

Educational Policies that Address Social Inequality

Country Report: Malta

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1. Historical overview and impact on social and educational disadvantage

In this section, we describe the Maltese educational system as it has emerged from its colonial past. We will briefly outline the main laws that regulate national education and describe the latest reforms introduced by the Maltese Government, including the one introduced last year (2007). This is followed by a brief analysis of the current state of the Maltese educational system, with a special focus on the issue of early school leavers – of which Malta has one of the highest rates in the European Union.

Due to the influence of its past history as a colony of Great Britain, Malta's educational system is based on the British model. It is divided into three main branches: a 6 year primary cycle (primary education, from age 5 to 11), 5 years of secondary education (from 11 to 16) and tertiary education. Education is compulsory between the ages of 5 and 16 (primary education has been compulsory since 1946, and secondary education, up to the age of 16, became compulsory in 1971). Malta has two streams of education: the public state-run system and the private/independent and Church-administered system. Education is free in both state and Church institutions.

State Schools

The State School sector draws its main inspiration from the British educational system. There is a state primary school in all towns and villages, but secondary schools are more concentrated. Also, public kindergartens are available free of charge for all pupils from three years upwards, but it is not compulsory for children to attend until age five.

Church Schools

About 30 percent of the national student population attends the non-state sector, composed in a vast majority by Catholic Church Schools run by religious orders. Church schools cover the whole spectrum of education, from Kindergarten to Sixth Form. Following an agreement between the state and the Catholic Church, church schools are funded by the Maltese government and are free of charge for students. In the agreement, the Church transferred much of its land to the state, which in turn finances school employees' salaries. Parents of students attending Church Schools may be required to give donations in order to fill the gap between state financing and the funding needed to develop structural facilities and to provide pedagogical services.

Private/Independent Schools

Although most schools from the non-state sector belong to the Catholic Church, since 1987 there has been a tendency to set up independent schools either as parents' foundations (non-profit making organisations) or as commercial ventures. However, not all independent schools are new; some date back to the early 1900s and have strong links with colonial Malta. All the grades are covered within the growing number of privately funded independent schools, from kindergarten to sixth form.

(For a more detailed explanation of the structure of Maltese Education System, from 3 to 18 years of age, see Appendix 1).

Main Laws/Decrees Governing Maltese Education

The main law regulating education in Malta is enacted by Act XXIV of 1988 (hence amended by various Legal Notices) which defines the educational rights and obligations of students, parents, the state and NGOs (including, foremost, the Catholic Church). This statute establishes that Maltese children may receive education from state schools, private/independent or religious schools, all of which must follow the National Minimum Curriculum and Conditions that establish minimum standards of hygiene, safety, classroom dimensions and amenities.

Apart from these basic principles, the Maltese Educational System is currently undergoing major changes. In 1996, computers started to be installed in all the primary school classrooms; and a new National Curriculum was drawn up and implemented between 2000 and 2001. Following this, an agreement between the Government and the Teachers Union for reforming educational law was recently signed in 2007.

State Education Reform

The Maltese government is working on a reform of the educational system in which the government commits to alleviating current deficiencies in the education system. This includes a guarantee of quality education for students, better prospects for all teaching levels, and to invest further in IT provision and educational support services. The Minister of Education has said that the proposed reforms are part of an effort to ensure the quality of education, reduce bureaucracy, increase schools' autonomy, and improve students' transitions from one educational level to another.

A factor which is under debate is the fact that the education system requires pupils finishing primary education (at the age of 11) to sit for national competitive exams that determine which secondary school they will attend. These result in a sizable number of pupils who do not pass this examination being channelled into schools where, it is claimed, 'de-motivation' towards learning tends to be very high and there is a higher rate of early school-leavers (Gatt 2004).

Currently, Malta's state school system is highly centralised: the Government's Education Division has the dual role of serving as a regulator of all educational institutions and as an operator of State Schools (attended by two thirds of pupils while the other one third attend church and private schools). One of the polemic aspects of the reform has been the intention to divide State Schools into seven clusters, each of which will be presided over by a board of governors. The Education Division will relinquish its role of operator while retaining that of regulator. Some critics – including the opposition party MLP, which is in favour of reforming education - have warned against the side-effects of the fragmentation of services, such as the creation of new bodies which would increase expenses and diminish efficiency. Opponents also claim that this plan devotes most resources to imposing more administrative paperwork on educators, which will hardly improve the system since the perspective largely lies on an idea of inequality as a school based factor.

The Current State of Maltese Education

According to Eurostat (2005), 42 percent of Maltese students finish school with a minimum level of qualifications which would make them employable, placing Malta in the first place in the EU league of underachievement in education. According to critics (Bartolo 2007), another problem has to do with the public school system (primary and secondary), which achieves poor results compared to the private school system. This creates a two-track system and limits parents' choices in deciding where to educate children. Parents are faced with incurring substantial financial expenses in private education in order to give their children a better chance of success at the end of secondary education, or facing possible under-achievement by their children because they cannot afford private education. The same critics highlight the fact that after more than 35 years of free tertiary education and almost 20 years of subsidising university students, many young people still do not enrol as university students. For further details and charts provided by the National Statistics Office about public expenditure, enrolment and school leaving, see Appendix 2.

2. Conceptions of social/educational disadvantage and their impact on different social groups

In Malta's official discourse, social/educational disadvantage is defined in terms of "students with special learning needs", although this definition is usually used without specifying which disadvantages are considered within this term. This official discourse enhances the Government's "commitment to a policy of inclusive education" throughout the whole educational cycle, arguing that the Maltese educational system aims to cater for all sectors of the population and for the needs of all pupils, irrespective of their academic abilities or vocational interests. Thus, an increasing number of children with special learning needs are being integrated into the mainstream schools, while some still receive their education in special primary and secondary schools. At the same time, it can be argued that the use of the term 'special needs' is used to subsume other groups and thus drawing attention away from specific needs of each group's profile.

The Maltese legal framework establishes class sizes and other special resources for both state and church/independent mainstream school sectors according to the number of student attending who have special needs. For example, class sizes in primary schools (1 to 6 years) should be as follows:

-30 children in classes with no SEN students

-26 children in classes with 1 or more SEN students

-Primary classes can have up to a maximum of two Learning Support Assistants

Religious Minorities

The principal religion of Malta is Roman Catholic, with 91 percent of the population, while other beliefs constitute less than 5 percent of the country's population (NSO 2006). The Catholic Church in Malta has a long history in educational involvement, with its historical role as the sole promoter of popular education for centuries. About 30 percent of the national student population attends the non-state sector, composed in a vast majority by Catholic Church Schools, run by diverse religious orders.

Religious education is also provided in all state schools as a core subject, but it is not compulsory for students to enrol. At the same time, there is a legal separation between the Church and the State, and other religions (in theory) are respected and may be practised without hindrance (however, evidence found seems to indicate that other, minority beliefs, are not promoted in these religious studies).

Linguistic Minorities

English, a legacy left by 180 years of British rule in Malta, is one of the two official languages of the islands along with Maltese – the national language - and both are instructional languages and compulsory in Maltese schools, from kindergarten to university, making the Maltese education system a bilingual one. The Maltese are widely exposed to the English language from a very early age. A high percentage of children enter kindergarten with minimal to very good knowledge of English. Maltese, as well as English, is used with children as early as kindergarten levels, with English especially used in non-state kindergartens.

In primary school, pupils are mainly instructed in Maltese in the early years, while English is increasingly used as the language of instruction in the later years of primary school and becomes predominant in secondary, post/higher-secondary and tertiary levels (being the main instructive language of the University of Malta), where instruction - involving the use of external examiners and foreign visiting lecturers - entails the use of English in practically all written and spoken situations (except foreign language courses).

Also, most textbooks and examinations in the different fields of study are in English at every level, due to the small size of the community/market that speaks Maltese, which does not ensure a regular production of new and updated textbooks. Besides Maltese and English, most people living on Malta speak or have a good knowledge of a number of other languages – mainly Italian but also French and German. Students can choose one or two other foreign languages. Italian is usually chosen due to geographical, historical and cultural reasons (children are exposed to Italian at an early age because of television, and proximity to Sicily). Besides Italian; French, German, Russian and Spanish have been added as optional languages studied at secondary level, as a result of increased economic relations with the outside world and the increasing importance of the tourist industry. The teaching of Arabic deserves special mention, since from 1975 to 1987, during one of the periods when there was a Labour Government, this subject was compulsory at secondary level (Badía 2004).

Minority languages

In 1995 Malta signed (and ratified in 1998) the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, declaring that no national minorities exist on its territory (Euromosaic 2004). Malta signed the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages on 5 November 1992, but has not yet ratified it.

Malta claims that it does not have any true minority languages, although the Maltese language itself is quite small: a state language spoken by approximately 400,000 people (Mercator 2000).

Maltese is the first language of about 98 percent of the inhabitants of Malta, and Standard Maltese is used in all communication at the national level, in official, religious and cultural activities; it is also extensively used in the media and is the exclusive medium in the local political sphere. The position of Maltese in education is weaker than in other areas - it is also used, but mainly at the spoken level.

Despite the fact that virtually all the inhabitants of the islands have Maltese as their first language (the number of speakers is close to 400,000), this language has never enjoyed a dominant position in its own territory. Some argue that Maltese is actually an endangered language whose future is not assured since it has to compete with English in many domains, the real language of power and prestige in Malta, and cannot rely on the language loyalty of its speakers (Badía 2004).

Although Maltese is the main language of instruction in most pre-school centres and is taught as a compulsory subject in all of them, it is taught as a *language subject* without content. This means that the Maltese children are not necessarily exposed to their own culture through nursery rhymes and songs (although there has been a recent push for more Maltese culture to be included in the primary curriculum).

In primary education, while Maltese is the language of instruction in most centres and it is taught as a compulsory (language) subject in all of them, there are few textbooks in Maltese and these are mostly related to the language subjects. This means that Maltese is the *oral vehicular* language but children are not necessarily literate in Maltese. In secondary schools, Maltese is the language of instruction in a limited number of subjects, and Maltese gradually yields to English in the curriculum. In centres for technical and vocational education, Maltese is practically the sole medium of instruction, perhaps due to the fact that many of the students come from backgrounds without a tradition of literacy.

In 1994 the Maltese Government embarked on a new language planning strategy, setting up a Maltese Language Board with the aim of analysing and proposing initiatives to protect and promote the Maltese language. Some actions have included 2001's report "A Strategy for the National Language", which formed the backbone of the Maltese Language Act adopted in 2004. The main

novelty in the draft Maltese Language Law is that, for the first time, the state shares with the voluntary organisations the responsibility of promoting the language, by supplying the different organisations with the means to operate better and stimulate cooperation among them (Euromosaic 2004).

Other Linguistic Minority Groups

There are approximately 1,000 members of the Arabic-speaking community, mostly Libyans, Palestinians, Tunisians and Egyptians. This community has its own school which covers twelve years of schooling. Arabic is the medium of instruction, the students are taught by native Arabic speakers (many from Libya), and the schooling system follows the Libyan model, including the use of the same textbooks. The school is recognised by the State and has obtained the support and cooperation of the Education Ministry. The school follows the national curriculum but also includes the teaching of Islam and Arabic language. Two of its stated aims are to maintain the identity of children of the Muslim community in Malta while enhancing tolerance and mutual respect between Muslims and other faiths (Schembri 2004a).

Not all members of the Arabic-speaking community send their children to the Arabic schools. By sending their children to Maltese state or private schools, they can better ensure that their children will have access to tertiary education without further pre-University study (which is the case with children going to the Arab school). Religious activity for these people centres around a mosque, and there is also an Islamic Cultural Centre, where Arabic lessons are taught outside of school hours. The Centre also arranges for religion lessons, runs a Kindergarten and holds evening Arabic language courses for adult learners.

Linguistic Minority/Special Education

In Malta, deaf children are taught through the medium of a dominant language (subtractive teaching) rather than through sign language. This prevents profound literacy and hinders gaining the knowledge and skills needed for socio-economic mobility and democratic participation. According to the UNESCO Education Position Paper (2003), the deaf should be considered a linguistic minority and sign language should be considered a minority language. Malta does not recognise sign language as an official language.

Indigenous minorities

Although Malta declared that no national minorities exist on its territory, traces of race-based discrimination do appear in some documents. The results of a study on Gender and Ethnicity in Malta's educational system (Cutajar 1999) that focused on the island of Gozo – the second largest -, concludes that the educational policies and practices of the Maltese State are biased against women and people of Gozo origin.

Another source, the online magazine "I Tchatchipen" (The Truth in Romani) provides a summary from European Roma Right Centre that states:

Anti-Gypsyism exists as a prevailing attitude throughout Europe, and is deeply engrained in European culture and societies. Stereotypes exist even in countries where there is hardly any visible Roma presence, such as in Denmark, Luxembourg, Belgium and Malta, and are not only the sources of discrimination and marginalisation, but they also inspire and 'justify' violent actions (European Roma Right Centre quoted in I Tchatchipen 2005).

It should be noted that this team could not find any information about Romas in Malta. According to the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUCM) - which does a summary of media coverage across Europe - there is no official data on racial crime in Malta (2006).

Ethnic minorities

The great majority of the country's population is ethnically Maltese, native to the island (96 percent), descendants of ancient Carthaginians and Phoenicians, with strong elements of Italian and other Mediterranean stock. Main foreign communities living in Malta are British (over 4,000 residents, mostly ex-patriots or retirees) and Italians.

As mentioned in the linguistic minority section, the Arab-Muslim community in Malta is made of about 3,000 individuals. The main activities as a community are related to religion or to education. According to Schembri (2004a) general attitudes of the Maltese towards the Arabs (in particular Libyans) have shifted towards more prejudiced and racist attitudes. In part, this is due to an increase in immigrants arriving to Malta in search of jobs (Schembri 2004b), further contributing to a stereotyped image of the "Arab as a male in his twenties who comes to Malta for a short stay and who is either a criminal or a potential criminal" (Schembri 2004b).

There are around 300 people of Indian origin, mostly from the town of Hyderabad in Sindh, who have adopted Maltese nationality. They are called "l-Indjani" (the Indians), by the Maltese. This indigenous minority has been part of Malta's commercial life for the last 115 years and is fully integrated into Maltese society. At the same time, this community is interested in retaining cultural roots - in 1955 the Indian Merchants' Association was formed, renamed in 1989 as the Maltese - Indian Community, implying that a shift from immigrant community towards a local ethnic minority group has taken place (Falzon 2001).

Albanians began to arrive in Malta as refugees in the early 1990s and in 1991 they established the association S.O.S. Albania - one of the projects set up by this voluntary organisation is a secondary school (Preca College). More Albanian refugees arrived in Malta during the Kosovo crisis in 1999. According to the European Council of Refugees and Exiles, a total of 110 refugees arrived through the UNHCR evacuation programme (ECRE 1999).

Nigerians make up a small group of ethnic minorities but they are well-known because they are mostly involved in the fifty different football clubs in Malta. There is not any statistical data concerning their presence in Malta.

Socio-economic groups

According to the European Commission, Malta can be classified as having an average 'low income' per family. The proportion of children (under the age of 16) with low incomes is 19 percent; which is higher than the population as a whole in the European Union (15 percent). This percentage rises for children in single parent households where 35 percent are in or at risk of poverty and 55 percent of single-parent families in Malta can be classified as having a 'low income'.

Some educational services have been conceived to address socio-economic inequalities. According to European documents ("Progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training", Commission for the European Communities 2006), the education and training systems which allow young people to participate relatively early in vocational education at the level of upper secondary education provide an opportunity for young people at risk. As the document indicates, this opportunity aims to meet their educational needs and therefore can have a positive influence on

potential early school leavers¹. Along with Cyprus, Italy and Portugal, Malta is among the EU countries with low numbers of pupils enrolled in vocational stream of upper secondary education (Eurostat 2005).

Special Education

Within the special education policy a Special Education Section within the Education Department has been set up especially for overseeing issues related to the handicapped. The Department also offers various ancillary services, eg guidance, welfare, psychological, medical, and spiritual counselling which are aimed at enhancing the quality of education offered. However, the Maltese Commissioner for Children's Rights (2007) claims that there is a lack of rehabilitation programmes for children and young people with 'very' challenging behaviour² in Malta. Children and young people with these problems usually end up in Mount Carmel Psychiatric Hospital, often being admitted to adult wards. If they commit crimes they end up in the in the Young Persons Unit of the Corradino Correctional Facilities. Both institutions are seen to be inappropriate for children and young people with such behaviour. The Commission is working on a project to put forward a set of proposals of how children and young people with very challenging behaviour could be helped and assisted in a dignified manner.

Gender

The Department for Women in Society (DWIS), which is a part of the Maltese Ministry for Social Policy, works on implementation of gender mainstreaming, particularly in the Public Sector, through the equality of gender in institutions, offering education, developing strategies for change, steps for implementing and managing change and models of institutional change. Significant advances have been made with regards to legislation, policies and developments in gender mainstreaming programmes; training such as the annual training workshop for gender focal points and gender trainers; the Gender Impact Assessment Workshops for senior public officers; publications; and collaboration with other ministries and departments.

Malta has also participated in a Grundtvig II Transnational Partnership Project entitled "Political Education and Learning for Gender Mainstreaming Implementation", with other partner countries that include Germany, Denmark, Greece, Iceland, Estonia and Austria. The objectives of this project were the elaboration, development and testing of educational modules for gender mainstreaming adaptable to the different national conditions and to the various interests of those national target groups involved in the process of gender mainstreaming, and the elaboration of training models for gender dialogue, gender sensitivity modules and gender training supporting gender mainstreaming.

Within this framework, Malta was the organiser and anchor of an international workshop held in April 2003 where 28 project partners and expert guests discussed their challenges and experiences to develop gender mainstreaming implementation ("Political Education and Learning for Gender Mainstreaming Implementation", The Grundtvig II Transnational Partnership Project).

Still, regarding education, co-education does not appear as an extended philosophy in the island, seen for example in the fact that although kindergarten and primary education are attended by girls

¹ It should be underscored, however, that the authors of this report do not intend to imply that students from lower socio-economic groups are best suited to being directed into vocational education at an early stage as an alternative to other higher education opportunities.

² The basic definition for challenging behaviour used for this project is "behaviours of such intensity, frequency or duration that the physical safety or the person or others are placed in serious jeopardy, or behaviour which seriously limits the person's access to ordinary settings, activities and experiences" (Commissioner for Children-Malta 2007).

and boys sharing the same classes, state and church secondary schools are single sex (attended by males and females separately).

Research studies have also found evidence of gender discrimination in the Maltese state educational policies and practices which are seen as biased against women (Cutajar 1999).

3. Project summaries included in database

A range of programmes, projects or initiatives taken by local agents to address educational disadvantage is included in the project summary database (see the project webpage <http://www.epasi.eu>). In order to select the projects to be included, the Spanish research team first solicited advice and proposals from Maltese experts in education policies - specifically experts within the thematic fields covered in this report - in the format of a preliminary survey. In the survey, the experts were asked to recommend policies and/or measures they considered relevant or had made an impact in one or more of the thematic areas.

In order to select the following projects, the Spanish team aimed to find an equal number of cases among all the at-risk groups established for the research. However, the final results indicate the difficulties encountered in finding educational policies, measures or actions aimed at ethnic, linguistic, indigenous and religious minorities. Arguably, this reflects a detectable tendency of the Maltese educational policies to principally address socio-economic disadvantaged groups, or to put 'multi-strand' measures into action (aimed at poverty/literacy/work insertion). It was noted that projects concerning gender also had a significant presence and, to a lesser extent, special education/disabilities. There appears to be a relationship between the absence of measures for the ethnic, linguistic, indigenous and religious minorities groups and the official denial of the existence of such communities³ (although racism has risen to worrying levels in recent years; see the section on indigenous minorities on page 8.) There are a few notable exceptions of projects for minority ethnic groups. It is also notable that in many of the cases where there is not a specific governmental policy, the gap has been filled, to some extent by religious groups. In particular, the Jesuit Refugee Service (JFS) appears to be looking for different means of promoting solidarity with and integration of the immigrant population.

Other selection criteria included public recognition of initiatives such as external recommendations (although our survey to more than 140 experts gave poor results), awards and projects that had been quoted as examples of good practices in other thematic reports.

Moreover, our intention of providing a balanced overview of both macro and micro scale projects - meaning projects organised at regional, national and local level and by central, local and individual actors- was not as successful as planned since clearly the institutional and/or governmental action at the national level was most prevalent. There were other difficulties in data compilation, apart from the apparent lack of initiatives address the above-mentioned inequalities. Foremost was the dearth of reliable information on the existence and or continuation of the projects; paucity of evaluation reports, and lack of reporting on costs and number of recipients. Indeed, scarcity of information about the measures backed by the Maltese government has been a general feature of the Maltese research. This has resulted in incomplete information in some of the project profiles, and some of the projects' reviews may appear quite poor in data (with considerable gaps). It must be stated that the final result is not due to lack of investigation but to lack of existing projects and/or available information about them.

³ In 1995 Malta signed the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, declaring that no minorities exist on its territory in the sense of the Convention. Quoted in Euromosaic III (see references).

Most of the projects chosen to be reviewed as case studies are multi-strand, meaning they are aimed at several themes. In the case of Malta, it was found that most of the multi-strand projects dealt with poverty, literacy and/or work insertion, perhaps reflecting the main characteristic of most Maltese educational policies and actions. Some of the projects also function as ‘umbrella’ projects, under which more specific, differentiated actions take place. Our selection also favoured those projects that appeared to be better documented, consolidated, and periodically (and positively) evaluated and up-dated.

Finally, we also considered the projects’ tendency to involve community actors – especially students’ parents - as a positive feature and worthy of inclusion in this report. In many cases, the project not only involve other agents (parents, community) in the educational actions being implemented and in the policies addressed to pupils’ needs, they also promote, at the same time, adult literacy and life-long learning among more ‘vulnerable’ adults (mostly mothers or women in general). These efforts should take into account the risk of reifying the ‘nurturing’ role of women as mothers or caretakers, as the only ones in charge of supporting their child’s studies. Arguably, this may be an unexpected and negative outcome of such policies.

On the whole, the general tendency of educational initiatives and policies appear to be aimed at overall improvement in educational achievement through open-door policies that engage parents and family in their children’s learning processes, with an important emphasis on improving literacy and numeracy as a starting point as well as measures aimed at early school-leavers (to provide essential training and/or access to return to school). In practice, this may prove to be more beneficial to marginalised groups who have historically had less access to educational opportunities. For the moment, the Maltese government does not appear to signal out specific target groups for these national actions instead there are wider measures, such as of the Malta National Action Plan on Poverty and Social Exclusion 2004-2006 that works like an “umbrella” policy promoting several projects.

4. A Summary of Educational Disadvantage in Malta Today

Looking at the seven indicators of potential areas of risk of inequality in education, it appears that there are two or three notable indicators as regards the Maltese population: early school leavers; upper secondary attainment; and post-compulsory education graduates. These factors have an impact on employment opportunities at later stages of life for students enrolled in school now. A 2001 Labour Force Survey of the National Statistics Office (NSO) indicates that Malta had approximately 58 percent of male early school leavers and a rate of 51.6 percent for females at that time. In the same report, it was indicated that Malta has the highest at-risk-of-poverty rate for unemployed persons aged 16 and over in the entire European Union.

Statistics show that unemployment in Malta is rising and that youth unemployment is significantly higher than the overall percentage (NSO 2007). Forty-five percent of the unemployed Maltese population is under 24 years of age (NSO 2007) and according to the National Action Plan for Employment for Malta (Government of Malta 2004), one in five persons registered as unemployed left school before completing secondary education. Furthermore, early school leavers are more likely to have longer spells of unemployment than other youths with better academic qualifications. According to the same Malta report unemployed persons are at 50 percent risk-of-poverty, which is considerably higher than the EU average of 39 percent.

When taking gender into account, only 32.8 percent of all women were in formal employment in 2004 and women tend to get employment on a temporary basis or under fixed term contracts more

frequently than men (ETC 2004). The at-risk-of-poverty of children 0-15 years of age in Malta is 21 percent and the at-risk-of-poverty-rate of single mothers in 2000 stood at 55 percent.

The link between illiteracy and poverty has been highlighted by the Maltese government as well as other organisations (academic and NGOs) in Malta. The Employment and Training Corporation of Malta has cited the cycle between illiteracy and the social-economic aspects of society, especially when considering opportunities for later training and lifelong learning: illiteracy inevitably affects the possibility of continued learning since these people lack the basic skills to be able to learn. Gatt (2004) identified how half of the student population of Malta preceding from particular secondary school type leave school without any certification and consequently with limited prospects for work. The study indicated that students attending Junior Lyceum, Church or Independent schools have high rates of continuing further education after finishing secondary school whereas students coming from area secondary students have lower rates of attending secondary and post-compulsory education.

According to the 2001 NSO Labour Force Survey, The Maltese labour force is relatively less educated/skilled than their EU counterparts, with some 69.5 percent of the labour force having completed secondary or lower education and 28.1 percent were at the post-secondary diploma or first-degree university level. Only 1.5 percent of the labour force was at the post-tertiary level of education. The percentages of disabled persons in higher education were: 0.05 percent of all students at University; 0.84 at the Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology, 0.11 percent of the students at the Junior College, and 0.16 percent at the Higher Secondary level (Malta National Action Plan on Poverty and Social Exclusion 2004-2006). According to this report, “The lack of more detailed data and particularly time series showing trends related to illiteracy and educational qualifications or professional skills of the disabled persons and their relative participation is a huge obstacle to measuring the intensity of their integration in society (p. 11)

The latest OECD report on education and training found Malta lagging behind in three aspects of education, namely: (1) early school leavers; (2) upper secondary attainment; and (3) mathematics, science and technology graduates. Unfortunately, in the literacy area, Malta was one of the countries that did not participate. However, according to a 1999 and 2002 National Literacy Survey, the overall average raw scores for Maltese and English tests of Year 1 and Year 2 pupils were quite high (32.9 and 29.9, respectively; maximum score was 40), with girls achieving significantly higher average scores than boys in both languages (2002 National Literacy Survey). According to the 2005 Census of Population and Housing, there were 26, 121 illiterates in Malta and Gozo aged 10 years and over with the majority being males (14,868). (Malta has approximately 399,867 inhabitants according to the government of Malta.)

There was very little information about other at-risk populations, apart from gender and poverty levels.

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Appendix 1. Structure of Maltese Education System (3 to 18 years)

Stage	Age level	Length	Type of school providing this education
Pre-Primary	3 to 5	2 years	Kindergartens attached to Primary Schools
Primary	5 to 11	6 years	Primary Schools
Secondary-Orientation cycle	11 to 13	2 years	Junior Lyceum; General Area Secondary Schools; 'Opportunity schools'
Upper Secondary-Specialisation cycle	13 to 16	3 years	Upper-Secondary School
Tertiary	16 to 18	2 years	Sixth Form-Upper Lyceum; Vocational Schools

Pre-School Education (3 to 5)

Pre-primary education is co-educational, full time and provided in kindergarten centres that are attached to primary Schools and fall under the responsibility of the Head of the primary School. Although attendance at this level is voluntary, about 95 percent of the national student population aged between 3 and 5 years attend.

Primary Education (5 to 11)

Primary schooling marks the beginning of compulsory attendance; it is co-educational and lasts for 6 years. Classes never exceed 30 pupils, and the school size varies from small centres with less than 100 students to larger schools with approximately 800 students (including Kindergarten pupils). The core subjects at this level are Maltese, Maths, Science, Social Studies, Religious Education, Physical Education and the Expressive Arts. Recent years (2000-2007) have seen the gradual introduction of technology education at the primary level. Streaming is practised during the last 2 years. At the end of year 6 (at the age of 11) students generally sit for a qualifying national examination and proceed to secondary education.

Secondary Education (11 to 16)

Secondary education is available for students who successfully complete primary education, and consists of a 5 year period divided into a 2-year orientation cycle and a 3-year cycle of specialisation. In the first 2 years classes may have up to 30 students, while in the last 3 years classes may not have more than 25 pupils. State and Church secondary schools are single sex, and most schools have a population of less than 550 students.

Secondary studies can be provided by 3 type of centres: those pupils who pass national examinations at the end of primary are admitted into Junior Lyceums, which are schools for higher achievers, while the other students go into General Area Secondary Schools (since 1994/95, the first cycle in Area Secondary Schools is of 3 instead of 2 year duration, while the second cycle consists of 2 years). There is also a special provision for low achievers ('Opportunity schools') who receive a simplified and less demanding type of secondary education.

At the end of year 5 of secondary, pupils sit for the Matriculation Secondary Education Certificate (MATSEC), which enables successful students to move on to tertiary education (Upper Lyceums/Sixth Form) and which leads to access to University. In addition, after 3 years of secondary schooling, students can opt to go to Trade Schools (a system which leads either to employment or to further technical education and training through apprenticeship schemes). Students in Trade Schools sit for local craft-level examinations, and some attempt to get UK-based City and Guilds certificates. Following the reform of the Trade School sector, Trade School students are also encouraged to sit for the MATSEC examination.

Malta is among the EU countries with the highest share of early school leavers (followed closely by Spain), however a higher share of early school leavers in both Malta and Spain attained at least the lower secondary level, rather than only primary (Commission of the European Communities, 2006). While the share of young people with upper secondary education has increased comparatively little

in many countries in Europe some countries, Malta has made considerable progress in the recent past.

Post Secondary –Tertiary- Education (16 to 18)

More than 54 percent of Maltese students continue with their education and training after the age of 16. Following the compulsory school cycle, post-secondary education leads both to the academic route and the vocational route (secondary students can choose to proceed through Sixth Form to University, or to one of the several specialised Vocational Schools and to employment). Vocational courses range from technical studies (mechanic, wood-working, etc) to public sectors (tourism, health care, nautical, agricultural) and private sectors (hairdressing, beauty therapy and secretarial studies). Students in the post-secondary sector may also receive financial stipends, apart from free tuition. The State Post-Secondary sector is presently made up of the Junior College, which is administered by the University of Malta, and one other school at Naxxar.

Appendix 2. Maltese Educational Statistics

(Source: National Statistics Office)

Enrolment at different levels of education (2002-2004)

Level	Primary	Secondary	Post-secondary	Tertiary	Vocational*
2002 Total	32,717	28,126	4,973	6,362	4,262
Males	16,946	14,302	2,705	3,159	2,764
Females	15,771	13,824	2,268	4,173	1,026
2003 Total	31,708	28,560	5,169	9,006	4,635
Males	16,454	14,443	2,298	3,888	3,168
Females	15,254	14,117	2,871	5,118	1,467
2004 Total	31,064	29,540	5,479	7,955	7,041
Males	16,084	14,988	2,318	3,515	5,063
Females	14,980	14,552	3,161	4,440	1,978

* Including post-secondary vocational courses. Vocational education comprises technical institutes, trade schools, the Institute of Tourism Studies, the Kindergarten Assistants' Training Centre and MCAST from (2001)

Percentage of early school-leavers* (2002-2004)

Year	Males	Females	Total
2002	53.0	50.9	52.0
2003	51.7	48.2	50.0
2004	45.2	39.9	42.6

*'School-leavers' refers to persons between 18-24 years who have achieved lower secondary school level or less and who are not in further education. This indicator has been calculated as a percentage of the total population in the same age bracket.

Appendix 3: Project Summaries

Theme	Project	Database Code	subsidiary themes
Minority ethnic groups	Sahha fid-Diversita' (Diversity Strenghtens)	MT236	D
	Diversity: Within and Without	MT240	RG
	The Drama Unit's "Theatre-In-Education" (TIE) projects	MT241	
	Safe Schools Programme: Anti-Bullying Service	MT242	C R L D I G
	Chaplaincy in Dialogue for University Students and Academic Staff	MT243	
Socio-economic	The Id f'Id (Hand in Hand) Parent Empowerment Programme	MT228	
	Youth Outreach Programme: Job Club	MT229	
	Reach project	MT232	
	Malta Writing Programme (MWP)	MT230	L
	Writing Process School Pilot Project At Mqabba Primary C	MT231	L
	NWAR (Late Blossoms) Family Literacy Programme [Case Study 1]	MT245	E R L D I G
	Hilti (My Ability) afterschool family literacy Clubs [Case Study 2]	MT246	E R L D I G
Religious Minorities	National Action Plan on Poverty and Social Inclusion 2006-2008 [Case Study 3]	MT247	E R L D I G
	(Project below: Arabic community school is also Muslim religion school)		
Linguistic Minorities	Arabic community school / Arabic language teaching	MT244	E R
Disabilities	Richmond Foundation's "Reaching the kids programme"	MT237	
	Inclusive Education Programme: Pilot Study at Maria Assumpta Secondary School	MT238	
	Let Me Learn (LML) Project	MT239	C
	Malta's Educational System Reform regarding Inclusive and Special Education [Case Study 4]	MT248	
Indigenous Minorities	(No projects found specifically addressing this community; official denial of it's existence)		
Gender	The Gender Gap in Science and Technology in Malta: evaluating the problem and tacking the issues	MT233	
	Facilitating Equality through Education (FETE)	MT234	
	Ghozza (former School Girl Mothers' Unit)	MT235	

Key: E ethnic minorities; C Socio-economic; R religious minorities; L linguistic minorities;

D disability; I indigenous minorities; G gender

Appendix 4: Project Overview

Project	Target age range					Target theme(s)						
	pre-school	primary	secondary	higher	working life	minority ethnic	Socio-economic	religious minority	linguistic minorities	disability	indigenous minorities	gender
Sahha fid-Diversita' (Diversity Strenghtens)		✓	✓			✓✓				✓		
Diversity: Within and Without		✓	✓			✓✓		✓				✓
The Drama Unit's "Theatre-In-Education" (TIE) projects (Minority Ethnic Groups + anti-bullying)		✓	✓			✓✓						
Safe Schools Programme: Anti-Bullying Service		✓	✓			✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Chaplaincy in Dialogue for University Students and Academic Staff				✓		✓✓						
The Id f'Id (Hand in Hand) Parent Empowerment Programme		✓	✓		✓		✓✓					
Youth Outreach Programme: Job Club (S-W)			✓	✓			✓✓					
Malta Writing Programme (MWP) (P-S- H-W)		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓✓		✓			
Writing Process School Pilot Project At Mqabba Primary C (P)		✓					✓✓		✓			
Reach project (S)			✓				✓✓					
NWAR (Late Blossoms) Family Literacy Programme [Case Study ①]		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hilti (My Ability) afterschool family literacy Clubs [Case Study ②]		✓				✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

National Action Plan on Poverty and Social Inclusion 2006-2008 [Case Study 3]	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Arabic community school / Arabic language teaching		✓	✓			✓		✓	✓✓			
Reaching the kids programme (P)		✓									✓✓	
Inclusive Education Programme: Pilot Study at Maria Assumpta Secondary School			✓								✓✓	
Let Me Learn (LML) Project		✓	✓	✓			✓				✓✓	
Malta's Educational System Reform regarding Inclusive and Special Education [Case Study 4]	✓	✓	✓								✓✓	
The Gender Gap in Science and Technology in Malta: evaluating the problem and tackling the issues (P-S-H)			✓									✓✓
Facilitating Equality through Education (FETE) (P-S)		✓	✓									✓✓
Ghozza (former School Girl Mothers' Unit) (S)			✓									✓✓

✓✓ Indicates main theme addressed
 ✓ Indicates additional themes also addressed

Educational Policies that Address Social Inequality

Malta case study report 1 The NWAR Family Literacy Programme

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The EPASI project is a programme of analysis of educational programmes in fourteen European countries, designed to address various forms of social inequality. The project analysis was conducted in the period 2007 – 2009. This report is part of the overall project, details of which are at <http://www.epasi.eu>.

The analysis is intended to be used within the overall framework of the EPASI programme.

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- The Institute for Policy Studies in Education, London Metropolitan University (UK) (Coordinator)
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- Montpellier III - Université Paul Valéry (France)
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UNIVERZITA HRADEC KRÁLOVÉ



MALMÖ HÖGSKOLA



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1. Selection criteria for all the Malta Case Studies

Most of the projects chosen to be reviewed as case studies for Malta are ‘multi-strand’ (aimed at several themes, mostly poverty/literacy/work insertion), reflecting the main characteristic of most Maltese educational policies/actions. Some of them also work as ‘umbrella’ projects, displaying other, and more concrete actions. Our selections also favoured those projects that appeared to be better documented, consolidated, and were periodically (and positively) evaluated and updated.

Recommendation by external sources was also a relevant criterion, either through our survey sent to Maltese education experts, reception of awards or official recognition, or quoted as ‘good practices’ in other evaluating or thematic reports. We also considered their tendency to involve the community - especially parents - in the educational actions and policies addressing their pupils as a positive feature for instance, promoting literacy of students and at the same time adult literacy and life-long learning among these adults (most times mothers/women).

2. The NWAR (Late Blossoms) Family Literacy Programme from the Foundation for Educational Services (FES)

The Foundation for Educational Services (FES) is a public organisation belonging to the Malta Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment. It was created in 2001 as a mechanism that works hand-in-hand with the Education Division to provide a range of innovative educational initiatives to reduce illiteracy in the compulsory levels of education in Malta.

According to the FES Statute the foundation aims to bring innovation in education while complementing, incorporating, facilitating and strengthening specialised initiatives. The foundation supports approaches that have been proven valuable to the Malta society as a whole and will ensure that these approaches achieve and maintain high international standards. Above all, the foundation is committed to educational equity and excellence, especially towards persons at risk of social exclusion and to future generations.

The aims of the Foundation are to develop and manage innovative prevention and early intervention services and programmes that ensure the provision of quality education for all students at risk of school failure and social exclusion; develop and manage educational programmes for parents that enable them to meet the challenge of nurturing and supporting their children’s development; contribute to the meeting of non-formal lifelong learning needs of citizens; develop schools as community learning centres and promote and disseminate educational research and publications on good practice approaches (FES Statute; FES Report of Activities 2001-2003).

Its projects consist basically of a range of day-school and after-school services characterised by a multi-pronged strategy that includes support for all the affected stakeholders (pupils, parents, teachers, schools, colleagues - groups of schools within a geographical area - and local communities).

One of the valued outcomes of the foundation is introducing the concept and practice of ‘Family Literacy’ in the Maltese panorama, a complex concept that encompasses the different ways in which parents, children and extended family members use literacy at home or in the community. The essence of family literacy is that parents are supported as the first teachers of their children. Programmes work with individuals as well as with the family unit, involving parents in their pupils’ educational processes and at the same time encouraging life-long learning. Family literacy activities are intended to support the acquisition and development of literacy experiences of parents, children

and other family members, and include, among other activities: family story-book reading, completing homework assignments or writing joint essays and reports (Macelli 2004).

Apart from supporting children at risk of educational failure and their families, the foundation helps schools in their efforts to develop day-school capability to enhance basic skills acquisition and parental involvement in schools.

The FES has developed five core educational support programmes focusing in the field of literacy and family literacy:

- The NWAR (“Late Blossoms”) Programme: a secondary prevention family literacy initiative
- The Hilti (“My Ability”) Programme: a community-based primary prevention afterschool family literacy initiative
- The Parents-in-Education Programme (Id f’Id): a parent capacity building initiative
- The Malta Writing Programme (MWR): a teaching of creative writing initiative
- The Assist Programme: a capacity building of schools initiative (Macelli 2004)

3. NWAR

One of its main projects is NWAR (Late Blossoms), an ongoing family literacy programme that aims to significantly reduce the prevalence of illiteracy in children from age 8 to 13 (late primary and early secondary levels) through an integrated approach which characterises all FES projects. The NWAR Service trains teachers to work with students within a family literacy context. It is addressed to children who have presented significant deficits in basic reading and writing skills for years and are therefore at severe risk of educational failure. It also aims to involve the children’s families (usually mothers), and the programme consists of an intensive after-school service (two times a week for one hour) usually over a period of one semester, with the possibility of extended service to a full scholastic year if necessary. It offers literacy support in both Maltese and English languages.

NWAR was launched in 2003, in a large part motivated by the significant number of Maltese students in compulsory education who failed in the acquisition of literacy skills, attributed – according to the FES - to a series of systemic factors such as the teachers’ lack of differentiated teaching competencies and the existing links between school and home teaching and learning processes.

Although the NWAR programme makes no specific distinction regarding minority groups, vulnerable communities are given precedence in the service. Nora Macelli, Chief Executive of the FES, labels the project as specially addressed to socio-economically disadvantaged groups (in a survey sent to the EPASI Spanish team). It also aims to improve gender awareness, by helping mothers get the chance to develop their own learning and literacy skills.

In fact, the NWAR programme has been included as one of the social exclusion prevention measures under the National Action Plan on Poverty and Social Inclusion of Malta (also included as Case Study n°3 in this review).

The NWAR strategy includes supporting students towards their basic literacy skills acquisition; actively involving parents in this process; providing school teachers with training opportunities at national and school levels (these include in-class actions so as to create a multiplier effect within school communities); supporting schools by providing technical assistance; collaborating with other learning support providers and submitting recommendations to policy makers (Ministry of

Education, Youth and Employment and its Policy Unit) on measures that would ensure basic skills acquisition by students at risk of educational failure (Macelli 2004).

The service is national in scope and currently operates in seven regional after-school NWAR centres, six on Malta and one on the island of Gozo. These centres are based in State schools, with the intention of transforming schools into hubs of community learning.

NWAR trains teachers in the application of Synthetic Phonics as a remediation tool in the early years of a child's educational growth, and combines it with other teaching and learning tools. After NWAR's introduction, Synthetic Phonics is being gradually incorporated to the Maltese State School System.

History (from FES activities report-4)

A three month pilot project was carried out in mid-2002 to determine the best methodology for the planned project, including discussions with parents to explore which learning and teaching techniques would be effective to implement at home. At the same time, sessions were held with children - who had been previously referred for presenting literacy acquisition problems - with the aim of setting basic reading and writing targets and reaching them through the application of specific tools such as flash cards, a word bank, poems, directions identification and sentence creation. These first sessions provided an initial picture of each child's abilities and level of education. The pilot experience also led to the first attempt in the preparation of informal individualised educational plans designed by the NWAR personnel and the parents for each child, and based on realistic targets that could be achieved within a short time span. As result of the pilot project seventeen families requested or were referred for literacy support, of whom eight (summing up 10 children) were assessed by the coordinator to make up the first NWAR project. The age range of pupils was from 7 to 11 years.

Although session plans were prepared beforehand, tutors found themselves adjusting the sessions to the specific needs of individual participants. Sessions were theme-based and participatory in order to make learning an enjoyable process, and pupil's participation was 90 percent. Parents' discussion sessions were held in parallel, with an attendance rate of 94 percent. Most times, both the mother and father participated (although the mother's presence became dominant in later years). Although the parent sessions were pre-planned, the process was flexible enough to focus on immediate concerns and solutions. The worksheets used by the children were shared with parents in order to stimulate their application and adaptation at home. Initial results and indications of service provision showed that the programme was a very effective tool since a good proportion of users made enough progress to be able to continue successfully their mainstreamed day school learning.

Service Expansion was very fast, and by its second year of implementation (2003), 89 families had benefited from the programme through one of three then-existing centres.

Social actors involved

Pupils

The admission criteria are directly related to the student's severe reading and writing difficulties and risk of literacy failure. Manifest symptoms included not speaking or listening with confidence; not answering relevant questions; being unable to express an opinion about ideas and events; not reading any given text; not remembering lengthy messages; not attempting to read unfamiliar words; not understanding what is being read and not being able to retell main points; not blending sounds; not writing legibly; not being able to compose a sentence; never using punctuation marks;

not being able to transcribe from a board or a book or never using interesting vocabulary (Macelli and Cini 2005).

The student profile is a child at upper primary or early secondary level of education, where no complementary education support is available and where previous attempts of literacy acquisition have been made by both the child and the parents but failed to achieve progress and did not qualify for the support of a classroom special needs assistant (FES activities report-4).

If the applicant is over 13 years old, the criteria are more flexible and acceptance is based on evidence that the parents have tried other possibilities of literacy support without success due to very late diagnosis or family problems; and the student risks reaching school leaving age without any literacy skills.

Parents

The programme works on the basis of a family learning contract, and parents are encouraged to make a commitment that they will take an active part in their child's learning process. Teachers trained in the NWAR method involve parents through the whole process, including the individual assessment of pupils' needs and determination of targets, the development of an Individualised Learning Plan (ILP) and its implementation and later review. During each hour of service, parents and their children participate in an intensive one-to-one/two literacy support session (each NWAR tutor works with one or two families). Parents are expected to use the tutor as a role model to learn the strategies that best support their child's learning, so that these can be replicated at home to enhance mastery. No updated data was found, but since its inception and up to 2005, 370 families have benefited by the service with very positive feedback and evaluation from the parents.

Teachers

Seven small teams of teachers have been engaged by the FES as NWAR tutors on a part-time basis. Teachers involved receive training in differentiated teaching methodologies -with a special emphasis on synthetic phonics- and parental participation strategies, plus mentoring and on-going support in the form of monitoring visits and on-going training. The application by these teachers of the learned methodologies in their classrooms works as a multiplier effect in schools.

Courses for both parents and teachers on Synthetic Phonics are delivered at both school and national levels. These include compulsory in-service training courses for teachers that are an integral part of their continuing professional development.

4. How the programme works

Applications for the NWAR after-school service can come by several means. Referrals from the child's school are especially relevant as well as referrals from the Statementing Moderating Panel, the Ministry of Education, and various psycho-social services within the Education Division (Macelli and Cini 2005).

A referral form filled in by the school administration and the parents is sent to the referrer in order to establish the principle that NWAR processes are inextricably linked to the school curricular processes and that the school is not relinquishing its responsibilities for the pupils attainment. Applications are acknowledged in writing followed by an invitation to an assessment session.

Pre-service assessment

Through an informal session, the NWAR Programme Co-ordinator and site Co-ordinators meet with parents and their child to understand their perception of the learning impasse and to discuss learning support strategies used at home. Assessment is carried out using a tool developed by FES personnel to determine the level of attainment in speaking, listening, comprehension and writing skills. Following this, realistic targets are identified and established within the context of an Individualised Learning Plan (ILP). A detailed explanation is provided to parents regarding how the NWAR tutor plans to work with the child, including a practical description of the multi-sensory approach, examples of exercises that would be used to enhance concentration, an explanation of auditory training (combining sounds to form words), decoding of sounds (identification of sounds in words), and a discussion of how the parents could use such learning-stimulating techniques at home.

Service

Implementation follows the initial screening and admission into the programme and design of the tailor-made educational project between the tutor and the referred child and parents. Literacy support sessions are held twice a week. Individualised learning plans (ILP) are prepared and implemented for a semester on a two-families-to-one tutor basis. The programme includes the active participation of the family during and between NWAR sessions.

Contact with school and integration of NWAR methodologies into day school processes

A first contact meeting is arranged with the child's school so that the centre gets to know about the NWAR approach, and to discuss the ILP and its implication for the school teaching and learning processes. Session plans are offered to the school for re-enforcement of the learning process as well as to familiarise teachers with the approach. Also, heads of schools and classroom teachers of each referred child are invited to visit their pupil at NWAR in order to familiarise themselves with the process being facilitated as well as to stimulate reflection about ways through which synthetic phonics can be applied in school.

Post-semester assessment

The same tool used for the pre-service assessment is used to compare levels of competencies, determine actual achievements, and to plan targets for the following semester, if required. In that case, the Individualised Learning Plan is reviewed for identification of learning targets for the next period.

5. Outcomes

NWAR has an average of 40 percent mainstreaming rate after one year of provision, and almost all the children are usually ready for mainstreaming after two years of provision (FES 2004).

Through the programme, those referred pupils considered 'unteachable' have gained literacy skills in a very short period. Students' fast learning has been attributed both to the innovative teaching methodologies and approach used by the NWAR tutors, and to the parents active involvement in their pupils on-going learning support process, thus positively influencing the informal curriculum of the home and enabling the capacity building of parents (FES 2004).

In this way the programme targets both the child and the adult: illiterate parents participating in the NWAR process - very often the mother or another female relative - have also gained literacy skills along with their children. Furthermore, parents who had never before considered accessing non-formal or/and formal adult education opportunities have, through the NWAR process, become interested in joining parent-focused courses offered by trained FES parent leaders and teachers.

According to FES Chief Executive Macelli, in this sense NWAR is seen as a last-chance programme for the child and very often a second-chance for the adult that enhances self-esteem, upgrades literacy skills and leads to lifelong learning.

The programme also has the aim of transforming schools into learning centres for the whole community, through teacher training and the dissemination of effective differentiated teaching methodologies. In this context, NWAR has exposed hundreds of teachers in Malta to the application of synthetic phonics in the early years of a child's educational process. Another contribution of the NWAR Programme to the Maltese education system is the dissemination of the synthetic phonics methodology which, since the scholastic year 2005-2006, is being adopted by a number of state schools as another key differentiated teaching methodology. The dissemination of this teaching and learning methodology takes place through a number of ways; including but not limited to in-school early years teacher training and support to classroom teachers, training of complementary teachers and official in-service courses for teachers and courses for parents (FES 2004).

Also, a “basic skills assessment tool” (BSA) developed for application by NWAR Programme personnel has been refined for adoption, on a wider scale, by the new state colleges that form part of the reform process of the Maltese state compulsory education system implemented by the Ministry of Education and entitled “For All Children To Succeed”. This assessment had been designed to provide detailed information on the basic skills attainment and needs of the learner both to the secondary school administration for classification purposes. It also helps teachers adapt their teaching according to the individual student’s attainment levels. What started as an in-house development by the NWAR Programme has been transformed into a basic skills assessment tool that can be used by all state primary schools.

Another outcome is the development by NWAR personnel of ‘Attainment Targets in Maths, English and Maltese’ for use at secondary level of education by state centres for low achieving students. The Maltese and English components of this assessment have been adapted from the NWAR assessment tool.

Evaluation

The NWAR Programme has been evaluated by an overseas external consultant, the late Professor Sheila Wolfendale from the School of Psychology at the University of East London, who was an expert in the field of family literacy. Her studies have shown significant gains in a number of literacy areas, and gains for the parents as well, for whom such participation has led to reflection about their own learning needs and engagement in existing lifelong learning opportunities (FES 2004).

According to this experts’ evaluation, some of the identified key success factors of the NWAR programme are: the rigorous selection process and the intensive induction and on-going training of NWAR tutors; the fact that NWAR field teams are small learning communities that engage in twice weekly training and planning sessions; the on-going follow-up and mentoring of tutors by the NWAR Programme coordinator; the on-going active participation of parents throughout the service provision period; the parent-empowering partnership that is established between NWAR tutors and parents. NWAR has demystified the professional role of teachers and helped parents overcome fears

of engaging in dialogue with teachers regarding their child's learning and development potentials and difficulties. The programme has also enabled many parents and schools to link up and maintain contact. This takes the form of the twice weekly circle time for participating families where they share the outcomes of their home-based efforts and the monthly meeting of parents where they discuss issues they themselves bring up. The fact that the programme does not directly target illiterate adults (parents) but that such parents become literate indirectly by their on-going presence and participation in the programme has also been evaluated as a very positive element of the project. Parents who are normally too shy to join basic adult literacy courses find themselves learning for the sake of their children and subsequently realise that learning is in fact fun. They may then join adult learning opportunities.

The multiplier effect of the programme is also another positive feature. NWAR trained part-time tutors, teaching them how to apply the project's methodology in their own classroom processes during their day school provision. Additionally FES offers practice-based training in the NWAR methodology to a wider group of teachers both during school hours (in-school professional development) as well as through short courses at national level by application. They also provide technical assistance to secondary schools through which small teams of teachers have been formed to develop and implement in-house literacy strategies and resources in support of struggling students. The fact that many teachers have heard from colleagues about the success of the NWAR programme and applied for a part-time position with FES is evidence of the positive effect the programme is having (Macelli and Cini 2005).

According to the 'National Action Plan on Poverty and Social Inclusion' 2004-06 the programme can be considered a wide success especially considering that students, whom schools and teachers had given up for un-teachable, learn to read and write in a few weeks – plus the fact that parents are involved throughout the whole process.

Finally, parents' feedback points to a general appreciation of the service for the following reasons: They had the opportunity to express and share their concerns with others in similar situations; they could ultimately acknowledge previously unrecognised internal strengths and skills that they could enhance in order to participate more effectively in their child's educational journey; parents with literacy difficulties themselves managed to do so as well; parents could practise learning strategies together and managed to try them out with success at home (FES activities report-4).

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Educational Policies that Address Social Inequality

Malta case study report 2 The Hilti After-school Literacy Clubs

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The EPASI project is a programme of analysis of educational programmes in fourteen European countries, designed to address various forms of social inequality. The project analysis was conducted in the period 2007 – 2009. This report is part of the overall project, details of which are at <http://www.epasi.eu>.

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MALMÖ HÖGSKOLA



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1. The Hilti (“My Ability”) Programme

The Hilti Programme is a primary prevention after-school family literacy programme that addresses pupils in their early primary years. Provision is specifically aimed at communities considered to be more vulnerable to future literacy problems. It was founded in 2001 by the Foundation for Educational Services (FES), and is carried out by the FES along with the selected centres that implement the programme in their school community. Hilti was the FES’ pioneer programme, materialising the Foundation’s aim to participate in the development and the implementation of strategies and programmes that effectively tackle illiteracy, absenteeism and school failure while ensuring the interest, motivation and involvement of students, parents, teachers and others involved. Hilti was also the first project to promote the importance of parents’ involvement.

According to the FES emerging research studies show that children’s motivation to succeed in school is influenced by the educational achievement of their parents. The importance of the family and the pupil’s social environment on cognitive development and literacy acquisition of children is manifest and is the foundation of the programme. Parental involvement will influence student achievement, school attendance, motivation, self-concept and esteem and behaviour. (FES 2004).

Hilti Clubs

The Hilti programme includes a range of activities, all characterised by processes through which teachers, children, their parents and volunteers engage in collaborative learning efforts through participation in artistic activities. The main activity is the Hilti Clubs, which provide after school sessions for all families who apply. A Club Hilti is held in a state primary school and caters for families of children aged 6 to 8 and whose children attend the host centre. Each centre has a ratio of 8 to 12 families per tutor.

Hilti Clubs encompass mixed ability groups and use a range of differentiated teaching and learning approaches to reach children who most require literacy support. A team of teachers trained in family literacy approaches and volunteer assistants run each Hilti Club. Teachers who co-ordinate these clubs must have attended a 112 hour training programme in the project’s specific methodologies.

Club sessions are carried out twice a week for 1¾ hours - from 2:30 to 4:15 in the afternoon -, during at least 15 weeks. Each meeting is organised in three blocks and consists of separate and parallel child and parent sessions that lead to joint sessions and processing of learning afterwards. Club activities are specifically designed with an in-built literacy and/or numeracy component that the children immerse themselves in as an integral part of the fun activity. Parents also obtain copies of resource tools being used by the Hilti Centre personnel on that particular day so that they can adapt them for home use afterwards.

Hilti Clubs currently operate in 26 community-based primary schools and reach around 600 children and their parents per scholastic year.

2. Hilti Programme Development and Implementation Process

In September 2001, right after the FES had been created and prior to embarking on its first operational phase, the strategy for the fulfilment of its corporate objectives was formulated and sent for discussion. A consultative seminar was held with educators, educational administrators and academics, and the feedback from the survey and the seminar was integrated into a revised strategy and plan (FES 2004).

As a consequence of the strategic design and consultation, a pre-pilot phase of the Hilti (My Ability) after-school family literacy programme was set a month later, in October 2001. The first

team of Hilti Centre coordinators and animators were recruited and provided with intensive training in family literacy work, including theoretical and practical elements. This team launched and ran the first Hilti Club at the Gzira State primary school for students from years two and three and their parents. The pre-pilot phase lasted from October 2001 to January 2002.

Pilot phase

By this time, another five centres had been created and all the trained coordinators were able to run their own school based Hilti programme. A total of 174 students and 126 parents participated. The pilot phase culminated with a Hilti Family Festival where parents from each of the six Hilti Centres planned, led and participated in theme-based workshops and other educational games and activities aimed at children, adults and whole families.

Expansion Phase

Following the success of the pilot phase between February and June 2002, the Education Division advised the FES in the identification of other schools that could be invited to host a Hilti Club. School selection was determined using a range of criteria such as the literacy result scores indicated by the National Literacy Surveys and the percentage of pupils who access in-school complementary education. Agreements were set with fourteen state primary schools, followed by construction of adequate work space and staff recruitment. Hosting a Hilti Centre includes furnishing two rooms allocated by each school and equipping them with the necessary educational resources this is undertaken with capital funding from the Foundation for Tomorrow's Schools from the Education Division.

These fourteen new Hilti Centres became operational in November 2002, adding to the first six. According to the project's activities report, parents from the first six Hilti Centres were invaluable in promoting family literacy initiatives in the fourteen new sites. Parents who joined FES personnel during parent meetings in these new sites were instrumental in stimulating parents to decide to become part of the programme. Parents from the old sites also joined FES personnel in the training of teachers who would later run the fourteen new centres. In 2003, the programme employed 10 full-time and 82 part-time personnel (mostly state school teachers specially trained for the task) and kept growing (FES 2004).

Hilti Clubs currently operate in 26 community-based state primary schools and reach around 600 children (of whom 350 are male and 250 female) and their families/parents (500, of whom 40 are male and 450 female) per year (National Action Plan On Poverty And Social Exclusion 2006-2008). Also, each state primary school that hosts a Hilti Centre has been offered additional literacy support for a limited number of older pupils.

3. Hilti Club Session Structure

Hilti Club sessions last for 1¾ hour, take place two times per week and run for a minimum of 15 weeks, although participants can re-register every semester. The tutor-pupils ratio average is of 1-10. Sessions have a common basic structure that is adaptable to provide a number of parallel and consecutive programmes for different age-groups and needs. Therefore, the programme content varies in topic and focus (FES 2008).

The basic structure of an after-school session is composed of three blocks:

a) Big Group Activity (50 minutes). Only children take part in this first activity which may include drama, creative thinking skills, group reading, cooking, special activity, etc.

b) Simultaneously, parents meet separately in their own room to prepare their participation in the Early Intervention Strategy. The session starts with a 10-minute circle time where they engage in a discussion on how and to what extent each family has implemented at home the knowledge and skills learnt during last week's parent session. Parents then go on to rehearse their interaction with their own children in the joint activity that is carried out in the final part of every Club session (part C, see below). This leads to concrete learning about how to support their children's educational development, and also an increased consciousness of the learning process itself and of their own role as learners and, eventually, as parent leaders in their school community. During this session, parents obtain copies of resource tools being used by the Hilti Centre staff on that particular day so that they can adapt them for home use.

c) Small Group Activity (35 minutes). Parents join their children to implement the previously rehearsed activity, and this way put into practice the knowledge and skills learnt in the previous meeting. Those children whose parents cannot participate in the session are assisted by tutors or volunteers (FES 2008).

From the children's perspective, the session's different blocks are a whole, with one part leading into the other, however, the first Big Group Activity provides the social, communicative and thematic context for the second, joint Small Group Activity. While the first one is more group-based, the second one focuses on one-on-one and small group work, with academic skills oriented tasks, reaching wider educational objectives such as knowledge of the world around us, social and communication skills, manual dexterity, and others.

4. Other Hilti Projects

Hilti through Sports

Similar to the family literacy clubs' aims, Hilti in Sports targets children ages 7 to 8 with literacy difficulties who would benefit from after-school support but are too involved in their local sports nursery to be reached and supported through their local Hilti Centre.

This initiative is considered as an extension of the local Hilti Centre but instead of being allocated in a primary school, it is set in the football club nursery. The literacy session takes place just before children's football training, two times per week for 45 minutes, and activities focus on a football-related aspect while integrating speaking, reading and writing elements. Sessions include discussions with football players whom the children look up to, the production of a newsletter or an article based on such encounters, and the production of booklets or wall-charts of football rules. The project was piloted in one community in partnership with the Valletta Football Club and the Valletta Local Council, and twenty children attended with a participation rate of 88 percent, after what is has been extended to other local sport clubs (FES 2008).

The Hilti Tezor ("My Ability is my Treasure") Project

This bilingual reading promotion initiative was created because of the general lack of Maltese literature for early years of education. It aims to promote the habit of reading among low-achieving students and their parents, including those children from monolingual families for whom the access to written materials in English has not led to cultivating reading. The initiative is funded by the HSBC Cares for Children Fund and the Maltese editorial house "Klabb Kotba Maltin".

Two packs of bilingual reading were created and published for children aged 6 to 7 (23 books) and 7 to 8 (18 books). Each set resembles a small treasure chest, and includes a bilingual guidebook with activities and projects that parents can carry out around the contents of each book. Also, a

contest was made for literature in Maltese, and three new children's books were published, one in large book format - being the first of its kind in Maltese - for use at kindergarten and year one of primary education. Besides being the first big book in Maltese, it is also the first to tackle multicultural and particular social issues for young children.

The project also included training HSBC workers as Volunteer Assistants to attend Hilti Clubs in three-month cycles, developing and implementing a reading promotion scheme, as well as creating and publishing new children's literature in Maltese.

PEFaL

This parent empowerment for family literacy project was partly funded by the European Commission through the Grundtvig action of the Socrates Programme, and aims to adapt the Maltese experiences from Club Hilti and Id f'Id programmes (also reviewed in the projects charts section. See the EPASI database projects [MT246](#) and [MT228](#)) to different European settings, forming a network of mutual learning family communities. Partners include England, Belgium, Lithuania, Rumania and Italy, and the initiative was launched in 2003 through a National Conference on family literacy for PEFaL partner organisations and practitioners from Malta (attended by 250 delegates), and closed in 2004 with an International Conference on Lifelong Learning through parental involvement in Education.

Finally, the FES also provides another family literacy programme named *Ongi Ongi Ongella* (a Maltese nursery rhyme) as part of day school provision for primary education children, complementary to the Hilti after-school services.

5. Hilti Clubs Outcomes and Long Term Impact

Some of the main outcomes of the work carried out at these centres include:

Infrastructure for school and after-school activities

Twenty-five Hilti Centres have become operational in host-State primary schools, each made up of two rooms specially refurbished and resourced to host Club Hilti and Id f'Id parent learning support activities on after-school hours. During school hours, the Club Hilti resources are used by Activity Teachers employed by the Education Division to develop a school-based integrated expressive arts programme, as well as for staff development and adult-centred learning activities. The funds and refurbishment work were provided by the government's Foundation for Tomorrow's Schools.

Professional development / Teacher training

Hilti Centres comprise a wide range of personnel (most on a part-time basis due to their links to the day-school services), including Centre Co-ordinators, Animators, Activity Teachers employed by the Education Division and Volunteer Assistants. The FES has provided the staff with training and mentoring sessions (102 hours in the case of Centre Co-ordinators) to provide literacy support services at Hilti Clubs after school hours, which has had an impact on day-school practices as well.

Impact assessment, Individual Educational Plans and Case Studies

Personnel from the FES have also developed Individual Educational Plans (IEP) for those children attending the Hilti Programme, as well as specific formative assessment tools - such as portfolios and profiles - in order to be able to gauge the impact of the family literacy approach adopted at the

Hilti Centres. Also, in depth case studies of individual children attending different Hilti Clubs have been completed and published in a monograph.

Hilti Family Festival

These are end-of-course celebrations where persons who had participated in the programme spend the day together celebrating their collective achievements. Parents get the chance to discuss educational issues of common concern through parent-organised and led workshops, and review children's progress through static and live exhibitions.

Print material, including among others

“Manual on How to Run a Hilti Club”: A Procedures Manual produced for use by Hilti Centre Co-ordinators and team members. “Hilti Tezor Reading Pack” for 6 and 7 year olds, and another for 7 and 8 year olds (bilingual texts); as well as a parents' guide to using the packs.

Development of home-school links and innovative school communities

According to the programme webpage, “parents learn concretely how to foster their children's educational development. This leads to increased consciousness of the learning process itself and of their own role as learners and, eventually, as parent leaders in their school community” (FES 2008).

The FES states that the Hilti Programme enables parents to come to know teachers and what they do more closely, developing a teacher-parent tie that breaks the barrier separating parents who shy away from school and teachers, and making parents feel reassured and accepted as main actors in their children learning processes.

Other children in the family may also benefit from using the activities made in the parents-pupils joint sessions and from having a parent who is more in tune with their learning. In the adult sessions, parents can come to terms with their own experiences of school and learning and are encouraged to reflect on how their attitudes to these experiences help or hinder their children.

The change processes involved by the programme at the personal, family and school levels are also enabling school communities to become more open to experiment with a range of effective and practical differentiated teaching methodologies that have the potential of stemming literacy difficulties at the roots. Moreover, such processes are stimulating teachers to explore new ways of facilitating learning activities in partnership with parents.

6. Evaluation

The creation of school-based Hilti Centres includes regular monitoring of the project's teams and undertaking performance assessments, as well as holding weekly planning, review and training sessions for Hilti Centre teams at head-office level and modelling sessions whenever required. Results of internal evaluations indicate that the approach stimulates and enhances children's self-esteem, social skills and literacy attainment. Parents gain competencies that strengthen the curriculum of the home. School teachers have the opportunity to develop home-school links and to extend their repertoire of literacy tools and strategies that enrich their classroom practices (FES 2004).

Most agents involved in the Hilti programme have been asked for evaluation and recommendations during each phase of the project. Their concerns and proposals have been taken on board in the preparation of the next phases of the programme. Systematic interviewing to heads of schools from those centres hosting a Hilti Centre shows that their perception of the programme changed from that

of a remedial to a family literacy programme; they regarded Club Hilti as a valuable addition to the school programme and were impressed by the parents attracted to programme and their level of participation.

Day school teachers' of all the schools hosting a Hilti Centre were also interviewed for their feedback regarding the programme. Their judgement on attainment of participating children and their parents showed that 74 percent considered an improvement in pupils' social skills; 81 percent perceived improvement in their academic skills as well; and 73 percent evaluated an improvement in parent participation (FES 2004). Their feedback also indicated that the programme was well received and perceived as learning through fun by the teaching community. Teachers have also expressed concerns about the programme's ability to reach those families that were most in need of such a service and to provide greater programme-school links.

Parents' concerns were gathered from parent-to-parent meetings, the Family Festival, operational files, in-house and external research exercises. Parents noted the following changes in their children; better speech and pronunciation skills; increased awareness of environmental print and an increased willingness to read it; eagerness to read more; a willingness to write more challenging sentences and writing them better; improved concentration and schoolwork; happier and more confident in school. Parents also noted the following changes: Enhanced parent-child communication; specific parenting strategies learnt; specific literacy strategies learnt; they appreciated the parents' sessions during Club Hilti as an opportunity for self expression, and to work with their children and the teachers; they appreciated small-group format and the upgraded welcoming physical environment. They also made proposals for improvements that have been taken on board in next phases of the programme (FES 2004).

Children's feedback has been gathered in the closures of Hilti Clubs. Their comments showed that they saw Club Hilti as a learning-conducive environment; appreciated the nurturing interaction between themselves and the Hilti staff; appreciated the supportive parental presence during sessions; developed bonds and communication skills between peers; were learning through fun – with speaking and literacy skill development being highlighted. Pupils also indicated their most enjoyable activities, and made many proposals for improvements (FES 2004). From all these evaluations, the Club Hilti personnel designed a chart indicating which attainment targets were reached, partly reached or not yet reached, as a project's assessment based on an evaluation of all the qualitative and quantitative data available.

Hilti Programme was also recommended (by request from the EPASI Spanish team) by Nora Macelli, Chief Executive of the Foundation for Educational Services (FES). According to Macelli, the programme has "proven to be a statistically significant early intervention literacy and parental participation strategy, leading to greater reading and social skills in children, and enhanced and more articulate parental involvement in their children's learning and in home-school links" (personal correspondence).

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Educational Policies that Address Social Inequality

Malta case study report 3 Educational Policy on Poverty and Social Inclusion

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1. National Action Plan on Poverty and Social Inclusion 2006-2008

According to the Maltese Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity, social inclusion is a growing and important concept within the changing political, cultural, social and economic developments being experienced in Malta. For the ministry, the promotion of social inclusion involves a different range of categories aimed at different target populations, all of whom have varying circumstances that have the potential of creating diverse risks of poverty and social exclusion. Therefore, the ministry opts for a multi-policy approach (MECYS 2007). The official discourse also points to the link between poverty and social inclusion, citing poverty or risk of poverty as having a direct impact on various life aspects including employment, education and social welfare. These, in turn, are influential factors concerning social inclusion, thus they require effective and efficient action (MECYS 2007).

In view of the foregoing, in 2004 Malta established a biannual National Action Plan on Poverty and Social Inclusion (NAP) within the European Council of Lisbon (2000) programme towards the eradication of poverty and the achievement of an inclusive society by 2010. The first 2004-06 NAP was followed by an updated, improved and ongoing second plan for the 2006-08 period.

Both National Action Plans target the goal of social inclusion from a multi-policy approach, simultaneously addressing those major areas that directly or indirectly impact the prospects for inclusion rather than focusing on concrete vulnerable social groups. In this sense, the project reflects the Maltese government's philosophy that the prospects for enhanced and effective social inclusion require a holistic community-based approach that includes a horizontal focus that incorporates diverse vulnerable groups in order to promote social cohesion (MECYS 2004, 2007). The Plan's interdisciplinary/transversal character is distinctive in its origins as well, since it was founded by the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity (being the lead/coordinator ministry in the area of social inclusion) along with the Ministry for Education, Youth and Employment and the Ministry for Tourism and Culture, and its implementation is carried out by diverse grass root entities.

Project aims include safeguarding present and prospective generations against poverty; promoting social cohesion through effective collaboration, coordination and networking and protecting, maximizing and empowering the emancipating potential of children and youth. These aims will be achieved through various reforms and initiatives aimed at enhancing the social inclusion prospects and general wellbeing of younger generations. The initiatives aim to promote an inclusive society through policy measures that provide equal opportunities to everyone, including the integration of persons with disability and disadvantaged groups, and by operating and extending training and employment schemes. The plan is supposed to materialise Malta's commitment towards safeguarding social cohesion and the well-being and life opportunities of vulnerable groups, and is a means to improving policy making, promote openness, transparency and involvement of stakeholders (MECYS 2007).

The NAP is an 'umbrella policy' that gathers a series of projects, each one aimed at addressing social inequalities either from an inclusive, multi-strand focus, or regarding a concrete at-risk community (several matching the themes identified by the EPASI project, although 'poverty/social class' is the main strand in most cases) in a range of social spheres, including education. The vulnerable/at risk-of-poverty groups targeted by the plan involve a wide range of groups: children, youth, families, and victims of domestic violence, addiction, disability, mental health, elderly, illegal immigrants, long term unemployed and single parents. The multi-policy approach focuses upon several areas, including: facilitating employment, investing in human capital, building stronger communities (prevention and intervention), strengthening the voluntary sector, investing in social welfare services, etc.

The current 2006-08 National Action Plan is built on the 1st plan's evaluations, combining its strengths and successes while adjusting areas that need improvement. New policies, priorities and pathways are also being developed. The result is a plan that includes 70 original policy measures or projects - extended from the previous one - plus 21 new policies, all characterized as:

- programmes and services that are interdisciplinary and outreach oriented;
- prevention programmes that create awareness and provide early intervention;
- the introduction of new legislation that protects the most vulnerable;
- the implementation of practical measures that particularly target education as the means for enhancing investment in human capital;
- the creation of more employment opportunities; and
- the provision of adequate structures to enhance networking (EAPN 2007)

The plan also considers the need of the government to know whether the measures that are being implemented actually address the established goals for inclusion. For this reason, systematic evaluation surveys and improvements are carried out, involving all implied stakeholders (see the section on evaluation below).

Education

Regarding education, the plan aims to reduce early school leaving and illiteracy rates, effectively address inclusive and quality education for all and enhance the link between academic education/lifelong learning and employability.

According to Eurostat data from 2005, Maltese unemployment is not decreasing: the unemployment rate stood at 7.1 percent (7.4 percent for women and 6.8 percent for men); long-term unemployment stood at 3.4 percent; the percentage of people aged 18-59 who are living in jobless households stood at 8.2 percent and the share of children aged 0-17 living in jobless households was at 8.9 percent. Also, at risk of poverty rate by age groups stood at 26.1 percent (0-17), 16.7 percent (18-64) and 24.7 percent (65+), being children and youths the most vulnerable community. Furthermore, young people who leave school early are more likely to stay on the unemployment register for a longer time than youth who have some form of qualification (Gatt 2004, Vallejo and Dooly 2008). Early school leaving is also often associated with low status occupations, less stable career patterns, unemployment in adulthood, criminal behaviour, and drug and alcohol abuse (see National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2006-2008).

Although Malta already provides universally free and compulsory schooling for children aged 6 to 16, it seems that this achievement is not enough to effectively cater for all the social realities found in the Maltese society. Reversing this situation implies major challenges in poverty prevention and significant efforts to achieve the empowering potential of children and young people. Due to this reality, one major goal of the 2006-08 NAP regarding education has to do with discerning related causal factors for not completing secondary education, identifying and applying solutions to fight early school leaving and encourage educational commitment.

The NAP is also very directed towards job-insertion and specialisation, as well as life-long learning programmes. According to the plan's webpage¹, "Education has a direct impact on the rate of economic growth in all sectors. At a time when prosperity depends on a highly skilled and adaptable workforce, it is particularly crucial for Malta to have an education system that enables it to compete in value-added, knowledge-intensive markets". Various programmes have therefore been introduced in the 2nd National Action Plan with a view to facilitate school ending and job insertion, and reduce the incidence of unemployment among early school leavers (such as the

¹ <http://www.msp.gov.mt/services/>

“Youth Outreach Programme: Job Club” and other initiatives previously described in this overview).

Some examples of policies included in the 2006-08 NAP focusing on education of children and young people, specially those with special needs (some already reviewed in this overview) are:

- Youth Outreach Programme: Job Club;
- Ghozza programme for young mothers;
- The NWAR Family Literacy Programme;
- The Id f'Id Parents-in-Education Programme;
- The Anti-Bullying Service;
- Early Childhood Education Policy (promotion of early education and childcare centres to ensure a good start for all children and facilitate increased participation in the labour market); and
- Training and Support for Labour Market Integration of Socially Excluded Persons (among others).

Although there are significant documents describing both National Action Plans, specific data regarding the number of recipients and the costs have been hard to find, due perhaps to the fact that it is an ‘umbrella’ type of project where overall numbers are difficult to establish, especially considering that each policy measure entails different beneficiaries and funds. Still, the Maltese public expenditure in education, health and social policy exceeds 60 percent of all public recurrent expenditure, which, according to the Government, is a statement of the priority and importance given to the social cohesion of Maltese society (MECYS 2007).

The National Action Plan on Social Inclusion co-exists and relates to Malta’s current educational system reform, addressed at the governance of the education system and the autonomy and decentralisation of State schools. It seeks to involve schools in initiatives for developing a culture of decision-making, shifting the focus away from solely transmitting information towards facilitating participatory learning; as well as improving and upgrading the quality of educational experience so as to enhance educational attainment and decrease levels of illiteracy and early school leaving.

2. Specific outcomes and Long term impact

Due to the ongoing character of the 2nd NAP, outcomes and long term impact have not yet been established. However, some previous data show good results regarding the previous biannual plan, along with the current educational reform. For instance, notwithstanding the overall unemployment figures, a positive development in the unemployment rate of young people has been recorded (for example, a decline of 2.2 percent in 2005, from 19.0 percent in 2004). This may be related to current education reform efforts that have led to another positive outcome: a decrease in early school leaving from 54.2 percent in 2000 to 44.5 percent in 2005 (EAPN 2007).

The plan’s National Consultation Process (carried out in 2006 at the end of the 1st NAP and towards the designing of the 2nd) has identified several good practices and brought forward various suggestions for the consolidation and expansion of existing initiatives. Concretely, 70 previous policies and actions were reviewed for their possibility of continuing, and 21 new measures/projects were included (MECYS 2006).

Also, during the 2006 National Consultation Seminar, all participants - government entities as well as voluntary organisations - were invited to nominate a “social inclusion officer” as a link between the individual entity and the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity. This group works now as a monitor entity on the Plan’s progress.

Evaluation

Service providers and users have played an important role in both the plan's consultative and design process. In order to evaluate the 1st biannual plan (2004-06) and improve the design of the 2nd (2006-08), the Ministries concerned carried out an extensive consultative process with grass root stakeholders and the general public. In an effort to widen and consolidate citizen participation and the ministries foster pro-active dialogue in the process of formulating the policy, priorities and supporting measures for the new plan. Policy makers and service providers, coming from government entities as well as from voluntary organisations, were invited to participate in this consultation process. They were asked to help update the policy measures pertaining to their entity and produce feedback on the efficacy and effectiveness of the 2004-06 NAP measures while also identifying lacunae necessitating to be addressed.

Consultation entailed a national seminar in January 06 for service users, service providers and policy makers, plus feedback through a questionnaire-based data collection research. This process was also followed by the setting up of a working group composed by all the "social inclusion officers" nominated by the various entities, with a view to bring together and synergise expertise from all the established strands. From then on, periodic meetings have been held between the Social Inclusion Office within the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity and the officers so as to monitor progress in the different working areas, reviewing and updating the 2nd National Action Plan.

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Educational Policies that Address Social Inequality

Malta case study report 4 Changing Inclusive and Special Education

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The EPASI project is a programme of analysis of educational programmes in fourteen European countries, designed to address various forms of social inequality. The project analysis was conducted in the period 2007 – 2009. This report is part of the overall project, details of which are at <http://www.epasi.eu>.

The analysis is intended to be used within the overall framework of the EPASI programme.

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MALMÖ HÖGSKOLA



Changing Inclusive and Special Education

Over the past years Malta has embarked on a National Educational Reform process that started in the year 2000 with the creation of a new National Minimum Curriculum (NMC) entitled “Creating the Future Together” applicable to all education providers in Malta (State, Church and Independent schools) in three different levels of education (pre-primary, primary and secondary). This NMC is based on a belief in social justice and prescribes the implementation of inclusion (Principle 8), a concept which recognises the full range of educational interests, potential and needs of pupils, and has been said to mark a paradigm shift in the way Maltese society looks at education.

In 2001, the Minister of Education announced the adoption of a new policy for inclusive schools, aimed at the attendance of students with a disability in mainstream education, named “Inclusive Education Policy Regarding Students with a Disability”. The Minister also announced the establishment of a Review Board to carry out this measure.

Later on, in 2005, this reform process led to the publication by the Ministry of Education of a new Network Organisation for Quality Education in Malta entitled “For All Children to Succeed” (FACTS) which includes 10 separate review exercises of different aspects of the educational provision, ranging from early childhood education and inclusion to higher and tertiary education and lifelong learning, all of which had been completed in the previous years. These reviews also included the improvement of educational services for children with special needs. Policy measures regarding Inclusive and Special Education are also included in the National Action Plans on Poverty and Social Inclusion (2004-06 and 2006-08), and further measures have been projected for the following years.

According to Kevin Bonello, vice-president of the Malta Union of Teachers (MUT) (contacted by the Epasi Spanish team in mid-2007), “Maltese developments in the field of Special Education this year have been tremendous”.

A summary of some of the main initiatives/projects undertaken in the last years would include:

- Attendance of children with disabilities in regular schools
- Creation of individualised educational programmes (IEP) for these pupils, according to their particular needs;
- Creation of a certificate in education for Learning Support Assistants;
- Reform of former Special Schools into “Resource Centres”
- Project for establishing National Attainment Levels for students attending Resource Centres;
- Training for Early Intervention Teachers;
- Recruiting of Assistant Heads of Resource Centres;
- And a setting up of a curriculum which reflects the National Minimum Curriculum for these children.

Despite the significant amount of documents that describe and analyse the Educational System reform regarding Special Education, specific data on costs and government investment has not been found.

Inclusive Education

The measure about the inclusion of students with a disability in mainstream education was set by the Minister for Education and developed by the Ministerial Committee on Inclusive Education, in charge of laying the necessary educational infrastructure and creating provisions for children with

diverse needs to be able to receive their educational entitlement in mainstream schooling. According to the European Anti-Poverty Network –Malta, this initiative targets 1,308 students recognised as having special educational needs. They are being educated across regular Kindergarten, Primary and Secondary schools and are supported by Learning Support Assistants (data for the 2006-08 period, in: www.eapnmalta.org).

Along with inclusive schools, the Ministry created two bodies closely connected with the implementation of this policy: the Statementing Moderating Panel and the Statementing Appeals Board, whose main aim is to make sure that every student with disability has an individualised educational programme according to his individual needs.

The functions of these statementing bodies are to:

- Ensure that each school has done everything it could and should do to meet the needs of the student with special needs, within the resources already available in the centre;
- Gather and analyse trans-disciplinary assessment reports from various professionals (including educational, parental, medical, psychological, social, communicative, vocational, etc.) regarding a student's statement;
- Invite parents and professionals to discuss issues raised by the assessments presented to the panel;
- Seek active consultation with parents and, when appropriate, the students themselves in developing a statement;
- Establish the nature and level of educational support needed by the student being statemented;
- Submit statements to the Director General of Education for follow-up action and provision of the indicated educational support;
- Undertake periodic reviews of statemented students; and
- Prepare annual reports for submission to the Minister of Education

Two Statementing Moderating Panels have been set up to ensure that students do not suffer due to statementing delays, allowing frequent meetings to efficiently process applications. The creation of these bodies has been complemented by a change in the actors attending the statementing process. While NGOs used to be represented on the Statementing Board, the new Statementing Moderating Panel does not include representatives of these organisations. On the other hand, school personnel and parents – who usually complained about their exclusion from the statementing process - play a major role in the new context, since they are consulted by the Statementing Moderating Panel during its deliberations (from: New Policy on Inclusion of Students with a Disability).

Individualised Educational Programmes (IEP)

The policy document “Inclusive Education – Support to Students with Disability” stipulates that for every student with a disability an Individualised Educational Programme (IEP) needs to be prepared according to his individual needs, and in consultation with, among others, the class teacher and parents. The document describes an IEP as “A concise and practical written plan, developed for a student with a disability, which describes the modifications and adaptations for a student's educational programme and the services necessary to ensure full access to educational entitlements according to the National Curriculum. Some students require small adaptations and minimum levels of support while others with more complex needs may require detailed planning for educational modifications, adaptive technologies, or health care plans. The IEP ensures that, whatever the level of support required, each school is to ensure that the student's needs are taken into serious consideration. In this sense, the IEP is a primary tool for ensuring equal opportunities, as regards the National Curriculum, for students with special educational needs because of disability” (from: New Policy on Inclusion of Students with a Disability).

Professional Training - Certificate in Education for Learning Support

Due to the ambitious character of the inclusive education policy, its effectiveness has requested the development of a wide range of key factors, including specialised personnel and training provision; concretely:

- professional training for school personnel to prepare IEPs;
- training for schools' management teams to embrace the notion of inclusion and incorporate subsequent measures in the School Development Plan;
- the setting up of a cadre of Inclusion Co-ordinators, specialised teachers who may identify and assist vulnerable students from an early stage, co-ordinate the provision of classroom support for students with a disability and assist schools to develop the capability of IEPs preparation and review;
- producing Learning Support Assistants/Facilitators to help educate these pupils with special needs across the curriculum.

Measures have been taken in order to ensure that staff is efficiently trained. The Division of Education stated that all categories of personnel who support students with a disability at the classroom level should follow a University tailor-made course leading to a "Certificate in Education for Learning Support". The Certificate was designed for all the Learning Support Assistants to be fully trained and qualified to support students with special needs to receive their educational entitlement.

According to the Ministry of Education, the Facilitator has the following responsibilities and duties: (from: Annual Reports of Government Departments – 2004 / Education Division)

Learning Support:

- Supports and collaborates with the class teacher and other colleagues in the education of all pupils in class and, in particular, pupils with special educational needs so that individual curricular needs are catered for;
- Fully participates in the development, implementation and review of an individualised educational programme (IEP) for pupils with special educational needs including recording and reporting progress of such IEPs on a regular basis;
- Helps in the preparation of educational materials and plays an active part in all the components of the instructional and educational process in class;
- In collaboration with the class teacher, participates in the observation, assessment and documentation process of the performance and behaviour of included learners as well as in their respective individual transition programmes as they move through the educational levels;
- In collaboration with specialists, teachers and parents, promotes an inclusive community of learners where all pupils are valued and respected.

Personal Support:

- Supports pupils with special needs in their personal care and hygiene needs;
- Seeing to the mobility, posture and seating needs of pupils as required (subject to the international guidelines on weightlifting and wheelchair pushing);
- Ensures the maximum educational benefit and safety for individual pupils by providing them with assistance during physical education, games, excursions and therapy sessions, as well as normal feeding during breaks and at other times as required;

Other measures related to specialised staff provision in regular school had to do with providing personnel to stand-in for Facilitators absence (due to illness or emergency leave) to ensure that

students with a disability are not forced to remain at home. Another new provision consists of a transition programme for students with a disability who are moving from primary to secondary education and from secondary to post-secondary opportunities.

Reform of Special Schools into Resource Centres

Recent changes in the Maltese inclusive education and special education sector also include transforming former Special Schools into “Resource Centres”. Such reform consists on the organisational restructurisation of special schools that cater for children with acute special needs, including more resources for teachers in Resource Centres and a more efficient distribution of these resources; and the centralisation of services offered to children with disabilities. The reform also considers the setting up of a curriculum which reflects the National Minimum Curriculum for these children, as well as training for Early Intervention Teachers and recruiting of Assistant Heads for these Resource Centres.

The Division of Education is currently providing training courses for all levels of personnel in Resource Centres, and is offering distance learning opportunities for a number of personnel who are interested in pursuing courses of studies in a specific area of special educational needs.

Project for establishing national Attainment Levels

Finally, a research project has been launched to examine and analyse the attainment levels obtained by students in Resource Centres and establish National Attainment Levels for children with acute special needs.

Outcomes, Evaluation and Official Recommendations

General evaluation of the Maltese Educational System Reform regarding Inclusive and Special Education seems positive so far, since most measures reviewed above were recommended by several education experts in reply to a survey from the Epasi Spanish team (including Marisa Scerri, Director of Policy Development and Programme Implementation from the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity; Raymond Camilleri, Director of Curriculum Management from the Education Division; and Kevin Bonello, vice-president of the Maltese Union of Teachers).

According to these sources, the impact of these initiatives are or will be reflected in the following benefits:

The inclusion of pupils with a disability in regular schools has helped these students to integrate better with their fellow students as well as helping them in understanding and learning in a more effective manner.

Measures addressed at staff training, and concretely the design of a Certificate for Learning Support Assistants has resulted in better facilitation of lessons and better focused teaching for students with special needs.

The transformation of Special Schools into Resource Centres and the creation of National Attainment Levels for these centres imply more resources for teachers in Resource Centres; an increase in efficiency in the distribution of resources; more efficient network services; detailed and professional guidelines for Special School Teachers and increase in efficiency and professionalism in the Early Intervention Programme.

In general terms, the whole reform has resulted in a better service for children with disabilities, new schemes of work and resources available for teachers and an increase in efficiency in resource administration for the benefit of students, parents and teachers.

However, the provision of some of these measures has been criticised either for lacking the proper coordination for their correct implementation or for not reaching all the population that needs them.

The main report of the National Action Plan on Poverty and Social Inclusion 2004-06 noted that, although “The Education Division provides classroom learning support by facilitators to students with a disability, promoting inclusion in the mainstream education, this service is not attracting the number of professional trained personnel required and the cadre of facilitators lacks an effective central co-ordination mechanism”. The document states that The Ministry of Education would conduct a review of Inclusive and Special education to analyse service provision (in: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_inclusion/docs/nap_incl_2004_mt_en.pdf).

The recently created Commissioner for Children – Malta, explained in a 2006 report that “there is currently no rehabilitation programme for children and young people with ‘very’ challenging behaviour in Malta. Children and young people with these problems usually end up in Mount Carmel Psychiatric Hospital, often being admitted to adult wards. If they commit crimes they end up in the Young Persons Unit of the Corradino Correctional Facilities. Both institutions are seen to be inappropriate for children and young people with such behaviour” (from: Report for ENOC Annual Meeting, Developments and Achievements September 2005 – August 2006). One of the aims of the Commissioner has been to put forward a set of proposals of how children and young people with very challenging behaviour could be helped and assisted in a dignified manner, since the Maltese services, including the Education System, were not offering solutions to address the rehabilitation of this specific population with special needs.

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Appendix 1. Structure of Maltese Education System (3 to 18 years)

Stage	Age level	Length	Type of school providing this education
Pre-Primary	3 to 5	2 years	Kindergartens attached to Primary Schools
Primary	5 to 11	6 years	Primary Schools
Secondary-Orientation cycle	11 to 13	2 years	Junior Lyceum; General Area Secondary Schools; 'Opportunity schools'
Upper Secondary-Specialisation cycle	13 to 16	3 years	Upper-Secondary School
Tertiary	16 to 18	2 years	Sixth Form-Upper Lyceum; Vocational Schools

Pre-School Education (3 to 5)

Pre-primary education is co-educational, full time and provided in kindergarten centres that are attached to primary Schools and fall under the responsibility of the Head of the primary School. Although attendance at this level is voluntary, about 95 percent of the national student population aged between 3 and 5 years attend.

Primary Education (5 to 11)

Primary schooling marks the beginning of compulsory attendance; it is co-educational and lasts for 6 years. Classes never exceed 30 pupils, and the school size varies from small centres with less than 100 students to larger schools with approximately 800 students (including Kindergarten pupils). The core subjects at this level are Maltese, Maths, Science, Social Studies, Religious Education, Physical Education and the Expressive Arts. Recent years (2000-2007) have seen the gradual introduction of technology education at the primary level. Streaming is practised during the last 2 years. At the end of year 6 (at the age of 11) students generally sit for a qualifying national examination and proceed to secondary education.

Secondary Education (11 to 16)

Secondary education is available for students who successfully complete primary education, and consists of a 5 year period divided into a 2-year orientation cycle and a 3-year cycle of specialisation. In the first 2 years classes may have up to 30 students, while in the last 3 years classes may not have more than 25 pupils. State and Church secondary schools are single sex, and most schools have a population of less than 550 students.

Secondary studies can be provided by 3 type of centres: those pupils who pass national examinations at the end of primary are admitted into Junior Lyceums, which are schools for higher achievers, while the other students go into General Area Secondary Schools (since 1994/95, the first cycle in Area Secondary Schools is of 3 instead of 2 year duration, while the second cycle consists of 2 years). There is also a special provision for low achievers ('Opportunity schools') who receive a simplified and less demanding type of secondary education.

At the end of year 5 of secondary, pupils sit for the Matriculation Secondary Education Certificate (MATSEC), which enables successful students to move on to tertiary education (Upper Lyceums/Sixth Form) and which leads to access to University. In addition, after 3 years of secondary schooling, students can opt to go to Trade Schools (a system which leads either to employment or to further technical education and training through apprenticeship schemes). Students in Trade Schools sit for local craft-level examinations, and some attempt to get UK-based City and Guilds certificates. Following the reform of the Trade School sector, Trade School students are also encouraged to sit for the MATSEC examination.

Malta is among the EU countries with the highest share of early school leavers (followed closely by Spain), however a higher share of early school leavers in both Malta and Spain attained at least the lower secondary level, rather than only primary (Commission of the European Communities, 2006). While the share of young people with upper secondary education has increased comparatively little

in many countries in Europe some countries, Malta has made considerable progress in the recent past.

Post Secondary –Tertiary- Education (16 to 18)

More than 54 percent of Maltese students continue with their education and training after the age of 16. Following the compulsory school cycle, post-secondary education leads both to the academic route and the vocational route (secondary students can choose to proceed through Sixth Form to University, or to one of the several specialised Vocational Schools and to employment). Vocational courses range from technical studies (mechanic, wood-working, etc) to public sectors (tourism, health care, nautical, agricultural) and private sectors (hairdressing, beauty therapy and secretarial studies). Students in the post-secondary sector may also receive financial stipends, apart from free tuition. The State Post-Secondary sector is presently made up of the Junior College, which is administered by the University of Malta, and one other school at Naxxar.

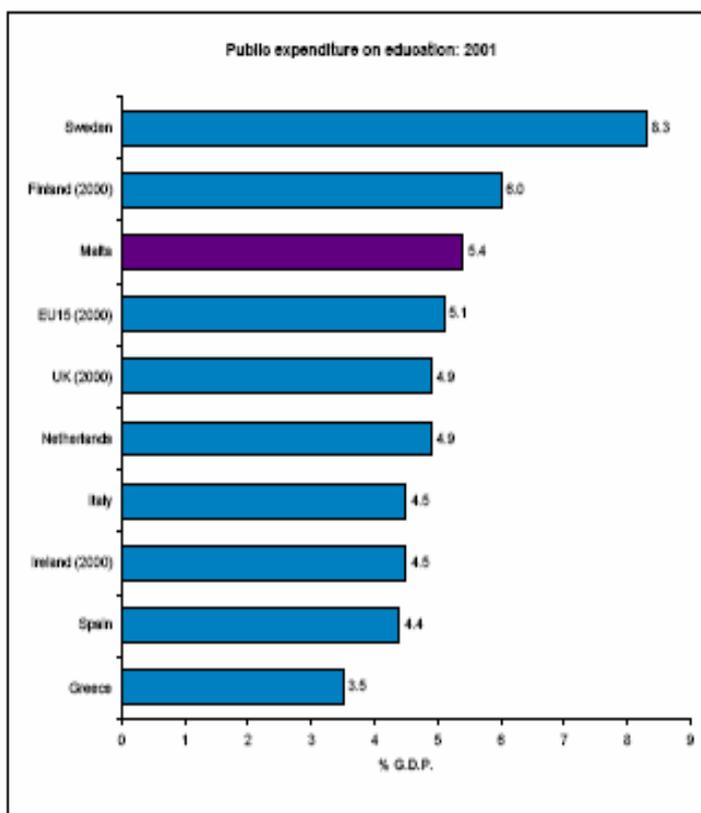
Appendix 2. Maltese Educational Statistics

(Source: National Statistics Office)

17. Public expenditure on education: 2001

Country	2001
Greece	3.5
Spain	4.4
Ireland (2000)	4.5
Italy	4.5
Netherlands	4.9
UK (2000)	4.9
EU15 (2000)	5.1
Malta	5.4
Finland (2000)	6.0
Sweden	8.3

Source: National Accounts, N80
Eurostat



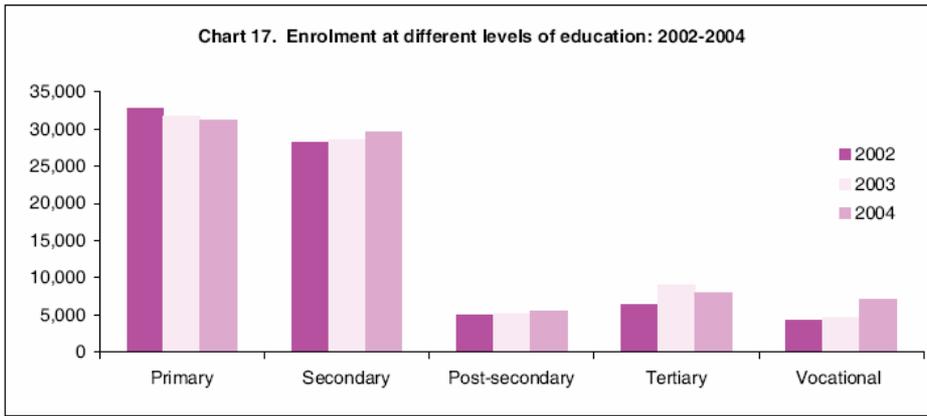
Definition:

Public expenditure on education as a percentage of the total Gross Domestic Product.

Enrolment at different levels of education (2002-2004)

Level	Primary	Secondary	Post-secondary	Tertiary	Vocational*
2002 Total	32,717	28,126	4,973	6,362	4,262
Males	16,946	14,302	2,705	3,159	2,764
Females	15,771	13,824	2,268	4,173	1,026
2003 Total	31,708	28,560	5,169	9,006	4,635
Males	16,454	14,443	2,298	3,888	3,168
Females	15,254	14,117	2,871	5,118	1,467
2004 Total	31,064	29,540	5,479	7,955	7,041
Males	16,084	14,988	2,318	3,515	5,063
Females	14,980	14,552	3,161	4,440	1,978

* Including post-secondary vocational courses. Vocational education comprises technical institutes, trade schools, the Institute of Tourism Studies, the Kindergarten Assistants' Training Centre and MCAST from (2001)



Percentage of early school-leavers* (2002-2004)

Year	Males	Females	Total
2002	53.0	50.9	52.0
2003	51.7	48.2	50.0
2004	45.2	39.9	42.6

*'School-leavers' refers to persons between 18-24 years who have achieved lower secondary school level or less and who are not in further education. This indicator has been calculated as a percentage of the total population in the same age bracket.