

National Education and Training 2010 Work Programme

Malta Progress Report

2007

CHAPTER 1: THE NATIONAL LIFELONG LEARNING STRATEGY

Lifelong learning is a key principle that underpins education and training policy. The Government of Malta is deeply committed to ensuring high quality and effective education and training systems that are accessible to everyone. Education and training play a vital role in sustaining the country's economic and social environment and development since, given the limited amount of natural resources, human resources could provide the country with a major competitive edge. Strategic Objective 3 of the 2006 National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) 2007-2013 is 'Investment in Human Capital'. This objective is considered to be particularly critical to both Malta's competitiveness and quality of life objectives and is underpinned by investment in the education and employment sectors, investment in social inclusion and institution building in the public and NGO sector. The strategic stance underlying Malta's economic vision precludes an increase in the supply of knowledge workers with tertiary, upper secondary, vocational and secondary level qualifications. Malta believes in the need to support the wider career choices of young people as well as facilitate the development of skills that better meet the needs of business and industry. To this end, Malta shall strive to develop higher level skills that support the creation and consolidation of a knowledge-based society and economy supported by ICT and entrepreneurship. The NSRF stresses the need for the on-going provision of quality lifelong learning opportunities within the framework of enhanced investment in education and specific fields of vocational education and training. Entrepreneurship education is considered to be crucial to the nurturing of a competitive and entrepreneurial culture from an early stage.

This National Report covers all contexts and levels of the education and training system.

Malta has an extensive and inclusive education system. All three-year old children have access to free kindergarten services. Education is provided for free in all state and state dependent schools and is compulsory up to the age of 16. Students with special educational needs access mainstream education and are supported throughout their compulsory education by Learning Support Assistants. Children of irregular immigrants are admitted to mainstream schools. Additionally, most post-secondary institutions, including University, the Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) and the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) are free. Students following full-time courses at upper secondary and under-graduate levels receive a students' maintenance grant. The Malta Government Scholarship Scheme initiated in 2006 with an annual outlay of €465,874 for students intending to follow post-graduate degree programmes overseas has, in 2007, been expanded to include an additional annual sum of €349,406 to encourage the take up of undergraduate degree courses offered by local private higher education institutions. Scholarships awarded since 2006 include 55 for master degrees and 31 for doctorates.

Literacy rates have increased over the past ten years. According to the 1995 National Census, 11.2% of the population aged 10 years and over at the time, referred to themselves as being illiterate. The definition that was used for illiteracy was: "Is this person able to read and write?" Comparing with recently published official data from the 2005 census, the self-reported rate of illiteracy has decreased over the time period since the 1995 census. Indeed about 7.2%¹ of the population aged 10 years and over were reported as being illiterate. The definition that was used for illiteracy for the 2005 census was: "Are you able to read and write a simple sentence about your everyday life?". It is also interesting to note that this decrease in illiteracy was registered across all age groups and was most marked in the higher age groups that experienced the highest rates of illiteracy. This would tend to indicate that the decrease in the overall illiteracy rate was not due to the passing away of the older generation, but to upskilling across the board with a marked emphasis on adult lifelong learning.¹

The country has a number of incentives for students to remain in education especially in the vocational and tertiary levels of education. The rate of early school leavers is decreasing due to increased

¹ National Statistics Office: *Census of Population and Housing 2005. Volume 1: Population*, 2007.

provision including government measures to provide incentives to students to pursue an education and training route after completing secondary education. Lifelong learning opportunities are increasing especially due to the combined efforts of entities across sectors to make efficient and effective use of structural funds and other EU educational programmes such as the various adult education strands of the Socrates Programme.

Students in Educational Institutions by level – 1997/98 to 2004/05

	1997/98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
Pre-school	10,637	10,443	10,039	9,847	9,604	9,368	9,141	8,551
Primary Schools	35,261	34,914	34,261	33,530	32,717	31,710	31,064	29,596
Secondary Schools	29,496	29,304	28,901	28,980	28,471	28,812	29,540	28,204
Special Schools	338	299	291	328	250	247	248	251
Sub-Total Secondary	29,834	29,603	29,192	29,308	28,721	29,059	29,788	28,455
Post-secondary (general)	10,529	10,853	10,793	11,075	11,023	11,356	12,392	11,861
Junior College	2,222	2,033	2,431	2,354	2,551	2,749	2,958	3,057
Post-secondary VET	1,841	1,917	2,615	2,801	2,003	1,794	707	771
MCAST full-time VET	--	--	--	--	1,635	2,065	3,771	3,615
MCAST part-time VET	--	--	--	--	104	1,882	2,563	2,578
Tertiary (full-time)	6,183	6,064	5,554	6,281	5,852	6,692	6,617	7,310
Tertiary (part-time)	963	895	808	1,212	1,480	2,314	1,338	2,220
Sub-total Upper Secondary	21,738	21,762	22,201	23,723	24,648	28,852	29,986	31,412
Evening Courses	8,624	11,656	11,801	11,418	10,752	12,582	12,874	17,986
Adult Training Centres for persons with a disability (age 21+)*	--	--	363	355	371	384	393	394

Source: National Statistics Office (2007): Education Statistics 2005, p.xxii

* Data from Adult Training Centres

Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP amounts to approximately 6% indicating an ongoing process to improve and upgrade the quality of education system in Malta. In 2006 alone, Government committed itself to invest €252 millions in this area.²

Research and Innovation

In 2006, the Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST) launched the National Strategy for Research and Innovation for 2007-2010 entitled 'Building and Sustaining the Research and Innovation (R&I) Enabling Framework'. MCST is the national advisory body to Government on science and technology policy. The MCST is also the national agency responsible for the management of the local RTDI programme, as well as the national contact organisation for the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7). The aim of the national R&I strategy are to establish priorities and targets for this key area and to define the measures, actions, levers, and incentives to be introduced, improved upon and consolidated so as to ensure an environment within which value added RTDI can flourish. Additionally, the R&I strategy highlights the emerging potential for public-private partnerships in applied research so as to provide an opportunity for Malta to be anchored as a centre for excellence for business-driven RTDI in the region. The strategy promotes partnerships between local

² Budget Speech 2006: Building on Our Strengths ... for a better quality of life.

industry and the University of Malta on the one hand and with major foreign institutes on the other to deliver business-driven RTDI that can be exported to the region.

The reforms have resulted in the following institutional framework:

(a) In order to politically champion the strategic importance of R&I, given that research and innovation as a policy instrument cuts horizontally across various policy domains (higher education; education; employment; industry and enterprise; capital; and competitiveness, etc) policy ownership for R&I was, in October 2005 placed within the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM).

(b) The Council was reformed with the separation of responsibilities for management and R&I policy direction. Thus, the Board constituted on the Council has policy and management direction for MCST. R&I advice is provided through the constitution of an Advisory Board, chaired by the Principal Permanent Secretary and constituted of scientists, industry, and academia. As part of Government's strategic direction, a far reaching reform of the education system has been undertaken. Reviews of key sectors have been completed with the active participation of stakeholders. Review outcomes and related recommendations now serve as building blocks for a comprehensive lifelong and lifewide learning strategy.

Sectors of the educational system reviewed	Policies on different elements of the education and training system in the public domain	Their status in 2007
Early childhood education and care provision	Early Childhood Education and Care – a national policy, 2006	Assessment of recommendations and part implementation
Inclusive education policies, structures and services	Inclusive and Special Education Review, 2005	Assessment of recommendations and part implementation
School attendance and absenteeism	School Attendance Improvement, October 2005	Assessment of recommendations and part implementation
Primary and secondary schools and the restructuring of the Education Division	- For All Children to Succeed – a new network organisation for quality education in Malta, 28 June 2005 - Amendments to Education Act, 2006 - Breaking the Mould – transition from primary to secondary, 2006	Implementation
National system of examinations (compulsory education)	- Outcome of the Review Group on the Junior Lyceum 11+ examination is in the final stages of completion. - FES book: Transition from Primary to Secondary: Time to Break the Mould? November 2006.	Awaiting review outcomes (May 2007).
National system of examinations (post-secondary education)	The Matriculation and Secondary Education Certificate (MATSEC): Strengthening a National Examination System, October 2005	Assessment of recommendations and part implementation
Adult basic skills	Report of the Adult Basic Skills Working Group, July 2006	Assessment of recommendations
Career guidance within compulsory education	A Career Guidance Policy and Strategy for Compulsory Schooling in Malta, October 2006	Assessment of recommendations
Higher and tertiary	- State Higher Education Funding: report of the	Implementation

levels of education	State Higher Education Funding Working Group, November 2004 - National Commission for Higher Education and Secretariat for Higher Education, 26 October 2005 - Amendments to Education Act, 2006	
National Qualifications Framework	- Towards National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning – a first guide, November 2006 - Legal Notice 347 of 2005: Malta Qualifications Council Regulations	Implementation
National Strategy for Research and Innovation - 2007-2010	- Building and Sustaining the Research and Innovation (R&I) Enabling Framework – Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST), 2006	Implementation
ICT	The National ICT Strategy (2004-2006), Ministry for Industry, Investment and Information Technology (MIIT)	Implementation
Lifelong Learning	Lifelong Learning in Malta: towards the learning society – draft national strategic plan, 2003	Assessment of recommendations

A draft national lifelong learning strategy was already developed in late 2004. However, due to the strategic goal of government to undertake comprehensive reviews of key sectors of the education and training system, the decision to finalise the national strategy was postponed pending the completion of the set of reviews, the analysis of the various recommendations and their adoption or otherwise by government, and the integration of approved allocation of resources for targeted policy measures into a national overarching policy framework and plan. The next step to be embarked upon during 2007 is the integration of the various reform elements outlined above into an overarching framework for a national lifelong learning strategy.

Structural Funds allocation for Education and Training

Single Programming Document, 2004-2006 – Education and Training

Approximately 18% of the total eligible cost of projects funded by the Structural Funds (2004-2006) in Malta was being invested in projects relating to education and training.³ A total of €10,848,195 was being spent on education and training under the European Social Fund (ESF), while a further €5,804,097 was being spent on education infrastructure financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).⁴ In all, there are 45 projects relating to education and training funded by Structural Funds, namely: 37 projects funded by ESF and 8 funded by ERDF. As a result of these projects, 7,110 people benefited from training and 1,013 jobs were created or retained. In addition to the projects funded by mainstream Structural Funds, there are 2 education and training projects funded by the ERDF European Community Initiative Interreg III (2004-2006). These have a total allocation of €168,459.

Education and Training projects fell under four of the five priorities in the Single Programming Document for 2004-2006, as follows:

Priority 1: Strategic Investment and Strengthening Competitiveness [ERDF]

Measure 1.2: Infrastructure - Sub-measure 1.2.2: Education and Social Infrastructure. 6 projects: Total Cost: €3,364,715

Priority 2: Developing People [ESF]

Measure 2.1: Employability and Adaptability. 12 projects; Total Cost: €5,982,182

Measure 2.2: Gender Equality. 1 project; Total Cost: €228,194.

Measure 2.3: Lifelong learning and Social Inclusion: 20 projects; Total Cost: €3,601,800

³ The total allocated to projects under the Single Programming Document 2004-2006 is €86,545,961. This amount excludes ineligible costs.

⁴ These figures relate to total cost of projects, including Malta's co-financing, and including ineligible expenses [eg. VAT]. Total: €16,652,292.

Priority 4: Regional Distinctiveness (Gozo Special Needs)

Measure 4.1: Basic Infrastructure and the Development of the Tourism Sector [ERDF] 2 projects; Total Cost: €2,439,382.

Measure 4.2: Human Resources, Gozo [ESF] 3 projects; Total Cost: €51,246.

Priority 5.2: Technical Assistance [ESF] 1 project; Total Cost: €484,773.**Community Initiative Interreg III, 2004-2006 – Education and Training**

Two Interreg III projects with Maltese partners include the provision of Education and Training:

- Interreg IIIA: Italia-Malta Programme [ERDF] 1 project; Maltese partner's total allocation: €49,200.

- Interreg IIIC: South Zone Programme [ERDF] 1 project; Maltese partner's total allocation: €19,259.

Cohesion Policy 2007- 2013 and Education/Training

Education and training have been given due importance under *Operational Programme I: Empowering people for more jobs and a better quality of life*, as well as *Operational Programme II: Investing in Competitiveness for a Better Quality of Life*, Cohesion Policy 2007-2013. Operational Programme II, which is to be co-financed by the European Social Fund will focus on five priorities, namely:

- i. Improving education and skills;
- ii. Investing in Employability and adaptability of the work force;
- iii. Supporting an equal and inclusive labour market;
- iv. Strengthening institutional and administrative capacity; and
- v. Technical assistance.

The total funding for Operational Programme II is €131,764,705, which includes the total Community Funding and corresponding National Co-financing. Operational Programme I, which is to be co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund will include the upgrading of education and training infrastructure, but will mainly focus on the following priorities: Investing in an enterprise-support infrastructure; supporting a competitive enterprise; promoting sustainable tourism; developing the TEN-T infrastructure; Improving accessibility and general economic services; upgrading environment infrastructure; urban regeneration and improving quality of life; and Technical Assistance.

EU Programme Allocation 2006

Allocation by EU Programme in Malta during 2006 was as follows:

(source: European Programmes Unit - EUPU)

EU Programme	Measure/Action*	Year	Total No of projects	Total No of Beneficiaries	Total Allocated Amount
Leonardo da Vinci	A	2006	8	140	€260,516.00
	B	2006	0	0	€0.00
	C	2006	0	0	€0.00
	D	2006	10	218	€227,761.00
	E	2006	0	0	€0.00
TOTAL		2006	18	358	€488,277.00

* A = Young people in initial vocational training; B = Students ; C = Young workers and recent graduates ; D = People in charge of human resources, planners, vocational guidance specialist ; E = instructors and tutors in the field of language skills

The above mentioned projects are ongoing activities and figures are subject to change

EU Programme	Measure/Action	Year	Total No of projects	Total No of Beneficiaries	Total Allocated Amount (EUR)
Socrates	Arion	2006	N/A	5	7,462
	Grundtvig	2006	37	N/A	148,000
	Erasmus	2006	3	210	370068
	Comenius	2006	121	N/A	438,931
	TOTAL	2006	161	215	964,461

The above mentioned projects are ongoing activities and figures are subject to change

EU Programme	Measure/Action	Year	Total No of projects	Total No of Beneficiaries	Total Allocated Amount in EUROS
YOUTH	Youth Exchanges	2006	32	364	428,651
	European Voluntary Service	2006	24	26	135,057
	Youth Initiatives	2006	17	236	76,797
	Support Measures	2006	11	57	173,911
	TOTAL	2006	84	683	814,416

The above mentioned projects are ongoing activities and figures are subject to change

Development, implementation and dissemination of education and training policies

Stakeholder consultation and wide dissemination of information are key features of policy development and implementation processes. All key policy documents are available on the website of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment with a link to the government portal. Regular press releases are issued by the Department of Information through newspapers, TV and radio channels, the government information portal and the public service intranet. The Minister of Education regularly meets stakeholder groups and representatives to brief them about developments taking place in the field of education and training. A top ministry official regularly organises seminars for parents to inform them about developments and to encourage a public dialogue about E&T and lifelong learning issues. Moreover, the Ministry's Education TV Channel runs daily information programmes. Thematic updates on Government measures are sent to all households.

CHAPTER 2: IMPLEMENTATION OF TRANSVERSAL POLICY OBJECTIVES

National Qualifications Framework

In October 2005, the Government of Malta published legislation to set up the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC)⁵ and to define the qualifications and competence levels for a national qualifications framework. Qualifications and Competence Levels were based on the proposed levels in the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong Learning. The goals of the Malta Qualifications Council are to steer the development of the National Qualifications Framework and to oversee the training and certification leading to qualifications within the Framework and which is not already provided for at compulsory education institutions or degree awarding bodies. MQC's remit is also to establish and maintain a qualifications framework for the development, accreditation standards of knowledge, skills, competences and attitudes to be acquired by learners; promote and facilitate life-long learning access, transfer and progression and foster the recognition abroad of professional and vocational certificates awarded in Malta under this legislation.

The idea to integrate the proposed levels of the EQF as guidelines for the design of a national qualifications framework is in response to the need to equip learners with the necessary infrastructure to improve their educational attainment levels through clear pathways to learning from the pre-school age to post-retirement. Furthermore, the levels as identified in the Maltese legislation serve as a direct response to the Lisbon objectives particularly those related to social cohesion and the development of the need for people to be able to adapt to a knowledge-based society in constant change. The importance of integrating education and training with occupational standards in the labour market and the concept of lifelong learning play a significant role in this process. The eight-level guidelines enable people to understand the importance of the role of education in strengthening the prospects of employability and social cohesion.

Parallel to these objectives lies the ever increasing need for industry to have a proactive function in the design, provision, monitoring and evaluation of qualifications particularly VET qualifications. Businesses will be guided by the qualifications and competences levels to adapt their structures to existing and new qualifications so that they remain competitive and attractive. Qualifications lead to the growth of learning organizations. In this connection, industry and trade unions will need to engage in innovative forms of cooperation to identify skills and competences, to mobilize and recognize them and to encourage professional and vocational development for all employees in order to consolidate competitive strategies.

In this context, the MQC acts as broker and regulatory body of a tripartite relationship between training providers, trade unions and industry. One of the goals will be to ensure that VET qualifications are governed by specific occupational standards and recognition at national and international levels. Outside this central mechanism are the increasing challenges from research and innovation, higher education, accountability and efficiency in the provision of this public service, from constituted bodies that represent specialized trades and professions and from the overall national strategy that aims at achieving development and a better quality of life to all citizens. It is the task of MQC to ensure that VET qualifications represent detailed acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences at all levels and that such qualifications are relevant to the present and future prospects of Malta's economic growth.

In November 2006, the Minister of Education, Youth and Employment launched, on behalf of MQC, a consultation process on a proposed National Qualifications Framework. The process will officially come to an end in April 2007 and it is expected that the nationally agreed Framework will be presented to all stakeholders in late 2007. To complement the process, the Malta Qualifications Council will be publishing in June 2007 a set of 4 Working documents on:

⁵ Further details on MQC can be obtained from Dr James Calleja A/Chief Executive Officer of the Malta Qualifications Council: email – james.j.calleja@gov.mt or info@mqc.gov.mt The legislation (Legal Notice) establishing MQC and the Qualifications/competences levels can be accessed from www.gov.mt Department of Information – Acts, Bills, Legal Notices – Legal Notice 347/2005

- Malta's National Qualifications Framework (based on the EQF);
- Guidelines for the a VET System for Malta's NQF;
- a Quality Assurance Policy for VET within the NQF and
- Level Descriptors for Key Competences for Levels 1 to 3 in the NQF.

All documents will be available on MQC's website, www.mqc.gov.mt The consultation process was marked by a presentation of the draft NQF through a national conference in early 2007 on the relationship between the EQF and Malta's NQF and a series of one-to-one meetings with key stakeholders such as political parties, public and private training providers, trade unions and employers, non-governmental and governmental organizations, students and parents organizations.

During 2007 and 2008, the MQC plans to embark on a number of initiatives to fine-tune the National Qualifications Framework and in particular:

- the launching of a project to set up Sector Skills Units for the recognition of prior learning;
- the launch of a project to validate informal and non-formal learning;
- the design of Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks;
- the design and implementation of an eRecord of Achievement for Lifelong Learning;
- the implementation of two Leonardo da Vinci projects on the testing of the European Qualifications Framework and on vocational qualifications related to security personnel;
- the design and implementation related to legislation of the National Qualifications Framework.

MQC represents Malta on the EQF Implementation Preparatory Group and the ENQA-VET Group. MQC is currently also leading a Leonardo da Vinci project entitled EQF-FRAME which aims at testing the EQF in the sector of tourism studies and is partner in another LDV project on Qualifications in the Security personnel profession with a leading private security company in Lithuania.

National Commission for Higher Education

The report *State Higher Education Funding* (2004) recommended the setting up of a structure charged with the strategic oversight of the higher education sector. Following this recommendation, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment submitted a green paper proposing the establishment of a National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE). This paper was tabled in Parliament by the Prime Minister during the budget speech of October 2005. Following various consultations with different stakeholders, the Minister appointed the first interim NCHE on the 3rd February 2006. On the 7th April 2006, the NCHE presented its proposals for the establishment of the NCHE as an advisory and consultative body, with terms of reference to be incorporated within the Education Act. These proposals have been incorporated in the Amendments to the Education Act (ACT No. XIII of 2006) of the 4th August 2006, and subsequently a permanent Commission was appointed on the 6th of September 2006.

The aims of the NCHE are to consult and advise Government through the Minister responsible for Education, engage in a structured dialogue with all institutions, and inform the public on issues relating to sustainable development of the further and higher education sectors to meet the needs of society. The NCHE is responsible to formulate the guiding principles of higher education policy, to propose a clear vision and sustainable strategic objectives and targets, and to research, analyse, advise, formulate recommendations, and review policies for the further and higher education sectors in Malta. A CEO and Operations Manager have already been appointed. The NCHE Secretariat shall provide executive support for research, technical appraisal and reporting necessary for the Commission to perform its functions. Since its launch, the Minister for Education has requested the NCHE to advise government on the needs and priorities for reform within the Education Act, on aspects related to further and higher education in Malta. The consultations are well underway and a report is envisaged to be prepared by the end of June 2007. In parallel, the NCHE is currently developing its first programme consisting of a series of consultations to initiate a structured dialogue on the first of a series of reforms envisaged by Government to strengthen the sector.

Studies

The Department Further Studies and Adult Education within the Education Division published a paper on Non-Vocational Adult Learning as part of a wider Eurydice study. The Department initiated a study on the Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning in conjunction with an OECD initiative in the field.

Basic Skills Assessment

The 2006 report of the Adult Basic Skills Working Group which is being assessed by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment has recommended the creation of a standardised system for assessing adult basic skills nationally.

The system of education and career guidance is being reviewed so as to create a more coherent and widely accessible one.

Transnational mobility

Measures to valorize the educational aspect of the mobility of individuals include the launch of Europass in December 2005 and the setting up of the necessary infrastructure and allocation of human resources to administer it within the Training Services Division of the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC). A Europass Mobility document has been introduced and widely disseminated. Individuals planning a European mobility experience for learning purposes in another European country are today required to apply for a Europass Mobility document so as record in detail the skills and competences acquired. To date, the ETC has issued around 575 documents, 234 of which were issued in 2006.

CHAPTER 3 - IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY OBJECTIVES IN SCHOOLS, HIGHER EDUCATION, VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING, AND ADULT EDUCATION

Government investment in education and training at all levels continues to increase. Funding for tertiary education has increased by 6.6%. The budget for vocational education and training opportunities offered by the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) has increased by 4%. Funding for new measures such as the setting up of the National Commission for Higher Education and the new Government Scholarship Scheme for studies at Masters and Doctoral levels has been approved and allocated. Funding of specialised continuing professional development of teachers in specialist areas has increased and new post-graduate courses introduced to equip educators with competencies necessary to deal with challenges created by the overall sector reforms. Preventive and remedial measures to reduce the proportion of low-achieving 16-year olds leaving secondary education with low basic skills have been stepped up. Efforts to further co-ordinate non-formal education provision by state, private and civil society organisations will be increased through the new Lifelong Learning Services to be set up under the new Educational Services Directorate envisaged in the national reform plans. The governance and leadership of education and training institutions have been the focus of major policy reviews and changes outlined in the first chapter of this report.

Quality assurance mechanisms

Quality assurance is increasingly becoming a key area of policy focus across all systems and levels. The reform of the compulsory education system envisages that, by late 2007, a new central Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education will have been established. Teams of educators have been trained by overseas experts to undertake school audits. Performance Management Programmes (PMPs) are another quality assurance tool that combines self-assessment with that of a line manager to guide continuing professional development. School Development Plans at both primary and secondary level of education are assessed by College Co-ordinators to guide school improvement initiatives. The new system of networked Colleges comprising primary and secondary schools has ushered in the Council of Heads as an additional planning, training, quality assurance and technical support mechanism.

The *Level Descriptors* for primary and secondary levels of education issued by the Curriculum Management Department at the Education Division aim at achieving a certain degree of standardisation and comparability across subjects. Each subject has eight stages of expected attainment with the first being the most elementary and the eighth the most demanding. The highest level is comparable to a Secondary Education Certificate Examination at level 1 obtained following five years of secondary education. Together with indicated expected learning outcomes, Level Descriptors serve as a tool that both monitors as well as reviews students' progress across the primary and secondary schooling as well as guides differentiated teaching and learning. Parents and learners too are encouraged to understand and learn how to use Level Descriptors so as to determine whether progress is being registered and at what level.

Science and Technology: The Maltese economic base is making great strides in shifting to a knowledge-based economy requiring higher order skills. In this development, scientific skills attain a higher profile since they provide the bases for research and development - areas which are "indispensable to technological progress"⁶ and increased added value in the economy. When transposed into the education sector, this requires that students receive a good scientific education incorporating a healthy mix of scientific knowledge and skills. To evaluate the current provision of science and mathematics at lower secondary level, Malta is participating in TIMSS 2007 for eighth grade (Form 3). Participation will also provide Malta's first international indicators which are sourced

⁶ European Commission Report based on work of the Working Committee on Quality Indicators "The Quality of School Education – Sixteen Quality Indicators", (May 2000) <http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/indic/rapinen.pdf>.

by the Commission for comparative purposes in benchmarking European education systems. The Department of Planning and Development, which has among its responsibilities the international benchmarking of the national education system, is currently co-ordinating the study on the national level. TIMSS 2007 in Malta will be a national study since it will cover the whole cohort of thirteen year old students. Participation in international studies concurs with the Ministry's commitment to benchmark national educational provision. Malta has already participated in the field test in April 2006. The results from TIMSS will provide objective data for a review of current curricular policies both as regards subject content and cognitive skills. It will also shed light on the teaching methodology used in science and mathematics which has a bearing both on classroom practice as well as on the professional development of current and future teachers. The review of a mathematics and science provision at secondary level reflects the Ministry's objective to increase the number of MST graduates.

The teaching and learning of mathematics is a very important feature in the education of children. It not only contributes to the acquisition of mathematical knowledge but also contributes to the enhancement of analytical and logical skills. It provides "an indispensable contribution to national competitiveness and the knowledge society"⁷. Aware of the centrality of mathematics in the Maltese curriculum, the need was felt to identify and remedy as early as possible areas of concern in the learning process. With this objective the Department of Planning and Development carried out a national benchmarking study of first year primary pupils' performance in mathematics. This was carried out in collaboration with the University of Malta and the National Foundation of Educational Research, U.K. The results of the study were published as "Mathematics in Malta – The National Mathematics Survey of Year 1 Pupils" in 2005. The survey provided an analysis of how Maltese pupils performed in the different content and cognitive domains. The results were taken up by the Department of Curriculum Management to develop strategies together with schools to address weaknesses and energise strengths in the teaching/learning of mathematics at this level.

Early Childhood Education and Care Level

Key departments and entities within the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment and the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity have been mobilised to work in an integrated and systematic manner in this key area. An inter-ministerial initiative led to the publication, in April 2006, of the document *Early Childhood Education and Care – National Policy*⁸ following which a series of measures were implemented in line with key recommendations: better equipped and resourced day care centres, access to higher education and training for personnel and wider awareness about quality child care services.

Committed to raising the quality of child day care provision, the two Ministries published, in July 2006, the *National Standards for Child Day Care Facilities* outlining ten key standards to be maintained by providers. In order to ensure that service providers abide by these standards, the Department of Social Welfare Standards within the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity carried out assessments of day care facilities across Malta. Contracts started to be signed in early 2007 with facilities holding a provisional license providing them with a total of €302,820 to upgrade their infrastructural facilities⁹. Service providers are now able to align themselves with the national standards and become publicly accountable. The registration of facilities compliant with national standards in this sector is the first step towards formal licensing to ensure that facilities availing themselves of these funds endeavour to improve their premises.

Malta has the lowest female participation rate amongst all the EU Member States (Labour Force Survey, January 2006). At 33% this is approximately 20% below the EU average female employment rate. In the same LFS survey, half of all inactive women cited personal and family responsibility as the reason for their inactivity. Along the years, the Maltese society has mainly focused on women adopting a traditional pattern whereby they remained at home to look after their husband and children and are held responsible for providing a tranquil family life whilst the husband is at work. In October 2001 a Joint Assessment Paper of Employment Policy Priorities by the Government of Malta and the

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ <http://www.education.gov.mt/ministry/doc/pdf/earlychildhood.pdf>

⁹ Department of Information Press Statement Number 0328, March 2007

European Commission was signed in which two of the top policy priorities to which Malta is committed is increasing the female employment rate and enabling women and men to balance work and family life (ETC, 2002, Gender Equality Action Plan, 2003-2004). More recently in Guideline No 18 of the Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs (2005-2008) issued by the EU commission, EU member states are urged to promote a work-life balance through resolute action to increase female participation and reduce gender gaps in employment, unemployment and pay. The contribution that women can make to revitalise the economy is one of the targets that this campaign will endeavour to portray by promoting childcare facilities as a means to facilitate women's full integration into the labour market.

To this end, a key measure involved the launch, in February 2007, of a national four month awareness campaign on the benefits of quality childcare in Malta. The campaign is managed by the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC), through funds from the European Social Fund. The project seeks to bring about a culture where parents consider alternative arrangements to childcare, which is positive for the development of the child, rather than automatically having the mother quitting her job to take full care of the children. The benefits of quality childcare for the child, the parents and society in general is being emphasised throughout the whole campaign. As a result it is hoped that parents will be in a better position to assess quality in childcare facilities. This will increase the demand for quality childcare services thus increasing job opportunities for the qualified staff currently being trained under ESF 24. On a national scale, an increase of women in the labour market will mean more income to government via national insurance contributions and income tax contributions. If women can remain in the labour market after having children, this will enable them to have better career prospects with better remuneration leading to the entitlement to a retirement pension at retirement age. A closer look at the figures that constitute the 33% of women in the labour market reveals that women's representation in careers related to science, engineering and technology is much lower. Currently in Malta, women make up only 10% percent of individuals working in careers related to information technology. Reasons behind this low percentage might be various, however a study carried out by ETC in 2005 suggests that both employers and women may presume that it is hard to balance work and family life when choosing a career in IT. It is envisaged that this campaign will make it easier for those 10% to remain in the labour market holding such positions and possibly encourage more young females to take up such careers.

The April to June 2007 campaign targets: Young parents, mainly mothers, married or single, currently active but considering quitting their job to take care of their child/ren or presently unemployed who wish to return to the labour market after maternity leave or a career break. The campaign is making effective use of print, television and radio media as well as street billboards and bus shelter advertising. The ETC is also creating a website through which relevant information can be easily accessed. A national conference is being organised in April 2007. An important element of the campaign is the launch of a national free-phone on quality child care standards, manned by the assessors at the Department for Social Welfare Standards, through which parents can enquire about what standards to expect before application and admission.

Other related measures include schemes developed by the ETC that encourage and support employers to develop infrastructure through which they can provide child day care facilities to their employees.

Both Ministries responsible for education and the family are fully committed to ensuring a stronger educational base as early as possible so as to provide children with a head start to their lifelong learning journey. The Ministries are also working together to develop edu-care opportunities using the existing infrastructure of state primary schools. Three such facilities will be opened in late 2007 by the next scholastic year during school hours.

Pre-school education: In terms of pre-school education of children aged 3 to 4 years, Malta already has a very high rate of participation at kindergarten level with over 90% of the age cohorts attending state, church or private centres. Over 700 kindergarten assistants are employed at this level¹⁰ in state, Church and independent schools. State funding covers 85% of state and state dependent personnel at

¹⁰ National Statistics Office: Education Statistics 2005 published in 2007.

this level. Access at state and state maintained kindergarten centres is free. Baseline child development assessment tools for use at this level have been developed by the Education Division.

Education and training of sector personnel

The Education Division is responsible for the continuing professional development of Kindergarten Assistants. Access to employment at this level is through a vocational education route. The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) offers a 2-year full-time course leading to an MCAST/BTEC National Diploma in Early Years, enabling learners to access jobs in play schools and kindergarten centres. The Department Curriculum Management at the Education Division provides a 12-week (330 hours) course for MCAST students following the MCAST/BTEC National Diploma in Early Years to ensure that those trained have the level of competence required of those applying to practice as Kindergarten Assistants.

Access to employment in a child day care and play school (pre-kinder) facility is through two vocational education and training routes. The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST)¹¹ offers an internationally recognised qualification via a 2-year full-time course leading to an MCAST/BTEC National Diploma in Care. This qualification prepares learners to access jobs in care homes, hospitals and community care settings. The Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) offers an 800-hour course in Child Care.

A B.Ed degree offered by the Department Primary Education within the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta is the minimum entry requirement for early years primary school teachers. As part of their studies for the *B.Ed. (Hons.) Primary*, undergraduate students are invited to select a number of study units specializing in early childhood education. These study units are conducted during the 2nd, 3rd and 4th year of their studies. Currently, the study units available include:

- Fostering language and literacy development (4 ECTS)
- The Early Childhood Education Curriculum (4 ECTS)
- Observation and assessment in Early Childhood Education (4 ECTS)
- Managing the early years classroom (4 ECTS)
- Creativity and Play (4 ECTS) which is being changed to Play, parents and early childhood settings (4 ECTS)

As regards post-graduate studies, the Department of Primary Education is currently working on the development of a Masters degree in the field of early childhood education and care. The degree is being developed and will be taught collaboratively by six institutions, namely the University of Malta (co-ordinating institution), Martin-Luther University, Halle-Wittenberg in Germany; Dublin Institute of Technology in Ireland; Oslo University College, Norway; University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland and Goteborg University in Sweden. The degree will be launched in the Autumn of 2007. It has been possible to work on this curriculum development programme with the financial support of the EU within the framework of the Socrates (Erasmus) programme (project number 79422-IC-1-2004-1-MT-ERASMUS-PROGUC-4).

Research and participation in international fora outputs of this Faculty Department include:

- consultancy on the formulation of the Ministry of Education's (2006) document *Early childhood education and care: A National Policy, 2006*

<http://www.education.gov.mt/ece.htm>

- consultancy leading to the publication of (2006) *Children's right to play: A study of Maltese children's perceptions on cultural and recreational activities*, by the office of the Commissioner for Children. Available at http://www.crin.org/docs/CFC_Children's%20Right%20to%20Play.pdf
- Sollars, V. (2007). (in press). *Children's issues in Malta*. The chapter is to be published in **Children's issues in Europe**. This volume is part of an encyclopaedia on children's issues worldwide to be published by Greenwood Publishers.
- Sollars, V. (2006). *Tradition, growth and innovation in Early Childhood Education – the Maltese perspective*. Paper presented at the Chiswick House School Conference, March 2006, Radisson, SAS, MALTA.

¹¹ http://www.mcast.edu.mt/institutes_communityservices.asp

- Camilleri, Grima A. & Sollars, V. (2006). *Intercultural competence in early childhood education. Perspectives and activities*. Malta: Faculty of Education.

The Dept of Primary Education has participated in a Comenius project (2003-2006) focusing on Communication and Language Awareness among pre-school teachers. Malta was one of the partners with Germany (co-ordinating institution), Sweden, Spain and Poland. There were three main activities in which Malta took an active role:

1. A needs analysis questionnaire among staff working with 3 to 6 year-old children to find out the views, attitudes towards and perspectives of intercultural competence and communication of kindergarten assistants and teachers of young learners;
2. Conducting a course, primarily aimed for early years educators, to raise their awareness of cultural competence, reflect on their own cultural milieu and develop their intercultural competence with a view to working with children in schools;
3. Organising a half day seminar among education officers and heads of schools in order to inform them about the results of the questionnaire, the training programme which had been undertaken and also launch the publication which a summary of perspectives and view of staff working with young children and activities which can be done within classrooms to promote intercultural competence and communication from a young age.

The final publication (2006) is entitled **Intercultural competence and communication in teacher training for Early Childhood Education: Theory & practice**. Malta: Faculty of Education.

Informal early years education: A number of government and non-governmental organisations significantly contribute to the provision of non-formal and informal learning opportunities. At both national and community level, for example, the government entity Foundation for Social Welfare Services and NGOs regularly offer courses on parenting skills that are very much in demand. Media programmes, including TV Channel 22 managed by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, run a range of information programmes that stimulate and broaden insight into issues related to early childhood education and care. At community level, a number of Mother and Baby Clubs are supported by a national family-focused NGO to provide informal training in this area including practical strategies related to effective play, communication and reading strategies.

Primary and Secondary levels of Education

The implementation of the reform of the compulsory education sector shall continue to be a major strategic goal in the coming years as the structures envisaged in the policy document for this sector and its related legislative provisions are created. Following the publication, in June 2005, of the policy document *For All Children to Succeed*¹² outlining government plans to reform the structures of the state compulsory education system, legislative amendments¹³ to the Education Act were published. Of the 10 state Colleges that network primary and secondary schools envisaged in the reform of the compulsory education system, 7 are operational and three others shall be set up in late 2007. Additionally, both educators and specialists as well the educational services provided by the state for students with special educational needs through special schools and mainstreamed inclusion are today being co-ordinated by a national support structure. The conclusion of negotiations with the major social partner in this sector enables, the reform process to move to the next phase of restructuring the Education Division into two separate national directorates tasked with a regulatory and support services function respectively - the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education and the Directorate for Educational Services.

The government has continued with its major school building and upgrading programme to enable the new College system to work in an effective and efficient educational environment. Culture and the arts being considered as the bedrock of creativity, the Ministry is looking towards integrating provision in this sector through a networked structure similar to those of the Colleges. In the coming years, the Ministry intends to extensively tap structural funds to extend the school day programme thus enabling more women to consider re-entering the labour market. The experience gained by the Foundation for Educational Services (FES) in the past five years in offering a range of after-school educational

¹² Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment: For All Children to Succeed – a new network organisation for quality education in Malta. 28th June 2005.

¹³ Act XIII of 2006 to amend the Education Act, Cap 327.

programmes for children and lifelong learning opportunities for parents and the wider community will be used as a model to build upon so as to effectively transform schools into learning hubs.

Results of the national 11+ examinations for 2007 have been the highest overall achievement ever; 61% of students sitting for this Junior Lyceum entrance examination passed in all five subjects. The national debate on the problems and effects of this qualifying process at the end of the primary education cycle gained considerable momentum with the FES study¹⁴ on the streaming and the national 11+ examination and the setting up, by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, of a national review committee on the Junior Lyceum 11+ Entrance Examination. Through this review, the Ministry aims to scrutinise this system with a view of establishing national benchmarks at primary and secondary levels. Views about the effects of this examination on the teaching and learning in primary schools; on the stress and anxiety experienced by children, parents and teachers involved; and on the pupils who fail the examination and are sent to Area Secondary Schools, have been aired frequently. Government policy for the compulsory education sector clearly articulates the challenge to be faced in this area:

“to eliminate the rather staccato if not abrupt manner by which students move from primary to secondary schooling in the state system.” (source: For All Children to Succeed, pp. 25-26).

The review group is expected to submit its recommendations by May 2007. In the meantime, the current distinction between the Junior Lyceums for higher attainers and the Area Secondary Schools for lower attainers is gradually being phased out by bringing them closer together through the College system of networking primary and secondary schools.

In line with the Barcelona declaration of increasing the number of foreign languages taught in primary schools, the Education Division has will be extending the pilot project to two other schools in late 2007.

Education and Training of Educators

The first strategic objective of the Lisbon process focuses on the need to raise the quality and standard of the learning process. One of the areas covered by this objective is the improvement of the education and training of teachers and trainers. This objective highlights the need “to have both high-quality initial teacher education and a process of continuous professional development”¹⁵. In order to have objective data, the Commission has commissioned the OECD to carry out an international study on the teaching and learning process taking place in European schools. The study entitled “Teaching and Learning International Survey” (TALIS) was launched in 2006 and the field test is scheduled for March 2007. Malta is participating in this study together with another twenty countries. This study will provide policy-relevant indicators which will help the Ministry of Education to plan and develop effective teaching practices and the related continuing professional development. The study will also investigate the management styles of Heads of School to provide models of school leadership in the ambit of effective schools.

The B.Ed (primary or secondary options) continues to be the main entry into the teaching profession. Although the University of Malta is the key provider of initial teacher training, it is responsive to emerging needs in the sector. It does so through the introduction of new ECTS modules within the existing B.Ed as well as through the development of new post-graduate degree programmes. In support of the national reform of the compulsory education sector, a number of new specialised post-graduate are being offered by the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta. These courses are preparing educators to acquire competencies in areas that present a particular challenge. New programmes include the following: Post Graduate Certificate in Dyslexia, M.Ed. in Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (2007), M.Ed. in Co-ordinating Inclusive Education, Post-Graduate Diploma in Career Guidance, M.Ed. in Educational Leadership. Other masters degree programmes still on offer are the M.Ed in Adult and Continuing Education, and the M.A (Youth and Community Studies).

¹⁴ Foundation for Educational Services: Transition from Primary to Secondary: time to break the mould? by Dr Grace Grima and Dr Josette Farrugia, November 2006.

¹⁵ European Commission, Staff Working Document SEC(2006)639 “Progress Towards the Lisbon Objectives in Education and Training” (2006)

The up-skilling of teacher competences to achieve modernisation of school curricula and enhance teaching and learning processes are increasingly become a major focus of the reform process. The major provider in this area is the Education Division within the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment that has for decades been regularly offering a wide range of in-service training courses aimed at modernising curricula and enhancing teacher competencies. Throughout the 2005-2006 scholastic year, the Education Division provides in-service training to around 3,700 teachers. Another growing provider in this area is the Foundation for Educational Services (FES) that has been consistently providing, since 2003, a range of new specialised non-formal education opportunities aimed at the continuing professional development of teachers. In its bid to support schools to continually raise standards of teaching and learning and to stem the incidence of illiteracy and its web of inter-related problems, the FES is working systematically with schools to train teachers at early primary school level in multi-sensory methodologies that include synthetic phonics. In this respect, in 2007, the FES is implementing a Literacy Acquisition Programme (LAP) in 32 state primary schools through a mix of short courses, in-class demonstrations, mentoring and other forms of support. Operational research is an integral part of the LAP. On an annual basis, the FES also offers an intensive 162-hour Writing Institute for teachers to further develop competencies in the teaching of writing through its Malta Writing Programme (MWP). The MWP programme has recently been recognised as an official affiliate site of the National Writing Project in the US, the first such recognition given to a teacher training organisation in Europe. Other non-formal courses on offer by the FES for teachers range from family literacy to working in partnership with parents to co-ordinating after-school programmes for parents and the wider community. By the end of the current scholastic year 2006-2007, the FES would have provided continuing professional development to 830 teachers from 76 schools.

In September 2005, the Ministry for Education, Youth and Employment directed the FES and the Education Division to construct and deliver a basic skills assessment (BSA) to all students entering the new St. Benedict's Boys' Secondary School. This school is part of the St. Benedict's' College, which is one of the now seven pilot Colleges that have launched the reform in the state compulsory education entitled *For All Children To Succeed – a new network organisation for quality education in Malta*. The Maltese and English components of this assessment were adapted from the Nwar assessment tool. The Mathematics component was developed by the Department Curriculum Management of the Education Division.

In June 2006, in conjunction with the Foundation for Educational Services and the Department Curriculum Management, the Ministry for Education, Youth and Employment developed and administered a *Basic Skills Assessment* to all identified Year 6 pupils in the state primary schools feeding into secondary schools within the first three state Colleges that had been formed. The pupils were identified as having failed to reach pre-determined benchmarks in their Primary Year 6 annual exams in Mathematics, English and Maltese. The BSA has been constructed in such a way as to provide detailed information on the basic skills attainment and needs of the learner both to the secondary school administration for classification purposes, as well as to teachers to adapt their teaching and learning accordingly.

The BSA assessors for the June 2006 exercise were the Complementary Teachers already deployed in state primary schools to assist in basic skills attainment, and who had already been involved in other forms of national assessments. Training in the administration of the BSA tool was provided to these teachers during late May 2006. The organisation of the administration of the BSA was taken care of by the individual schools, whilst organisation at central level was done by a joint FES-Education Division team. This means that the BSA is self-sustaining and can keep on being administered with the present resources within schools. In helping secondary school teachers to identify the basic skills needs of each learner, it will give a significant contribution to the paradigm shift that is necessary to reduce the numbers of early and/or unqualified school leavers: from teaching the syllabus to teaching the child. Related to this initiative is the development and implementation of a Basic Skills Course for state secondary school teachers in the newly formed Colleges. Through the course, teachers selected for the role of Basic Skills Teacher, shall be able to develop and implement alternative learning programmes for students screened through the BSA process.

Inclusive and Special Education: Over 1,500 educators work in this area with over 2,200 students in mainstream and special schools. Around 1,400 of these work in mainstream schools as learning support facilitators. A significant number of these learning support facilitators have followed a University course at certificate or Diploma level. The Ministry of Education is today offering another learning route into this specialist field by offering a 70-hour induction training course. By June 2007, 561 learning support facilitators involved in providing classroom support to mainstreamed pupils with special educational needs would have completed this professional development course provided by the state Network on Inclusive and Special Education. Early Intervention teachers (0-5 years) who provide home-based educational support have been provided with an intensive one-week continuing professional development course. ICT teachers who support special schools and others who support the work of learning support facilitators have followed an intensive one week course on Augmentative and Alternative Communication Strategies. Educators (40) from all special schools have moreover followed intensive one week courses on the *Development of Special School Curricula and Assessments*. The Network on Inclusive and Special Education is currently exploring with post-secondary education and training institutions, including the ETC, the possibility of creating meaningful transition pathways for students with special educational needs.

Maths, Science, Design and Technology Education

The methodology for teaching mathematics in primary schools was upgraded three years ago with the introduction of the ABACUS. Extensive in-service training of educators and parents has since taken, and continues, to take place. At secondary level, numeracy classes have been introduced and an overhaul of the curriculum is envisaged. Around 1,500 secondary school students are accessing the Design and Technology curriculum through well-equipped and resourced laboratories manned by 50 Design and Technology technicians and used by 54 trained subject teachers. The curriculum of the Design and Technology curriculum is managed by the Design and Technology Centre within the Curriculum department of the Education Division. Currently, a team of ProDESKTOP accredited teachers are running an evening course for 40 teachers on the application of this computer-aided design tool aimed at secondary school students. Following the first University Certificate Course in Design and Technology, the Design and Technology centre continued to bridge the gap in skills and competencies of lab technicians by offering skills-based courses such as the 150 hours one offered to 40 technicians in 2006. The Centre regularly provides teacher re-training courses to allow for the movement of teachers from the home-economics field to the design and technology one. The Centre plans to form part of the Maths, Science and Technology Cluster Group of the DG Education and Culture and to participate in the related Peer Learning Activities (PLAs) so that it can nurture and facilitate a multiplier effect of best practices in this key sector.

In order to effectively participate in the *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Studies (TIMSS)* study in April 2007, three external International Quality Assurance Administrators have been trained. Secondary school Subject Co-ordinators have been trained to train Test Administrators so that, by April 2007 all Form 3 students across Malta will be tested.

Parental Involvement in Education

Parents are represented on each School Council with three parent represented. At national level, the Association of School Councils (AKS) provides on-going information, support and discussion fora.

In order to help schools within Colleges to build sustainable links with families of their students, the FES runs a *Parents-in-Education Programme* through which teachers trained in stimulating parental participation in curricular matters co-work with parents to design and deliver short skills-based courses for other parents around educational issues of common concern. Referred to as *Parent-to-Parent courses*¹⁶, this initiative has become very popular and has been instrumental in stimulating the building of effective home-school links and the development of a cadre of parents trained to offer their services to their child's school community. A challenge that needs to be critically explored is the possibility of seeking sustainable ways of creating flexible part-time work opportunities for trained parents in the education sector. Through part-ESF funding, a Lifelong Learning Portfolio for Parents

¹⁶ Between January 2006 and March 2007, 947 parents accessed 34 courses in various localities.

has been developed and tested and published. Through this tool, parents will be able to record learning gains and map out the next steps in their lifelong learning - a tool that can also be used when seeking employment.

Upper Secondary and Higher Education Level

A steady annual increase has been registered in the number of students accessing upper secondary and higher education. The annual increase in the post-secondary student population is mainly attributed to the expansion of the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) that provides courses for those opting for vocational education and training courses. The government's aim is to achieve a 65% target of persons aged 22 years completing upper secondary and higher education by 2010. Official figures indicate that between 2000 and 2005, the percentage rose from 40.7% to 70%. Between 2002 and 2005, the number of students who complete compulsory education without continuing post-secondary education has decreased by 14%¹⁷.

In December 2006, the lead provider of vocational education and training, MCAST, launched its master plan *Placing Students at the Heart of What We Do* promising a substantial increase in the number of students attending VET courses in order to satisfy the growing demands of a knowledge-based economy. MCAST is today providing viable alternative pathways to higher education and its courses are in great demand. In order to meet this burgeoning demand, MCAST is forging links with private education and training providers, especially in the field of ICT. In 2005¹⁸, full-time students at MCAST amounted to 3,615 (2,394 m; 1,221 f) while 722 (421 m; 301 f) followed part-time courses.

Learning Partnerships in VET: The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), as a dynamic professional and vocational education institution, over the years has developed and strengthened partnerships with local industrial, commercial and servicing enterprises, further as well as with local and overseas higher education institutions and professional bodies. These partnerships ensure that the programmes offered by the various Institutes within MCAST satisfy the changing needs of the economy while keeping the content and delivery relevant. MCAST develops both short-term and long-term programmes to satisfy specific needs of industry such as the agreement reached with Lufthansa Technik. Close collaborative relations have also been developed with private ICT training providers and Malta Enterprise - the Government agency attracting and facilitating local and foreign investment - in order to ensure, as far as possible, the availability of skilled and competent labour for emerging requirements. MCAST and the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) work together to deliver a range of apprenticeship training programmes and re-skilling courses for the unemployed. Individual members of the MCAST staff establish contacts in their fields of specialisation at the local and international, mainly European, levels. MCAST participates in the Lifelong Learning Programme, earlier known as Leonardo da Vinci, through which temporary or more long term partnerships sometimes develop. ETC and MCAST have established learning partnerships with small and medium sized enterprises that offer apprenticeship opportunities for persons undertaking a VET programme.

The Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) is another VET provider at post-secondary level. Through its Training Services Division, the ETC manages the Technical Apprenticeship Scheme (TAS) covering 17 trades and the Extended Skills Training Scheme (ESTS) covering 19 trades and crafts. In 2006, the number of new apprentices stood at 294; 141 (ESTS) and 153 (TAS). The total number of apprentices in both schemes currently stands at approximately 792; with 324 (ESTS) and 468 (TAS). Female participation in both schemes stands at 11% of the total population an increase of 1% on the previous year. In collaboration with MCAST and the Parliamentary Secretariat for Small Businesses, 51 apprentices benefited from exchange visits through the EU Leonardo Programme.

Students following full-time and part-time courses at the *Institute of Tourism Studies* in 2005 totalled 527 and 224 respectively. The Institute of Tourism Studies continues to offer a range of full-time and

¹⁷ Press Release number 1252 dated 19 August 2007 issued by the Department of Information,

¹⁸ NSO Education Statistics 2005, published in 2007.

part-time courses at Certificate, Diploma and Higher Diploma levels and an Extended Skill Training Scheme (ESTS) in three hospitality trades. It is increasing the provision of practical skills training for those working in industry to enhance their life-long learning in partnership with employers. It provides workplace mentoring and ITS tutor-support for practical skills testing. The Institute's strategy is to maintain an environment that encourages and supports participation in the learning process by all those with ambition and commitment to succeed. As a specialist provider of vocational and higher education programmes, ITS promotes a culture of mobility and opportunity that equips students with appropriate knowledge, skills, competences and quality standards to enable them to compete with advantage, at all levels within the sectors we serve, i.e. in the field of hospitality. To this end, the ITS has developed relationships with a wide variety of employers in the international hotel business, offering internships to Maltese students in the U.K. Belgium, Germany, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Italy and France. A compulsory component of the Diploma programmes is the International Internship. Students are expected to undergo twelve months industrial experience abroad before they proceed with their third year of study.

Students in non-vocational post-secondary education institutions in 2005 totalled 1,908 (State; 817 m; 1091 f), and 767 in state-dependent, independent and private ones (407 m; 360 f).

Tertiary Education Level

During 2006-2007, a total of 9,508 students (5476 females and 4,032 males) were following full-time and part-time courses at the University of Malta's ten faculties. A slight increase in the percentage of female students was registered (58%) over that of 2005-2006 (57%). Ad hoc learning partnerships with industries and businesses are developed by the University of Malta. Special examination arrangements are available for students with learning difficulties. Accessibility to all buildings is ensured.

Career Guidance

Employment is increasingly becoming more flexible and careers less predictable. Unemployment is a national priority debated at all levels of society. Education and training opportunities have increased to such an extent that seeking learning and career-related guidance throughout one's life is becoming indispensable. Career guidance being a key instrument for field of lifelong learning, active employment and social equity policies and of strategies to reach the Lisbon goals, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment undertook a review of career guidance within the formal compulsory education system so as to be in a better position to further develop educational and career guidance in an organised and holistic manner. Prior to the completion and submission of their report, the review team undertook three studies to inform policy reform recommendations. One study involved researching secondary school students' perceptions, attitudes, expectations and use of the existing guidance services. The second study targeted 80% of guidance personnel at secondary level of education and obtained data on their perceived training needs, available resources, time allocated to direct work with students, parents and employers, funding and other issues. The third study involved qualitative data gathering through focus group meetings with school counsellors. The review team stress the need for the career guidance sector to be better structured in order to become more effective. The Ministry is currently assessing recommendations put forward by stakeholders through the review team in October 2006 prior to developing a wider national career guidance policy and linking it in a coherent manner to the national lifelong learning strategy.

In line with government's commitment to strengthen this sector, a new (February 2006) 2-year part-time post-graduate *Diploma in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development* (60 ECTS) was introduced in 2007 by the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta. The course has attracted 17 students from the education and employment sectors. The course aims to professionalise career guidance services by training career practitioners in the various aspects of such work. The decision on whether the post-graduate Diploma will be offered again in 2008 depends on the outcomes of the review of the career guidance services and parameters of the policy document

Entrepreneurship in Education

The nurturing of entrepreneurial skills and competences is crucial for human, social and economic development. An inter-ministerial endeavour involving the Ministry of Education, Youth and

Employment and the Ministry for Competitiveness and Communications has led to the development of a multi-layered strategy to promote and nurture entrepreneurship across levels of the educational system.

At **primary level**, an entrepreneurship education pilot project in six schools is scheduled to start in April 2007. Teachers of 9-10 year old pupils will be trained in stimulating entrepreneurial skills. *Young Enterprise* shall provide learning resources adapted to meet the requirements of the *National Framework Curriculum*. The outcome of this project shall determine its expansion. Entrepreneurial skills form an intrinsic part of the 8-11 curriculum of the state's summer school programme known as *SkolaSajf* that is annually accessed by around 4,000 pupils. Pupils' output is disseminated during the annual *Fieramaratona* that brings to an end this annual programme. Technology education that encourages entrepreneurship and innovation is increasingly becoming an integral part of the primary curriculum.

At **secondary level**, students are exposed to entrepreneurship education and training through the *Scoops Co-operative* programme involving students aged 12-14 from around 30 schools annually. Through *Scoops*, students form a co-operative to undertake market research followed by the design, production and marketing of a product. The Department of Technology in Education within the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment promotes entrepreneurship through well-equipped design and technology laboratories and highly trained educators at both school and national level. Equipment and tools for design and production including ICT facilities enable students to develop and hone their skills in this key area. Modern communication facilities such as videoconferencing and web design are used to prepare students for eCommerce. Teacher training and on-going technical support coupled with carefully selected software and websites and the creation of tailor-made interactive activities underpin the curriculum at both primary and secondary level. Secondary schools, moreover, organise seminars and visits to businesses. This initiative is of particular interest to those 14-15 year old students intending to follow the vocational education and training route.

At **post-secondary level**, the organisation *Young Enterprise* is the main medium for the development of entrepreneurship education and training at this level. Its programme is characterised by 'learning by doing' through hands-on skills-based fun activities which inspire young people and improve their understanding of the value and role of business skills. *Young Enterprise*, which is also co-funded by the private sector, encourages students aged 16 to 18 to form tiny enterprises through which they create new products and services. Following participation in local competitions, the winning companies proceed to compete in similar competitions at European level. Higher secondary schools, moreover, organise seminars and visits to various state departments involved in the area of business and industry. This initiative facilitates a better understanding of what starting up a business is all about. Similar activities were also introduced at the secondary level.

Vocational Adult Education

The Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) runs a Night Institute for Further Technical Education (NIFTE) to assist employees occupying technical posts to obtain the theoretical knowledge required to become more proficient. The wide ranging course programmes is regularly evaluated and modified with new programmes developed. The ETC has also applied for City & Guilds of London training and testing recognition and accreditation.

To date, over 60,000 participants have benefited from ETC's mainstream short competency based courses aimed at those seeking employment, persons in employment interested in upgrading their skills, women returning to the labour market, persons with special needs and youths entering the labour market for the first time. New programmes specifically target the learning needs of at risk client groups such as youths in institutional care, women in refuge and refugees/asylum seekers, lone mothers and youths with low basic skills leaving compulsory education. In 2006, the number of participants in ETC courses amounted to 6,763 of which 4,724 were males and 2,039 females. The percentage of registering unemployed was 76% (5,119).

In 2006, the ETC expanded its Training of Trainers Network (TTnet Malta)¹⁹ activities in line with CEDEFOP objectives. TTnet Malta is a branch of the European Training of Trainers Network and regularly organises information sessions for VET teachers, trainers and those involved in the profession. TTnet Malta has its own website www.ttnetmalta.com which is linked to the CEDEFOP Electronic Training Village's TTnet house. The local TT network, which is assisted by CEDEFOP, invites all vocational teachers, trainers in the various settings that range from VET institutions to workplaces and institutions concerned with the training of vocational teachers and trainers to join the network by filling in the online membership application form available on the website. To date more than 100 persons have registered with the local network.

The Department Further Studies and Adult Education also offer evening classes in a range of technical subjects. The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) is another major contributor in this area offering a range of vocational evening courses for adults as well as day courses funded through ESF.

Two new post-secondary vocational routes for persons with learning difficulties have been created in 2007 by the the VET College MCAST and the Institute for Tourism Studies.

Non-Vocational Adult Education (NVAE)²⁰

The state system of non-vocational non-formal adult education courses is financed by public funds together with a nominal fee paid by the participants with exemptions for old age pensioners and other economically disadvantaged groups. Basic skills and social support provisions are free. The Department of Further Studies and Adult Education, apart from being a major provider, also works in partnership with Local Government and NGOs especially in the provision of basic skills courses. Local Government provides subsidized short courses with nominal fees paid by the participants. Public entities provide free or highly subsidised part-time or short courses. Private licensed 'Tuition Centres' provide courses exclusively financed by the learner. NGOs too provide a wide range of non-formal and informal NVAE free or subsidised opportunities at times paid for through learners' fees. NGOs include community-based religious associations, band clubs, youth clubs, sports clubs, hobby clubs, and philanthropic associations whose activities are financially supported through membership fees and public donations. Adult education is an academic discipline both at graduate and post-graduate levels at the University of Malta through the Adult Education Programme of the Faculty of Education. The Education Division provides regular pedagogical training through in-service courses as well as monitored practice for adult education tutors. According to official NSO statistics, 17,986 persons participated in part-time evening courses in 2004/05. This figure does not include participants in courses provided by all adult education providers in Malta.

Commercial schools and tuition centres: The Department Further Studies and Adult Education at the Education Division issues licenses to commercial adult education schools and centres. In 2006 there were 107 valid licenses for 65 licensed Commercial Schools and 42 Tuition Centres while 7 new applications were registered. Application for the setting up of a new school also requires detailed information about the school's proposed philosophy, policies, curriculum, teaching programmes and teachers' qualifications. Of these schools and centres, 40% offered academic courses, 31% vocational ones and 29% offered a range of non-formal programmes.

¹⁹ www.ttnetmalta.com

²⁰ Annual Report of the Department Further Studies and Adult Education, Education Division, 2006.

State Adult Education: The Adult Learning division within the Department Further Studies and Adult Education is responsible for the evening programmes, adult literacy courses, a national Lifelong Learning Centre that offers formal courses, the Media Education and Broadcasting Centre, the Schools of Art, the Schools of Music and the Schools of Drama in Malta and Gozo. The adult learning division provides learning opportunities to all those who would like to acquire or improve their knowledge and skills in particular subjects of their choice, supports learners' entry into a knowledge based society and economy through ICT courses, monitors learning opportunities offered to ensure relevance and quality, and continually strives to create a culture of lifelong learning. Through this division, the Department Further Studies and Adult Education offered 185 courses in Malta and 64 courses in Gozo during the last quarter of 2006. Over 8,000 participants accessed courses varying in type and depth. Of these, 3,674 followed evening classes at district level centres. An annual Lifelong Learning Course Prospectus is widely distributed with the cooperation of the Local Councils. Effective use of radio programme phone-ins is made to encourage and invite the public to become active citizens through adult learning. The official website of the Department Further Studies and Adult Education registered over 180,000 hits throughout 2006, an increase of over 50% over the previous year. On-line course registrations also registered an increase in 2006. Learning partnerships were developed with such companies and entities as Dowty, Playmobil, FITA and the Ministry for Small Enterprises.

Adult Basic Skills

Following on the formation, by the Foundation for Educational Services (FES) of an inter-agency group involving the ETC, MCAST, FES, DFS&AE as part of a Grundtvig partnership project led by the UK-based Basic Skills Agency, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment requested the group to develop a national Adult Basic Skills Strategy. The report was submitted to the Minister in 2006 and is now being assessed as part of a wider exercise leading to the development of a national lifelong learning strategy. As part of this exercise to review this important sector, the Department Further Studies and Adult Education (DFS&AE) published commissioned and published *A Study of Young People following Basic Skills Courses in Malta*. Key recommendations of the Adult Basic Skills Working Group include more effective tapping of EU educational programmes and structural funds, the development of a national Basic Skills Action Plan with clear targets to be reached within specific time frames and the contribution of private and public companies in providing courses. The Basic Skills Unit at MCAST provides assessment and support to students who need support in this area before being in a position to access an MCAST vocational course.

ABS Staff within State Entities for 2005

State Entity	Full Time Providers	Part-Time Providers	Total per Entity
ETC	/	58	58
MCAST	11	2	13
FES	5	100	105
Total	16	160	176

Source: Adult Basic Skills Working Group, 2006

EU funding tapped for the basic skills sector²¹ amounted to €24,420 (Grundtvig 1); €943,570 (ESF) and €600,259 (ERDF).

Basic Maltese and English Literacy Courses: The Department Further Studies and Adult Education led an ESF project entitled *Training of Trainers Programme in Basic Literacy* was concluded with considerable success during 2006. Two short courses for adult educators, one in Malta and one in Gozo, were held in the month of March and September respectively. Through this project 14 centres in 12 localities today offer Basic Maltese Literacy courses in the evenings. The total number of learners attending is around 110. Through this same project, a set of three manuals for the teaching and learning of basic Maltese were published under the title *Sisien*²² and highly publicised through a public launch. The manuals include workbooks for students and a teachers, an audio compact disk, a

²¹ Report on Adult Basic Skills, 2006.

²² *Sisien* means 'foundation' in English

set of working cards and a set of educational charts. As regards Basic English, 360 adults (113 males and 247 females) attended courses in Basic English literacy organised in collaboration with 19 Local Councils, and the National Council for Women.

Other basic literacy course providers: Through another ESF project entitled *Community-based Lifelong Learning Centres*, the Foundation for Educational Services (FES) ran basic skills courses in English (108 learners in 5 localities) and Maltese (43 learners in 3 localities). The ETC runs its own basic literacy courses and, like the FES, worked with the NGO Paulo Freire Institute in one locality in this area.

Computer Literacy: The demand for ICT courses at basic and higher levels is also on the increase. In 2006, 91 adults attended ECDL START courses; 308 adults attended ECDL CORE courses; and 137 adults attended ECDL ADVANCED courses offered by the Department Further Studies and Adult Education through its various Centres. The Foundation for Educational Services (FES) ran basic skills courses in ICT for a total of 523 learners in 6 localities, 322 participants having followed basic courses and 201 at advanced level.

In the field of Adult Basic Skills, the *Employment and Training Corporation (ETC)* continues to be a lead provider. To this end, the ETC shall continue to provide a range of demand-driven and needs based training services through ESF and ERDF projects. Projects initiated during the 2004/6 structural funds programming period are in the process of completion. These include the Literacy for Employment, Basic Employment Training for School Leavers (BET) and the Supported Employment Scheme for persons with special needs. Others projects such as the following are nearing completion: Traineeships for Women, Youths in Institutional Care, Lone Mothers and Creating a Women Entrepreneurship Culture. In the process the Corporation is reviewing its current schemes and initiatives so as to bring them in line with state aid regulations and to make them more clients friendly and effective.

Aware of the number of clients registering for employment and their lack of basic skills, the ETC will be setting up a Basic Skills Unit. The aim of this unit will be to identify standards, training needs and develop/deliver Training programmes. Through this initiative all the basic skills programmes currently on offer will be integrated into one programme so as to provide a holistic approach.

The national Lifelong Learning Centre: The number of adult learners attending day classes at this centre was, in 2006, 30% higher than in 2004. In early 2007, 422 adults were following formal and non-formal courses that include basic literacy (Maltese and English) and other academic subjects at different levels. ECDL, entrepreneurship development and women empowerment courses are very popular. The centre is a key education and training provider for the Armed Forces of Malta, leading to ACE 1 and ACE 2 levels of academic attainment. Age groups differ with the 41-60 age group constituting 39% of learners, 31-40 total 18%, 17-30 total 12% and the 61+ category forming 29%.

The *Staff Development Office (SDO)* at the Office of the Prime Minister continues to be the major vehicle for the non-formal and continuing professional development of public service employees.

Visual and Performing Arts: The Department for Further Studies and Adult Education is responsible for the School of Art, the Mikelang Borg Drama Centre and the Johann Strauss School of Music in Malta; and the Schools of Art, School of Music and the Drama Centre in Gozo. The aggregate number of students attending these schools stands at 3,367. Various initiatives are being taken by these schools notably the various public performances given by the Johann Strauss School of Music and the Mikelang Borg Drama Centre. The Gozo School of Art has been successful in attracting European Regional Development Funds (ERDF) to extend the school premises incorporating a Crafts Development Centre and an ESF project consisting of a number of craft courses promoting sustainable employability in Gozo. In all 42 different courses in Art and Crafts were offered. Apart from these the school was involved in hosting exchange visits and several exhibitions both locally and abroad.

Euro Changeover: An extensive and significant campaign to inform and train the public is underway. A *Euro Changeover Training Manual* has been finalised by the NECC Training Task Force.

Media Education: The *Education Channel 22*, a television channel of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment is a key lifelong learning tool that is being extensively used by sector personnel across public service departments and public entities. Appropriately so, its remit has been broadened to encompass a wider audience beyond compulsory school age stakeholders. Today, its programmes are aired by other TV channels. Moreover, with the introduction of 22AM and 22PM programmes, live air time has considerably increased. Public-private partnerships have also been sought through a public call for show of interest in an effort to make the station more sustainable. A partnership agreement with the Public Broadcasting Services (PBS) has led to increase in studio space and viewership. Higher investment in and full access to this channel have the potential of turning this TV channel into the leading promoter and disseminator of lifelong and lifewide opportunities in the country. Campus FM run by the University of Malta is also state funded and provides a range of informal education programmes spanning various subjects.

Entrepreneurship education: Both the Employment and Training Corporation and the Department of Further Studies and Adult Education offer courses on 'How to start your own business. Furthermore, the Department collaborated with the Secretariat for Small Business and the Self Employed within the Ministry for Competitiveness and Communications in organizing short courses at regional level for small retail businesses in order to upgrade competences in the field.

Community-based non-formal adult education:

In partnerships with NGOs, the Ministry for Investment, Industry and IT (MIIT) has set up 4 Community Technology and Learning Centres (CTLCs). These are technology-enabled centres which stimulate learning and collaboration, where the most disadvantaged groups in society gather to gain skills, share information and use technology, thus aiding them to access or return the labour market. The Centers cater for specific audiences such as persons with a disability, the unemployed as well as vulnerable persons from geographical areas where the percentage of unemployment, families living on low income, and people with a low level of education is above average. An array of courses are offered varying from ICT related and other services, which are accessible to members of the NGO itself as well as people living in the community.

In six localities, 215 non-formal adult education courses were accessed by 2,038 participants through ESF project 5 Community-based Lifelong Learning Centres executed by the Foundation for Educational Services. Designed as a personal development tool and a bridge to further access to wider lifelong learning opportunities, the project attracted, in the main, housewives with tenuous links to the educational and training system.

Active Ageing

The University of the Third Age (U3A) in Malta is now 10 years old and is proving to be an effective non-formal education tool for older persons. U3A runs 3 Centres, a national and two regional ones. Lectures by specialists are held four times a week in one Centre and twice weekly in the other two. 16 and 8 modules are covered annually in the central and regional centres respectively. At the beginning of every year, members receive a detailed prospectus of the study units to be offered during that particular year in each of the three centres. This Prospectus is drafted by a Board composed of University lecturers and members of the U3A. The Prospectus also contains a brief description of each unit. Members are free to choose which units to attend. Every year, the prospectus covers a wide range of topics including, Anthropology, Archaeology, Computer Studies, Economic Issues, Health, History, History of Art, Hobbies, International Relations, Languages, Legal Issues, Music Appreciation, Nutrition, Philosophy, Religion, and Social Issues. The high attendance throughout every year is a clear indication of the quality of the programmes offered and of the eagerness of the members to participate. The U3A also has its own overseas Travel Service for members. The members of the U3A have their own Association. The U3A has a quarterly journal edited and organised by the members themselves. Official NSO statistics indicate that 687 elderly persons accessed U3A courses in 2004/05.

State day care centres for the elderly and community based social clubs for the elderly run by the voluntary sector offer regular learning opportunities for service users. A source of on-going learning

for the elderly are the myriad radio programmes that enable listeners to phone in to seek information and to engage in live discussions on topical issues including the maintenance of healthy lifestyles.

Certification of adult education courses: Courses in academic subjects, ISCED levels 2 and 3, are certified either by the MATSEC Board at the University of Malta or through foreign, usually the United Kingdom, awarding bodies on the same basis as those learners at the end of mainstream education. University of Malta part-time and evening courses certification is not different to that given on completion of full-time courses provided that they are equivalent in level and in number of ECTS. Courses provided by private Tuition Centres leading to a foreign qualification are certified by that same foreign awarding body and are locally recognized if recognized by the country of origin. Courses in Dance, Music and the performing arts may lead to certification by a foreign (usually UK) awarding body. Other adult education courses provide an ad hoc certificate or a certificate of attendance. There exists, as yet, no system of APL in place with the exception of the University of Malta 'maturity clause' and access to the vocational courses of the Institute of Tourism Studies.

Gender aspects in education and training

Being a key player in this area, the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) regularly organises seminars and conferences at national level and supports and monitors gender mainstreaming liaison persons working within large organisations. It has published a number of research studies in this area to inform and shape policy change. It also works in partnership with key organisations such as the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC), the National Council of Women. In partnership with three European countries, the ETC and the NCPE are working together on a project aimed at stimulating a culture shift with regard to gender stereotypes and roles in the labour market. Significant use of communication networks to influence cultural behaviour and attitudes is being made. The process involved training media representatives on related legislative changes as well as on the portrayal of gender stereotypes and roles on the media linked to the world of work and the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities.

In partnership with three European countries, the ETC has embarked on another campaign aimed at bringing about attitudinal change by encouraging men and fathers to take up new roles in view of the family unit. Modern Man in an Enlarged Europe, the project focuses on making use of paternity leave and active involvement in raising children as a means to confront stereotypes on men and to develop new images of men as care-givers.

Also in partnership with the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE), the ETC is implementing an EQUAL project entitled *Promoting Equal opportunities through Empowerment*. The project aims to reach out to the inactive segment of the Maltese population, particularly women, and inviting them to advance in the labour market by promoting the uptake of opportunities to this end.

In 2006, the Education Division participated in a European project aimed at facilitating equality through education. Having a research component, the project sought to correct stereotyped gender roles that influence young people's education, training and career choices. In their work choices and in their role in society. Pre-service and in-service courses for teachers on moving away from gender stereotyping have been organised.

ICT and lifelong learning

Education and awareness measures have long been a priority in the ICT programme pursued by the Ministry for Investment, Industry and IT. Projects coordinated within the ambit of the National ICT Strategy include those with the objective to increase the appreciation of the general public towards the use of technology and to improve the skills of using technology. The adult population has been a priority audience in such an initiative, since the majority of this segment have been limited to the use and exposure to technology during their schooling period. This lack of exposure often results in lack of confidence in the use of technology and the inability to master the basic ICT skills.

The myWeb programme continues to be a major Government initiative aimed at eradicating the digital divide. The programme is an ICT educational course, aimed at individuals who have never used a computer and has been designed for the needs of adult learners. The course is spread over 20 hours

with 10 hours on IT foundations and basic computer applications, including how to browse the Internet and use of the email. The course is supported with a step-by-step manual either in English or Maltese, as preferred by the individual, detailing the course content in a graphical and text format. To date, the myWeb course has been running successfully at different localities across the country opening the secondary schools for adult learners in the evening. The course has managed to attract citizens from different walks of life, particularly the middle-aged and the elderly who during their schooling years were not exposed to ICTs. The course is now also being organized in the Community Technology Learning Centers that have been set up by the Ministry²³. In the last 3 years more than 12,000 people participated in the programme. The average age of participants is 45 years which confirms the attainment of the programme objective to reach to the middle-aged and the elderly with an ICT Awareness course.

The myWeb Corporate is another initiative under the ‘Kick-Start’ programme. Addressing the key strategic objectives of the National ICT strategy to increase the take-up of technology by micro and small companies, Kick-Start is an umbrella programme of tangible initiatives that seek to equip the enterprises with the right resources for them to benefit from the investment in technology. The programme places special emphasis on developing an e-Business culture through education programmes and awareness campaigns.

The myWeb for Industries is a new development on the existing programme and aims to attract a working audience which due to time limitations set by work engagements has previously failed to benefit from the myWeb course. Any company with a total enrolment that exceeds 20 trainees is eligible to apply. Trainees can be both employees and their respective direct family members. Training sessions are held on the work premises at times which fit best the needs of both the employees and the company.

ICTV is a 30 minute TV programme aimed at bringing ICT closer to the ICT sceptics. Viewers’ are nudged to consider putting ‘ICT’ in their lives. They are taken through a humorous yet informative journey to an ICT way of life. *ICTV* ultimately aims at ensuring that individuals and groups at risk of social exclusion are aware of the opportunities that the web and ICTs can provide; develop the basic computer and technological skills that will instil individuals with the confidence to use the web and ICTs; can themselves develop online content and services that they value and wish to use. Additionally, it aims to ensure that Government initiatives and opportunities are captured by the general public and thus motivating Maltese households to introduce more technology in their homes. *ICTV* also acts as a launch pad for new Government ICT initiative.

ⁱ Census of Population and Housing 2005. Volume 1: Population, 2007, NSO.

²³ Access in Birgu, National Council of Women in Blata l-Bajda, Eden Foundation in Bulebel and UHM in Floriana