimum Conditions Regulations (NCMR).

At the lower secondary level, schools in the private sector provide general education. Independent schools at lower secondary level generally have two levels: a middle school and a senior school, housed in the same premises and covering the five years of lower secondary education. Four private schools also provide a general upper secondary education. Church and independent upper secondary institutions are co-educational.

There is no private provision for vocational upper secondary education. Approximately 40% of Malta's primary and secondary school students are enrolled in private schools.

There are **no private special schools** since they follow an inclusive education policy. Some private independent schools are organised differently from state schools, where the educational cycle is divided into three levels, i.e. early school (from 2 to 7 years), middle school (from 8 to 11 years) and senior school (from 11 to 16 years). The school year and school time more or less follow that of state schools. Teachers need to have the same minimum qualifications as those stipulated for teachers in state schools. Private schools are also subject to monitoring by the Quality Assurance Department within [DQSE](#).

Source: [Eurydice](#)



Administration and governance at local and/or institutional level

[Local councils](#) are very active in the field of adult education and lifelong learning programmes and courses. Such programmes are developed and run by the [Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability](#) and in close collaboration with local industry. A variety of courses (held both in the morning and in the evening) are held at the premises of the local councils and/or at the primary schools of the localities.

All state schools in Malta now form part of one of 10 [College Networks](#) where each College Network is a body corporate with its own legal and distinct personality. This is a level where the Head of College Network can take decisions concerning the schools within the College Network, thus ensuring that students entrusted to the schools within the College Network receive their educational entitlement according to their potential in a full, continuous and smooth process of education. The Head of College Network chairs the Council of Heads for the schools within their college. The main aim of the Council of Heads is to nurture a spirit of collegiality in the running of the College as a network of schools while developing a common ethos and identity.

The [Education Act](#) stipulates that every town and village should have its primary school. Nearly every primary school has a kindergarten attached to it. Since the reform, middle schools and secondary schools receive students from the feeder primary schools within the College Network.

Source: [Eurydice](#)

4.2 Specific areas for shared responsibilities across and between central and local government

Policy development, implementation and co-ordination

No information. These are not applicable to Malta since the central government covers the whole system.

Identification of needs/referral for services

No information.

Data collection and sharing

No information.

Monitoring and evaluation

No information.

Quality assurance and accountability

No information.

Funding

No information.



4.3 Formal and informal collaboration across ministries

The IIPBD board (Inter-ministerial Inter-professional Board for Persons with a Disability) is an inter-ministerial board where the Ministry for Health, the Ministry for Education, Sports, Youths, Research and Innovation and the Ministry for Social Inclusion and Voluntary Organisation, collaborate together to ensure efficient services are provided for learners with disabilities and their parents. This is legally recognised as per Legal Notice 19 of 2019.

4.4 Specific mechanisms for formal and informal collaboration that impact on inclusive education

Development of a shared vision for inclusive education

Framework for the Education Strategy 2014–2024 (2014)

[A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion \(2022\)](#)

National Inclusive Education Framework (2022)

Policy development, implementation and co-ordination

A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion (2022)

[National Inclusive Education Framework \(2022\)](#)

Identification of needs/referral for services

[The Statementing Process Guidelines \(2019\)](#)

Data collection and sharing

The targets of the Inclusion Policy 'A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion' are continuously being evaluated and further enhanced.

Monitoring and evaluation

The Policy Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate within the Education Strategy and Quality Assurance Department is tasked to monitor and evaluate the Policies.

[Inclusion Policy and Framework](#)

Quality assurance and accountability

The Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education and the School Internal Review within the Education Strategy and Quality Assurance Department develop and implement internal and external quality assurance mechanisms.

Funding

No information.



SECTION 5. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

This section provides information on the general and specific quality assurance and accountability frameworks and mechanisms informing the country's education system.

5.1 School-inspection processes and structures for all forms of educational provision

Develop pilot projects to examine inclusive teaching and learning approaches.

The Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education and the School Internal Review within the [Education Strategy and Quality Assurance Department](#) develop and implement internal and external quality assurance mechanisms.

5.2 Other quality-assurance processes for all forms of educational provision

Regulation of the teaching profession by the Council for the Teaching Profession.

Quality assurance as specified by Chapter 327 of the Laws of Malta, the [Education Act](#), establishes that the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) is required to establish, regulate, assure and monitor standards and quality in education of all the educational establishments attended by students of compulsory and pre-compulsory school age, irrespective of which sector they pertain to. Such reviews are required so as to guarantee optimum quality, especially in terms of educational programmes and services and of operations.

Through the [external review](#) structure, the Quality Assurance Department is committed towards promoting, within schools, a culture of continuous professional growth and school improvement. The processes established for external reviews in schools guarantee that each school will be considered and evaluated within its own context. School success and good practice are celebrated, and opportunities for further improvement and development are discussed with the schools, always within an environment which promotes professional dialogue. External reviews also take place in early childhood educational settings where attendance is not compulsory.

[Review Guidelines](#) are disseminated so that all educators, including the school leadership, have a clear understanding of the review parameters. The QAD, through different review models, is committed towards guiding schools in further understanding and developing their potential for growth. This is done through discussion on the internal review exercise carried out by the school and the review of the implementation processes currently adopted by the school. It is to be noted that all review models work towards ensuring that each learner gets the best educational experience and quality education.



The Education Regulatory Compliance Section (RCS), as part of the Education Strategy and Quality Assurance Department, is particularly responsible for the Non-State Educational Sector, namely church schools, independent schools, international schools and independent summer clubs.

As of 2016, licensed institutions can submit a programme for accreditation to the Education Strategy and Quality Assurance Department. These programmes are assessed and pegged to the Malta Qualifications Framework. This accreditation process is based on a number of principles, as set out in the [Referencing Report for Malta](#) (2016) and [National Curriculum Framework](#) (2012). The accreditation process adheres to the parameters set out in the Report, with respect to the level descriptors and the number of credits assigned for the learning outcomes stated.

The key areas falling under the remit of the Directorate for Curriculum, Lifelong Learning and Employability Department are the Digital Literacy and Transversal Skills, the Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability Directorates. Also, the [Directorate for Learning and Assessment Programmes](#) is split into two entities: the Directorate for Early Years, Languages and Humanities Programmes and the Directorate for STEM and VET Programmes. In relation to how effective the educational quality assurance processes are in enabling stakeholders to implement inclusive education, the current quality assurance system provides a good basis for further developments that will ensure transparency and accountability, as well as high-quality education for all learners.

There is also the Council of the Teaching Profession, whose role includes initial teacher training, continuous professional development of teachers, and establishment of standards for the teaching profession.

Source: [European Agency 2019 Special Needs and Inclusive Education in Malta: Audit Report](#), p. 13

5.3 Evaluation mechanisms used to monitor outcomes at different system levels

General outcomes (academic, social, well-being, etc.) for all learners

Academic: The [Educational Assessment Unit](#) (EAU) within DLAP monitors and supports teaching and learning through formative and summative assessment procedures. [Assessment for Learning](#) (AfL) strategies are promoted by AfL Education Officers in primary and post-primary schools, focusing on the process of learning. Learners develop practices whereby the standard of performance they are expected to reach is recognised. Learners are supported to self-monitor their own learning and self-reflect on their own work.

AfL strategies in schools are promoted to improve meta-cognition skills, particularly the capacity to learn how to learn. Additionally, the EAU monitors and moderates [Assessment of Learning](#) (AoL), examined through end-of-year examinations, which take place during the last three years of primary school and throughout secondary education, national benchmark examinations at the end of primary school, and school-based assessment. Students' summative assessment results are monitored by the EAU, in collaboration with the Heads of Department within schools.



Source: [Eurydice](#)

One of the 10 themes in the Inclusion Framework is Learner and Staff Well-being which also emphasises the need to support learners and staff in their holistic well-being in schools.

One of the targets in the [Inclusion Policy](#) is ‘Whole-school approach to social and emotional learning and mental health and well-being is implemented’.

Specific outcomes (academic, social, well-being, etc.) for learners vulnerable to exclusion

Academic: DLAP has Education Officers responsible for certain at-risk groups, such as migrant learners or children with specific learning difficulties, to ensure that they can fulfil their potential through the provision of a differentiated curriculum, where appropriate.

Schools are transforming into inclusive settings with a required shift from a ‘one size fits all’ educational model towards a socially just education that aims to increase the system’s ability to respond to all learners’ diverse needs.

In [A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion](#), a diversity wheel was created with six sections that describe student diversity: Cognitive & Learning Diversity, Multi-culturalism & Language Diversity, Religious Belief Diversity, Socio-Economic Diversity, Gender & Sexual Diversity and Physical & Psychological Diversity.

Outcomes for schools (professional development, staff and personal well-being, etc.)

One of the benchmarks in the Inclusion Policy is ‘All educators have access to flexible education and training opportunities that support their work in delivering quality inclusive education’. Also, through the benchmark there are specific targets which put forward the need for training for educators:

- SLT and educators engage in professional development and training in different areas of inclusive education every scholastic year.
- Practitioners and Specialised Educators are provided with opportunities of continuous professional development that upskills their knowledge and understanding.
- Training is organised for college/school-based educators on how to address LGBTIQ issues in colleges/schools.

There are other targets in the policy which also address the need for training for educators, namely:

- A mentoring programme for learning support educators is developed.
- Support is given to newly appointed LSEs through the development of a toolkit.
- Upskilling of educators through the support of HoD (Inclusion) and Psychosocial Team.
- SLT and other educators attend training with regards to support services available.



The [Institute for Education](#) has a number of professional development training initiatives for educators.

The [National School Support Services](#) offers several CoPE sessions and information sessions on services to schools. The CoPE sessions focus on different training themes centred around the definition of inclusive education set in the policy, such as support for learners with individual education needs, learners with behaviour challenges, learners who come from multi-cultural backgrounds, and learners who are LGBTIQ. The information sessions focus on the different services given by educators, practitioners and professionals at National School Support Services.

Outcomes for parents and families (support, participation, family well-being, etc.)

One of the targets of the Inclusion Policy is ‘Parents are aware of support services available and training is organised’.

The Institute for Education is also organising courses for parents to engage them in their children’s teaching and learning.

5.4 Evaluation mechanisms used to monitor the effectiveness of processes at different system levels

Effectiveness of teaching and learning processes

There are various objectives behind the external reviews carried out by the Education Review Section (ERS) and Regulatory and Compliance Section (RCS). One of the most important characteristics brought about by the role of external evaluator is the consistent presence in schools through the different external review models. The use of a variety of review models is a valuable opportunity to develop a link with schools where national policies and strategies can be discussed among professionals. Determining evidence can be gathered through these external reviews which can spur further development both at school and national level. QAD Standards, with clear success criteria, have been developed with stakeholders. They articulate a shared national understanding of school quality and so provide a basis for aligning internal and external review processes as outlined in the NCF (2012, p. 32) ‘Quality Assurance is to be realised through a system of ongoing self-evaluation, monitoring and review within schools complemented by an external review system that together foster school improvement.’ This attempts to create a balance between autonomy and accountability, and between a centralised and decentralised system of quality-assurance mechanisms. These criteria tackle Educational Leadership and Management, Learning and Teaching, and School Ethos.

Effectiveness of school management processes

As above.

Effectiveness of teacher professional development processes

No information.



Efficiency and effectiveness of funding mechanisms

Not applicable.

Effectiveness of (vertical) co-operation between stakeholders at different system levels

Not applicable.

Effectiveness of (horizontal) co-operation between ministries and ministerial departments

Not applicable.

5.5 Specific monitoring mechanisms relating to learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting at the start of the scholastic year and IEP Review Meetings at the end of the scholastic year are monitoring mechanisms. The aim of these meetings is that multi-disciplinary teams supporting the learners, along with the parents, plan individual education goals which are then reviewed at the end of the scholastic year.

5.6 Specific evaluation mechanisms relating to learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education

In addition to IEPs carried out for individual learners, end of Year Evaluation Reports for services within National School Support Services are written at the end of the scholastic year or on an annual basis.

5.7 Specific accountability mechanisms to ensure the inclusion of learners vulnerable to exclusion from inclusive education

Education Officers conduct regular visits in schools to support and monitor services given by National School Support Services.

Also, professionals, practitioners and educators working within different services are provided with Induction Training and Job Shadowing and mentoring by an Education Officer at the induction phase of their new role.

Professionals, practitioners, and educators working within different services are also provided with continuous professional development training on regular basis and monthly meetings are set to discuss arising matters and for training.



SECTION 6. STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION, CO-OPERATION AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

This section provides information on the structures, mechanisms and opportunities for stakeholder collaboration and co-operation in the country.

6.1 Does the legislation and policy framework specify that learner voices are used to inform the development of learning and teaching environments?

Yes.

6.1a Description of the legislation and policy framework around the use of learner voice

‘Respect for the views of the child’, paragraph 21:

While recognising the state party’s efforts to ensure respect for the views of the child, in particular through the mandate of the Commissioner for Children, the Committee recalls its previous concluding observations (CRC/C/MLT/CO/2, para. 33) and recommends, with reference to its general comment no. 12 (2009) on the right of the child to be heard, that the state party:

1. strengthen its efforts to ensure respect for the right of all children to be heard in all matters affecting them, in the family, at schools, in the courts and in all relevant administrative and other processes, including children in vulnerable and marginalised situations, such as children with disabilities, and asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children, and ensure that due weight is given to their views in accordance with their age and maturity;
2. ensure that professionals working with and for children systematically receive appropriate training on hearing and taking into account children’s views in all decisions affecting them and in accordance with the child’s age and maturity;
3. conduct awareness-raising programmes, including campaigns, to promote the meaningful and empowered participation of all children within the family, the community and schools, including within student councils, with particular attention to children in vulnerable and marginalised situations;
4. ensure the adoption and effective implementation of the Council of Europe Child Participation Assessment Tool in order to standardise participation of and consultation with children on issues that affect them.’

Source: UN CRC Committee on the Rights of the Child, [Concluding observations on the combined third to sixth periodic reports of Malta](#), p. 5, section C – Respect for the views of the child.

When the Inclusion Policy and Framework were being drafted, a project where learners were asked what Inclusion means to them was implemented. Through this project, the educators drafting the policy were guided by the feedback given by the learners.



Another project where learners' voice was ensured was when learners on the autism spectrum through the drawing and talking method were asked about likes and dislikes within their school environment. This research guided the personnel drafting the [Autism Friendly Environment Guidelines](#) (2019) and in eventually setting up the REACH units.

Also, since the REACH units are still in their second year of being set-up, constant evaluation is taking place. Learners (and their parents) attending the units were asked on their thoughts and experiences on their learning experiences within the REACH unit. Malta also participated in the Voices in Action (VIA) project by the European Agency to capture learners' and parents' voices on the experience of attending the REACH unit.

6.2 Does the legislation and policy framework ensure curriculum development processes take account of all learners and their communities?

Yes.

6.2a Description of how the legislation and policy framework around curriculum development processes take account of all learners and their communities

The following is the definition of Inclusive Education written in '[A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion](#)':

Available and accessible to all learners of all ages, including those facing challenges, such as those with speech needs or who have a disability, those originating from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, migrant backgrounds or geographically depressed areas or war-torn zones, regardless of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

6.3 Does the legislation and policy framework support the active involvement of different stakeholders in ensuring inclusive learning environments?

Parents and families

One of the themes in the National Inclusive Education Framework is 'Parental Involvement and Community Engagement'.

One of the targets in the Inclusion Policy is 'Parents are aware of support services available and training is organised'.

Also, training initiatives for parents are organised by the [Institute for Education](#).

School-leaders/leadership teams, teachers and specialist staff

One of the themes in the National Inclusion Education Framework is Inclusive and Strategic Leadership.



There are a number of targets that support SLT, educators and specialised professionals in the Inclusion Policy, namely:

- SLT and other educators attend training with regards to support services available.
- SLT and educators engage in professional development and training in different areas of inclusive education every scholastic year.
- Practitioners and Specialised Educators are provided with opportunities of continuous professional development that upskills their knowledge and understanding.

Stakeholders in the local communities

One of the themes in the National Inclusive Education Framework is 'Parental Involvement and Community Engagement'.

Local-level decision-/policy-makers

Not applicable.

Non-governmental organisations, disabled people's organisations or other organisations representing vulnerable groups

National School Support Services takes part in several conferences and stakeholders' meetings.

One of the targets in the Inclusion Policy is: 'Creating or reviewing memorandum of understanding with other services and agencies outside NSSS and involvement in inter-ministerial committees'.

6.4 Does the legislation and policy framework ensure that curriculum development processes involve the participation and contribution of different stakeholders?

Yes.

6.4a Description of the legislation and policy framework ensuring the involvement of stakeholders in curriculum development processes

Inclusion Policy implementation involves a number of professionals, educators, practitioners, SLT members, learners and parents collaborating through the implementation of various targets.

6.4b Explanation

6.2.5 The need to develop a support system underpinned by a collaboration culture

The Audit's findings suggest that the relatively fragmented system of provision in Malta creates a culture of individual, rather than collaborative, practice. Fieldwork data suggests that effective co-operation among professionals in schools and services often depends upon individual working bonds and relationships. It appears, too, that there is not a strong



culture of systematic reflection on practice in the overall support system. Many stakeholders do not see professional self-review as something that is relevant or useful for them or their learners. Conversely, many stakeholders are quick to identify failings within the system and the actions of other actors, rather than engaging in critical self-review based on a clear understanding of personal professional responsibility. This issue may be symptomatic of a 'closed' culture, where commenting on others' practice may be seen as 'speaking out against colleagues'. Such a culture promotes 'blame games' and abdication of personal and collective responsibilities.

The system in Malta is based on a sincere will to develop more inclusive school environments, but the limited possibilities for formal and informal inter-professional communication result in differing perceptions and expectations among stakeholders. Focus groups, in particular, highlighted the fact that perceptions of 'adequate' support differ widely among groups of stakeholders, but there are limited opportunities for professionals to openly discuss these differing views and reach equitable agreements on ways forward.

Source: [European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2019 Malta Audit Report](#), p. 71

6.5 Does the legislation and policy framework support the development of learning communities in local/regional areas?

Yes.

6.5a Description of the legislation and policy framework that supports the development of learning communities

One of the targets in the Inclusion Policy is that 'Schools and services shall provide potential networking opportunities'. This is already taking place, even when it comes to training for different support services, where speakers/trainers from the University of Malta and even the Institute for Education support.



SECTION 7. FINAL COMMENTS AND REFLECTIONS

A number of statements that were put forward in this draft country report are based on practices and targets that are being implemented through the Inclusion Policy, 'A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion'.

The Diversity Wheel, the definition of Inclusive Education and the four benchmarks support inclusive education practices as well as equity and quality education.

The National Inclusive Education Framework also guides educators in implementing good practices towards Inclusive Education that is catered to support learners in feeling a sense of belonging within the school community.

Since the start of the implementation of the targets of the Inclusion Policy, it was observed that several initiatives in schools and through services are being implemented to ensure quality inclusive education in schools in Malta. These practices and initiatives are embracing diversity in all stakeholders within school communities. They are building on continuous communication among different stakeholders to ensure practices centre around the strengths and needs of individual learners while at the same time create a sense of belonging for all learners, parents and educators in schools.