



## INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (IECE) COUNTRY QUESTIONNAIRE – MALTA

### 1. ACCESS, PROCEDURES AND PARTICIPATION

#### Key principles

- 1.1 Provision that is available and affordable to all families and their children.
- 1.2 Provision that encourages participation, strengthens social inclusion and embraces diversity.

Guiding questions	Country response
<p><b><i>Legislation and policy at national level</i></b></p> <p>1. Is there a national policy and legislation that gives the right to all children, without exception, from at least 3 years onwards, to attend mainstream Early Childhood Education (ECE)?</p> <p>2. Is there support available to enable every child to attend ECE?</p> <p>3. Is there a period of compulsory ECE before school starts?</p> <p>4. Are arrangements in place for transition from home to ECE and from ECE to primary education for all children?</p> <p>5. Is inclusion stated as a goal of ECE provision?</p>	<p>‘It is the right of every citizen of the Republic of Malta to receive education and instruction without any distinction of age, sex, belief or economic means’ (Cap 327:3, <a href="http://www.justiceservices.gov.mt/DownloadDocument.aspx?app=lom&amp;itemid=8801">http://www.justiceservices.gov.mt/DownloadDocument.aspx?app=lom&amp;itemid=8801</a>).</p> <p>Free kindergarten for 4-year olds since 1974.</p> <p>Free kindergarten for 3-year olds since 1988.</p> <p>Free childcare (0–3 years of age) since 2014.</p> <p>Free transport to and from school from age 5 onwards, provided that there is availability. Children are required to be accompanied by a parent/carer.</p> <p>Compulsory education starts at age 5. The National Curriculum Framework (2012, <a href="http://curriculum.gov.mt/en/Resources/The-NCF/Documents/NCF.pdf">http://curriculum.gov.mt/en/Resources/The-NCF/Documents/NCF.pdf</a>) refers to the Early Years Cycle as being from birth to age 7.</p> <p>Meetings are organised by the School Management Team (SMT) for parents and children with a statement have a transition and Making Action Plans (MAP) session from home to kindergarten. Different colleges or schools employ different strategies with regard transition.</p> <p>‘The Ministry for Education and Employment recognises that current participation at kindergarten level is very encouraging and above EU average but this must go beyond numbers and ensure that a stimulating and rich</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
<p>Is there a policy making ECE accessible to all children?</p> <p>6. Is there a policy that obliges mainstream publicly funded ECE to make adaptations so that all children can attend and participate? Please describe</p>	<p>learning experience for children to have a sure start in life' (Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014–2024).</p> <p>According to Eurostat (July 2013), Malta has reached 100% attendance level amongst four-year olds. However, children who are still not toilet trained by age 3 are not allowed to attend kindergarten settings and neither can they continue to attend childcare provision.</p>
<p><b><i>Practice at national level</i></b></p> <p>1. What percentage of children attend mainstream ECE provision at ages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 years</li> <li>• 4 years</li> <li>• 5 years (if not primary)</li> <li>• 6 years (if not primary)?</li> </ul> <p>2. What are the main factors preventing some children from accessing mainstream ECE?</p> <p>3. Are there children who attend special ECE settings? Please provide data if available.</p> <p>4. Describe arrangements for inter-</p>	<p>Total Maltese live births resident in Malta (all babies born in wedlock and registered with the Public Authorities in Malta who have one Maltese parent, and all babies born outside wedlock and registered with the Public Authorities in Malta who have a Maltese mother):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 2013: 4,032 children born;</li> <li>– 2012: 4,130 children born;</li> <li>– 2011: 4,165 children born.</li> </ul> <p>Children attending kindergarten classes within the state school sector:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 808 children born in 2013 (3 years old – February intake only accepts children born between 1 January and 30 April 2013);</li> <li>– 3,011 children born in 2012 (4 years old – children over 3 attend the San Miguel Resource Centre);</li> <li>– 2,889 children born in 2011 (5 years old).</li> </ul> <p>Children with a statement of needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 206 children born in 2011 (attending Kinder 2 class);</li> <li>– 265 children born in 2012 (attending Kinder 1 class).</li> </ul> <p>Children with multiple disabilities are enrolled in the San Miguel Resource Centre.</p> <p>Arrangements for inter-service collaboration and other professionals include: Child Development Assessment Unit</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
<p>service collaboration to enable children's attendance and participation?</p> <p>5. What proportion of children is formally identified as having additional needs at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3 years</li><li>• 4 years</li><li>• 5 years</li><li>• 6 years</li></ul>	<p>(CDAU), health services, independent psychologists, Appogg, social services, NGOs.</p>



## 2. WORKFORCE

### Key principles

2.1. Well-qualified staff whose initial and continuing training enables them to fulfil their professional role.

2.2. Supportive working conditions including professional leadership that creates opportunities for observation, reflection, planning, teamwork and cooperation with parents.

Guiding questions	Country response
<p><b><i>Legislation and policy</i></b></p> <p>1. What level of qualification is required to work in ECE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for teachers?</li> <li>• for other staff?</li> </ul> <p>2. What regulation is there for staff-child ratios in ECE?</p> <p>3. What provision is there for additional staffing to support children with diverse and additional needs?</p> <p>4. Does the initial training of staff include</p>	<p>Educators in ECE include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– teachers (B.Ed. Hons ECEC);</li> <li>– kindergarten assistants (MQF Level 4 qualification in ECE);</li> <li>– supply kindergarten assistants (KA) (with a minimum of 1 A level);</li> <li>– Learning Support Assistants: SLSA, LSA I, LSA II.</li> </ul> <p>Staff ratios:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– KG1 (3–4-year olds), 15:1 (or 14:1 if at least 1 child has a Statement of Needs);</li> <li>– KG 2 (4–5-year olds), 20:1 (or 18:1 if at least 1 child has a Statement of Needs).</li> </ul> <p>Free support services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– LSA, Early Intervention, ACTU, Hearing and Visual Impairment;</li> <li>– nurture groups/SEBD;</li> <li>– SPSS;</li> <li>– social services;</li> <li>– guidance and counselling;</li> <li>– Inspire Winter Programme for Statemented Children;</li> <li>– specialised and therapeutic services in Resource Centres.</li> </ul> <p>Initial Training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– B.Ed. (Hons.) ECEC: Disability issues in Early Childhood Settings (4 ECTS), Supporting Transitions in the Early Years (4 ECTS), Addressing Diversity in Early Years (4 ECTS), Psycho-social Issues and their Implications for Early Years</li> </ul>



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<p>understanding and supporting children with diverse and additional needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for teachers?</li> <li>• for other staff?</li> </ul> <p>5. Does initial training include preparation for working in partnership with families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for teachers?</li> <li>• for other staff?</li> </ul> <p>6. Is there a policy for in-service training? Does it cover inclusive education skills?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for teachers?</li> <li>• for other staff?</li> </ul>	<p>Development (4 ECTS), Legal Issues and Implications for Early Years Practitioners (4 ECTS);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– MCAST: Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in the Early Years, Working with Children with Additional Needs;</li> <li>– ETC: Importance of Equal Opportunities, Importance of Inclusion of Children with Special Needs;</li> <li>– Minds Malta: Legal Considerations in the Child Care Field (2 ECTS), Working with Disability and Diverse Educational Needs in the EYs (3 ECTS), Psycho-social Issues in the EYs (3 ECTS);</li> <li>– CDEC: Equal Opportunities and Disability Issues, Child Welfare;</li> <li>– CACHE: Understand the Speech, Language and Communication Needs of Children and Young People with Behavioural, Social and Emotional Difficulties (3 credits), Support the Referral Process for Children and Young People (3 credits), Promote Children’s Welfare and Wellbeing in the EYs (6 credits), Promote Equality and Inclusion in Health, Social Care or Children’s and Young People’s Settings (2 credits).</li> </ul> <p>Partnership with parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– B.Ed. (Hons.) ECEC: Parental Involvement in ECE (4 ECTS);</li> <li>– MCAST: Collaboration with Parents, Colleagues and Other Professionals in EYs;</li> <li>– ETC: Importance of Parental Involvement.</li> </ul> <p>Continuous Professional Training (PD sessions and in-service days) is organised at school/college/national level in agreement with MUT.</p>
<p><b>Practice at national level</b></p> <p>1. What proportion of</p>	<p>Due to capacity building constraints a few KAs are temporarily deployed in kindergarten classes  <a href="https://education.gov.mt/en/Documents/Vacancies/Supply%20KGA%20ENG%20DES%20457-2015.pdf">https://education.gov.mt/en/Documents/Vacancies/Supply%20KGA%20ENG%20DES%20457-2015.pdf</a>.</p>



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<p>staff has the required qualification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for teachers?</li> <li>• for other staff?</li> </ul> <p>2. Please describe any proposed changes to the required qualifications.</p> <p>3. Describe the role of leaders of ECE settings in ensuring inclusive practice?</p> <p>4. Provide any data on staff–child ratio.</p> <p>5. Please describe the range of specialist support that is available and how it is organised?</p> <p>6. How do regular and support staff collaborate in IECE settings?</p> <p>7. Describe the</p>	<p>Qualified KAs are in possession of, or have been approved for, a recognised Diploma at MQF level 4 in Early Childhood Education and Care that includes a component of Training Practice (including the Extended Training Programme organised by the Education Directorates in collaboration with MCAST), or a recognised appropriate comparable qualification, including qualifications in pre-primary education or pre-primary childcare 0–5 years at MQF level 4. Qualifications at a level higher than that specified will be accepted for eligibility purposes, provided they meet any specified subject requirements.</p> <p>The new call for KA II in DES is currently being discussed in line with the Bologna Process policy and regulations.</p> <p>The Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Early Childhood Education and Care is offered on a full-time (four years) or part-time (five years) basis.</p> <p>As of October 2016, the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) MQF Level 6 in Early Childhood Education and Care will be replacing the previous undergraduate degree in ECEC at the University of Malta.</p> <p>Students receive training in the theoretical understanding of how young children develop and learn and pedagogical knowledge. Qualifications in languages are encouraged.</p> <p>The MCAST–BTEC National Diploma in Children’s Care, Learning and Development or the Certificate in Pre-school Education, Learning and Development offered by MCAST also enable students to work in a professional capacity with children in childcare and kindergartens and would also be considered an entry requirement, followed by a 2 year course.</p> <p>The Early Years Section within the Curriculum Management Department (CMD) strives to ensure that all children in kindergarten classes are provided with quality education and entails providing support and guidelines to school head teachers and kindergarten assistants (KAs) within schools. Early Years Education Officers and Inclusive Education Officers (EOs) conduct routine visits within kindergarten settings to support,</p>



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role of support assistants in the ECE setting?	<p>advises and monitors the work of KAs and LSAs. Education Officers conduct in-class visits to assess identified KAs and LSAs and evaluate their practice depending on requests by Directors or Service Managers. Confirmation visits are regularly conducted at the end of the probationary period.</p> <p>All kindergarten settings have a standard ratio of one adult to 15 three-year-old children and one adult to 20 four-year-old children (Early Childhood and Education Care in Malta, 2013).</p> <p>Services are based at the centralised Student Services Department. This department offers specialised support in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Special Education: To provide the resources required for inclusive and special educational programmes and for other schemes related to individual educational needs in conjunction with colleges and schools. Services offered:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ access to communication and technology unit;</li><li>○ early intervention service;</li><li>○ social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD);</li><li>○ hospital classes;</li><li>○ resource workers;</li><li>○ learning support centres;</li><li>○ young people’s unit (YPU);</li><li>○ youth workers;</li><li>○ the services in the four Resource Centres.</li></ul></li><li>– Inclusive Education: The aim is to create environments responsive to the differing developmental capacities, needs, and potential of all learners from kindergarten (including child care centres and private kindergartens) to tertiary and adult education. Services offered:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Inclusive Education;</li><li>○ Learning Support Zones and Nurture Groups;</li></ul></li></ul>



Guiding questions	Country response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Unaccompanied Minors;</li><li>○ Autism Spectrum Support Team;</li><li>○ Home Tuition;</li><li>○ Teachers for the Hearing Impaired;</li><li>○ Teachers for the Visually Impaired.</li></ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Psycho-social Services: The Education Psycho-social Services within the Department for Student Services seek to provide quality service by qualified personnel to clients within the educational system according to the specific needs of learners. These services are intended to assist learners in their holistic development as individuals and help them become active and responsible members of society;</li><li>– Counselling Services in schools;</li><li>– Educational, vocational and career guidance in schools;</li><li>– Career Guidance Service;</li><li>– Education Medical Service;</li><li>– School Psychological Service;</li><li>– School Social Work Service;</li><li>– Safe Schools Programme which incorporates the Child Safety Service, Anti-Bullying Service and Anti-Substance Abuse;</li><li>– <i>Servizz Għozza</i>;</li><li>– College Prefect of Discipline;</li><li>– Subsidised service to the Structured Training and Education Programme (STEP) which is a specialised programme carried out by a multi-disciplinary team for children with difficulties on the autism spectrum.</li></ul> <p>These services can be accessed through a referral system. To date there is no link between one service and another except through the child or school team.</p>





<b>Guiding questions</b>	<b>Country response</b>
	<p>They are currently carried out in school visits, sessions in the school setting, meetings, training activities, visits to the Centre to receive specialised services, reports, electronic and telephone correspondence.</p> <p>The role of learning support assistants (LSAs) is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Supporting and collaborating with the class teacher and other colleagues;</li><li>– Under the guidance of the class teacher, assisting in the education of all learners in class, in particular learners with special educational needs, so that their individual curricular entitlement is ensured and their learning needs are catered for;</li><li>– Participating fully in MAP sessions;</li><li>– Together with the class teacher, developing and implementing Individual Educational Plans (IEP) by adapting the lesson plans and resources;</li><li>– Attending IEP and Individual Transition Plan (ITP) meetings;</li><li>– Reviewing IEPs, including recording and reporting progress of IEP implementation on a regular basis;</li><li>– Supporting the class teacher to prepare and write the IEP document of every child with a statement in class;</li><li>– Assisting in the preparation of educational materials and playing an active part in all the components of the instructional and educational process in class, under the direction of the class teacher;</li><li>– In collaboration with the class teacher, participating in the observation, assessment and documentation process of the performance and behaviour of included learners;</li><li>– Participating in individual transition programmes as learners move from one educational level to another, from school to school, and from school to work, handing over to the other LSAs and personnel all relevant information and documents so as to ensure a smooth transition for the learner;</li><li>– Promoting an inclusive community of learners, in</li></ul>



<b>Guiding questions</b>	<b>Country response</b>
	<p>collaboration with Inclusion Co-ordinators, specialists, resource workers, teachers, parents, learners and other stakeholders, where all children are valued and respected. This will include collaborative work in school and with other agencies, such as the CDAU, Resource Centres, NGO's and other educational and therapeutic environments;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Participating in hydrotherapy, multi-sensory, sensory integration and other sessions in schools, Resource Centres or other centres where such services are available, so as to ensure access to educational and personal entitlements of learners;</li><li>– Promoting at all times the aims, ethos and policies of the employing school, college or Resource Centre and actively working as a member of the staff team;</li><li>– Assisting in the preparation, dissemination and use of teaching resources, ensuring their upkeep in class, school and Resource Centres;</li><li>– Supporting learners during activities held outside the school premises, including experiences in the community, work places, other further and higher educational establishments;</li><li>– Encouraging participation in EU projects and other projects in accordance with the SDP targets and as agreed with the Senior Management Team;</li><li>– Supporting learners with special needs in their personal care and hygiene needs including: toileting, including accompanying the child to the toilet; undressing and dressing; cleaning, washing and showering; and changing of sanitary towels and incontinence pads;</li><li>– Seeing to the mobility, posture and seating needs, including lifting and pushing learners in wheelchairs, according to Health and Safety Regulations issued under the Health and Safety Authority Act, taking into consideration international guidelines;</li><li>– Ensuring the maximum educational benefit and safety for individual learners at all times by providing them with</li></ul>



<b>Guiding questions</b>	<b>Country response</b>
	<p>assistance during physical education, games, excursions and therapy sessions, as well as normal feeding during mid-morning and midday breaks and at other times as required;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Transport-related duties. Without prejudice to the obligations of the owner and driver of the vehicle concerned regarding the safety of passengers and the full observance of the law and regulations related to transport matters, a Learning Support Assistant may be required to carry out transport-related duties should the requirement be indicated by the statement or by the Head of School or other competent authorities. In such cases, the LSA shall:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o assist in the boarding and un-boarding of learners on and off the transport vehicle and, in the case of learners who are wheelchair/buggy users, put the restraints on the wheelchair/buggy and also put the passenger restraint on the learners to ensure safety during transportation;</li><li>o carry out transport supervision duties to and from school when the transport of learners during normal school hours is necessary; supervision duties carried out outside school hours shall be remunerated at the established rates.</li></ul></li></ul>

### 3. CURRICULUM

#### Key principles

3.1. A curriculum based on pedagogic goals, values and approaches that enable children to reach their full potential in a holistic way.

3.2. A curriculum that requires staff to collaborate with children, colleagues and parents and to reflect on their own practice.

Guiding questions	Country response
<p><b><i>Legislation and policy</i></b></p> <p>1. Is there a national ECE curriculum for <i>all</i> children?</p> <p>2. Does it include skills and competences to be achieved by children?</p> <p>3. Describe how the curriculum facilitates inclusion?</p> <p>4. Is the use of new technologies included in the curriculum?</p> <p>5. Is the curriculum adaptable to meet the needs of all children?</p> <p>6. How are parents involved in the adaptation of the curriculum to individual children?</p> <p>7. Is there awareness of the impact of labelling on children's participation</p>	<p>An official document outlines 'Guidelines and Suggestions for the Implementation of the Curriculum in the Kindergarten' (Attard, 2002, <a href="https://curriculum.gov.mt/en/Curriculum/Kindergarten/Documents/Guidelines_%20Kindergarten.pdf">https://curriculum.gov.mt/en/Curriculum/Kindergarten/Documents/Guidelines_%20Kindergarten.pdf</a>). 'The Record of Development and Progress at Kindergarten Level' (<a href="http://curriculum.gov.mt/en/Curriculum/Kindergarten/Documents/rdp_sept_08.pdf">http://curriculum.gov.mt/en/Curriculum/Kindergarten/Documents/rdp_sept_08.pdf</a>) and its 'Guidelines' (Attard, 2002, <a href="http://curriculum.gov.mt/en/Curriculum/Kindergarten/Documents/rdp_guidelines.pdf">http://curriculum.gov.mt/en/Curriculum/Kindergarten/Documents/rdp_guidelines.pdf</a>) are still widely used by Kindergarten Assistants as a record keeping tool.</p> <p>The National Curriculum Framework (2012) proposed a Learning Outcomes Framework (<a href="http://www.schoollearningoutcomes.edu.mt/en/">http://www.schoollearningoutcomes.edu.mt/en/</a>) as the keystone for learning and assessment throughout the different cycles of the education process – the Early Years, Junior Years, Middle Years and Secondary Years. The aim of the Learning Outcomes Framework (LOF) is to free schools and learners from centrally-imposed knowledge-centric syllabi and to give them the freedom to develop programmes that fulfil the framework of knowledge, attitudes and skills-based outcomes that are considered the national education entitlement of all learners in Malta. Currently the implementation of the LOF is being discussed between MEDE and MUT.</p> <p>The guidelines and suggestions are designed to help Kindergarten Assistants plan their work by focusing on the holistic development of the children. They focus on the</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
	<p>emergent curriculum.</p> <p>New technologies include smart boards and touch screen computers. In addition, all primary schools have additional hardware, including Bee-Bot, Easi-Speak, Easi-Scope, Easi-View, Talking Album, A3 light panels and digital cameras and computer programmes such as <i>Boardmaker</i> and <i>Clicker 5</i>.</p> <p>Every child has their own profile according to their individual needs. Every child with a statement also has an Individual Education Programme (IEP). The IEP is a concise and practical written plan, developed for learners with disabilities that describes the modifications and adaptations to their educational programme and the services necessary to ensure full access to educational entitlements according to the National Curriculum Framework (<a href="https://education.gov.mt/en/Documents/A%20National%20Curriculum%20Framework%20for%20All%20-%202012.pdf">https://education.gov.mt/en/Documents/A%20National%20Curriculum%20Framework%20for%20All%20-%202012.pdf</a>). The IEP is a primary tool for ensuring equal opportunities for learners with special educational needs because of disability. Some learners with disabilities 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.</p> <p>Parents of children with a statement of needs attend IEP meetings and goals and adaptations are discussed. Parents are given a copy of the document. Parents also have parent/teacher meetings twice every academic year in order to discuss the children’s progress. Teachers are also in regular contact with parents if there is a need to set handover work to help children further.</p> <p>The perception is that there is an awareness among parents which might be leading to an abuse of the system, where parents opt to label the child in order to have an assessment report which makes them eligible for an appointment with the Statementing Moderating Panel. A</p>



Guiding questions	Country response
	<p>label is also needed in order to obtain subsidies for NGO services. It is therefore believed that the effect of labelling on children’s participation and learning is being used in a negative way to obtain certain services.</p> <p>A National Steering Committee was set up in 2015 with the aim of identifying the educational needs of each child and offering holistic support. Screening Programmes will be offered free of charge to children from the age of 18 months and will consolidate and bridge possibly fragmented existing services.</p>
<p><b><i>Practice at national level</i></b></p> <p>1. Is there assessment of the learning and development of children from age 3 years?</p> <p>2. What arrangements are there for the screening of children’s functioning?</p> <p>3. Is children's engagement and participation in ECE activities monitored?</p> <p>4. How do ECE settings reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of all children?</p> <p>5. How do staff adapt (prepare and present) the curriculum and the learning activities to make them accessible to all children?</p>	<p>Currently the ‘Record of Development and Progress at Kindergarten Level’ (Attard, 2002) is compiled by the KGA for every child. As the country is in the process of implementing LOFs, an assessment tool is being developed to be in line with the National Curriculum Framework (2012).</p> <p>A pilot formal screening project took place in December 2015 and targeted children within the autism spectrum. It is envisaged that all children will be screened at the age of 2 years for different needs.</p> <p>In the case of children who seem to have additional needs, they will be referred to the relevant professional who will assess the child, such as the Early Intervention Service or the Child Development Assessment Unit.</p> <p>The SMT monitors activities at school level. Education Officers for Early Years (Curriculum) give the necessary support and ensure quality is maintained.</p> <p>Each school setting adopts different inclusive strategies according to the different needs of the children in its care.</p> <p>Children with a Statement of Needs have an IEP as described above. Differentiated teaching methods are employed by each KA.</p> <p>Open days are organised to encourage parents’ participation in the children’s learning process. Selected parents (through a school-based voting system) form part</p>



<b>Guiding questions</b>	<b>Country response</b>
<p>6. How are parents involved in this process?</p> <p>7. How are children themselves involved in this process?</p> <p>8. How is ICT used to overcome barriers to participation and learning?</p> <p>9. What provisions are there for meeting children's additional needs?</p> <p>10. How is the environment adapted to the needs of all children?</p>	<p>of the School Council, which discusses school issues in general. Parents of children with a Statement of Needs attend IEP meetings and participate in goal planning and implementation.</p> <p>Kindergarten Assistants (KAs) and Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) observe the children so that they can plan activities according to their interests and needs.</p> <p>The interactive whiteboard (IWB) is used in order to engage the children further. The Access to Communication and Technology Unit (ACTU) provides specialised ICT equipment to children with additional needs, such as AAC devices, software and access technology.</p> <p>The Foundation for Tomorrow Schools (FTS) is responsible for ensuring the environment is safe and welcoming for all the children. Their remit includes installation of lifts and ramps where required. The environment is adapted to the child as per the IEP which is decided on by the team supporting the child (e.g. OT, SLP, etc.).</p>



## 4. EVALUATION AND MONITORING

### Key principles

4.1. Monitoring and evaluating produces information at the relevant local, regional and/or national level to support continuing improvements in the quality of policy and practice.

4.2. Monitoring and evaluation which is in the best interest of the child.

Guiding questions	Country response
<p><b><i>Legislation and policy</i></b></p> <p>1. What standards are in place for ensuring the quality of ECE at national level?</p> <p>2. Describe the arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the quality of ECE provision?</p> <p>3. How is the participation of all children reflected in the national quality standards for ECE?</p> <p>4. How does national policy identify and address inequalities in participation in ECE?</p> <p>5. How does research inform policy and practice in ECE?</p>	<p>Internal reviews are carried out by the college principal in collaboration with the SMT, while external reviews are carried out by the Quality Assurance Department (QAD).</p> <p>Early Years (Curriculum) Education Officers are responsible for ensuring quality ECE at national level.</p> <p>The country submitted itself to an Audit by the EU Agency in order to regulate and act on any irregularities in inclusion practices  <a href="https://education.gov.mt/en/Documents/Special%20Needs%20and%20Inclusive%20Education%20in%20Malta%20-%20External%20Audit%20Report.pdf">https://education.gov.mt/en/Documents/Special%20Needs%20and%20Inclusive%20Education%20in%20Malta%20-%20External%20Audit%20Report.pdf</a>). Inclusive Co-ordinators (INCO)  <a href="https://education.gov.mt/en/Circulars/Human-Resources-Circulars/Circulars2014/2014/151b.pdf">https://education.gov.mt/en/Circulars/Human-Resources-Circulars/Circulars2014/2014/151b.pdf</a>) and EO Inclusion  <a href="https://www.gov.mt/en/Government/Government%20Gazette/Documents/2015/09/Government%20Gazette%20-%2011th%20September.pdf">https://www.gov.mt/en/Government/Government%20Gazette/Documents/2015/09/Government%20Gazette%20-%2011th%20September.pdf</a>) address inequalities in participation in ECE.</p>
<p><b><i>Practice at national level</i></b></p> <p>1. How do staff monitor and evaluate the participation and</p>	<p>An IEP Review is held at the end of the academic year in order to evaluate the work implemented on the goals set in the IEP. The RDP  <a href="https://curriculum.gov.mt/en/Curriculum/Kindergarten/Documents/rdp_sept_08.pdf">https://curriculum.gov.mt/en/Curriculum/Kindergarten/Documents/rdp_sept_08.pdf</a>) is a document which entails continuous evaluation of the child’s participation and</p>





Guiding questions	Country response
<p>learning of all children?</p> <p>2. How are parents involved in this process?</p> <p>3. How are children themselves involved in this process?</p>	<p>progress in class, based on its Guidelines (<a href="http://curriculum.gov.mt/en/Curriculum/Kindergarten/Documents/rdp_guidelines.pdf">http://curriculum.gov.mt/en/Curriculum/Kindergarten/Documents/rdp_guidelines.pdf</a>).</p> <p>Parents' evenings and open days are organised at school level while MAP sessions, IEP meetings and Reviews are organised for children with a Statement of Needs. Photos and work done by the children is continuously given to parents in order to show the child's growth. Most schools also upload information for parents on the internet.</p> <p>Children are rarely involved in monitoring and evaluation; however, this is done informally through praise, positive reinforcement and exhibitions of children's work.</p>



## 5. GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING

### Key principles

5.1. Stakeholders in the ECE system have a clear and shared understanding of their role and responsibilities, and know that they are expected to collaborate with partner organisations.

5.2. Legislation, regulation and/or funding supports progress towards a universal legal entitlement to publicly subsidised or funded ECE, and progress is regularly reported to all stakeholders.

Guiding questions	Country response
<p><b><i>Legislation and policy</i></b></p> <p>1. Under which ministry(ies) / department(s) are ECE provisions regulated and funded?</p> <p>2. How is intersectorial (health, social and education) collaboration promoted among all stakeholders in ECE?</p> <p>3. How is free or affordable provision guaranteed to all children age 3 years and over?</p> <p>4. What additional economic measures are available for children with additional needs and their families to access mainstream ECE?</p> <p>5. How is additional funding allocated?</p>	<p>ECE is on the agenda of two government ministries: the Ministry of Family and Social Solidarity (MFSS) and the Ministry of Education and Employment (MEDE) (Sollars, 2007, <a href="http://www.ifp.bayern.de/imperia/md/content/stmas/ifp/commissioned_report_malta.pdf">http://www.ifp.bayern.de/imperia/md/content/stmas/ifp/commissioned_report_malta.pdf</a>).</p> <p>Intersectorial collaboration is promoted through continuous professional development opportunities, team meetings, team projects.</p> <p>Nurses and general practitioner from the Health Care Department (Well Baby Clinic) assess children prior to them attending kindergarten. The Early Intervention Team forms part of the Child Development Assessment Unit under the auspices of the Primary Health Care Department. Other services include Head Lice Screening.</p> <p>Free provision of kindergarten in Malta can be traced back to 1975 with the introduction of settings for four-year-old children and the downward extension of the service to include three-year olds in 1988. Since then, this has been the standard. Since 2014, parents and guardians have access to free childcare below this age, if both parents, or a single parent/guardian, work or are enrolled in a programme of studies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– a full-time or shared Learning Support Assistant for the child;</li> <li>– free educational services in the mainstream setting</li> </ul>



Guiding questions	Country response
	<p>such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Access to communication and technology;</li> <li>○ teachers for the visually impaired;</li> <li>○ teachers for the hearing impaired;</li> <li>○ Early Intervention teachers and resource workers;</li> <li>○ subsidies for a specialised programme offered by Inspire including transport, specialised computer equipment and software, toys needed by the child for their needs, free transport to and from school with trained personnel.</li> </ul> <p>Parents apply for a particular service which is then given free of charge. Parents also apply through the Statementing Moderating Panel for subsidies to apply for specialised programmes with NGOs.</p>
<p><b><i>Practice at national level</i></b></p> <p>1. How far does the standard of ECE provision vary across regions and localities?</p> <p>2. How effective is collaboration between the ECE and health, social and other relevant agencies for children and families?</p> <p>3. What proportion of children (3 years to primary education) make use of additional funding?</p> <p>4. How well does</p>	<p>Due to the country's size, there is no difference between localities in the country. Education Officers for the Early Years ensure quality education in ECE in all the 3 sectors – State, Church and Independent.</p> <p>Efforts are continuously being made towards building healthier relationships. Cross referrals are common and personnel have a good understanding of the different sectors and roles. What seems to be lacking is more teamwork due to time constraints and not enough inter-ministerial collaboration (e.g. speech-language pathology service is not given in all school settings).</p> <p>Additional funding ensures regular contact with service providers and subsidised NGOs. Free transport enables children with additional needs to access school. Computer software and toy resources enable the child to perform in a more inclusive environment. Despite this, this area is still a work in progress and more input is needed in this area.</p>



<b>Guiding questions</b>	<b>Country response</b>
additional funding support inclusive education?	



## FURTHER COMMENTS

In 1999, the National Minimum Curriculum (NMC) set out the knowledge and skills to be acquired by learners and, although seen as too prescriptive by some stakeholders, it had inclusion as a main principle and was introduced with a broad national consensus.

### Special Needs and Inclusive Education in Malta

The strategic plan for the NMC (Ministry of Education, 2001) not only outlined the need for new structures and approaches, but also underlined the necessity for schools to collaborate and share good practice. It also highlighted the importance of allowing space for autonomous initiatives to facilitate school-based curriculum development.

In 2005, the publication 'For All Children to Succeed' set out proposals for reorganisation to promote decentralisation and increase collaboration among schools to ensure that the individual needs of learners were catered for. The document also underlined the concept of collaboration with parents or guardians, recognising the benefits parents and others can gain from networking with the schools (Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, 2005).

As a basis for these developments, networks were described as 'purposeful social entities characterised by a commitment to quality, rigour and a focus on standards and student learning' (Hopkins, 2005; cited in *A New Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014–2024*, Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014) in a Framework launched in February 2014, aiming to address all cycles of education from early years to adult learning. This Framework aims to unify the different frameworks and strategies, such as the National Curriculum Framework, the National Literacy Strategy for All, A Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Early School Leaving and the Strategy for Lifelong Learning. Measures aim to reach across all socio-economic sectors and different cultural, ethnic, religious, gender and sexual statuses and the Ministry is seeking to improve learners' learning experiences by encouraging creativity, critical literacy, entrepreneurship and innovation at all levels.

The Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014–2024 has four broad goals that are in line with European (i.e. Education and Training 2020) and world benchmarks:

- to reduce the gaps in educational outcomes between boys and girls and among learners attending different schools; decrease the number of low achievers and raise the bar in literacy, numeracy, and science and technology competence and increase learner achievement;



- to support educational achievement of children at risk of poverty and from low socio-economic backgrounds and reduce the relatively high incidence of early school-leavers;
- to increase participation in lifelong learning and adult learning;
- to raise levels of learner attainment and retention in further, vocational and tertiary education and training.

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

Following consultation, the latest framework sets out to:

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

However, a report on the reaction of the Malta Union of Teachers to the Curriculum Framework (Malta Union of Teachers, 2011) suggests that it does not take into account the wider definition of inclusion (moving beyond disability) and also raises the need to distinguish between mixed-ability teaching and inclusion.