

# **COUNTRY POLICY REVIEW AND ANALYSIS**

**Malta**



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## Section 1: Country priorities for education

The text below presents the main country priorities in the field of education, with special attention to the development of inclusive education.

### Country priorities

Malta possesses no natural resources but its only richness lies in its human resource. Much emphasis is placed on the notion that no Maltese citizen should fall or be left behind, so much so that Malta spends over 5.9% of GDP on education, which is slightly above the average spend in other European countries. The Maltese Government views this huge expenditure as a way to foster economic growth; enhance productivity; contribute to citizens' personal and social development and a means to reduce social inequalities. All this shows that education plays a vital role in Malta since it is the 'womb in which our society reproduces and re-creates itself for the future' in order not to 'lose what is valuable in our character and outlook from one generation to the next' (National Minimum Curriculum, 1999, p. 5). The ultimate objective of the Maltese educational system is to augment the country's intellectual capacity by equipping 'all individuals with a balanced mix of wisdom, knowledge, skills and attitudes in order for them to operate effectively in today's and, particularly, tomorrow's world of work' (National Minimum Curriculum, 1999, p. 28).

Entrenched in the Maltese constitution there is the right to free education and instruction for each and every Maltese citizen. In fact, Chapter 327 of the mentioned constitution, entitled the Education Act (1987), states that 'it is the right of every citizen of the Republic of Malta to receive education and instruction without any distinction of age, sex, ability, belief or economic means' (Paragraph 3, p. 4). Moreover, through this act the State reserves the right to regulate education in the best way possible as 'it shall be the right of the State: (a) to establish a National Curriculum Framework of studies for all schools; (b) to establish the national minimum conditions for all schools; and (c) to secure compliance with the National Curriculum Framework of studies and the national minimum conditions for all schools' (Paragraph 7, p. 5). The Act also highlights very clearly the obligations of the state, which are '(a) to promote education and instruction; (b) to ensure the existence of a system of schools and institutions accessible to all Maltese citizens catering for the full development of the whole personality including the ability of every person to work; and (c) to provide for such schools and institutions where these do not exist' (Paragraph 4, p. 4).

All this shows that the local educational system is not only a dynamic and vibrant one but also underlines its desire to be an agent of change. The ultimate mission is to promote inclusivity and provide quality education in an attempt to reach out to all its learners (Also very clearly stated in the Education Act). As a matter of fact, the National Curriculum Framework (2012) looks upon 'education as a journey towards personal enrichment and empowerment, as a mechanism to uphold social justice and as an important tool for inclusion and employability' (p. vii). The current Maltese Government embarked on an ambitious project to make the current educational system more available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable by working towards a conceptual change in mainstream education whereby it no longer focuses on the conditions, deficits or differences of the



## Country priorities

learners and try to 'fix' them but really starts adapting to the best interest of all learners.

Hence the National Curriculum Framework (2012) stresses the importance of 'adaptation and change in our whole culture' since 'the world of tomorrow – and the Maltese presence in it – is not the same as that of yesterday' (p. 5). With this in mind, the National Curriculum Framework (2012) argues that it aims to 'achieve an assurance that by the end of compulsory education learners will have acquired the necessary knowledge, skills, competences, attitudes and values that stimulate them to view lifelong learning as part and parcel of their development as individuals and as citizens of our country, of the European Union and of the world' (p. vii).

Education is the 'premise of progress, in every society, in every family and its foundation rest on the cornerstones of freedom, democracy and sustainable human development' (Kofi Annan, 2001). This fundamental principle is also recognised and accepted by the present Maltese Government whereby it is bound to provide high quality education to all its learners. Framework strategy documents such as:

- The National Curriculum Framework (2012);
- Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014 – 2024 (2014);
- Respect for All Framework (2014);
- Malta National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 (2014);
- A National Literacy Strategy for All in Malta and Gozo 2014–2019 (2014);
- National Employment Policy (2014);
- A Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Early School Leaving in Malta (2014); and
- The National Youth Policy Towards 2020 (2015)

try to improve the quality and effectiveness of the local educational system, while working to develop a society that is competent, resourceful, critically conscious and competitive. Moreover, in order to facilitate the transformational process, a number of policy documents were also issued, namely:

- Read with Me (2012);
- Addressing Attendance in Schools (2014);
- Addressing Bullying Behaviour in Schools (2014);
- Managing Behaviour in Schools (2015);
- A Whole School Approach to Healthy Lifestyle: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Policy (2015); and
- Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex Students in Schools Policy (2015).

All this demonstrates a sense of commitment and good-will towards effective and meaningful change, leading towards improved educational outcomes by providing high quality education to all learners. Also to shed more light on the state of inclusive education in Malta, in 2013 the Ministry for Education and Employment commissioned



## Country priorities

the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education to conduct an audit focusing on the following 'five critical issues':

1. How well as schools enabled to implement inclusive education?
2. How adequately are school staff enabled to meet learners' diverse needs?
3. Do the official needs identification and statementing procedures promote an approach to meeting individual learning needs that is based on children's rights?
4. How effectively do systems of support enable all stakeholders in education?
5. How effective and enabling are educational quality assurance processes?

(Education for All External Audit Report, 2014, p. 11)

The findings from the 'Education for All' external audit report together with the feedback gathered from the Roll Out sessions with all educational stakeholders on the audit, gave rise to the following priority areas:

1. *Meaningful and Authentic Leadership* processes at all levels to facilitate the transformation of schools/colleges into effective learning communities for both students and educators;
2. Emphasis on *Continuing Professional Development* of all educators at all levels to enhance more reflective practices and processes;
3. Importance on the *Re-engineering of all Support Services* to focus more on college and educators' empowerment rather than on the individual need;
4. *Active Engagement, Involvement and Participation of Parents and Communities* in teaching and learning processes as well as in schools;
5. *Flexible Curriculum* leading to diverse student-centred pedagogies and *less rigid assessment* forms.

In addressing the above-mentioned five priority areas, the Ministry is convinced that the four broad goals which are in line with European and world benchmarks, would be reached in the framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014–2024. These goals are:

1. Reduce the gaps in educational outcomes between boys and girls and between students attending different schools;
2. Decrease the number of low achievers and raise the bar in literacy, numeracy, and science and technology competence and increase student achievement;
3. Support educational achievement of children at risk of poverty and from low socio-economic status and reduce the relatively high incidence of early school leavers by increasing participation in lifelong learning and adult programmes;
4. Raise levels of student retention and attainment in further, vocational and tertiary education and training.

(Framework for Education Strategy for Malta 2014–2024, p. 3)



## Section 2: Analysis grid

### Measure 1: To improve inclusive education and to ensure that good quality education is accessible for all

Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>1.1 There is a clearly stated policy for the promotion of quality in inclusive education.</p> <p><i>(Policy aims to widen access to education and to promote full participation and opportunities for all learners vulnerable to exclusion to realise their potential. Policy outlines how education policy-makers need to take responsibility for all learners.)</i></p>	<p>1.1.1 The Equal Opportunities Act (2000) specifically refers to education by stating that it is unlawful for an educational authority or institution to discriminate against:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an applicant for admission as a pupil on grounds of their disability or a disability of their family members, by refusing to accept their application for such admission or in the terms or conditions on which such educational authority or institution is prepared to admit them as a student;</li> <li>• a student on the grounds of their disability or disability of any family members by denying them access, or limiting their access, to any benefit provided by such educational authority or institution or expelling them from the educational institution they are attending. (OoP, p. 3)</li> </ul> <p>1.1.2 Chapter 327 of the Laws of Malta – the Education Act (1987) as amended in 2006 is the main legislative instrument which regulates education in Malta. Article 4b of the Act states ‘that is the duty of the State to ensure the existence of a system of schools and institutions accessible to all Maltese citizens catering for the full development of the whole personality including the ability of every person to work’. (VET, p. 4)</p> <p>The Maltese education actively encourages and implements an inclusive education system. The Education Act stipulates that: ‘The Minister shall ensure that the national policy on inclusive education is being applied in all schools and that there are available the resources, tools and facilities required so that this may be given as effectively as possible. (VET, p. 4)</p> <p>1.1.3 The Constitution also states that ‘Disabled persons and persons incapable of work are entitled to education and vocational training’. (VET, p. 4)</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>1.1.4 The 'Framework for Education Strategy for Malta 2014–2024' (2014) affirms that during the proposed 10-year period (2014–2024) all students will 'develop their personal and social potential and acquire the appropriate knowledge, key skills, competences and attitudes through a value-oriented formation including equity, social justice, diversity, and inclusivity' (p. 2). Hence the Ministry for Education and Employment, through the implementation of the National Curriculum Framework (2012) and the above-mentioned strategy, is putting forward a coherent strategy for lifelong learning opportunities from early childhood education and care to adult learning to ensure that all children, young people and adults have the opportunity to obtain the necessary skills and attitudes to be active citizens and to succeed at work and in society. The aforementioned educational strategy envisages that the process of helping learners achieve their full potential through high quality education should 'not be hindered by differences in socio-economic, cultural, racial, ethnic, religious, gender and sexual status' (p. 3). Finally, this same strategy acknowledges potential vulnerable learners to exclusion due to out-of-school factors like poverty, disability and social exclusion and 'seeks to improve these students' learning experiences by encouraging creativity, critical literacy, entrepreneurship and innovation at all levels' (p. 3).</p> <p>1.1.5 The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) (2012) also emphasises and stresses the significance of promoting quality in inclusive education. It affirms the importance of 'inculcating a culture of quality education for all learners and hence regard success as being relative to one's capacity to learn – a roadmap which every child will own as a means to develop as a person and as a citizen of an increasingly diverse and challenging Maltese society' (p. x). The NCF (2012) points out that to achieve all this it is the 'responsibility of all educators' (p. 37). Also, this national Framework (2012) celebrates diversity by catering for all learners at each stage of their education. It aims to introduce more equity and decentralisation in the national system. Hence it defines social justice in education to mean 'all students, irrespective of background and ability, are provided with an education that will allow them to develop to the maximum of their potential' (p. 7). Also, one of the cross-curricular themes in the NCF is entitled 'Education for Diversity'.</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>1.2 Legislation and policy are consistent with the principles of the UNCRC and the UNCRPD.</p> <p><i>(Legislation and policy and upholds the right of all learners to full participation in school with their own local peer group.)</i></p>	<p>1.2.1 In 2012, Malta ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (VET, p. 17)</p> <p>1.2.2 In April 2012 the Equal Opportunities Act (2000) was amended and aimed at improving the existing rights of persons with disabilities and provided stronger safeguards against discrimination. Also, amendments primarily sought to change existing terminology which was offensive and outdated. In line with the Convention, especially Article 24, the term ‘disability’ now refers to the lack of physical, mental, intellectual or sensory functions that on a long term might limit a person from participating fully and effectively in education and society.</p> <p>1.2.3 Part II Paragraph 11 (2) (I) of the Education Act (1987), which illustrates the functions and duties of the Directorate for Educational Services states that ‘in conjunction with Colleges and schools, provide the resources required for inclusive and special educational programmes and for other schemes related to individual educational needs’. Also, Paragraph 58 entitled Inclusive Education affirms that ‘...the national policy on inclusive education is being applied in all schools and that there are available the resources, tools and facilities required so that this may be given as effectively as possible’ so that all learners can fully participate in schools alongside their own local peer groups.</p>
<p>1.3 The concept of inclusion is clarified in education policy as an agenda that increases quality and equity for all learners.</p> <p><i>(Policy aims to address underachievement of all vulnerable groups including children with disabilities.)</i></p>	<p>1.3.1 The ‘Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014–2024’ states that ‘education strategies need to be flexible, ongoing, inclusive and embrace a long-term and sustainable vision that is democratic nationwide. The proposed Strategy aims to cultivate student engagement and motivation and to promote high aspirations in learning within an inclusive, safe and orderly environment both physical and psychological’ (p. 7). It also tries to address the issue of underachievement from various groups of learners since ‘there is no way our country can prosper and succeed as a democratic and just society if we retain the current high levels of children with low literacy, numeracy, science and digital skills, the low level of children who master higher-order thinking skills, and the current drop-out rates’ (p. 5).</p>





Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>1.4 Legislation and policy for inclusive education is cross-sectoral.</p> <p><i>(Policy outlines procedures to ensure the efficient co-ordination of services, as well as clearly defining roles and responsibilities.)</i></p>	<p>1.4.1 The Education Act (1987) outlines very clearly the functions and duties of the Directorate for Educational Services which amongst others states that ‘in collaboration with the Colleges, ensure the provision of effective services of counsellors, social workers, psychologists and other professional persons according to the needs of students and their families’ and ‘in conjunction with Colleges and schools, provide the resources required for inclusive and special educational programmes and for other schemes related to individual educational needs’ (Par. 9, 2k, l).</p> <p>The Learning Outcomes Framework together with the designed 10 Attainment levels also ensure efficient co-ordination of the teaching and learning process, hence more co-ordination and better use of services.</p>
<p>1.5 There is a long-term multi-level policy framework for implementing quality inclusive education at national, regional and / or organisational levels.</p>	<p>1.5.1 The ‘Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014–2024’ stresses that the 10-year implementation plan for quality inclusive education is based on ‘7 strategic pillars’ being:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <u>Governance of Education Organisations</u>: Guarantee of long term financing; Sustainability of funding; Governance structure that enables modernisation and innovation; Support for the development of administrative processes; Transparency tools for governance, management and administration;</li> <li>2. <u>Social Dimension</u>: Equal opportunities in education; Employability and relevance of education; Lifelong learning; Skills assessment in view of society and industry; Open access to information on educational tracks and qualification opportunities;</li> <li>3. <u>International Dimension</u>: Intensive strategy for the teaching of English across all social sectors; International mobility of students and staff; International openness to new systems and processes; Harmonisation of qualification frameworks to European structures; Harmonisation of assessment and examination methods; and International recognition of local qualifications;</li> <li>4. <u>Quality of Education Provision</u>: Quality assurance of education programmes; Quality through</li> </ol>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>people programmes: continuous development of education providers;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. <u>Student Focus</u>: Different learning tracks and student centred learning; Student support through counselling, guidance, mentoring and tracking systems; Modernisation and automation of student_processes;</li> <li>6. <u>Strategic Innovation</u>: Managing the interaction of the Quadruple Helix: Education, Society, Industry and the Public Sector; Training for educators on new teaching and learning methods; Feedback programmes for students, educators and stakeholders; Realignment and development of strategic objectives based on international development in education and feedback from stakeholders;</li> <li>7. <u>Performance Dashboard</u>: data collection and reporting; Measurement of achievements and gaps in the context of European targets’ (p. 4).</li> </ol>
<p>1.6 Policy outlines how education policy-makers need to take responsibility for all learners.</p>	<p>1.6.1 The National Curriculum Framework (2012) outlines how educators and education administrators share the responsibility to guide students through Early and Compulsory education, to provide diverse contexts of learning, to encourage retention in lifelong learning and to bring the world of education closer to the world of work and of employment’ (p. viii).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘The Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) will assume the responsibility to ensure that every child carries a profile of his and her progress and achievements in the knowledge, skills, competences, attitudes and values as detailed in this NCF. Success will be recorded, and additional support will be given as required to ensure that children have access to their learner’s entitlement’ (p. 10).</li> <li>• ‘the State to ensure that every person, irrespective of age, gains access to educational experiences which he or she is entitled to’ (p. 6).</li> <li>• ‘It is the responsibility of the Directorate for Quality and Standards to evaluate curriculum implementation, innovation and emerging trends, through assessment at school, national and</li> </ul>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	international levels’ (p. 42).
<p>1.7 Policy has the goal of supporting all teachers to have positive attitudes towards all learners.</p>	<p>1.7.1 The Learning Outcomes Framework (LOF) (2013) which presents 10 Attainment levels covering all year groups for learners with diverse needs along their educational cycle in an institution accompanied by age. These outcomes present a number of ‘I can’ statements on which teachers will be given training to make best use of them and to constantly view learners positively. They tend to help teachers view diversity as a resource rather than as a problem. It also presents a number of teaching strategies for each subject on how teachers can include each and every learner in class.</p> <p>1.7.2 The Respect for All Framework (2014) encourages a whole school approach whereby all stakeholders in the school community work ‘to ensure that all students have the opportunity to obtain the necessary skills, attitudes and values to be active citizens and to succeed at work and in society’ (p. 7).</p> <p>1.7.3 The National Curriculum Framework (2012) also requests teachers ‘to hold and ensure that positive attitudes towards excellence, commitment, responsibility, flexibility and entrepreneurship form part of the learning process’ (p. iii).</p>
<p>1.8 Policy requires learning material to be accessible.</p>	<p>1.8.1 The Education Act (1987) states that it is the State’s obligation to ‘ensure the existence of a system of schools and institutions accessible to all Maltese citizens catering for the full development of the whole personality including the ability of every person to work’ (Part I, Par. 4 b). The same Act also indicates that is the duty of the Directorate for Educational Services to ‘allocate to the Colleges and to the schools such buildings, including sports facilities, educational and cultural spaces, furniture, equipment, technology, science, communications and information technology laboratories, and other tools, which would be needed with an aim of making the best use of them as teaching and learning tools’; ‘ensure the provision of programmes, services and human resources required for a safe and secure environment in schools, for students, teachers and any person who are in the school, the provision of a school transport service which may be required for the students’ and ‘support the Colleges in the organisation of special initiatives and projects, including those after school hours’</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	(Part II, Par. 11, 2 c, p, q).
<p>1.9 Policy describes an effective framework of support for schools to implement inclusive education.</p> <p><i>(Support structures focus on different forms of educational resource centres that are locally organised to offer support to individual or clusters of schools.)</i></p>	<p>1.9.1 Education Act 1988 – Further to this, ‘the Minister shall ensure the existence of specialised centres of resources which support schools and Colleges in the implementation of the policy of inclusive education, which give a service to students having specific learning difficulties, and others which provide education and training services to students with individual educational needs whose educational entitlement may be better achieved in such centres’. (VET, p. 4–5)</p> <p>1.9.2 The Reform of Special Schools (2010), saw a ‘shift from the present scenario. For example, students who attend a special school remain in the same school right through their school life, they will now due to the reform, be able to experience the different phases of school life as their peers do in mainstream education’ (Student Services Department, 2009, p. 4). The reform also intended to ‘provide quality education for all students with Individual Educational Needs, whether they attend Resource Centres or mainstream schools. The resources provided at the centres together with the expertise of the personnel working in these centres, will be made available to offer the necessary support to students, parents, school administrators, teachers and Learning Support Assistants working with students with Individual Educational Needs and who attend mainstream schools’ (Student Services Department, 2009, p. 5). Finally, the ultimate aim of this reform was to ‘transform special schools to resource centres:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to provide quality education, with better access to the National Curriculum to all students;</li> <li>• to offer specialised services to students in mainstream schools;</li> <li>• to offer services, support and training to staff in an inclusive mainstream setting;</li> <li>• to act as catalysts in the introduction of innovative approaches to the education of students with Individual Educational Needs’ (p. 8).</li> </ul> <p>The reform’s recommendations had been all implemented.</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>1.10 Policies outline a continuum of support for children and young people in schools, to meet the full diversity of learners' needs.</p>	<p>1.10.1 The National Curriculum Framework (2012) recognises this concept and stresses that 'the principle of the continuum of achievement should be such that it allows a learner to follow, from amongst different education pathways, the best pathway that will allow him or her to reach the maximum of his or her potential – irrespective of whether the student is a high flyer, has average abilities, basic abilities and/or has a disability' (p. 5).</p> <p>1.10.2 Finally, the development of a framework of ten levels of attainment (2012) which were implemented in the State School Learning and Assessment Programmes for Forms 1 and 2 in 2012. The idea was to have different learners in the same class but in a differentiated context to naturally progress at different rates through these levels of attainments, through teaching and learning pedagogies that cater for diversity. Moreover, the learning outcomes give empowerment of the learning experience to the learner.</p> <p>1.10.3 'Every student should receive quality education whether they are in mainstream schools or education resource centres and irrespective of the levels they are able to attain' (Special School Reform, 2009, p. 20).</p>
<p>1.11 Policy outlines strategies for awareness-raising with all stakeholders in inclusive education.</p>	<p>1.11.1 'The Respect for All Framework (2014) adopts a whole school approach philosophy. This approach is defined as a unified collective and collaborative action in and by educators, administrators, parents and students that has been strategically constituted to improve student learning behaviour and well-being and the conditions that support these... It highlights what can be done and why, it acknowledges the school culture and the school climate without it being constraining and prescriptive'. (Respect for All, 2014, p. 7).</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>1.12 Policy outlines the development of the role of special schools as a resource to increase the capability of mainstream schools and improve support for all learners.</p> <p><i>(The specialist knowledge and skills of special school / resource centre are maintained and further developed so as to enhance support for learners, such as those with low-incidence disabilities.)</i></p>	<p>1.12.1 The Special Schools Reform (2010) policy document outlines the rationale behind such a reform so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Every student should receive quality education whether they are in mainstream schools or education resource centres and irrespective of the levels they are able to attain;</li><li>• Every student should have access to an education that responds to the right to have access to the National Curriculum Framework;</li><li>• Every student should have access to an education that responds to their individual educational, vocational, social and moral needs;</li><li>• Students with Individual Educational Needs who are in mainstream schools can make use of resources in Education Resources Centres if they so require. Thus, a continuous and inclusive set of services can be provided according to the needs of all students;</li><li>• Students will have the opportunity to experience the different phases in a student's life that is from primary to secondary, from secondary to young adulthood, and eventually to further education, employment or day centres whichever is best suited for the student;</li><li>• Teachers and support staff with specialist knowledge will be able to support and collaborate with their colleagues in mainstream schools;</li><li>• Good practices, innovative approaches to teaching, methods of teaching and teaching aids appropriate for students with Individual Educational Needs are developed and disseminated amongst all stake holders both in resource centres and mainstream schools (p. 20).</li></ul> <p>It is worth noting that all the above-mentioned suggestions have been fully implemented.</p>



### *Measure 1 evaluative comments*

At a system level the challenge of inequity is being tackled across the system through additional funding and targeted national policies such as the 'Respect for All Framework' (2014) which incorporates in it a set of other policies on attendance, bullying behaviour, managing behaviour in schools, trans, gender variant and intersex students, migrant students and on healthy eating and physical activity in schools. Schools are being encouraged to incorporate strategies in their School Development Plans to address these issues based on their needs and weaknesses. At a college level, there is commitment by College Principals to take forward more inclusive approaches and at school level more examples of shared activities amongst special schools and primary and secondary schools are cropping up. Moreover, the introduction of Alternative Learning Programmes, Core Competence Programmes and a revitalised Vocational Subjects Programme at Secondary level are ensuring that more learners feel accomplished to perform to their best potential.

The Learning Outcomes Framework is also encouraging more personalised learning through more student-centred approaches in class as well as diversified assessment procedures.

The Audit on inclusive and special education in Malta also gave an evaluative research based analysis of the whole system. Whilst acknowledging a lot of improvement and an ever-growing commitment towards inclusive education, the audit concluded that at present in certain instances the Maltese educational system is still dominated by a deficit-medical thinking mentality which support is regarded as a means to 'fit' the learner into the existing system. Rooted within the system there is 'a culture of blame', cultivated by the predominant presence of SNE experts, who in turn facilitate the process of shifting collective responsibilities in meeting diverse learners' needs. Also, it transpires that there are general misconceptions around the term 'inclusion' and still many educators, from top to bottom, confuse it with 'integration'. Finally, with regards to system or reform implementation the audit argues that 'a participatory approach is needed, moving from 'crisis management' by a few key stakeholders to collaborative planning according to realistic timescales. This should be coupled with a transparent and independent approach to monitoring and evaluation' (Education for All Audit Report, 2014, p. 86). The findings also stress lack of 'autonomy'; 'flexibility'; 'ownership'; 'trust' and 'respect' throughout the whole system, which is still highly centralised favouring a 'top-down' approach. All these areas are being tackled by the Ministry through the setting up of structures such as the Education for All Project Team, Core Group, Stakeholders Platform and Steering Committee. To date, a number of concept papers on 'Reconceptualising the Concept of Inclusion'; 'Re-engineering of Support Services'; 'Transformative Leadership'; 'More Communication and Synergy'; 'Flexible Curriculum and Assessment'; 'Continuous Professional Development of All Educators'; 'Parental Involvement' and on 'Research based Evidence Practises' have been developed. A comprehensive action plan showing the way forward in each area is also being developed.



## Measure 2: To support improved co-operation, including greater involvement of parents and local community

Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>2.1 The full involvement of families in all educational processes is outlined in legislation and policy.</p>	<p>2.1.1 The Education Act (1988) stipulates that each college shall ‘ensure that parents become partners and active collaborators in the education of their children at school and promote lifelong learning among both parents and the community generally’ (Chapter 327, p. 32, as amended in 2006). Hence it ‘promotes the implementation of the national partnership policy of parents in school development and in the educational experience of their children and create an effective home-school partnership’ (Chapter 327, p. 29, as amended in 2006).</p> <p>2.1.2 The same act also stipulates that ‘every school, whether it is a school within the College or not, shall have a School Council which shall be composed of parents and teachers, and a Students’ Council which shall be composed of and selected, and which shall have the functions, duties, powers and procedures such as the Minister may from time to time establish by means of regulations’ (Chapter 327, p. 34, as amended in 2006).</p> <p>2.1.3 The National Curriculum Framework (2012) promotes ‘a vision where parents are considered important stakeholders in the educational journey of their children’ (p. 31) by encouraging educators to ‘collaborate with parents and the wider community to ensure meaningful and long-lasting experiences in order to inculcate a deep understanding of ‘self’, ‘other’ and the impact of choices and actions upon individuals, communities and the environment’ (p. 35).</p> <p>2.1.4 Moreover, policies in the ‘Respect for all Framework’ (2014) promote ‘a whole school approach’ where parents are encouraged to take an active role in the implementation of the policies. For instance, the policy on ‘Addressing Bullying in Schools’ (2014), measure 2.1 states ‘to develop close partnerships between parents and the school in order to identify undesirable behaviour noticed in children under their care’ (p. 15). Similar measure can be found in all the other policies like ‘Addressing Attendance in Schools’ (2014); ‘Managing Behaviour in Schools’ (2014); ‘A whole school approach to a healthy life style: Healthy eating and physical activity’ (2014) and ‘Trans, gender variant and intersex students in schools’ (2015).</p>





Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>2.2 Policy for inclusive education places learners and their families at the centre of all actions.</p>	<p>2.2.2 The Education Act (1987) stipulates that ‘the Ministry shall ensure that each College shall implement the national policy on parental partnership in the educational process of their children’ (p. 33) and ‘every school, whether it is a school within the College or not, shall have a School Council which shall be composed of parents and teachers, and a Students’ Council’ (p. 33).</p> <p>2.2.3 The ‘Respect for All Framework’ (2014) stresses that ‘formal education is also intended to support parents and care-givers in nurturing the acquisition of such values. The latter permeate through both the explicit and implicit curriculum experienced by students throughout their educational journey’ (p. 5).</p> <p>2.2.4 Also, the policy document ‘Inclusive Education – Support to Students with Disability’ (2000) stipulates that for every student with a disability an Individualised Educational Programme (IEP) needs to be prepared according to his/her individual needs, and in consultation with, among others, the class teacher, parents and the student. Also before carrying out an expert assessment and before taking a decision to commence special education, the consent of the students’ parents shall be obtained. Moreover, before a statement of needs is developed, the Statementing panel invites ‘parents and professionals to discuss issues raised by the assessments presented to the panel’ and ‘seeks active consultation with parents and, when appropriate, the students themselves in developing a statement’ (p. 4).</p>
<p>2.3 Sharing information among professionals and families is a policy priority.</p>	<p>2.3.1 All policies which fall under the ‘Respect for All Framework’ (2014) adopt ‘a whole school approach philosophy. This approach is defined as a unified collective and collaborative action in and by educators, administrators, parents and students that has been strategically constituted to improve student learning behaviour and well-being and the conditions that support these’.</p> <p>2.3.2 The official ‘School Development Plan Handbook’ (2014) encourages schools to ‘generate a spirit of co-operation and collaboration among all members of the learning community’ (p. 3). The ultimate aim is to transform schools into professional learning communities for educators, parents and students. Also, the Education Act encourages Colleges to ‘promote dialogue and a team culture among</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	the Heads, school staff and parents through co-operation, especially with regard to initiatives and problems relating to the College as a whole' (p. 28).
2.4 Policy has the goal of supporting parental interaction and communication with professionals.	2.4.1 All policies in the 'Respect for All Framework' (2014) include a strategies document which highlights how the school community can support parental interaction and communication with professionals. In fact, section 2 of the 'Managing behaviour in schools strategy' (2014) deals with 'Parents responsibility for their children's behaviour'; the 'Addressing bullying behaviour in schools strategy' (2014) includes a whole section for parental involvement (p. 14) and the 'Addressing attendance in schools strategy' (2014) includes measures like 'creating a partnership with parents of students in primary, middle and secondary schools' (p. 7).
2.5 Schools are expected and supported to involve a wider range of partners and foster formal and informal networks that support their practice.	2.5.1 Most of the policies that fall under the 'Respect for All Framework' (2014) encourage schools to involve different partners from outside the school community and hence foster formal and informal networks that support teaching and learning behaviours. Two such policies that promote this ideology are the 'Managing Behaviour in Schools Policy' and the 'Addressing Bullying in Schools Policy' (2014). Moreover, the 'Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014–2024' (2014) states that schools do not exist in a vacuum and hence relevant teaching and learning cannot take place in isolation. It encourages schools to create the necessary space and structure to involve the wider community in this whole process.

*Measure 2 evaluative comments*

Over the past years, various initiatives have been taken to strengthen levels of co-operation and collaboration between different stakeholders in the educational sphere. Moreover, a lot has also been done to involve parents and entities in local communities in the teaching and learning processes within schools. For years the idea that schools, parents and local communities are different entities has permeated along the whole system. However, evidence is showing that they are not! Schools do not function in a vacuum but operate within a whole community context. Hence the new vision endorsed by the Ministry for Education and Employment is to transform schools into learning communities or laboratories of



knowledge where educators, teachers, students and community entities dialogue with each to share and construct new knowledge. The 'Education for All' structures (Steering Committee, Core Group, Stakeholders Dialogue and the Project Team) within the Ministry for Education and Employment, which were formed soon after the publication of the external audit report on inclusive and special education in Malta, aim at creating more synergy and communication between all stakeholders – policy makes, college principals, heads of schools, teachers, parents, students and various other community entities. Furthermore, the Quality Assurance Department is also currently reviewing its monitoring criteria for external reviews with the intent of developing more inclusive, culturally responsive and specific standards. The latter should guide schools to become more inclusive and culturally responsive.

### Measure 3: To develop monitoring strategies, establishing a comprehensive accountability and evaluation framework for inclusive education

Agency recommendation	Findings
3.1 Policy describes clear mechanisms to evaluate effectiveness and quality in inclusive education.	<p>3.1.1 Evaluative mechanisms of effectiveness and quality in inclusive education fall under the remit of the Quality Assurance Department (QAD) within the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education. A key function of the Quality Assurance Department within the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education is: 'in support of the evaluation and the internal audit of every school, (to) implement inspections and external reviews, and also so that children and students are helped so that they may obtain in the best possible manner the set learning targets and necessary skills' (Education (Amendments) Act 2006, Art. 9 (2)). The 'School Development Plan Handbook' (2014) and the 'Parameters for External Review' (2012) policy documents guide the whole external monitoring and reviewing process in schools. With regards to the Internal review process the following policies are in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Induction and Mentoring Co-ordination Role</a> (2012);</li><li>• <a href="#">Mentoring Role</a> (2012);</li><li>• <a href="#">HOD Role</a> (2012);</li><li>• <a href="#">Mentoring in the 2007 Agreement between Government and MUT</a>; and</li></ul>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Mentoring in the 2010 Agreement between Government and MUT</a></li> </ul> <p>3.1.2 The law states that the External Reviews should be ‘in support of the evaluation and the internal audit of every school’ (Education Act, 1987, as amended in 2006, Art. 9 (2) (d)). This legislative measure is still in force. Therefore, the external review is an instrument of accountability and conformity with national standards and aspirations; however, it is situated precisely in the delicate and dynamic balance between the complementary functions of support and accountability.</p> <p>3.1.3 The National Curriculum Framework (2012) stresses that ‘since children develop holistically and because learning and development do not occur in a sequential, linear fashion; Early Years educators and Primary and Secondary teachers are encouraged to set up learning environments which appeal to children’s interests, are relevant to their day-to-day experiences and can be explored in innovative and challenging ways’ (p.40).</p> <p>3.1.4 One strategic pillar for policy development in the ‘Framework for the Education Strategy 2014–2024’ (2014) is the ‘quality of education provision’ through ‘quality assurance of education programmes’ (p. 5).</p>
<p>3.2 Monitoring procedures ensure that inequalities in access to educational resources at regional or organisational levels are addressed.</p>	<p>3.2.1 The QAD’s mission is to strengthen a system of ongoing self-evaluation, monitoring and review within schools.</p> <p>3.2.2 Steps have also been taken in order to improve the formal needs identification and resource allocation procedures, including the introduction of a review process and ‘moderation’ by the Statementing Moderating Panel (SMP) and Student Services Department (SSD).</p> <p>3.2.3 One of the duties of the Education Officer (Inclusive Education) and Inclusion and Special Education Specialist is to ensure that colleges, schools and teachers are making effective use of the educational resources available so as to ensure that all learners are receiving access to high quality education.</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>3.3 Accountability measures that impact upon educational professionals’ work reflect the importance of wider learner achievements.</p>	<p>3.3.1 The current mission statement of the QAD also stresses that the ‘external review in Malta post-2006 is primarily an instrument that supports and empowers schools in their ongoing quest to improve their practice and their outcomes in terms of the holistic vision of the National Minimum Curriculum and its successor, the National Curriculum Framework’ (<a href="https://education.gov.mt/en/education/quality-assurance/Pages/External-Reviews.aspx">education.gov.mt/en/education/quality-assurance/Pages/External-Reviews.aspx</a>). The above is the mission statement of the Quality Assurance Department (QAD) and such vision is still in force.</p>
<p>3.4 Policy outlines common standards for service and provision evaluation for use across health, education and social services.</p>	<p>3.4.1 The QAD has just recently established standards or quality indicators that reflect the framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014–2024 and the Respect for All Framework 2014. In this way, there is a clear sign post for all schools so as to improve on their quality of education for all learners.</p> <p>3.4.2 An inter-ministerial committee, comprising members from the ministry for Health and Energy, Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity, Ministry for Education and Employment and the Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties has also been set up. Currently recommendations put forward by this inter-ministerial committee are awaiting approval from the three ministers. Hence there is no published policy document as yet.</p>
<p>3.5 Policy outlines how to involve families in the process of evaluating quality of services.</p>	<p>3.5.1 The QAD in its external review of schools also involves families and parents in the process of evaluating quality of service given by the school. This is done through a questionnaire which is distributed to all parents and then analysed. Analysed data from questionnaires is then compared with other data gathered during the external review before compiling an evaluative report. For this purpose, the QAD follows these policy and procedural documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External Review Information for Parents (Point 7);</li> <li>• Parents Pre-Review Questionnaire (English/Maltese) (Point 13);</li> <li>• Primary School Learners’ Pre-review Questionnaire (Point 15); and</li> </ul>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Secondary School Learners' Pre-review Questionnaire (Point 17). (<a href="http://education.gov.mt/en/education/quality-assurance/Pages/External-Reviews.aspx">education.gov.mt/en/education/quality-assurance/Pages/External-Reviews.aspx</a>)</li></ul>
3.6 Policy describes mechanisms to evaluate demand for services.	3.6.1 The Statementing Moderating Panel (SMP) keeps a detailed record of all the referrals that reach the SMP. The gathered data is then categorised according to school sector; year of referral; age and disability or condition. The full data is then transferred to the Education Resources department where it is analysed and evaluated. Moreover, every primary and secondary school needs to keep a detailed 'Classification List' indicating the type of support services learners benefit from.
3.7 Policy supports opportunities for school teams to evaluate their practice through involvement in research and development activities.	3.7.1 The QAD stresses that each school should hold an internal review exercise which involves all stakeholders in the school community. It stresses that an effective school internal review and the actions that flow from it should deliver improved educational outcomes and experiences for all learners. This would consequently direct towards better School Development Plans (SDP) in order to better address the quality education for all. Such documents are reviewed yearly by the School Management Team in collaboration with all staff to evaluate actions delivered, their effectiveness and areas that needed further development. These actions are done during School Development Days or Professional Development sessions in the school. The QAD has also published 'The School Development Plan Handbook' (2014) to support schools in their internal review process so as to help them build their own internal capacities by effectively understand who their learners are, their strengths, their weaknesses and consequently deliver strategies how these needs can be addressed.



### Measure 3 evaluative comments

The above-mentioned standards have just been launched and they are being currently piloted through a newly proposed streamlined external review process. After this school year, the newly implemented streamlined external review process and the newly established standards will be evaluated so as to highlight strengths and/or areas for development so as to ensure quality in inclusive education. It is also envisaged that the Quality Assurance Department becomes a separate entity so as to ensure more transparency, accountability and reduce risks of conflict of interests. Moreover, changes in the Education Resources Department will also take place, with the appointment of 4 service managers, who will be primarily tasked with supporting schools' SMTs with their classification processes and with the analysis of data received from schools and SMP. Hence issues of recruitment, procurement and job mobility will be thoroughly evaluated in an attempt to improve the whole system efficiency and effectiveness.

### Measure 4: To improve the cost-effectiveness of the education system, combining efficiency, effectiveness, equity and inclusion

Agency recommendation	Findings
4.1 National level inclusive education strategies are linked to long-term financial support.	4.1.1 From the budget allocated to the Ministry for Education and Employment, the Student Services Department (SSD) is allocated financial support to invest in inclusive related resources for the ACTU (Access to Communication and Technology Unit); supports Resource Centres by providing them with a capital budget and in buying services from NGOs. Finally, the Ministry for Education and Employment supports local schools by allocating them funds (imprest funds) to invest in educational and inclusive resources.
4.2 Funding policies and structures provide flexible resourcing systems that promote inclusion.	4.2.1 Funding is flexible towards the whole educational system. Annually the Government in its budgetary measures projects an annual sum to be used by the Ministry for Education and Employment. Financial estimates incorporate expenses, those of capital and recurrent votes. These funds are distributed to schools according to the population and the way these are spent is determined by the Heads of Schools to ensure flexibility. Recently the Government is funding breakfast to all learners. Also, part of the educational budget is dedicated to the provision of learning support assistants in schools.



Agency recommendation	Findings
4.3 There are long-term funding commitments to support collaborative initiatives between various school-based, resource centre and research teams.	4.3.1 The ‘Special Schools Reform’ (2010) encourages greater collaboration and networking between schools and resources centres. In fact, it stipulates that ‘the resources provided at the centres together with the expertise of the personnel working in these centres, will be made available to offer the necessary support to students, parents, school administrators, teachers and learning support assistants working with students with Individual Educational Needs and who attend mainstream schools’ (p. 3).
4.4 Policy outlines mechanisms for systematic data collection on expenditure and implementation that informs cost-effectiveness issues.	4.4.1 Budget expenditure in education fall under the remit of the Operational and Maintenance Expenses Directorate.

#### *Measure 4 evaluative comments*

Education is one of the pillars on which the Maltese economy is built. The Government’s vision is to continue investing on the educational sector so as no citizen or learner is left behind ‘since it contributes to human development, a high-quality education is instrumental in increasing the country’s productivity’ (Budget Speech, 2016, p. 33). Hence so as to ensure that no child falls behind in education, in this year’s budget speech, the Government announced the following initiatives:

1. The continuation and the strengthening of the Free Childcare Programme – new childcare centres in Haz-Zebbug, St. Julian’s and Floriana are planned to open;
2. The commencement of the ‘one tablet per child’ scheme;
3. The launch of ‘a new screening programme with the title ‘A Lens on our Children's Development’ which ‘will monitor children from an early age to identify their special needs in good time for them to be given the support they require’ (p. 35);
4. The strengthening of the bilingual programme ‘Aqra Miegħi/Read with Me’, ‘aimed at infants and children under three years of age and their parents/guardians’ and the continuation ‘of the programme ‘Aqra Kemm Tiflaħ’ (Read as Much As You Can) to further emphasise the





love of reading among primary and secondary school children. Each school to enrol in the programme will be given 100 books, 50 in Maltese and 50 in English for each class’ (p. 35).

5. The introduction of the ‘Prince’s Trust aimed at helping these students make progress and acquire skills that help them integrate in society’ (p. 36).

Finally, in order to make support services in the educational sector more sustainable in the long run, the Ministry for Education and Employment embarked on a re-engineering of services programme as well as in finding alternatives to the current Learning Support Assistant service which is increasing heavily year after year and becoming unsustainable. Alternatives for the present LSA system include the introduction of Class Assistants or Subject LSAs. In fact, last year the Ministry for Education and Employment surpassed the approved estimate (EUR 212,973,000) by EUR 12,196,000 mainly because of ‘Higher expenditure than originally budgeted under Operational and Maintenance Expenses (mainly Professional Services and Contractual Services); Programmes and Initiatives (mainly Church Schools, Childcare Centres, LSAs in Private Schools and Childcare for all) and also under Contributions to Government Entities (mainly under the Commission for Higher Education and National Literacy Agency)’ (p. 104).

**Measure 5: To increase participation in good quality inclusive early childhood education and care and enrolment rates in pre-school education**

Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>5.1 Policy clearly respects the rights and the needs of children and their families.</p>	<p>5.1.1 The Education Act 1988 and its subsequent amendments refer to pre-school education stating that the ‘state may provide schools for infants who are under compulsory school age’. (OoP, p. 2)</p> <p>5.1.2 In April 2006, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment published a National Policy on Early Childhood Education and Care (<a href="http://www.education.gov.mt">www.education.gov.mt</a>). Recently this policy document has been revised so as to include the measure of free childcare education for all. This policy issued recommendations and guidelines on the following areas: (a) Financing – including leave benefits for mothers and fathers, tax rebates to guarantee affordable, quality provisions, and sufficient funding channelled to KG classes; (b) Participating and Access – suggesting ways of how parents can participate and have access to literature on child care facilities and support services, (c) Transition issues, (d) Ratios – child staff ratios, (e) Staff qualifications and Networks, (f) Programmes, (g) Monitoring and</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>Evaluation, (h) Evaluation and Research. (ECI, p. 9)</p> <p>5.1.3 Throughout these past years, considerable effort has been invested in the early childhood development and care sector. The most important milestones achieved so far include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Publication of the National Standards for Day Care Centres and facilities July 2006. These standards are still in force.</li></ul> <p>The National Standards for Child Day Care Facilities (2006) (<a href="http://www.education.gov.mt">www.education.gov.mt</a>) encourages the involvement of parents. All provisions involve the parents in different ways according to the service provided. (ECI, p. 13)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ETC's European Social Fund project for Childcare facilities at the work place.</li><li>• The drawing up of separate planning guidelines for Childcare facilities by the Malta Environment and Planning Authority.</li><li>• The Improvement Grant Scheme for child day care facilities as announced in the Budget Speech for 2006.</li><li>• The provisional registration of child day care facilities;</li><li>• The National Information campaign of the Benefits of Quality Child Care</li></ul> <p>(ECI, p. 15)</p> <p>5.1.4 The National Minimum Curriculum (1999), which has been recently replaced by the new National Curriculum Framework (2012), emphasises as one of its major principles the issues of inclusive education in all years, including early childhood. (OoP, p. 2)</p> <p>The current Education Act (1987) states that it is the right 'every citizen of the Republic of Malta to receive education and instruction without any distinction of age, sex, belief or economic means' (Part 1, Par. 3). It stresses also that it is 'the right of every parent of a minor to give his decision with regard</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>to any matter concerning the education which the minor is to receive’ (Part 1, Par. 6) and ‘to opt that the minor should not receive instruction in the catholic religion’ (Part IV. Par. 47 (5)). Moreover, the consultation document on the reforms to the current Education Act stresses that future amendments in the Act need to focus more on ‘the rights and obligations of parents in the provision of education to their children’ and on the ‘students’ rights and increased student involvement’ so as to equip learners and their parents to live in an inclusive and multicultural society able to celebrate diversity and the enjoyment of human rights for all. The same act also stipulates that ‘a teacher in possession of a Degree of Bachelor in Education in Early Childhood and Care teaching at kindergarten level shall be considered as a teacher for all intents and purposes of the law’ (Part III, Par. 23) and that each College ‘shall promote contact with child care centres to facilitate the smooth transition between early childhood and the entry into kindergarten centres and schools’ (Part V, Par. 51(q)).</p> <p>The National Policy document on Early Childhood Education and Care (2006) states that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ‘Parents need to be able to make a real, rather than a perceived choice between looking after their very young children or making use of child-care settings. Parents must comfortably take a decision on whether they want to use formally approved child-care for their children or look after the children themselves, with or without the help of the extended family or other personal arrangements. If parents are to have a real choice, there should be options with strong family-friendly measures to support those who want to be with their children’</li><li>• ‘Parents must be convinced and educated to weigh the short and long-term benefits for children from participation in high quality child-care settings. The dilemma here is identifying and agreeing on what constitutes quality early years provision which promotes the well-being and development of children’</li><li>• ‘Affordability: whether parents can afford to have children in child-care or whether it is less expensive to give up employment and look after children at home is a particularly delicate issue as parents need to weigh the costs of child-care vs the family income’</li></ul>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Amongst families who want to avail themselves of child-care, undoubtedly some would prefer to make use of the services in a flexible manner. Current information on patterns of usage within FES settings indicates this is a preferred option for many families. Services are not utilised to their maximum capacity all the time; although these settings are open from 07.30 until 16.00, very few families make use of the services after 14.00’. (p. 28).</li> </ul> <p>Moreover, the same policy document states that provisions need to ‘respond to the needs of children and families rather than simply contain a bureaucratic/administrative problem’ (p. 30).</p> <p>The National Curriculum Framework 2014 also recognises that early childhood education and care is a fundamental component of the learner’s educational process. This framework stresses that the early years cycle needs to ‘be supported by the visionary leadership of key practitioners working in early childhood education’; ‘recognise children’s uniqueness in learning and development through a variety of learning styles and pedagogies’; ‘offer programmes of activities which move away from emphasising specific subject or content teaching in favour of pedagogies which enhance curricular links and thus facilitate learning processes’; ‘endorse policies for assessment and transitions’; ‘facilitate capacity building of major stakeholders, predominantly parents and Staff’ and ‘incorporate measures to ensure quality assurance procedures thus promoting a reflective approach which monitors and evaluates practices and outcomes’ (p. 46). The framework also points out that ‘apart from being knowledgeable about child development, learning processes and suitable pedagogies, early childhood practitioners must demonstrate empathy and solidarity with the families of children with whom they are working and show that they are capable of working with children and their families’ (p. 46).</p> <p>Finally, all policies, strategies and procedures under the ‘Respect for All Framework’ (2014) clearly emphasise the importance to respect the rights and the needs of children and their families.</p>
5.2 Support is available for families to recognise and understand the needs of their child.	5.2.1 Each service targets defined age groups and is available for all children within the defined group and their families. Support is given to all children and families if these are identified as needing it. (ECI, p. 11)



Agency recommendation	Findings
<i>(Support focuses upon and what is in the child's best interests.)</i>	<p>Example of good practice: Home-start programme for parents with children 5 and under (ECI, pp. 4–5). This measure is still in force.</p> <p>5.2.2 Parents having the care and custody of their children may be entitled to a Children's Allowance (this allowance forms part of the country's national welfare system) if their reckonable annual income does not exceed a certain level. Funding is provided centrally by the Ministry of Education and Employment. The funds are appropriated during the parliamentary debate on financial estimates towards the end of the year. (OoP, p. 5)</p> <p>5.3.3 Support for families to recognise and understand the needs of their children is provided through the:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <u>The Early Childhood Intervention Programme</u></li></ol> <p>This programme aims to 'provide a family centred and comprehensive support system for children with developmental disabilities or delays in the first five years (0–5) of life. The principle is to minimise the delays and maximise the chances of reaching typical milestones in development. It also supports and implements screening procedures to increase the early identification of difficulties and provide the family support as early as possible to families' (<a href="http://education.gov.mt/en/education/student-services/Pages/Special_Education/Early-Childhood-Intervention.aspx">education.gov.mt/en/education/student-services/Pages/Special_Education/Early-Childhood-Intervention.aspx</a>). Amongst the services provided there are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) 'Assessment and Intervention in the child's natural environment e.g. home or school. The programme, 'Early Beginnings' focuses on four main areas of development including Physical development – Gross and Fine motor; Communication, Language and Literacy; Personal, Social and Emotional; Cognitive and Numeracy';</li><li>b) 'The Early Intervention team helps parents and educators in the planning and application of an educational programme tailored to the child's needs';</li><li>c) 'Support groups and workshops for parents supporting children with various needs';</li></ol>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>d) 'Group therapy in different areas involving both children and parents/carers';</p> <p>e) 'Support of Early Intervention Team in IEPs and transitions';</p> <p>f) 'Whole school approach targeting a school inclusion programme';</p> <p>g) 'Support and training provision to early years educators as continuous professional development';</p> <p>h) 'Screening assessment'; and</p> <p>i) 'Attendance in case conferences of children undergoing assessment at the CDAU and providing an educational report'.</p> <p>2. <u>The Statementing Moderating Panel</u> – parents are invited to attend the statementing panel's board so as to take an active part in the statementing process of the learner. Parents are also requested to attend the Review and Appeals Statementing boards. During these sessions parents are given advices as deemed necessary.</p> <p>3. <u>The Education Psycho-social Services</u></p> <p>These services try to 'provide quality service by qualified personnel to clients within the educational system according to the specific needs of pupils and students. These Services are intended to assist students in their holistic development as individuals and help them become active and responsible members of society'. Amongst the services offered there are 'Counselling Services in the schools; Educational, vocational and career guidance in the schools; Career Guidance Service; Education Medical Service; School Psychological Service; School Social Work Service; Safe Schools Programme which incorporates the Child Safety Service, Anti-Bullying Service and Anti-Substance Abuse; Servizz Għozza and College Prefect of Discipline' (Ministry for Education and Employment).</p>
5.3 Policy outlines how ECI services should be provided for children and families as	5.3.1 Well Baby clinic (in force) is the first point of intervention for all babies and their parents. These clinics are held at main health centres in different parts of the island to make availability easy. Every



Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>early as possible and as quickly as possible, following identification of need.</p>	<p>family with new born babies are sent for to be seen at the clinic. (ECI, p. 10)</p> <p>5.3.2 The Early Intervention Service (in force) is one of the services provided by the Student Services Department. It caters for children from birth to 5 years who are experiencing developmental, medical, psychological, physical, learning and/or other difficulties. The family doctor refers the child to the Child Development and Assessment Unit (CDAU), which in turn refers them to the Early Intervention Team. Referrals may also be made directly from the family. Each child is then followed through home and school visits (when they enter kindergarten) by the same teacher. (OoP, p. 9)</p> <p>5.3.3 The services listed below are all being offered at national level:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Child Care Centres</li> </ol> <p>Child care centres provide the first step towards early assessment and intervention. The fact that parents and their children get support at such an early age proves to be instrumental for the further positive development.</p> <p>(ECI, p. 16)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Early Intervention Teachers</li> <li>3. Kindergarten Centres</li> </ol> <p><i>Target group addressed by the service</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Child care Centres take children from 3 months to 3 years.</li> <li>2. Early Intervention Teachers work with children from 0 to 5.</li> <li>3. Kindergarten Centres have children from the age of 3 to 5. (ECI, p. 6)</li> </ol> <p>5.3.4 The inter-ministerial committee is also working on an Early Childhood Development, Screening and Intervention programme so as to monitor children from an early age to identify their special needs in good time for them to be given the support they require.</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>5.4 Policy states that in risk situations, the child’s rights should come first.</p>	<p>5.4.1 The ‘Child Protection Policy’ (2013) and ‘A Positive Parenting Policy in Malta’ (2014) all highlight very clearly the need that in risk situations the child’s rights should always come first. Moreover, this concept is also expressed in the ‘National Curriculum Framework’ (2012) and in all policies, strategies and procedures under the ‘Respect for All’ framework (2014). The ‘Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex Students’ (2014) policy relates this concept very clearly.</p>
<p>5.5 Policy measures and guidelines clearly define quality standards for early childhood services and provision.</p>	<p>5.5.1 The ‘National Standards for Child Day Care Facilities’ (July 2006) (<a href="http://www.education.gov.mt">www.education.gov.mt</a>) were published by the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity together and the Ministry of Education Youth and Employment. These ten (10) Standards focus on: (1) Suitable Persons – meaning the persons working with children in day care facilities. (2) Physical Environment, Premises and Employment. (3) Management and Organisation. (4) Health and Safety of Children. (5) Care, learning and Play. (6) Working in Partnership with Parents. (7) Behaviour Management. (8) Child Protection. (9) Food and Drink. (10) Equal Opportunities and Children with Special needs. (ECI, pp. 9–10).</p> <p>These Standards are issued on a National Level and provide the framework for monitoring and assessing quality and outcomes of service provisions. (ECI, pp. 9–10). They apply for the public, private and voluntary sector. (ECI, p. 13)</p> <p>5.5.2 Responsibilities of sectors and services (ECI)</p> <p>Funding allocation: Directorate for Educational Services</p> <p>Delivery of services: Directorate for Educational Services</p> <p>Policy implementation: Directorate for Educational Services</p> <p>Quality assurance implementation (e.g. courses, qualifications, teaching methods): Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (ECI, p. 7)</p> <p>5.5.3 The ‘Free Childcare Scheme: Child Care Service Providers’ terms and conditions outline amongst others the following standards:</p>





Agency recommendation	Findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government is to pay the child-care facilities;</li> <li>• Attendance needs to be between 90 and 100%;</li> <li>• Parents have to book the number of hours the children will attend child care facilities. Parents also have the right to change the number of hours and/or days when to enrol their children;</li> <li>• Free childcare is terminated once the child is eligible to enrol to KG1.</li> </ul> <p>5.5.4 Moreover, the National Curriculum Framework stresses the need that to set quality standards for child care centres and early childhood education. In fact, the Learning Outcomes Framework is creating a curriculum based on play for early years. With regards to learning environments the same NCF stresses the need for ‘stimulating and supportive environments and resources are available and accessible for all’ (p. 32).</p>
<p>5.6 Early childhood guidance is developed jointly by departments of health, education and social services.</p>	<p>5.6.1 Child Development and Assessment Unit (CDAU), is linked to education through the early childhood educators who are provided by the directorate for educational services (DES). These teachers will visit all families who have been referred to the unit and work with children and parents to ensure acquisition of basic skills in the first years before entry into formal education. (ECI, p. 10)</p> <p>5.6.2 The CDAU consist of a paediatric team which assesses and treats clients from birth to 16 years referred by consultants/doctors. Upon receipt of the referral form an appointment is sent for an OT assessment. The children seen at CDAU are referred for various limitations and difficulties including Autism, Global Developmental Difficulties, Learning Difficulties, ADHD, Cerebral Palsy, Head Injuries, Down syndrome and other syndromes. Children may be treated individually or in groups. Group therapy includes the Sensory Motor, Handwriting, Prewriting, Perceptual Motor and the Alert Group. Occupational Therapy addresses physical and environmental areas so as to promote independence in learning, play and self-help tasks. Therapists also work in close collaboration with the children’s family members, teachers and with other professionals of the multidisciplinary team.</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	Recently an inter-ministerial committee has also been set up.
5.7 Policy for early childhood services supports cross sectoral, multi-disciplinary working at regional and local levels.	<p>5.7.1 The ‘Inclusive Policy regarding Children with Special Educational Needs’ (2000) argues that interdisciplinary work around children with disabilities and their families. For every child with special needs a Making Action Plans (MAP) session is developed followed by an Individual Educational plan where the child’s needs and strengths are described; a plan of action is designed and responsibility for follow-up is placed. The persons responsible have the responsibility for ensuring that the measures are implemented and evaluated.</p> <p>5.7.2 The inter-ministerial committee was also set up to work on an Early Childhood Development, Screening and Intervention programme so as to monitor children from an early age to identify their special needs in good time for them to be given the support they require.</p>
5.8 Policy ensures there are pre-school places offered to children coming from ECI services/provision.	<p>5.8.1 Kindergarten centres are open to all children whatever their need is. (ECI, p. 15)</p> <p>5.8.2 Government provides free childcare for children under the age of 3 from families where the mother goes out to work or to study.</p> <p>(Budgetary Measure 2014:  <a href="http://mfin.gov.mt/en/TheBudget/Documents/The_Budget_2014/Budget2014_Speech_EN.pdf">mfin.gov.mt/en/TheBudget/Documents/The_Budget_2014/Budget2014_Speech_EN.pdf</a>).</p>
5.9 Policy outlines how cost-free services/provision are made available for families.	<p>5.9.1 The Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport is responsible for the provision of various child care facilities situated around the Maltese Islands. It also offers kindergarten centres free of charge for all children from the age of 3 to 5. (ECI, p. 10)</p> <p>5.9.2 Parents needing to make use of child care facilities are means tested and those on a gross income less than EUR 9,317 are entitled to the service free of charge. There is a nominal fee for parents on a higher income. Parents whose children attend a private day care facility registered by the Department for Social Welfare Standards benefit from a deduction in the tax amount payable to the Inland Revenue Department. (ECI, p. 12)</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>5.9.3 ECI provisions provided by the health and education sectors such as the Well baby clinic, Child Development and Assessment Unit (CDAU) and kindergarten centres are free of charge for all families. (ECI, p. 12)</p> <p>5.9.4 <u>Budget Measures 2014:</u></p> <p><b>1. Free Childcare Centres</b></p> <p>The introduction of free child care centres is a key proposal intended to assist families in exploiting the full potential of each household member whilst finding adequate work-life balance. We will start implementing this electoral pledge by investing EUR 3.8 million so that, as from next year, we would be providing this service to those families where both parents work or, in the case of single parents, where the parent works. An investment that will grow in the following years. We will shortly be publishing a White Paper for consultation in the implementation of this scheme. This is one of a series of White Papers which the Government is announcing today with the message being that this is a Government that listens to the people. This measure is intrinsically linked with employment – to encourage more women to enter the world of work. It also tries to help families strike a balance between work and family life. Hence the following categories benefit from this measure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Parents, both or single guardian who are in work and paying social security contributions;</li><li>b) Parents, both or single guardian who is in education leading to a recognised diploma or degree;</li><li>c) Single-Parent (mother or father) who are in work or in education.</li></ul> <p>Parents are entitled to free childcare for all children of childcare age, at a rate which is pro-rata to the mother's or father's employment hours (Free Childcare Service Terms and Conditions – MEDE) (<a href="http://education.gov.mt/en/resources/News/Documents/FCS_Service_Users_Terms_and_Conditions_22052015.PDF">education.gov.mt/en/resources/News/Documents/FCS_Service_Users_Terms_and_Conditions_22052015.PDF</a>)</p> <p><b>2. New Early Hour School Service</b></p> <p>We shall also be assisting those families who find it difficult to take their children to school and make it</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>on time for their own place of work. From next year, we shall be introducing a new service whereby parents may take their children to school one hour prior to the current school time and the children will be provided with a healthy breakfast at school. This would also promote a healthy lifestyle for our children. This programme will not mean an additional burden on teachers, and will be implemented in consultation with them. Teachers opting to participate in the programme will be paid extra.</p> <p><b>3. Reduction of income tax for the Use of Childcare Centres</b></p> <p>Meanwhile, we shall continue with the reduction of income tax for parents whose children attend childcare centres. The current tax legislation provides for a deduction from income for parents who send their children to child care centres against payment. This deduction will be increased from EUR 1,300 to EUR 2,000. This benefit will be applicable to those parents who opt to pay for child care, rather than making use of the free child care service.</p> <p><u>Budget Measures 2016:</u></p> <p>This year we shall continue with the free Childcare programme, where we are the only European country to offer this type of incentive. We are proud that through this investment numerous women are joining the work force for the first time, and families are benefitting from Government support apart from saving around €5,000 for each child. This is money that remains in the pockets of Maltese and Gozitan families. We are determined to continue to invest. It is being planned to open new childcare centres in Haż-Żebbuġ, St Julian's and Floriana in collaboration with Projects Malta. A new screening programme will be launched with the title of 'A Lens on our Children's Development'. The programme will monitor children from an early age to identify their special needs in good time for them to be given the support they require. Also to be strengthened is the bilingual programme 'Aqra Miegħi/Read with Me', aimed at infants and children under three years of age and their parents/guardians. We shall also continue the programme 'Aqra Kemm Tiflaħ' (Read as Much As You Can) to further emphasise the love of reading among primary and secondary school children. Each school to enrol in the programme will be given 100 books, 50 in Maltese and 50 in English for each</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	class. <a href="http://mfin.gov.mt/en/TheBudget/Documents/The_Budget_2016/Budget_Speech_2016_en.pdf"> (mfin.gov.mt/en/TheBudget/Documents/The Budget 2016/Budget Speech 2016 en.pdf)</a>
5.10 Policy ensures the same quality of service irrespective of differences in geographical location. <i>(Such as isolated or rural areas).</i>	5.10.1 Although the Child Development and Assessment Unit of the Health Division is centralised, Early Intervention Teachers from The Student Services Department in The Directorate of Educational Services that form part of the assessment team at CDAU work with the children and their families in their own homes. (ECI, pp. 11–12) 5.10.2 Child care centres are provided at 8 different locations across Malta and Gozo. (ECI, pp. 11–12) 5.10.3 Each town or village has its own kindergarten centre usually attached to a primary school. (ECI, p. 11–12) 5.10.4 Well baby clinics are provided in health centres in different parts of Malta. (ECI, pp. 11–12) 5.10.5 The Education Act states that every citizen of Malta is entitled to receive high quality educational service irrespective of their age, gender, sex, belief, geographical position or economic means (Chap. 327, Part 1, Par. 3). The same act also indicates that the State shall ‘ensure the existence of a system of schools and institutions accessible to all Maltese citizens catering for the full development of the whole personality including the ability of every person to work’ and ‘provide for such schools and institutions where these do not exist’ (Chap. 327, Part 1, Par. 4 b, c). 5.10.6 As indicated in the budget speeches above (2014, 2016), the government is also building a number of childcare centres around the Maltese islands so as to make this service more accessible and efficient. 5.10.7 The LEAP project (this is the actual name of the project) targets the Priority Axis ‘Promoting an equal and inclusive labour market’. It aims to create occupational opportunities for disadvantaged groups which are or are often at risk of poverty. The project aims to build a structure which would enable individuals to be identified amongst society through decentralisation. Posts within NGOs and



Agency recommendation	Findings
	Public Entities will be created to reinforce efforts of integration within society and serve as opportunities for these groups which benefit from work experience complimented by the necessary guidance and social mentoring support ( <a href="http://mfss.gov.mt/leap/Pages/default.aspx">mfss.gov.mt/leap/Pages/default.aspx</a> ).

#### *Measure 5 evaluative comments*

The current Government's vision is to strengthen as much as possible the early childhood sector. It believes that unless young children are given the necessary skills and competences from a very young age, their educational journey and experience can never be a successful one. As a matter of fact, the Government intends to continue investing in the FREE childcare scheme as well as to build new childcare centres around the Maltese islands so as to make the service more accessible for all. Also, the current administration will continue in its initiatives to modernise current schools; build new schools and equip current and new schools with the necessary resources and equipment so as to facilitate the teaching and learning process. The Government also believes that healthy school environments effect the overall performance of learners in schools. Hence the healthy breakfast scheme in schools will be strengthened. In order to increase participation in the educational context a new screening programme with the title of 'A Lens on our Children's Development' will be launched. This programme will monitor children from an early age to identify their special needs. Also in order to enhance the learners' literacy skills and competences as early as possible a comprehensive 'Language Policy for the Early Years in Malta and Gozo' (2014) has been launched. This policy strives to provide learners with opportunities to: '(a) foster positive attitudes towards Maltese, English and other languages' and (b) 'develop competences in Maltese and English in different settings' (p. 2). It also 'offers direction in the promotion of bilingualism to: (a) parents and significant others; (b) early years educators; (c) managers of early years education settings; and (c) early childhood teacher educators' (p. 3). Moreover, the programme 'Aqra Miegħi/Read with Me', aimed at infants and children under three years of age and their parents/guardians, will be strengthened. Learners at risk because of social constraints such as poverty, limited socio-economic means, cultural limitations and nationality are also being tackled through the LEAP project. Hence this programme will also be strengthened in the coming years. Finally, the Learning Outcomes Framework is also devising a new and comprehensive early year's curriculum with special emphasis on learning through play and exploration so as to improve the balance between planned learning and responding effectively to the students' interests and needs. Hence more focused training to early year's teachers and practitioners will be made available.



## Measure 6: To improve student-focused measures such as mentoring, personalised learning approaches and improved guidance

Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>6.1 High expectations for all learners' achievements underpin policy for inclusive education.</p>	<p>6.1.1 The Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014–2024' (2014) stresses that 'the proposed Strategy aims to cultivate student engagement and motivation, and to promote high aspirations in learning within an inclusive, safe and orderly environment both physical and psychological' (p. 7).</p> <p>6.1.2 Moreover, the National Curriculum Framework (2012) promotes 'a clear focus on improving the quality of education and raising student achievement levels' (p. xiii).</p> <p>6.1.3 Finally, the 'National Assessment Policy' (2014) argues that 'targets should be both aspirational and ambitious. The teacher's level of expectation for pupils should be very high. High expectations have been described as a 'crucial characteristic of virtually all unusually effective schools'' (p. 23).</p>
<p>6.2 Policy outlines that learners' voices should be listened to in decision-making that affects them.</p>	<p>6.2.1 The 'Respect for All' Framework (2014) highlights the importance of giving more voice and weight to the opinion of the students themselves. As a matter of fact, all policy documents in this framework contain a section on how students can be actively involved in the strategy development, implementation and evaluation processes. For example, 'The Managing Behaviour in Schools Strategy' has a whole section (Section 3) dedicated on students' active participation and engagement 'to ensure that they take responsibility for their own behaviour in order to enhance learning' (p. 15). Moreover, measure 3.2 of the aforementioned document stresses 'students are to be involved in the decision-making processes concerned with their learning and the school environment' (p. 17). The other policy documents namely, 'Addressing Bullying Behaviour in Schools' (2014); 'Addressing Attendance in Schools' (2014), 'A whole school approach to a healthy lifestyle: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity' (2013) and 'Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex students in schools' (2014) all contain similar measures and directions as above.</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>6.3 Teaching, support and guidance has the goal of empowering all learners.</p>	<p>6.3.1 The National Curriculum Framework (2012) stresses that it ‘looks upon education as a journey towards personal enrichment and empowerment, as a mechanism to uphold social justice and as an important tool for inclusion and employability’ (p. vii) and as such it will ensure that ‘school leaders and educators will have the appropriate level of empowerment and flexibility to position the level of entitlement in a manner that reflects the ethos and local requirements of Colleges and Schools’ (p. 17).</p> <p>6.3.2 It is envisaged that the impact of the Learning Outcomes Framework (LOF) on learners shall be ‘Richer, more comprehensible narrative of learning to inform future learning’ and ‘taking more responsibility of own learning – including self-assessment’ (<a href="https://schoolslearningoutcomes.rightbrain-nodes.com/files/documents/Reaching_Destinations_-_LOF_Seminar_HOS_-_16-17.144820060975.pdf">schoolslearningoutcomes.rightbrain-nodes.com/files/documents/Reaching_Destinations - LOF Seminar HOS - 16-17.144820060975.pdf</a>).</p> <p>6.3.3 The overall aim of the newly designed outcomes framework is for students to become successful learners; effective contributors; responsible citizens and confident individuals. Finally, all support provided by ‘specialist teachers will be to provide support to class teachers, and to students with individual educational needs’ (Inclusion Policy, 2000, p. viii).</p> <p>6.3.4 The Learning Outcomes Framework process tries to ensure that our schools promote a continuum of achievement where all learners’ success is recognised and certified.</p>
<p>6.4 Appropriate educational support is available as necessary and is fit for purpose in meeting personal learning needs.</p>	<p>6.4.1 Educational support to meet personal learning needs is mainly provided through the ICT for inclusion policies (ICT4I, examples, pp. 1–3).</p> <p>Main policy developments in ICT for Inclusion that have taken place since 2000:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The introduction of specialised ICT at San Miguel Special School in Pembroke;</li> <li>• The setting up of a section on ICT for SEN within the eLearning Centre;</li> <li>• The setting up of the Access to Communication and Technology Unit in the Student Services</li> </ul>





Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>Department;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The provision of a virtual learning environment and interactive whiteboards in each classroom and laptop for every teacher that are now available in all state schools and are also being made available to non-state schools. (ICT4I, p. 3)</li><li>• Malta’s Smart Island Strategy: It is pertinent to point out that the national policy for the implementation of eLearning across all classes from kindergarten to the end of secondary schooling has a clear in-built element that allows for and promotes inclusion, in the differentiation and personalisation that is increasingly possible through the virtual learning environment and interactive whiteboards in each classroom and laptops for every teacher that are now available in all state schools and are also being made available to non-state schools. The newly-elected government is also committed to eventually making tablets available to learners, significantly increasing the potential for personalised learning and inclusion. All of this is a key component of Malta’s Smart Island Strategy, as per <a href="http://www.mita.gov.mt/MediaCenter/PDFs/1_MITA_Strategic_Plan_2009-2012_(web).pdf">www.mita.gov.mt/MediaCenter/PDFs/1_MITA_Strategic_Plan_2009-2012_(web).pdf</a> (ICT4I, pp. 1–2)</li><li>• The use of ICT is not encouraged in specialised centres only. Mainstream schools have also benefitted from ICT investment to support teachers in their teaching and learning processes. Over the years, classrooms got equipped with interactive whiteboards and computers all equipped with the latest ICT educational programs. As from next year the Government will also start implementing its electoral pledge of ‘One tablet per Child’. These tablets will also be equipped with the necessary ICT programs that should support teaching and learning of all learners.</li></ul> <p>ICT for inclusion falls under the responsibility of both Education Directorates, namely the Directorate for Educational Services and Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education. Within these Directorates, there are established assistive technology (AT) and augmentative and alternative (AAC)</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>practices. (ICT4I, p. 1). Example of assessment procedure for receiving AT equipment on loan (ICT4I, p.1)</p> <p>The Curriculum Management and eLearning Department and the Department for Student Services are jointly responsible for the strategic implementation of assistive technology in the classrooms in the context of the new National Curriculum Framework (NCF), which was enshrined in law in February 2013. (ICT4I, p. 3)</p> <p>6.4.2 The ‘Inclusive Education Policy’ (2000) regulates support provision through the setting up of the Statementing Moderating Panel as well as with the development and enactment of Individual Educational Plans. As a matter of fact, one of the functions of the SMP is to ‘establish the nature and level of educational support needed by the student being statemented in order to ensure a quality education’ (p. 8). This support is provided on ‘Shared’; ‘Shared in the same class’ and ‘One-to-One’ basis. Moreover, the same policy stipulates also the main functions, characteristics and purposes for an Individual Educational Plan to facilitate personalised learning and support. Hence ‘it summarises those aspects of a student’s education programme that are modified or adapted, and identifies the support services to be provided, and who is responsible for their provision’ (p. 4); establishes ‘a clear relationship between any support services being provided and the student’s educational programme’ (p. 4) and ‘provides accountability for ensuring individualised planning’ (p. 4).</p> <p>6.4.3 Other support services (Job Handbook, 2010) include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) <u>Inclusion Co-ordinators</u> (INCO): who mainly support and participate ‘in the development of a College-wide Special Educational Needs (SEN) policy and provision in collaboration with the College Principal, the senior management team (SMT) of the school, school staff, students and parents’; ensure the ‘effective implementation and monitoring of this policy and related actions so as to ensure equitable access to a relevant curriculum for students with Individual Educational Needs (IENs)’ and oversee ‘the formulation, implementation and review of IEPs for students with IENs’ (Job Descriptions Handbook, p. 19).</li></ol>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="801 312 2101 619">2) <u>Inclusion Support Teachers</u>: these support 'Inclusion Co-ordinator (INCO) in all the schools covered by the INCO; assist the INCO in the overseeing of the drafting of the Individual Education Programmes (IEP) prepared by teachers and Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) prior to the IEP Conference; participate in the IEP Conference meeting; support the schools assigned to in the co-ordination of the provision of special examination arrangements for students with IEN; under the INCO's direction, support the LSAs in the implementation of the IEP goals' and 'observe students, as directed by the Head of Schools, prior to a formal referral is submitted and referring to the INCO all areas observed'.</li><li data-bbox="801 641 1899 673">3) <u>Transition Organisers</u>: who support the transition from school to post 16 or work.</li><li data-bbox="801 695 2101 1161">4) <u>Language Integration Support Teacher in Cultural Integration Unit</u>: who shall mainly 'support the Head of the Cultural Integration Unit in implementing the programmes and initiatives of the Unit; develop, deliver, assess and evaluate language mastery programmes in Maltese and English for learners who are unaccompanied minors, asylum, seekers, refugees and third country nationals; liaise with the Head of School and teachers of these learners to ensure that the language mastery programmes are integrated in the general educational programme of the learners involved, thus ensuring continuity and maximum retention and use; support the Head of School and teachers of these learners in ensuring that the cultural diversity represented by these learners is recognised, respected and celebrated in the school, also through language activities and support the Head of School and teachers of these learners in ensuring that these learners are culturally and linguistically integrated in the life of the school community, also through language activities'.</li><li data-bbox="801 1184 2101 1257">5) <u>Literacy and Numeracy Support Teachers</u>: who shall support teachers and learners with either literacy or numeracy difficulties.</li><li data-bbox="801 1279 2101 1353">6) <u>SEBD Specialists</u>: these provide support to teachers and students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.</li></ol>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>7) <u>Oracy Support Teacher</u>: who offers support in oracy related activities in both Maltese and English.</p>
<p>6.5 The learning process is based on flexible curricula based on learner centred approaches and the development and implementation of individual learning plans as necessary.</p>	<p>6.5.1 The National Minimum Curriculum (1999), which applies to all schools in Malta and has the force of legislation subsidiary to the Education Act, recognises inclusive education as one of the basic principles in education. (OoP, p. 3).</p> <p>6.5.2 The National Minimum Curriculum was revised in 2011 and the National Curriculum Framework was published. (OoP, p. 3). The National Curriculum Framework, which was recently launched, now allows for differentiation of different subjects of the curriculum with differentiated learning outcomes based on a ten-point scale (Level 1 – Level 10). (ICT4I, p. 4)</p> <p>6.5.3 Example of good practice: a website for the use of ICT in promoting differentiated learning: <a href="http://www.curriculum.gov.mt/secondary_syllabi.htm">www.curriculum.gov.mt/secondary_syllabi.htm</a> (ICT4I example, p. 6)</p> <p>6.5.4 The Learning Outcomes Framework (2014) proposes a flexible curriculum which has a direct impact on the teaching and learning process. Hence the LOF ‘embraces the following philosophy: Student-centred pedagogy; Assessment for Learning Inquiry-based learning; Respect to students’ individual learning needs; A holistic approach to learning; Differentiated instruction; A balance between knowledge, skills, competencies, values and attitudes’ (LOF, 2014). It also proposes the following skills and values for learners ‘Collaboration, Problem Solving, Risk taking, Entrepreneurship, Critical thinking, Presentation, Honesty, Integrity, Inclusion, Respect, Reliability, and Sharing’ (LOF, 2014). The framework presents also 6 cross-curricular themes, being ‘Education for Entrepreneurship, Creativity and Innovation’; ‘Education for Sustainable Development’; ‘Digital Literacy’; ‘Literacy’; ‘Learning to Learn &amp; Co-operative Learning’ and ‘Education for Diversity’, which are intertwined with all core subjects at both primary and secondary level.</p> <p>6.5.5 Moreover, the ‘Subject Foci are not rigid or restrictive and do not have to be delivered in a particular sequence or as discrete content areas taken in isolation. Subject Foci can be overlapped and blended into larger (or smaller) learning programmes. Educators may prefer to approach the learning</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>contexts in a different order depending on the situation, or to deliver aspects of the learning through preferred topics’ (Learning Outcomes Framework, p. 37).</p> <p>Finally, the NCF addresses the issue of learners’ diversity and requires that this is promoted through an inclusive environment. Hence it addresses the needs of ‘gifted and talented learners for whom the process of learning needs to be sufficiently challenging to engage and motivate them to develop their talents; learners with special educational needs for whom the curriculum should be written in a way that allows the teachers to appreciate how every student can access the same curriculum in every learning area and allows for the assessment of a continuum of ability; learners with severe disabilities for whom the curriculum should offer an education based on a continuum of abilities expressed in terms of developmental phases; learners from disadvantaged social backgrounds for whom the school, in collaboration with key local and institutional stakeholders in the community, needs to up-skill and support families and the local community to provide an environment that is educationally rich and stable; learners from diverse social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds including children of refugees and asylum seekers for whom the curriculum should include access to an educational programme which is embedded within an emotionally and psychologically supportive environment that respects their individual circumstances’ (A National Curriculum Framework for All, Ministry for Education and Employment, 2012, p. 41).</p>

*Measure 6 evaluative comments*

With the introduction in 2015 of the Learning Outcomes Framework (LOF) it is envisaged that the teaching and learning process will become more flexible and student-centred so as to ‘raise awareness of inclusion as a mainstream issue that is about quality education and raising the achievement of all learners’ (External Audit Report, p. 33). The Government’s vision in the coming years is to support recommendations given by the External Audit Report (2013), namely to: raise achievement for all learners through ‘learning outcomes that cover the needs of all learners, including those with the most complex needs’ (p. 82); the distribution of school in an ‘equitable way to support inclusive education’ (p. 82); and making ‘all lessons accessible to all learners in an appropriate way’ (p. 82); increase learner engagement and participation by making training ‘available for school staff, learners and their parents to support learner self-advocacy approaches’ (p. 82); monitor learners’ progress through ‘a



national assessment framework that covers the needs of all learners, including those with the most complex needs (p. 82); support to schools ‘to develop coherent formative and summative assessment, recording and reporting procedures that are in line with national and school-level policies for inclusive education’ (p. 82); increase ‘the range of assessment procedures used in a school allows all learners to display their skills, abilities and competencies’ (p. 82) and involve ‘all learners in self-assessment and recording of their own learning progress’ (p. 82); provide more transition opportunities by providing ‘alternative accreditation pathways’ for learners who require them (p. 83). Finally, the ambition of the current administration is to strengthen the current Vocational subjects offered at secondary level and increase them according to the needs of the learners and society.

**Measure 7: To improve the school ethos (such as the creation of supportive learning environments, adapting learning environments to specific learning needs)**

Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>7.1 Policy supports school leaders to value diversity among staff as well as learners, encourage collegiality and support innovation.</p>	<p>7.1.1 At the heart of the National Curriculum Framework (2012) ‘is the classroom set-up, in which the teacher ... facilitate learning in an environment that captures diversity and inclusivity and leads students to work towards personal growth, an understanding of the values of solidarity and social justice, formal qualifications and employability’ (p. 2). It also ‘views diversity as a cohesive force rather than a dividing force’ (p. 23). This same document encourages also more collegiality between all stakeholders at school level. In fact, it proposes ‘distributed leadership’ so as to ‘encourage the involvement of stakeholders in collective or delegated decision-making process. Ethically such collegiality is the way forward merging accountability with collaboration’ (p. 44). Finally, it also sustains innovation and entrepreneurship so that ‘Children value the processes that lead to creating and implementing new ideas. Through risk-taking, planning, perseverance and the use of their imagination, children understand and develop the ability to think, create and value new products that help them and others adapt to changes in society’ (p. 52). The ‘Respect for All’ Framework is built on the 4 pillars of learning being: Learning to be, to do, to know and to live together. The latter pillar ‘refers to students being educated about human diversity whilst making them aware of the similarities and interdependence of people’ (p. 10). Heads of school are, therefore, encouraged in their internal review exercises to make their school ethos and mission statements in line with the above credentials</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	listed in the national policies.
7.2 Policy outlines the responsibility of school leaders to effectively communicate their vision for inclusive education to the school teaching team and wider school community.	7.2.1 The policies under the 'Respect for All' Framework (2014) are developed on the 'whole school approach' policy, meaning that all stakeholders in the school should be actively involved in the planning, development, implementation and evaluation phases of the policies. So much so that the strategies in each policy advocates that Heads of school 'identify a key member of staff to assume responsibility', 'develop a team approach plan' and 'make sure that all information of the policy is disseminated to all staff members and there is general ownership and consensus on all measures' (Respect for All, 2014).
7.3 Policy aims to ensure the recruitment of teaching staff from diverse backgrounds, including those with disabilities.	<p>7.3.1 All entrants into teacher education have to meet the same requirements (detailed in the Eurybase report). (TE4I, p. 2)</p> <p>7.3.2 The 'Equal Opportunities Act' (2000) promotes and advocates the creation of work related opportunities for individuals from diverse groups including those with disabilities. In fact, in every call for application due attention is given to this particular issue.</p> <p>7.3.3 In the last budget speech, the Government 'enforced the law in favour of the employment of persons with disability which thus far had existed only on paper...this is the biggest social reform of all time in the field of labour and persons with disabilities, namely the enforcement of the legislation that requires all medium and large enterprises to employ a percentage of persons with disability' (Budget Speech, 2015).</p>
7.4 Policy supports schools to ensure teaching staff are able to meet diverse learning needs. <i>(Teaching staff have competence and expertise to develop individual plans,</i>	<p>7.4.1 The 'National Curriculum Framework' (2012) stresses that for the 'NCF to be successfully implemented the sustained and continued up-skilling and re-skilling of educators' competencies to deliver the new pedagogies requires a structured professional development programme that goes beyond what the current structure for training permits' (p. xvi).</p> <p>7.4.2 The NCF also encourages school leaders to make effective use of 'professional development</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
<p><i>implement learner-centred approaches and support learners in personalised learning.)</i></p>	<p>sessions’, ‘curriculum time’ and ‘school development plan days’ so that effective training is given to staff.</p> <p>7.4.3 The NCF also proposes a new professional development structure which moves away from the traditional ‘In-service training’ so that ‘continuous professional development programmes are organised for all practitioners within Colleges and Schools as well as on-going professional development to address national and strategic issues’ (p. 32).</p> <p>7.4.4 The ‘Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014–2024’ also stresses the importance of ‘training for educators on new teaching and learning methods’ under the ‘Strategic Innovation’ pillar (p. 4).</p>
<p>7.5 The school ethos and culture is guided by school strategic plans that have high expectations for the academic and social achievements of all learners.</p>	<p>7.5.1 The ‘School Development Plan Handbook’ (2014) issued by the Quality Assurance Department encourages schools to develop comprehensive and inclusive vision and mission statements. It stresses that ‘a vision statement focuses on the future. It provides a broad and inspirational image of the future the school seeks to create, presented in a sentence or paragraph’ whereas the mission Statement ‘focuses on the present. It describes who we are and what we do as a school. It may include the core values of the school, the educational services provided, student and parental involvement, resources available and school achievements’ (p. 5).</p> <p>7.5.2 It also encourages staff to always hold high expectations for their students in a supportive, inclusive and holistic environment.</p>
<p>7.6 School strategic plans describe how universal design for learning approaches are used to provide individualised learning tools and opportunities.</p>	<p>7.6.1 The ‘School Development Plan Handbook’ (2014) stipulates that School Development Plans need to include an area on <b>Teaching and Learning</b> (Learning and Teaching, Resources for learning, Curriculum, Achievement and Assessment). Key areas which fall under the ‘Teaching and Learning’ objective need to identify the type of learning pedagogies teachers will be using in class so as to include all learners in their teaching processes. Educators are encouraged to use strategies which fall the Universal Design for Learning. However, as yet not all schools have effectively approached the</p>





Agency recommendation	Findings
	universal design principles or are adopting ad hoc responsive pedagogies.
7.7 School strategic plans stipulate that all learners are entitled to be active participants in the life of the school and community.	7.7.1 The ‘External Review Survey for Learner’ (Primary and Secondary) which forms part of the QAD’s external review exercise includes questions where learners are asked to state whether they are being actively involved in the classroom as well as in the school. (Refer to References Section: Websites – last address).
7.8 School strategic plans have clear statements on the value of diversity.	7.8.1 In general schools develop statements in their action plans indicating that they value diversity, are inclusive and treat all learners fairly and equally. Actions in this sense are then reviewed by the external audit teams.
7.9 School strategic plans describe mechanisms for shared leadership, teamwork and collaborative problem solving.	7.9.1 The ‘School Development Plan Handbook’ (2014) urges schools to perform effective and efficient internal review processes. Here Senior Management Team is encouraged to promote shared leadership values so as to facilitate teamwork and collaborative problem solving and above all increase ownership and a sense of belonging in all stakeholders.

*Measure 7 evaluative comments*

The current administration is determined to strengthen the existing structures within the current educational system so as to support schools develop and build their own internal mainstream capacities by making sure that ‘all schools have policies and action plans detailing how national-level policies on inclusive education will be implemented; school-level policies consider: school ethos, systems and procedures, teaching and learning issues, behaviour, pastoral support and learner well-being; and the school community works collectively to remove barriers to learning and participation in schools and minimise all forms of discrimination and stereotyping’ (External Audit Report, p. 81). Also, it is envisaged that all ‘SMTs take a universal design approach to the school environment as well as the curriculum’ (p. 81). Hence quality assurance standards are being established and mechanisms for monitoring those standards are being developed within the overall system. Finally, the 2014 External Review document focuses and gives direction on the following areas of school activity: education leadership, internal evaluation and development, effective school management, learning and teaching, assessment, school ethos and climate, and parental involvement. Recommendations have



been taken on board by the current administration and the necessary re-culturing and re-structuring processes have already started. The Quality Assurance Department are also currently reviewing their monitoring standards for external reviews and evaluations.

**Measure 8: To reduce the negative effects of early tracking (the early streaming of pupils by ability into different types of provision or schools) and to reduce the extensive use of grade retention<sup>1</sup>**

Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>8.1 Legislation across relevant public sectors has the goal of ensuring educational services enhance developments and processes working towards equity in inclusive education.</p>	<p>–</p>
<p>8.2 Policy outlines how support structures that impact upon inclusive education are diverse and easily available.</p> <p><i>(Support structures prevent early tracking and streaming of pupils at an early age).</i></p>	<p>8.2.1 In 2007, the Student Services Department (SSD) in the Directorate for Educational Services (DES) was set up with the appointment of a Director. In 2008, the Department appointed Service Managers to manage the Inclusive Education Section, Special Education and Resource Centres and Psycho-Social Service. (OoP, example, p. 9)</p> <p>8.2.2 The Inclusive Education and Special Education/Resource Centres Sections work in collaboration with non-government organisations, the Child Development Assessment Unit, the National Commission for Persons with a Disability, various professionals within the health care services, mainstream schools, Resource Centres and other educational establishments. (OoP, example, p. 12)</p> <p>8.2.3 Inclusion Co-ordinators (INCOs) support primary and secondary schools in the implementation of the inclusive education policy. These INCOs support senior management teams, parents, teachers and</p>

<sup>1</sup> Early tracking means the early streaming of pupils by abilities into different types of provision or school; this includes placing children into separate schools.

The extensive use of grade retention means holding students back to repeat school years, instead of providing flexible individual support.



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>LSAs and help to co-ordinate service provision for pupils with special needs attending mainstream schools. (OoP, example, p. 11)</p> <p>8.2.4 Pupils with sensory impairments, besides being supported by LSAs, are also supported by a peripatetic teacher who visits the schools once or twice a week, depending on the needs of the pupils. There are also pupils who communicate through sign language and are provided with the services of sign language interpreters. These pupils are also supported by interpreters in post-secondary education. (OoP, example, p. 10)</p>
8.3 Assessment mechanisms are in place to identify the support needs of learners at an early stage.	<p>8.3.1 Educational psychologists in each college in Malta and Gozo assess learners on referral from schools within the college. Moreover, the Child Development and Assessment Unit (CDAU) assesses also referred children at an early stage. The new screening programme entitled 'A Lens on our Children's Development' will also monitor children from an early age to identify their special needs in good time for them to be given the support they require.</p> <p>At class level, the end of year progress reports will also serve as a means of identifying the support needs of learners at a very early stage.</p>
8.4 Data is available relating to learners' rights to age appropriate education.	–



### Measure 8 evaluative comments

Identifying the needs of learners at an early stage and supporting them in mainstream school settings has reduced the number of learners attending segregated settings. More work is currently being done so as to support schools to meet the needs of all learners. The current administration is envisaging reducing existing rigid forms of setting by ability through high degrees of flexibility based on principles of relevance and personalisation. The Lifelong Learning and Early school leavers department is taking a lot of initiatives so as to minimise these effects. Moreover, the various support services at college level aim at supporting and empowering schools in adequately helping all learners.

([lifelonglearning.gov.mt/dbfile.aspx?id=47](http://lifelonglearning.gov.mt/dbfile.aspx?id=47)).

### Measure 9: To support improvement in schools with lower educational outcomes

Agency recommendation	Findings
9.1 Clear mechanisms exist to identify schools with lower educational outcomes. <sup>2</sup>	<p>9.1.1 The ‘Transition from Primary to Secondary Schools’ plan states that ‘national benchmarking becomes a necessary regulative feature in the Maltese education landscape in a context where standards need to be monitored and teachers and schools need to be supported’ (p. 9). Hence the purpose of the end of Year 6 exam is for benchmarking rather than selection, meaning ‘to gather national benchmarking information for accountability purposes and to provide schools with the students’ attainment levels in order to help them take informed planning, teaching and learning decisions’ (p. 100).</p> <p>9.1.2 The National Curriculum Framework (2012) states that ‘it is the responsibility of the Directorate for Quality and Standards to evaluate curriculum implementation, innovation and emerging trends, through assessment at school, national and international levels’ (p. 42).</p> <p>9.1.3 The NCF (2012) ‘recognises the need for a benchmarking and monitoring system that gauges the performance of the education system across the three Cycles of education. This will allow the</p>

<sup>2</sup> This recommendation does not directly come from the Agency work covered in the CPRA activities. A number of project recommendations have implicitly, but not explicitly referred to this issue. However, the piloting work and detailed discussions with PG countries showed it is necessary to have this explicit recommendation linked to this measure.



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>Directorate for Quality and Standards together with other stakeholders to have the necessary data that will enable the quality assurance of practices in schools. In total, five stages are to be introduced in the system: three for benchmarking and two for monitoring’ (p. 42).</p> <p>9.1.4 MEDE is taking this issue very seriously. The NCF stresses the importance of catering for all learners needs in order to improve educational outcomes of all children. It also encourages new educational routes within the system that help learners maximise their capabilities. This is further reinforced in the Strategy Framework for Malta 2014–2024. Moreover, the setting up of the Lifelong learning and Early school leavers department is another valid initiative in this direction (<a href="http://lifelonglearning.gov.mt/dbfile.aspx?id=47">lifelonglearning.gov.mt/dbfile.aspx?id=47</a>, <a href="http://lifelonglearning.gov.mt/dbfile.aspx?id=37">lifelonglearning.gov.mt/dbfile.aspx?id=37</a>)</p>
<p>9.2 Policy outlines how methods of assessment, inspections and other accountability measures contribute to school improvement processes.</p> <p><i>(Accountability measures support inclusive practice and inform further improvement of provision for all learners.)</i></p>	<p>9.2.1 One of the strategic pillars for policy development in the ‘Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014–2024’ is that of ‘Performance Dashboards’ (p. 4) which focuses on ‘data collection and reporting’ and ‘measurement of achievements and gaps in the context of European targets’ (p. 4).</p>
<p>9.3 Policy aims to increase the capacity of all schools to meet a greater diversity of needs and support learners within their local communities.</p> <p><i>(Schools are supported to use innovative teaching methods, practical learning approaches and individual plans, focusing on learners’ capabilities.)</i></p>	<p>9.3.1 The ‘Inclusive Education Policy regarding students with disability’ (2000) regulates the development of Individual Educational Plans which are ‘concise and practical written plan, developed for a student with a disability, that describes the modifications and adaptations for a student’s educational programme and the services necessary to ensure full access to educational entitlements. The IEP is a primary tool for ensuring equal opportunities, as regards the National Minimum Curriculum, for students with special educational needs because of disability. Some students with a disability require small adaptations and minimum levels of support while other students with more complex needs may require detailed planning for educational modifications, adaptive technologies, or</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	health care plans' (p. 4).
<p>9.4 Policy outlines clear incentives for schools to take all learners from their local community.</p>	<p>9.4.1 The 'Education Act' states that 'it is the right of every parent of a minor to give his decision with regard to any matter concerning the education which the minor is to receive' (Chapter 327, Part 1, Par. 6). The 'Inclusive and Special Education Review' (2005) also acknowledges this right and highlights 'students who attend a special school will no longer remain in the same school right through their school life, but they will now due to the reform, be able to experience the different phases of school life as their peers do in mainstream education' (p. 56).</p> <p>9.4.2 The policy document 'For all Children to Succeed' (2005) states that we need to work on 'how to eliminate the rather staccato if not abrupt manner by which students move from primary to secondary schooling in the state system' (pp. 25–26). Hence the policy document 'Transition from Primary to Secondary Schools in Malta' (2008) led to the abolishment of streaming in primary and secondary schools in favour of mixed ability teaching and approaches. This policy documents support 'all forms of differentiated teaching and learning so that all learners' needs, abilities and talents are met and catered for' (p. 56).</p>
<p>9.5 Policy requires school strategic plans to outline preventive educational action against dropouts.</p> <p><i>(Including necessary measures so that learners who become disengaged find new educational alternatives.)</i></p>	<p>9.5.1 The 'Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Early School Leavers in Malta' (2014) 'envisages structures that enable stakeholders to monitor implementation for the purpose of revising plans when the need arises, with the specific target of keeping on track in our quest for providing a more meaningful and successful educational experience for all students' (p. 10) to reduce as much as possible the high percentage of dropouts.</p> <p>9.5.2 One of the aims of the 'Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014–2024' is to 'support educational achievement of children at-risk-of-poverty and from low socio-economic status, and reduce the relatively high incidence of early school-leavers' (p. 3).</p> <p>9.5.3 MEDE incorporated VET and Alternative Learning Programmes as part of the general curriculum in a holistic process of support so as not to restrict students from gaining access to the full curriculum.</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>On the other hand, Core Competence Programmes are serving as compensatory routes for learners who have severe needs in Mathematics, English, Maltese, etc.</p> <p><a href="http://lifelonglearning.gov.mt/dbfile.aspx?id=37">lifelonglearning.gov.mt/dbfile.aspx?id=37</a></p> <p><a href="http://education.gov.mt/en/resources/News/Pages/News_items/Alternative-Learning-Programme.aspx">education.gov.mt/en/resources/News/Pages/News_items/Alternative-Learning-Programme.aspx</a></p>

### *Measure 9 evaluative comments*

The current educational system embarked on a 10-year plan during which the following objectives will be targeted:

- 1) Reduce the gaps in educational outcomes between boys and girls and between students attending different schools, decrease the number of low achievers and raise the bar in literacy, numeracy, and science and technology competence, and increase student achievement;
- 2) Support educational achievement of children at-risk-of-poverty and from low socio-economic status, and reduce the relatively high incidence of early school-leavers;
- 3) Increase participation in lifelong learning and adult learning; and
- 4) Raise levels of student retention and attainment in further, vocational, and tertiary education and training.

(Strategy for Malta 2014–2024, p. 2).

In this regards the 'Framework for the Education Strategy in Malta 2014–2024' (2014), based on the 4 principles of equity, social justice, diversity and inclusivity, addresses the learning to know and the learning to do through the Curriculum and the Learning Outcomes Framework. On the other hand, the policies under the 'Respect for All' framework address the learning to be and the learning to live together where the value of respect is considered as a prerequisite. Moreover, the values of co-operation, responsibility, unity, tolerance, honesty, peace, happiness, love, freedom, humility, simplicity, courage, friendship and respect are also being promoted in schools through the concept of values-based education. Also, the current administration believes in providing and diversifying educational pathways which would allow students to reach their full potential and maximise their abilities and talents. In this regards schools are encouraged to develop their own 'Alternative Learning Programmes' (ALPs) and more vocational subjects are being introduced in schools. In fact, in the budget speech 2014 the Minister reiterated that 'as from this year, students in boys' secondary schools are being offered a vocational education experience where academic teaching in class is merged with workshop



experience at MCAST. This vocational experience will be certified by MCAST so that students could proceed from secondary school to MCAST without the need of a Foundation course'. At post-secondary and tertiary level the Government is also committed to continue to invest in students and in improving the current infrastructure. In this respect, in budget speech 2014 the Minister announced that 'we believe that, as far as possible, we should encourage students to further their education. Whoever has a problem should be encouraged and not discouraged. For this reason, students who need to repeat one year in their course will still receive their stipend'. All this shows the spirit, determination and will to provide more educational opportunities to all of our students so that all learners can reach their full potential and no-one is left behind.

**Measure 10: To improve the quality of school staff, focusing on the quality of teachers, quality in continuing professional development, developing teacher competences and reinforcing school leadership**

Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>10.1 Policy outlines how all school staff develops the skills to meet the diverse needs of all learners.</p> <p><i>(Appropriate training and professional development is provided to all school staff including teachers, support and administrative staff, counsellors, etc.).</i></p>	<p>10.1.1 On employment, Learning Support Assistants in state schools follow a ten-week (70-hour) evening course. This introductory course, which is organised by the SSD in the Directorate for Educational Services, gives participants basic skills, knowledge and understanding on working with and supporting pupils with special educational needs in mainstream education. The course has a practical component where LSAs are monitored and also supported in their place of work. (OoP, example, p. 14)</p> <p>10.1.2 The SSD also offers a Level-5 certificate course for LSAs who have completed the ten-week introductory course. This course offers a more intensive follow-up to the first course. Participants gain both practical and theoretical knowledge in the education of pupils with special educational needs. (OoP, example, p. 14)</p> <p>10.1.3 The 'Institute for Education' within the Ministry for Education and Employment has been set up to develop and meet the diverse needs all schools' staff. This institute will try to provide a 'link between the pre-service and CPD of teachers' and to set 'organisational structures at the school-site that encourage and facilitate opportunities for immediate and sustained practice, classroom observation, collaboration, mentoring and peer coaching' (Bezzina, 2002a).</p>





Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>10.2 Policy supports the development of high quality and appropriately trained teacher educators.</p> <p><i>(With improvements in recruitment, induction and continuing professional development.)</i></p>	<p>10.2.1 The Quality Assurance Department is responsible for the induction of newly qualified teachers. The policy document ‘Induction for Newly Qualified Teachers Handbook’ (2014) states that ‘an Induction Programme has been developed consisting of two distinct yet mutually supportive components: mentoring and appraisal. Mentoring provides professional support, while appraisal provides professional guidance and leads to the confirmation of permanent employment after the first year of service as NQT’ (p. 3). In this regard, ‘the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) provides training courses for prospective Teacher Mentors as well as for Induction Co-ordinators (ICs), who help to co-ordinate the whole process at a school level. The Directorate for Educational Services (DES) is thus providing the support of an experienced and trained colleague, who helps the NQT to settle down in the classroom, at school and into the teaching profession’ (p. 3). The abovementioned handbook also states that a ‘distinction shall be made between mentoring and appraisal duties. Appraisal duties shall include confirmation of newly qualified teachers and duties related to the PMPDP. Mentoring shall include support, coaching and facilitation of self-evaluation during induction and at any other time as determined from time to time by the Head of School, in consultation with the College Principal, subject to the provisions of clause 20 (2)’ (Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family, 2010, para. 22, n. 1).</p> <p>10.2.2 Also, the 2006 Education (Amendments) Act Cap. 327, part III, para. 24 (2e) requires two years of supervised experience in a registered school while the 2010 agreement between the Government and the Malta Union of Teachers, para. 21 (1) states that all employees shall be expected to follow an induction process, not necessarily during school hours.</p> <p>10.2.3 During the past years, Malta has invested in recruitment of professional personnel working in the fields of career guidance, counselling and other psycho-social services.</p>
<p>10.3 Policy supports flexible training opportunities in initial and continuing professional development, for all</p>	<p>10.3.1 Teachers employed as early intervention teachers receive further in-house training organised by the Student Services Department (SSD). (OoP, example, p. 14)</p> <p>10.3.2 The eLearning Centre has always endeavoured to train all educators in schools on generic and</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>teachers.</p> <p><i>(Schools and teacher education institutions will work together to ensure good models in practice schools and appropriate placements for teaching practice.)</i></p>	<p>specialised ICT equipment prior to its implementation in the classroom.</p> <p>ACTU also provides training. This is done in one of two ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. General training courses through in-service courses held in July and September each year. ACTU staff are also involved in the training of learning support assistants.</li> <li>2. Educational staff are provided with training in the classroom to identify further opportunities for the use of AT/ICT/AAC in the context of the school environment. This is tailored to the individual child's needs and the equipment they have access to. (ICT41, example, p. 2)</li> </ol> <p>10.3.3 Each year, the Ministry for Education and Employment organises a number of Compulsory and Voluntary Inset courses for teachers at all grades in all educational sectors.</p> <p>The Student Services Department organises an induction course of 10 weeks to learning support assistants. The University of Malta organises the Diploma in Facilitating Inclusive Education whilst MCAST organises the 20- and 30-week courses on Inclusive Education. All these courses are recognised by the Ministry for Education and Employment.</p> <p>At school level, schools organise 3 professional development sessions for their respective staff on addressing issues, challenges and needs faced in their school setting. Most often these are intrinsically tied to the School Development Plan.</p> <p>More recently the scheme 'Train the Trainer' has also been launched whilst the memorandum of understanding between the University of Malta and the Ministry for Education and Employment will facilitate the introduction of a more structured mentoring system in the coming future.</p>
<p>10.4 All teaching staff are supported and develop a clear understanding of effective learning strategies.</p> <p><i>(Such as learning to learn and active</i></p>	<p>10.4.1 ESF-funded 'Train the Trainer' scheme which 'is intended to ensure that a team of trainers working within a number of schools across both state and non-state sectors will provide training and support to educators within schools. The latter will eventually be required to use the learning outcomes approach in their teaching and learning processes. The educators involved will enhance</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
<i>learning approaches.)</i>	their individual learning needs arising from new demands which they will encounter as a result of the implementation of the Learning Outcomes Framework approach in schools' (ESF1.228). The aim of this project is to provide hands-on training to educators in their implementation of the Learning Outcomes Framework.
10.5 Policy supports schools to develop strategic plans of staff training in inclusive education.	10.5.1 This is captured and identified through the QAD's internal and external reviews. These are highlighted in the 'School Development Plan Handbook' (2014) where schools are guided on how to develop effective and inclusive school development plans as well as provision of supplementary training to staff to address their needs and weaknesses.
10.6 Policy outlines the specialised training pathways for specialists who support school communities to implement inclusive education.	<p>10.6.1 As outlined above the Student Services Department organises the 10-week course training for learning support assistants. LSAs can upgrade this initial 10-week course either at MCAST through the 20 -and 30 week-courses or the University of Malta through the Diploma.</p> <p>10.6.2 Moreover, the 'Special Schools Reform' (2010) states that resource centres can 'offer services, support and training of staff in an inclusive mainstream setting' and 'act as catalysts in the introduction of innovative approaches to the education of students with Individual Educational Needs' (p. 8).</p>
<p>10.7 Policy supports research into the effectiveness of different routes into teaching.</p> <p><i>(Including course organisation, content and pedagogy to best develop the competence of teachers to meet the diverse needs of all learners.)</i></p>	10.7.1 The initial teacher training provided by the University of Malta through the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed. Hons) Primary or Secondary will be replaced with a Master's degree in Teaching and Learning. However, a BA or a BSC degree will still be required before enrolling to the Master in Teaching and Learning degree. The aim of this revamped teacher training course is to adjourn the current course organisation, content and pedagogy instructions to best develop competences of prospective teachers to meet the diverse needs of all learners.



### Measure 10 evaluative comments

The new administration is very much focused on the continual development and professional update of all teachers' skills. The aim is spread this up-skilling exercise also to educators in management positions such as Heads of Schools; Education Officers; Service Managers; Assistant Directors; Directors; College Principals and Director Generals. This continuous training would help to have a more effective, efficient, co-ordinated and up-to-date workforce capable to read, analyse and address the complex changes happening in today's society. In this regards the 'Institute for Training in Education' within the Ministry for Education and Employment will engage all professionals in this update process and report on the progress in their development as teachers against standards. Such standards, which are being developed, are inclusive and frames against values linked to social justice. Significant progress is also being registered in promoting positive relationships between teachers and students; school administrators and teachers; teachers and parents; and teachers and teachers to build a positive learning environment leading to higher attendance and lower chances of exclusion.

### Measure 11: To improve transition from education to work by increasing the coherence between employment incentives, education and VET; improving the quality and accessibility of apprenticeships; promoting cross-sector co-operation; simplifying the systems of qualifications

Agency recommendation	Findings
11.1 Policy ensures that VET programmes should address labour market skill requirements.	<p>11.1.1 The pre-budget document 2013 emphasises the need to increase investment in education and training as net contributors to job creation and economic advancement. (VET, p. 5). This is not an outdated document since all budgetary measures are considered as ongoing processes.</p> <p>11.1.2 The Ministry for Education and Employment in 2015 issued the 'Employability Index' which 'will offer more guidance to students on the choices of jobs that are available for the various lines of studies by indicating to the student the potential of finding a job within the line of study being chosen' (p. 6).</p> <p>11.1.3 At the beginning of school year 2011/2012 the Ministry for Education and Employment introduced vocational subjects at secondary level (Introduction of Vocational Subjects in Secondary School, 2011). The latter consisted in a five-year Vocational Education Development Pilot Plan with the aim to:</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• broaden and enrich the secondary school curriculum through the adoption of teaching and learning methods that move away from formal learning to a learning progression process based on on-going assessment of practical tasks, project work, experiential learning related to work, written assignments and portfolios – thus leading students to develop into autonomous learners;</li><li>• provide alternative assessment for formative purposes and support their competencies in terms of learning outcomes – all the units in the learning programmes of these vocational subjects are based on the learning outcomes approach. The evaluation of vocational subjects is based mainly on on-going formative assessment on written and practical tasks rather than on written examinations;</li><li>• provide initial VET certification to students;</li><li>• put initial vocational education and qualifications at secondary level at a parity of esteem with general academic education;</li><li>• render education more relevant, meaningful and attractive to students especially those who are at risk of becoming early school leavers as they do not learn the world through the academic achievement discourse.</li></ul> <p>11.1.4 At lower secondary level (locally called secondary education), VET subjects in Engineering, Health and Social Care, Hospitality, and Information Technology were piloted in 2011 to students aged 14 onwards to raise awareness and interest in VET, to provide initial VET certification to students and to put initial vocational education and qualifications at secondary level at a parity of esteem with general academic education. Subsequently, in September 2015, home-grown vocational delivery models and qualifications in the same subjects, together with Agribusiness, were introduced nationally in all the state and most of the non-state secondary schools (Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Malta).</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>11.2 Policy aims at matching labour market skill requirements and learners' skills, wishes and expectations.</p>	<p>11.2.1 One of the key ideas in the new National Curriculum Framework (NCF, 2012) – <i>Towards a Quality Education for All</i> – is ‘the development of lifelong learners who are engaged and responsible citizens and active in the economy’. (VET, p. 6)</p> <p>11.2.2 One of the aims of the NCF is to develop learners who are capable of sustaining their chances in the world of work. More specifically this will require the development of employability competencies and capacity-building to achieve gainful employment and sustain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ability to communicate effectively and confidently</li> <li>• Competence in using new and information and communication technologies</li> <li>• The ability to train, re-train and develop new skills</li> <li>• Economic stability and independence</li> <li>• Innovation and entrepreneurship</li> <li>• The ability to readily embrace mobility and exchange</li> <li>• A systems view of reality that facilitates their engagement in the promotion of sustainable development</li> <li>• Active involvement in sustainable development issues. (2011, p. 25)</li> </ul> <p>(VET, p. 6)</p> <p>11.2.3 The ‘Employability Index’ (2015) ‘would aid all stakeholders to ensure better matching between the supply of skills among the working population as well as the occupations being created in a recovering economy’ (p. 35).</p> <p>11.2.4 The ‘JobsPlus’ Initiative together with ‘a unit of job market analysts will also be set up to carry out research and give advice in this sector...employment contract templates will be placed online and</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>will be accessible for download by everyone. Thus, we will be ensuring that all workers would have an employment contract that reflects the conditions stipulated by law’ (Budget Speech, 2016, p. 28).</p> <p>11.2.5 Moreover, ‘work on the Job Matching System, which was undertaken together with VDAB of Belgium, has just been finalised. The necessary training for employers and job seekers is expected to start in the coming weeks. We will once again give a boost to co-operatives where workers unions could take a pro-active role in their creation’ (Budget Speech, 2016, p. 28). Finally, the ‘Job Practice initiative’ ‘aims to give MCAST students an opportunity to widen their skills portfolio’ (p. 29).</p> <p>11.2.6 At further and higher education the following VET options are available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School-based IVET in college programmes after compulsory education.</li> </ul> <p>EQF level 3 and 4 programmes (mainly provided by MCAST and ITS for 16 to 18+) have a duration of one or two years. For students who finish compulsory education without a certification, there are introductory courses to specific vocational sectors (programmes leading to an introductory and/or foundation certificate) at EQF levels 1 and 2. Successful completion leads to access to further study in the same field. At post-secondary (non-tertiary) level, two-year college-based programmes lead to a qualification at EQF level 5 (higher national VET diploma) and at tertiary level, two-year programmes lead to a VET bachelor degree (EQF level 6). Students who successfully complete a higher national diploma programme (equivalent to the first two years of a university first degree programme) and who meet all entry requirements can opt for a further year of study to qualify for a Bachelor’s degree. ITS students can further their studies after an EQF level 5 qualification by enrolling in a Bachelor’s degree in Tourism at the University of Malta. Vocational-oriented degree programmes are also provided by the university's department of nursing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apprenticeship schemes (work-based learning at an employer's establishment combined with school-based instruction at a college) with a duration of 18 to 36 months are run by the ETC in collaboration with MCAST and ITS.</li> </ul> <p>Two types of schemes exist: the extended skills training scheme (ESTS) awarding a journeyman's</p>



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	<p>certificate at craftsman level (EQF level 3) and the technician apprenticeship scheme (TAS) awarding a journeyman's certificate at technician level (EQF level 4).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuing VET (CVET) is offered by MCAST and ITS in evening courses.</li> <li>• The ETC also provides adult learning but mainly targeted at the unemployed.</li> <li>• The Directorate for Lifelong Learning in the Ministry of Education and Employment organises courses at EQF levels 1 and 2 to develop key competences among adults (lifelong learning in the community), hosted by local councils and financed by the Department for Local Government;</li> <li>• Maturity clauses allow adult learners aged 23 or older to enter programmes at the University of Malta and MCAST.</li> </ul> <p>They do not have to comply with entry requirements but are interviewed (and in some cases, take a written test) to assess prior qualifications and experience. Proposed amendments to the Education Act will improve permeability between VET providers and further and higher academic institutions (Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Malta, 2012).</p>
<p>11.3 Policy outlines the development of partnerships and networking structures. <i>(Partnerships with a pool of local employers to ensure close co-operation with regard to learners' supervised practical training and finding employment after graduation.)</i></p>	<p>11.3.1 Malta College of Science and Technology (MCAST), Institution of Tourism Studies (ITS) and the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) maintain a strong link with industry in order to match their practices with the local labour market needs. Representatives from industry form part of their Boards of Directors. (VET, p. 15)</p> <p>11.3.2 'Training Aid Framework' and the 'Investing in Skills' initiatives together with the 'Training Pays' scheme, which will soon be launched, 'will encourage more people to undertake the necessary training. Part of the training will be subsidised' (Budget Speech 2016, p. 29).</p> <p>11.3.3 The 'Work Exposure and Traineeships' schemes 'were instrumental in reducing unemployment. Therefore, for the next seven years we shall be offering 500 work exposure and traineeship placements every year. This will help to further reduce unemployment to the lowest levels ever</p>





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	<p>recorded in our country’ (Budget Speech, 2016, p. 29).</p> <p>11.3.4 Students at secondary level which enrol in the ‘Alternative Learning Programmes’ are also given practical hands-on work experience in local companies and employees. At MCAST students also follow hands-on practical training which helps them to be more prepared for the world of work.</p> <p>11.3.5 The following areas are also addressing this issue:</p> <p><u>Stakeholders strongly support VET:</u> the Chamber for Commerce, Enterprise and Industry, the Malta Employers’ Association as well as the Trade Unions are involved. Many employers promote and apprenticeship placements. Dialogue between VET provision and industry is a key feature in qualification design. Several firms are establishing themselves as ‘learning institutions’.</p> <p><u>Regulating VET providers:</u> VET is regulated by the Education Act. A 2012 legal notice defined the Malta qualifications framework for lifelong learning, which has a regulatory function. In parallel, 2012 legislation maps out tasks of the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE), assigning it responsibility for regulating training institutions and programmes. All Maltese and foreign further or higher education providers need a licence that can be renewed or changed. Legislation also designated the NCFHE as the sole quality assurance and accreditation agency. The NCFHE co-ordinates work on EQAVET and aims to support VET providers in implementing quality assurance systems.</p> <p><u>Investing in lifelong learning:</u> MCAST and ITS play a key role in creating a highly skilled and dynamic workforce. Blended learning has been introduced to make lifelong learning more widely available and flexible for adults who need to combine it with professional and family commitments. The Directorate for Lifelong Learning plays an important role in awarding scholarships for VET at higher level and for the visual and performing arts.</p> <p><u>Validation of informal and non-formal learning:</u> Legislation (2012) on validation of informal and non-formal learning, in line with the NQF, establishes NCFHE’s right to set up Sector Skills Committees and Units. Members are appointed with approval of the Minister for Education and Employment. A number of occupational standards within different sectors have already been developed (Vocational</p>



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	Education and Training in Malta, 2012).
11.4 Policy outlines how transition from education to employment is supported by adequate provision.	11.4.1 Funding to support VET and transition to employment: (a) Financial support and/or incentives for learners with SEN and families; (b) Financial support and/or incentives for companies to employ young people with SEN (VET, p. 19)
11.5 Policy supports the availability of meaningful VET options for learners to choose from.	<p>11.5.1 In further education, VET is provided mainly by the Malta College of Science and Technology (MCAST) and the Institution of Tourism Studies (ITS). The Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) provides VET education outside the formal education setup. (VET, p. 7)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MCAST was established by public deed in 2000 but its legal status was further strengthened by means of the 2006 amendments to the Education Act, with the mission to ‘provide studies and training for education in the vocational and professional sectors’. (VET, P. 7)</li> <li>• Legal Notice 131 of 2012 – The Institution of Tourism Studies Regulations, 2012 – was published to regulate and provide for matters related to the Institution of Tourism Studies in accordance with article 132(2) of the Education Act as a body corporate having a distinct legal personality. (VET, p. 7)</li> <li>• The Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) is the national employment and training agency. The ETC was established by means of Chapter 343 of the Laws of Malta – The Employment and Training Services Act 1990 and subsequent amendments. It provides ‘training courses and other schemes for the purpose of assisting persons desiring to fit themselves for gainful occupation, or desiring to improve or update the quality of their knowledge and skills for the same purpose’. (VET, p. 7–8)</li> </ul> <p>Examples of apprenticeship schemes. (VET, p. 8, 15–16)</p> <p>11.5.2 No policy for VET programmes in all secondary schools, but a good example of a pilot study that might lead to this (VET, p. 6)</p>



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	<p>Examples of VET programmes for SEN students (VET, p. 15). Since both programmes were recently introduced, assessment procedures, qualifications and assessment criteria are still being developed. Both programmes focus on the individual needs of students with the aim of facilitating their transition to further studies, training and/or employment. (VET, p. 15).</p> <p>11.5.3 Vocational subjects have been introduced as an option subject in Form 3 in all secondary schools at Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) level. Five VET subjects have been introduced: Engineering Technology; Information Technology; Agribusiness; Health and Social Care and Hospitality. These subjects now have a locally set learning outcomes syllabus which is approved by the Matsec Office, at Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) level 3.</p> <p>11.5.4 The ‘Prince Trust’ programme has been introduced in a number of secondary schools for students in Core Curriculum Programme. This is a Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) level 1 programme which benefits vulnerable students and ‘will be available to young people in Malta to help them develop the skills and confidence needed to reach a positive future through relevant, engaging and informal learning’ (Curriculum Department).</p>
<p>11.6 Policy supports the availability of supervised practical training.</p>	<p>11.6.1 Currently the Ministry for Education and Employment is working on a ‘Work Exposure’ Policy which will soon be launched and will provide young learners the opportunity to experience exciting, hands-on learning within a real work environment. This policy will support lessons learned in the classroom and enable learners to put skills for work into practice under the supervision and guidance of an industry mentor.</p> <p>11.6.2 There is also being provided by the Job Exposure or Work Orientation Initiative.  <a href="http://www.mita.gov.mt/en/DigitalOutReach/brighterfuture/Pages/Job-Exposure.aspx">www.mita.gov.mt/en/DigitalOutReach/brighterfuture/Pages/Job-Exposure.aspx</a></p>
<p>11.7 Policy outlines how sustainable employment opportunities are supported through the availability of appropriate, on-</p>	<p>11.7.1 ‘The Employability Index’ serves this purpose.  A quote from the document: ‘The Employability Index will offer more guidance to students on the</p>



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going support.	choices of jobs that are available for the various lines of studies by indicating to the student the potential of finding a job within the line of study being chosen'.  ( <a href="http://etc.gov.mt/Resources/file/Resources/2015/October/Employability_Index_2015.pdf">etc.gov.mt/Resources/file/Resources/2015/October/Employability_Index_2015.pdf</a> )
11.8 Policy outlines how VET programmes are reviewed periodically.  <i>(Both internally and/or externally in order to adapt to current and future skill needs.)</i>	11.8.1 In the Education (Amendment) Act, 2012, the functions of the Malta Qualifications Council passed on the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE). The new responsibilities for NCFHE are enacted also in the following Legal Notices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Legal Notice 294/2012: Malta Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning Regulations;</li><li>• Legal Notice 295/2012: Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning Regulations;</li><li>• Legal Notice 296/2012: Further and Higher Education (Licensing, Accreditation and Quality Assurance) Regulations.</li></ul> 11.8.2 Curriculum department is currently working on this issue. Moreover, the Secondary Educational Certificate Vocational Subjects Policy Document (2015) also gives clear guidelines in this regard.  ( <a href="http://www.um.edu.mt/data/assets/pdf_file/0005/268493/VETPolicyDocument.pdf">www.um.edu.mt/data/assets/pdf_file/0005/268493/VETPolicyDocument.pdf</a> )

#### Measure 11 evaluative comments

The current administration is willing to continue working in the VET field so as to provide more meaningful job opportunities in all sectors to all our learners. This is seeking to build on strengths to reduce poor levels of youth unemployment. The 'Employment Index' together with the above-mentioned initiatives in the education and employment sectors are steps in the right direction which are bearing fruits, given that Malta has the lowest rate of unemployment in Europe. The aim is to strengthen these structures and introduce new ones which will build on the success of the previous years. Also the fact that each college in Malta has a multi-disciplinary team including guidance and career teachers will further help the transition from school to work ([education.gov.mt/en/resources/documents/policy\\_documents/career\\_guidance.pdf](http://education.gov.mt/en/resources/documents/policy_documents/career_guidance.pdf)).



**Measure 12: To improve educational and career guidance across all phases of inclusive education**

Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>12.1 Policy outlines the mechanisms for ensuring effective transition across educational sectors and phases.</p> <p><i>(There are well-organised transition processes among services to ensure continuity in the support required when learners move from one form of provision to another.)</i></p>	<p>12.1.1 The Policy Document ‘For All children to Succeed’ (2005) highlights the need for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘the shift from centralisation to decentralisation that necessitated that schools network together’.</li> <li>• ‘Each school forms part of a network with other schools and the whole network is called a College. Each College has a Principal who leads the whole network and who chairs a Council of Heads of schools, within that network’.</li> <li>• ‘This empowers all the schools in the College further to be able to take decisions as suits to the needs of their students. Moreover, schools are more autonomous operating within a stipulated, agreed framework which also ensures accountability’.</li> <li>• ‘In this way, through networking, schools are in a better and stronger position to meet the needs of students. They will work in partnership with one another, share resources, will jointly solve problems and create new practices within the specific and particular context of a group of schools forming one whole unit’.</li> <li>• ‘Networks will ensure a smoother flow from one level of education to another, as well as provide schools with the required space to develop their curriculum as laid down by the National Curriculum Framework’ (p. 34).</li> </ul>
<p>12.2 Policy outlines how career counsellors/officers support learners and employers regarding employment possibilities.</p> <p><i>(Support is provided with job applications, inform and support employers and</i></p>	<p>12.2.1 Within compulsory education the Student Services Department within the Directorate for Educational Services is responsible for the Education Psycho-Social Services offered to students and their parents. One of these services is the Guidance and Counselling Service. This service is provided by College Counsellors, Career Advisors and Guidance Teachers. This service is provided both at primary and secondary levels of education. Students are assisted in their choice of subjects at the end of their second year in secondary education as well with their choice of their educational or career pathway.</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
<i>facilitate contact between both parties.)</i>	<p>College Career Advisors and Trainee Career Advisors support students in career education. Counsellors help students in their personal problems and may refer students to other professionals within the service such as school psychologists, family therapists, social workers or with National Support Agencies. The Student Services Department also organises an annual career expo whereby students can have first-hand experience in careers and education pathways that are available to them once they finish compulsory education. (VET, p. 10)</p> <p>12.2.2 To ensure a smoother transition from compulsory education to further education and/or the workplace, career guidance is provided to students in their final year of compulsory education. This includes visits to industry and further education institutions, seminars on the job interview and the preparation of a c.v. as well as talks by speakers from the various job opportunities and educational institutions. (VET, p. 10)</p> <p>12.2.3 During the pre-final year (4<sup>th</sup> year of secondary education) students are given the opportunity of a week-long job shadowing experience in various workplaces. This provides students with a brief work-place experience which is a further opportunity to help them in their choice of career and in developing employability skills. (VET, p. 10)</p> <p>12.2.4 Both MCAST and ITS provide a guidance and counselling service to their students. The MCAST Team of Counsellors and Career Advisors works together to run and offer the optimum service both to prospective students and their parents and to MCAST students following courses in the nine different Institutes and at the Gozo Centre. (VET, p. 10–12 – HIGHER ED.) See example of good practice for vocational guidance in Higher Education (VET, p. 10)</p> <p>12.2.4.1 Students with SEN following mainstream and special courses [at MACAST] benefit from such services. The ETC Career Advisors within the Supported Employment division give assistance and job search guidance to persons with disability who are seeking employment.</p> <p>The new Resource Centre programme aims to equip students with SEN with an individual vocational profile so as to help them move on to employment training and support programmes leading to job</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>placement in open work settings or alternative employment opportunities. (VET, p. 19)</p> <p>12.2.5 Both services, career guidance and counselling services are offered in state schools all year round, i.e. comprising school holidays and the summer period.</p> <p>During the past years, Malta has invested in recruitment of professional personnel working in the fields of career guidance, counselling and other psycho-social services. Capacity building in this regard was given considerable attention with the aim to provide an optimum service to students and their parents who seek such services.</p>

#### *Measure 12 evaluative comments*

In view of the points above, the following comments are put forth for further consideration:

- A challenge is presented in view of the sustainability of the Career Exposure Experience (CEE) for SENs. The challenge is posed not only from the aspect of finding the suitable placement to SEN students, but also to provide also the necessary support to SEN students while on the work placement.
- A challenge is also presented in view of the Transition of SEN students from Secondary schooling to Post-Secondary/further education paths. Resources (mainly human resources and time) are limited in relation to the provision of programmes which appeal to SEN students because personnel also have to cater for mainstream students apart from SEN students, in order to facilitate this transition.
- Ideally, one has to provide ongoing Training to career guidance personnel to enhance their knowledge and increase their awareness about various conditions pertaining to the context of 'Special Needs' in order to be able to provide a better service to SEN students.
- Career guidance activities relating to the transition of SEN students from school to post-secondary/work should be planned in a way so as to focus mainly on and cater for SEN students' specific needs so that they will be better prepared for the world of work/further education.
- Career Adviser and guidance teachers in colleges are encouraged to support learners in their transition from one school to another as well as in their choice of subjects at secondary level.



The policy document being used to address this measure is the Career Guidance Policy for Schools (2007; [education.gov.mt/en/resources/documents/policy\\_documents/career\\_guidance.pdf](https://education.gov.mt/en/resources/documents/policy_documents/career_guidance.pdf))

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