



EUROPEAN AGENCY
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education



RAISING THE ACHIEVEMENT
OF ALL LEARNERS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

RAISING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF ALL LEARNERS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Country Report: Malta



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MALTA COUNTRY REPORT

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1. What reference is made to raising achievement in national policies? How is raising achievement defined?

Malta has participated in a number of international studies whose results have initiated debates about ‘achievement’. A number of national policies refer to ‘achievement’ as the educational effort that must be made to reach out to all learners.

A recent study carried out by Cambridge English showed the following achievements in English of Primary Year 5 pupils in state, church and independent schools:

- Primary school learners in Malta achieved a mode of A2 in the skills of Listening, Reading and Writing.
- A mode of B2 was observed for the skill of Speaking.
- A large proportion of learners are at the B levels and can be considered independent users of English (65.8% for Speaking, 45.3% for Writing, 41.3% for Listening and 20.1% for Reading).
- Speaking is the learners’ strongest skill, with 18% of candidates achieving Level C1 and above.
- Reading has the comparatively highest proportion of learners at A1 level (32.8%), which highlights Reading as the learners’ weakest skill.
- The distribution of CEFR levels, which cover a range from pre-A1 to C levels, reflects Malta’s educational context and linguistic milieu, in which language levels vary quite widely, with Maltese as the dominant language for some learners and English for others.

International tests and measures which indicate the effectiveness of measures being taken are described in the following policies.

1.1 National Curriculum Framework

In the [National Curriculum Framework](#) (NCF) (2012), the Education Minister referred to achievement obtained in the reduction of early school leaving: ‘the drastic reduction of early school leavers from over 54% in 2000 to 30% in 2012 and the dramatic increase of learners in higher education from less than 900 in 1987 to almost 20,000 in 2012’ (p. vii).

The NCF’s target is to achieve specific targets set for 2027, as outlined in Table 1.



Table 1. Key Performance Indicators in Malta’s National Lifelong Strategy, with reference to raising achievement

Key Performance Indicators	2012	2025/26
% of 19-year-old students participating in further and higher education, excluding post-secondary education	–	40.0%
% of 17-year-old students participating in further and higher education	80.0% +	90.0%
% rate of students who obtain grades 1 to 5 in the Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) in any five subjects	66.3%	75.0%
% rate of students who obtain the Secondary School Certificate and Profile	0.0%	95.0%
% of early school leavers	30.0%	10.0%
PISA Literacy (levels 2 to 6)	63.7%	85.0%
PISA Mathematical Literacy (levels 2 to 6)	66.4%	80.0%
PISA Scientific Literacy (levels 2 to 6)	67.5%	80.0%
TIMSS Mathematics (intermediate to advanced)	60.0%	70.0%
TIMSS Science (intermediate to advanced)	48.0%	60.0%
SurveyLang English (A2–B2)	91.0%	95.0%
SurveyLang Italian (A2–B2)	50.0%	70.0%

With regard to raising achievement, the NCF aims to achieve the development of:

- knowledge, skills, competences, attitudes and values that improve the quality of life of Malta’s children;
- diverse learning pathways to achievement, including vocational education and training, as well as job observation experiences;
- flexibility in the management of schools and the classroom. This would allow College Principals, Heads of Schools and educators within the classroom to be creative, innovative and provide for the individual needs of learners, thus contributing to increased inclusion practices that promote further achievement;
- a [Learning Outcomes Framework](#) on which the design of learning programmes will be based, leading to assessment processes in line with specific learning experiences;



- regular reviewed targets of achievement that will enable education leaders and policymakers in education to assess the impact of the NCF on the attainment of the Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) at Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) Levels 2 and 3 and the Secondary School Certificate and Profile at MQF Levels 1 and 2.

1.2 Malta National Lifelong Learning Strategy

The [Malta National Lifelong Learning Strategy for 2020](#) highlights various points related to raising achievement. The main points are:

- to increase the rate of adults participating in adult learning;
- to decrease the rate of early school leavers (currently at 22.6% compared to the EU average of 12.8%), with a low percentage of 30–34-year-olds in tertiary education. There is also a much higher share of adults with low-level education in Malta (61.9%) compared with the EU (25.8%).
- To decrease the persistence of low education passed on from generation to generation. While in 2000 only 7.4% of 30–34-year-olds held higher education qualifications, this figure increased to 26.0% of 30–34-year-olds in 2013.

Table 2. Key Performance Indicators in Malta’s National Lifelong Learning Strategy, with reference to raising achievement

Key Performance Indicators	Malta 2012 (base value)	Malta 2020 (target)	EU 2020 (target)
1. Early leavers from education and training	22.6%	10.0%	10.0%
2. Level of participation of adults aged 25–64 in Lifelong Learning	7.0%	15.0%	15.0%
3. Share of students in Vocational Education and Training at ISCED 3	38.9%	45.0%	N/A
4. 30–35-year-olds completing tertiary or equivalent education (MQF Level 6)	21.1%	33.0%	40.0%
5. Women in employment aged 20–64	46.9%	70.0%	75.0%
6. Literacy skills in men aged 25–64	96.7%	98.0%	N/A
7. Digital technology skills in adults aged 25–64:	N/A	Level 5	N/A
• MQF level 5 for working age adults			
• MQF level 6 for people aged 18 to 29	N/A	Level 6	N/A



1.3 Respect for All Framework

The [Respect for All Framework](#) (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2014) document revolves around UNESCO's four pillars of learning: Learning to Know, Learning to Do, Learning to Be and Learning to Live Together (ibid., p. 9). The framework encourages a whole school approach, whereby all stakeholders in the school community work towards raising achievement and closing gaps. This ensures that all learners have the opportunity to obtain the necessary skills, attitudes and values to be active citizens and to succeed at school, work and in society. It acknowledges 'schools' culture and climate without it being constraining and prescriptive' (ibid., p. 7) and highlights what needs to be addressed and why. Five policies fall within this holistic framework:

1. Addressing Attendance in Schools
2. A Whole School Approach to Healthy Lifestyle: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Policy
3. Managing Behaviour in Schools
4. Addressing Bullying Behaviour in Schools
5. Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex Students in Schools.

Each of these policies also presents a set of Strategies and Procedures, which aim to support schools in their implementation.

1.3.1 Respect for All: Addressing Attendance in Schools Policy

In this policy, reference to achievement is defined by maximising school completion for all learners, raising achievement and closing gaps in learner performance. [Addressing Attendance](#) is considered important by the Ministry of Education and Employment because it has been found that poor school attendance lowers the literacy and numeracy rates of any country (Thompson, 2008) since absenteeism places learners at risk of educational failure.¹

1.4 A National Literacy Strategy for all in Malta and Gozo

Malta's participation in the [PIRLS 2011](#) outlined the following facts that reflect the context of literacy levels:

- Malta's mean reading score (477) was significantly lower than the international average and was ranked 35th out of 45 participating countries.
- The reading attainment of Maltese pupils was comparable to pupils from Trinidad and Tobago. However, it was significantly higher than nine countries, including Azerbaijan, Iran, Colombia, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Qatar, Omar and Morocco.
- The bottom 25% of Maltese learners scored less than 412 and the top 25% scored more than 546 on the Reading Achievement scale.

¹ See also [Education for All: Special Needs and Inclusive Education in Malta](#)



- The proportion of Maltese pupils scoring more than 550 scale points in reading (24%) was significantly lower than the international average (44%).
- Moreover, the proportion of Maltese pupils scoring less than 475 scale points in reading (45%) was significantly higher than the international average (20%).
- The mean reading score of Maltese students in the Maltese test (457) was significantly lower than the corresponding mean reading score in the English test (477).
- On average, independent school pupils scored significantly higher in reading than church school pupils, who in turn scored significantly higher than state school pupils.
- Mean reading scores of girls exceed those of boys by 14.2 scale points in state schools, 11.5 scale points in church schools and 19.8 scale points in independent schools.
- In the English test, Maltese pupils scored significantly higher in informational reading than in literary reading; however, in the Maltese test, the mean scores for the two reading purposes were comparable. Both boys and girls scored higher in informational reading.

This therefore acted as a benchmark for raising levels in the future, as outlined in the [National Literacy Strategy for all in Malta and Gozo 2014–2019](#) (2013).

1.5 [A strategic plan for the prevention of early school leaving in Malta 2014](#) (2013)

The National Statistics Office, in discussions with Eurostat, has come to define Early School Leavers (ESL) in Malta as those between 18 and 24 years of age who do not have at least the equivalent of SEC passes (grades 1 to 7) in five different subjects and who are not in education or training. The ESL rate for Malta in 2010 was 24.8%. In 2011 it decreased to 23.6% and went down to 22.6% in 2012. In 2013 it went down another two percentage points to 20.9%. These figures show that Malta has managed to lower the rate of ESL from 27.1% in 2009 by 6.2% in four years. However, Malta's rate of ESL in 2013 was still the second highest in the EU and well above the EU average of 11.9%.

Despite the progress Malta has made to increase the number of students in further and higher education, data shows that only about half of the students in the 5th form in May of 2013 managed to get a pass (grade 5 or better) in Maths, Maltese, English and Physics.

Other worrying statistics show that, in state schools, 23.9% of those sitting SEC exams in May 2013 did not get a grade from 1 to 5 in any subject.

1.6 Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014–2024

This document is another policy published in recent years which highlights the need to improve educational standards. The main targets are listed in Figure 1. No specific targets have been mentioned in this policy.

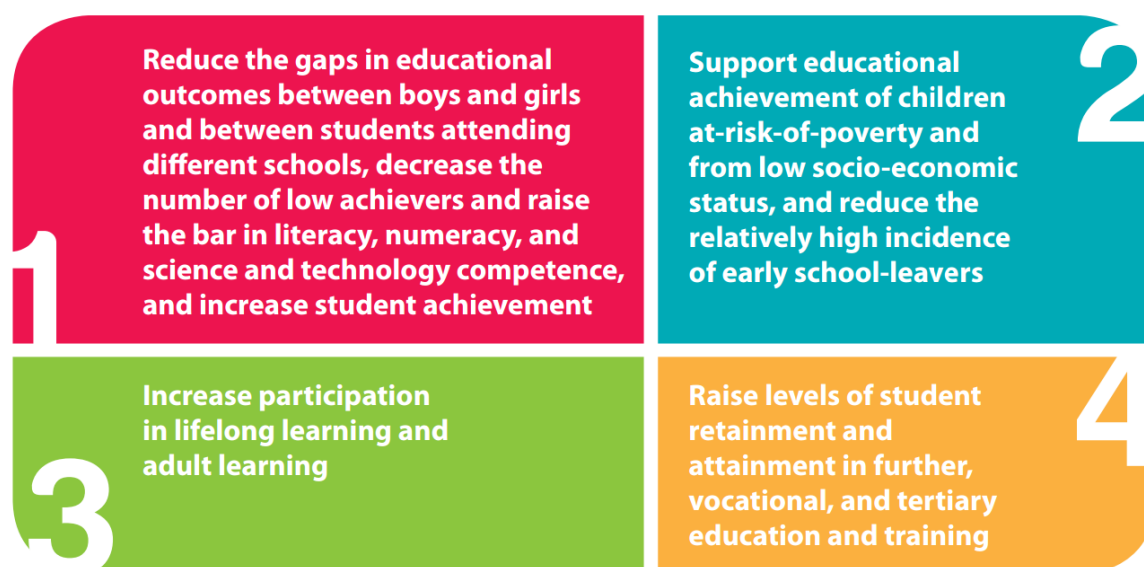


Figure 1. The four main targets of the Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014–2024

1.7 'Education for All' Framework Structure

Following the publication of the '[Education for All: Special Needs and Inclusive Education in Malta: External Audit Report](#)' (2013), a formal framework structure, entitled 'Education for All', was set up within the Ministry of Education and Employment. This structure aims to start a comprehensive re-structuring and re-culturing process to provide high quality education and raise the achievement of all learners in schools.

The 'Education for All' Framework Structure is composed of four entities – the 'Steering Committee', the 'Core Group', the 'Stakeholders Dialogue Platform' and the 'Project Team'. These entities work interchangeably together to ensure increased ownership and transparency, more dialogue and consultation and more co-operation and collaboration among all stakeholders.

2. What national policies specifically target raising achievement?

2.1 Specific group of learners

Table 3. Specific groups of learners targeted by policies

Policy	Specific group of learners
National Curriculum Framework	All learners in formal schooling (compulsory education)
Malta National Lifelong Learning Strategy	All learners in formal schooling and beyond



Policy	Specific group of learners
Respect for All: Addressing Attendance in Schools Policy	Learners with high rates of absenteeism in formal schooling
A National Literacy Strategy for all in Malta and Gozo 2014–2019	All learners in formal schooling
National Policy and Strategy for the attainment of Core Competences in Primary Education (2009)	Learners at primary level who have not yet achieved core competences in literacy at levels 1, 2 and 3
A strategic plan for the prevention of early school leaving in Malta 2014	Learners with high incidence of early school leaving. Under one of its actions, Youth Guarantee, the policy aims to target the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target Group 1: single, unmarried parents, mostly women, living on social benefits; • Target Group 2: young disabled people in receipt of a disability pension; • Target Group 3: young unemployed people who have been registering with the Public Employment Service for more than 6 months and are in receipt of unemployment assistance. Individuals must be heads of household to be eligible for such benefits; • Target Group 4: young unemployed people who have been registering with the Public Employment Service for less than 6 months; • Target Group 5: young unemployed people who are captured in the Labour Force Survey but are not registering for work with the Public Employment Service.
Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014–2024	All learners, especially those with high incidence of school failure
'Education for All' Framework Structure	Targets learners' diverse needs, which fall under one of the following categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational and Ability • Cultural • Religious and Faith • Social and Economic



Policy	Specific group of learners
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gender• Physical and Psychological• Other emerging needs.

2.2 Main actions recommended by different policies

2.2.1 National Curriculum Framework (2012)

- A clear focus on improving the quality of education and raising learner achievement levels
- A readiness to depart from traditional curriculum structures and practices that may restrict learning
- Flexible learning programmes, providing diverse and integrated learning experiences that cater for a wide spectrum of learners and which suit the interests and capabilities of individual learners within nationally-accepted parameters
- Learning programmes that focus on understanding and emphasise the learning process and the active co-construction of meaning, rather than the mere acquisition of content
- Learning programmes that empower teachers to implement innovative teaching and learning strategies, especially through the use of e-Learning
- 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 the transfer of skills from one learning area to another
- Assessment that values and assesses both the processes and the products of learning
- Initial teacher education and further opportunities for training and support in the use of pedagogies that are inclusive in nature and cater for diversity
- Professional development that is congruent with the availability of opportunities within the extended reality of the EU
- The development of the school as a learning community of reflective practitioners.

2.2.2 A strategic plan for the prevention of early school leaving in Malta (2014)

- Setting up an Inter-Ministerial Committee Early School Leaving with the mandate to:
 - assess and propose strategies, policies and actions;
 - ensure that ESL and inter-related issues and proposed actions are designed and implemented with the support of main stakeholders



- Setting up an ESL Unit:
 - Be a leading partner and work with relevant entities
 - Carry out on-going monitoring of strategies, policies and programmes emanating from this strategic plan
 - Be responsible for the monitoring of education provision for children and young people who are disengaged or at risk of disengaging from school
 - Provide consultation and assistance to schools across the state, church and independent sectors in developing ESL prevention programmes
 - Work with agencies and schools to ensure that teachers and support staff are well equipped to occupy centre stage in the drafting and implementation of strategic responses to educational disadvantage. Develop mechanisms that facilitate teacher and support staff involvement, taking into account the demands of their job
 - Work with different entities to tackle the challenge of ESL
 - Seek to promote partnerships between parents, teachers and the community
 - Establish networks with overseas entities involved in ESL prevention programmes, with the aim of providing school staff and relevant stakeholders with formal and informal training opportunities in the area of ESL
 - Seek funding for ESL prevention programmes under the 2014–2020 ESF financing instrument, among others.
- Providing free childcare
- Educating for and through diversity:
 - Developing guidelines for school development plans on how best to integrate migrant learners and families, devising appropriate teaching plans and introducing teaching and learning resources that reflect a range of cultures and social perspectives and dimensions
 - Developing procedures to ensure that migrant minors are registered in a school and are given the necessary induction support
 - Providing teachers with the necessary training and support services
- Meeting the needs of high achievers
- Setting up middle schools: making caring community schools possible
- Supporting children at risk through innovative teaching and learning tools and through school and community-based solutions:
 - Developing e-Learning content to better respond to learning needs
 - Tapping mobile technology for more learner engagement
 - Funding for a school-based approach to reducing ESL



- Reintroducing vocational education in secondary schools as an alternative learning pathway
- Transition processes, flexible pathways and career guidance:
 - Strengthening the transition process across educational pathways
 - Review and consolidate the career guidance service across levels
 - Honing the potential of the Secondary School Certificate and Profile
 - Harnessing and strengthening parental support to combat ESL
- Combating ESL through teacher training
- Meeting the challenge of ESL: intervention measures:
 - Early warning systems
 - Consolidating support networks around learners at risk
 - Harnessing Youth Workers' support for older learners
 - Empowering learners with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties
 - Supporting teenage mothers to stay in education and training
 - Supporting learners and parents through after-school support programmes
 - Supporting learners at risk in the secondary school
- Meeting the challenge of ESL: compensation measures:
 - Reintegration programmes at further education levels
 - Striking strategic partnerships for an effective second chance education for learners at risk
 - Providing quality second chance education for people with disabilities, for better life chances
 - Implementing the Youth Guarantee Scheme to reach out to young people at risk.

2.2.3 Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014–2024

General recommended actions include:

- updating the existing learning programmes and modes of assessment in both general and vocational and training education;
- modernisation of vocational education;
- support apprenticeship, traineeship, work-based and workplace learning initiatives, in the context of lifelong learning;
- accreditation and certification of experiential and work-based learning;
- validation of informal and non-formal learning and forms of apprenticeships;
- certification system (at all levels) that adds value to employability, mobility and higher standards of transparency.



2.2.4 National Policy and Strategy for the attainment of Core Competences in Primary Education (2009)

The [Strategy](#) (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2009) had the following priorities:

- the prevention of attainment deficit in Core Competences through Early Support;
- the Early Identification of Core Competences attainment deficit;
- the Integration into mainstream teaching;
- the Intervention with respect to Core Competences attainment deficit in early primary.

2.2.5 A National Literacy Strategy for all in Malta and Gozo 2014–2019

- Promote the integration of the skills of oracy, reading and writing
- Introduce increased opportunities for Reading Time in Maltese and English throughout the curriculum, within the frame of reference of the National Curriculum Framework
- School-level decisions about the most appropriate literacy strategies, made by those who have the best knowledge about and are closest to the learners, with support from the central services
- Promote professional development opportunities for educators at different levels in literacy learning and teaching
- Promote the use of new technologies in the teaching and learning of literacy
- Promote research studies that will provide a better understanding of literacy practices in Malta and Gozo
- Promote literacy awareness through national initiatives, the media and family-orientated measures.

2.2.6 Malta National Lifelong Learning Strategy

- Co-ordinate delivery of Lifelong Learning provided by public organisations
- Promote adult skills and VET as flexible route to employability
- Develop a coherent, equitable and sustainable accreditation system for adult learning
- Improve the overall quality of adult learning in Malta
- Embrace the emergence of Open Education resources as opportunities for Connected Learning
- Facilitate women’s participation in the workplace through Lifelong Learning
- Leverage Lifelong Learning to support inclusivity and empower marginalised communities
- Improve the quality of life of older people through Lifelong Learning opportunities.



2.2.7 'Education for All' Framework Structure

The four structures within the 'Education for All' Framework work towards the elimination of 'deficit-thinking'. This will bring about transformational change in the education system's approaches, philosophies and services, rather than continuing to focus on learners' perceived deficits, disabilities, conditions or impairments, in order to 'normalise' learners. The ultimate aim is to close the achievement gaps between diverse learners (see Table 3) to raise the achievement of all learners through high quality education. Within this context, the 'Education for All' Framework Structure identified eight fundamental developmental areas:

1. Effective Leadership and Good Governance at all levels;
2. Initial Training and Continuous Professional Development;
3. Flexible Curriculum, Assessment and Pedagogy Techniques;
4. Evidence-Based Research System;
5. Effective Communication and Strong Deployment and Recruitment Processes;
6. Strong Internal and External Reviewing Systems;
7. Re-engineering of systems of support: Using Support Services in ways that promote High Quality Education for all learners;
8. Creating Positive Learning Communities.

For all the above-mentioned areas, evidence-based concept papers and comprehensive plans of action have been devised. The plans of action include a specific timeframe, a set of quality and performance indicators and clear success criteria.

2.2.8 Respect for All: Addressing Attendance in Schools Policy

This policy recommends that the whole school community adopts values as the core of the school ethos and environment.

3. What information/data are collected at national level on attainment and achievement?

3.1 Results of national tests and qualifications

- Core Competences Checklists are collected for learners with literacy difficulties
- [Literacy assessments](#) for end of year 3
- End of Primary Benchmark Assessment
- Cambridge English Assessment (2015)
- Secondary Education Certification (SEC).

3.2 Other 'measures'

- PIRLS 2011
- TIMSS 2007, 2011, 2015



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- PISA 2009 +, 2015
 - Survey Lang
 - TALIS 2008.

4. What information/data on attainment and achievement (including the wider areas outlined above) are collected at school level?

- Core Competences Checklists are collected for learners with literacy difficulties
- End of Primary Benchmark Assessment
- Cambridge English Assessment (2015)
- Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) passes from each secondary school
- An online profiler for measuring core competences in English has been developed, but is only used for the assessment of migrant learners.

5. What information/data are used for school evaluation and quality assurance at national/local level?

Schools conduct self-evaluation (sometimes involving questionnaires to stakeholders) in the formulation of the School Development Plan.

Education Officers (inspectors) visit teachers in their classrooms to support and evaluate the teaching, learning and subject content being developed in the classroom.

The Quality Assurance Department conducts a school audit every five years to evaluate the whole school system.

National assessment marks, pertaining to the school, are given to the school Senior Management Teams (SMT), to enable the school to conduct self-assessment and comparing results with previous assessments.

6. Are there any specific initiatives in place to support/enable teachers and/or school leaders to raise the attainment and achievement of all learners?

6.1 Training for early intervention

Early intervention teachers follow the same university course as primary and secondary teachers.

6.2 Training of kindergarten assistants

The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology provides a training programme for people wishing to work with children at pre-primary level. This Diploma in Student Care,



Learning and Development enables students to work with children in a professional capacity in childcare and kindergartens. Apart from providing skills, knowledge and understanding in early years, the programme also provides knowledge and understanding of special needs education.

6.3 Initial teacher training

Initial Teacher Training at the Faculty of Education, University of Malta, was raised to a Master's degree course in October 2016. This aims to help students focus on the pedagogical aspects of the teaching profession and to be well supported for the teaching and learning experience in the classroom.

6.4 Training of learning support assistants

On employment, learning support assistants (LSAs) in state schools follow a ten-week (70-hour) evening course. This introductory course gives participants basic skills, knowledge and understanding of working with and supporting learners with special educational needs in mainstream education. The course has a practical component, where LSAs are monitored and supported in their place of work.

A Level 5 certificate course is also offered for LSAs who have completed the ten-week introductory course. This course offers a more intensive follow-up to the first course. Participants gain both practical and theoretical knowledge in the education of learners with special educational needs. These courses are also offered to LSAs in church schools. The University of Malta also offers a two-year course at diploma level on facilitating inclusive education.

6.5 In-service training

On-going in-service training is offered in various areas of special education to all teachers and support staff working in the Special Education Centre, in special schools and in mainstream schools. It includes courses and workshops in communication, ICT, curriculum development and planning, assessment and early intervention. All teachers are statutorily required to attend one in-service course annually.

7. What other policies may influence levels of attainment and achievement for all learners?

Other policies which influence the attainment and achievement of learners include:

- the provision of 'free' summer revision classes to help learners achieve a pass in the SEC exams in the core subjects;
- the provision of a number of after-school programmes which support learners and their parents/guardians in the attainment of further learning. These programmes are run by the Foundation for Educational Services and by the National Literacy Agency. They target both vulnerable and other learners and enhance their literacy and numeracy skills;
- the financial parental allowance given to vulnerable families by the Social Services Department, which is linked to regular school attendance;



- the setting up of 2nd chance educational institutions such as the Alternative Learning Programme School and the Guze Ellul Mercer 16+ School, which provide alternative learning to students aged 15 and over, at the end of their secondary school experience.

8. Please provide a short commentary/critical reflection on the main policy challenges

All targets referred to in the sections above are challenging when it comes to improving educational attainment and reaching targets set by EU 2020. They are particularly challenging in tackling illiteracy and early school leaving, since they require many co-ordinated strategies to be implemented by a compartmentalised system.

Malta became independent in 1964 and a lot of improvement has been made in the last half a century. In fact, the Maltese educational system constantly seeks to provide high quality education that is research-based and relevant to future generations. This is crucial to empower teachers and professionals with the right tools to tackle situations in the classroom and school where they work.

Another challenge is to raise the results obtained in international studies, which have a direct influence on the level of foreign investment in the country. Such results have indicated that more work needs to be done, given the human and financial investment being injected into the system. Policies go beyond recommendations and include an evaluation of the resources needed to implement change, including infrastructure and human resources. They provide quality assurance measures and checks to ensure that the investment is being used efficiently and effectively. This includes decentralising the system to give schools more autonomy to use them effectively, hence moving away from a 'one size fits all' approach and replacing the questionable dichotomy of 'top-down' with 'bottom-up' approaches.

The challenges which Malta faces are not different from those of other European countries. The National Curriculum Framework (2012) presented three aims for the educational system in Malta, namely active citizenship, employability skills and lifelong learning. These aims, together with a pedagogy which is based upon the acquisition of 21st century skills, including digital skills, and combined with the values of respect and responsibility, form the basis of the education system which Malta tries to achieve.

Another important challenge lies in the upskilling and professional development of all main stakeholders, especially teachers and senior management teams. Quality assurance mechanisms also need to ensure that learners are provided with the best teaching methods possible and that these are basically used in everyday teaching.

In summary, all of the above challenges need to filter down to the following areas:

- early childhood education provision, including childcare provision;
- inclusive education policies, structures and services;
- school attendance and absenteeism;
- state primary and secondary schools;



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- restructuring of the education division;
 - Matriculation and Secondary Education Certificates (MATSEC) that reflect the evolving economic needs of the country, moving away from knowledge-based assessment to one that empowers learners with the right knowledge, attitudes and skills;
 - smooth transition at every stage of schooling and life after school, through lifelong learning opportunities that are relevant to all learners, including those with low functional skills;
 - career guidance;
 - higher and tertiary levels of education;
 - lifelong learning.



ANNEX 1. EXAMPLE OF PRACTICE TO RAISE LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT

Example submitted by: Gaetano Bugeja; Darlene Borg

Contact person: Gaetano Bugeja (Director Curriculum Management); Darlene Borg (Assistant Director Student Services)

1. Location of school/learning community and short description of context

National

2. Summary information on school/learning community

As with many countries with a colonial heritage, until 2006 Malta had a highly centralised and selective compulsory education system. Malta has kept step with EU countries in practically all EU education benchmarks. Additionally, Malta recently participated for the first time in the TIMSS, PIRLS and PISA international studies. These confirmed that, while our top achievers compare well with those of other countries, we have an unacceptably high level of low achievers:

- 37% of the national population for Mathematics in TIMSS;
- 59% for Science in TIMSS;
- 36.3% for PISA Reading Literacy;
- 33.7% for PISA Mathematical Literacy;
- 32.5% for PISA Scientific Literacy;
- 45% for PIRLS.

The EU 2020 target is to have less than 15% of the learner population classified as 'low achievers'.

In 2000, a new National Minimum Curriculum became law. However, it became clear that Malta's compulsory education system needed a profound transformation of objectives, strategies and structures that went beyond foundational principles. The 2005 concept document 'For All Children to Succeed' by the Ministry of Education and Employment proposed the decentralisation of state schools into ten colleges with secondary schools and their own feeder primary schools. Colleges would have an increased administrative, managerial, financial and ultimately curricular autonomy, within a framework of standards and quality assurance. The revamped Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) would have a national remit with respect to educational policy, maintenance of standards, supporting school improvement and quality assurance.



In 2009, an agreement on the harmonisation of church compulsory education led to the elimination of the 11+ examination in 2011, in agreement with church schools. This provided a more level playing field and increased the mix of learners in all schools. This itself was an important contributing factor to increased equity. The new End of Primary Benchmark was introduced and has since been influencing teaching and learning in our schools.

Also in 2009, the review of the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) was launched. This proposed universal education entitlement built around eight Learning Areas, inspired by the eight EU Key Competences Framework. The NCF aims to address the gaps in our learning processes that over the years have led to absenteeism, significant rates of early school leavers and low skills and competences for a proportion of learners.

The NCF is presented within a lifelong learning perspective and celebrates diversity by catering for all learners at each stage of their education. It aims to introduce more equity and decentralisation in the national system. It treats early childhood, primary and secondary education with the same importance. The NCF seeks to present a seamless curriculum which reflects smooth transitions, building and extending on the firm foundations in early childhood education. In essence, the NCF aims to provide a quality education for all learners, reducing the percentage of early school leavers and strengthening their enrolment in further and higher education.

The NCF proposed a Learning Outcomes Framework (LOF) as the keystone for learning and assessment throughout the years of compulsory education. The LOF aims to free schools and learners from centrally-imposed knowledge-centric syllabi. It aims to give them the freedom to develop programmes that fulfil the framework of knowledge, attitudes and skills-based outcomes that are considered the national education entitlement of all learners in Malta. The LOF is thus intended to eventually lead to more curricular autonomy for colleges and schools, in order to better address the learning needs of their learners. The European Social Fund project, 'Design of Learning Outcomes Framework, Associated Learning and Assessment Programmes' (ESF 1.228) and related training is intended to deliver this LOF approach to the educators within compulsory education and all relevant stakeholders.

3. Summary of key feature/strengths of current practice

Each Attainment Level will comprise of a list of Learning Outcomes, or, in the case of VET subjects, a list of Learning Outcomes and Grading Criteria. These Learning Outcomes are articulated in a number of 'I can' statements, which may sound repetitive when seen categorised within each level. The reason for these statements is to allocate empowerment of the learning experience to the learner. Teachers will be given guidance in the Learning and Assessment Programme (LAP) document on how to use these 'I can' statements in their teaching and learning. Each Learning Outcome will not initiate from a vacuum, but will be embedded within learning experiences which pedagogically make sense to the learners in question.

The Learning and Assessment Programme document includes examples of how these Learning Outcomes can be attained, and references to content which helps teachers connect the particular learning experience to the subject matter they are already familiar



with. These references to content and examples will help establish the boundaries for assessment, which teachers can use to assess these learning experiences. These boundaries for assessment will help prevent situations where teachers cover an amount of superfluous material to ensure that all content is covered. Gradually, and with adequate support and training, teachers will learn how to develop learning experiences which are flexible enough to address the particular needs of their learners, yet specific enough to be measured and reported.

4. Data/information available

On-going

5. Focus of example/work to raise achievement

On-going

6. Summary information about developments/current work in this area

On-going

7. Key learning points from this example

Apart from the decentralisation of the education system, which gives schools and teachers more flexibility in their teaching, the learning outcomes have various advantages:

- A move away from a teacher-centred approach, which depended on the teacher's input and on assessment in terms of how well the learners absorbed the material taught: the syllabi used in the past referred mainly to the content of the course that would be covered during the lessons. This teacher-centred approach can make it difficult to identify precisely what the learner must be able to do in order to internalise the concept.
- The alternative model informs both the teacher and learners what the latter is expected to be able to do at the end of the lesson.
- Learning outcomes focus on what the learner has achieved, rather than the intentions of the teacher.
- Learning outcomes focus on what the learner can demonstrate at the end of a learning activity.
- Learning outcomes allow both teachers and learners to have a clear picture of the behaviour that is expected of the latter and the end of the lesson and course.
- Learning outcomes are clear statements of what the learner is expected to achieve and how they are expected to demonstrate that achievement. Thus, learning outcomes are more precise, easier to compose and far clearer.



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- Learning outcomes help learners to learn more effectively: learners know where they stand and the curriculum is made more open to them.
 - Learning outcomes help teachers to design their materials more effectively.
 - Learning outcomes help teachers select the appropriate teaching strategy matched to the intended learning outcome, e.g. lecture, seminar, group work, tutorial, discussion, peer group presentation or laboratory class.
 - Learning outcomes help teachers to better record what a particular activity is designed to achieve.
 - Examinations are set based on the materials delivered.
 - Appropriate teaching and assessment strategies are employed.

8. Supporting materials (web links, papers, presentations, etc.)

[Learning Outcomes Framework](#)

[Learning Outcomes Framework – Reaching Destinations seminar](#)