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Directorate-General for Education and Culture

Lifelong Learning: horizontal policy issues and 2020 strategy
Lifelong Learning: 2020 strategy

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Preparation of the 2012 Joint Report on the implementation of the Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020)

Incorporates the Position of the Government of Malta

CONTRIBUTION TO NATIONAL REFORM PROGRAMMES (approx. 2 PAGES)

QUESTION 1

Please provide a summary of the main education and training elements in your National Reform Programme (NRP):

National Target

Throughout the period 2000-2008, from among EU-27 Member States, Malta registered the largest decrease in the percentage of early school leavers, arriving at a percentage of 39% in 2008. This percentage drop (15.2%), is more than three-fold the percentage decrease registered by most EU Member States. The progress achieved over the period 2000-2008 is attributed almost entirely to the establishment of the Malta College of Arts Science and Technology (MCAST) which provides vocational and professional education and training to upper secondary students.

Throughout the period 2000-2008, Malta registered one of the largest increases (13.6%) in the percentage of tertiary educational attainment of 30-34 year olds, arriving at a percentage 21% in 2008. This is due to the fact that, during the 1990s, Malta experienced a significant increase in the number of students participating in higher education, mainly at the University of Malta due to a number of additional incentives for students to take up higher education studies.

In dialogue with the Commission, Malta has set the following targets:

- Aiming to reduce school drop-out rates to 29% by 2020.
- Increasing the share of 30-34 years old having completed tertiary or equivalent education to 33% by 2020.

In the period 2010-2015, Malta will endeavour to continue to offer new possibilities for learning whilst ensuring that all persons receive due certification and recognition of their studies in a drive to value all learning, in order for this to be able to serve the individual learner as a basis for further study or work.

Key Measures to Reach the National Target

Tackling Absenteeism by Strengthening Student Services

With the aim of reducing current levels of absenteeism in compulsory education, it is planned that social and educational student services will be improved at the grass-roots level within schools, in order to provide a more understanding environment for students with different abilities and for students from diverse social, cultural and national backgrounds.

It is also planned that multi-disciplinary teams (including social workers, psychologists, psychotherapists, trainee counsellors, trainee career guidance teachers, family workers) will monitor families in which there is a high tendency of children's' absenteeism from school, at the community level in order to provide the support needed to socially address problems which the family unit may be facing.

While some elements mentioned above are already in place, particularly at college level, with a first attempt having been made at community level, this measure requires significantly stepping up Malta's efforts in this regard, so as to be able to affect the students at school level. Due to the increase in human resources that the extension of student services requires, as well as the nature of organisation of human capacity and resources at community level, it is planned that such a measure will be initiated in 2012-2013, and continue to expand in its coverage until 2015. The fiscal cost of the measure is expected to reach €2.1 million over a four year period starting from 2012. The measure is expected to be a significant contributor to reduce the number of drop-outs from the education system.

Offering more Opportunities for Participation in Vocational Education

Vocational training is deemed to be an important vehicle in order to encourage more students to continue their education beyond the school-leaving age and to develop their true employment potential. The setting up of MCAST has been an important milestone allowing Malta to register significant improvements in educational attainment levels over the last few years. It is therefore imperative that this National Reform Programme continues to build on these achievements. This measure aims to extend the provision of vocational education, in particular through the following actions:

1) The introduction of vocational subjects in secondary school, which are to be included as part of the general curriculum undertaken by students. Such vocational subjects are to be introduced with the aim to fulfilling the potential of students in vocational fields, and to introduce students to subjects which can capture both their aptitudes and their interest, in view of them progressing to further vocational studies and to employment in a given technical or vocational sector at a later stage. Preparation of ground work involved in the setting up of VET provision is underway and will continue until 2011.

Vocational subjects as pilot projects will start in September 2011. The pilot projects to be carried out in State and Non-State Schools are expected to take place between 2011 and 2012. Meanwhile the initial VET will start being offered in schools in 2012.

2) The extension of vocational subjects at post-secondary level of education in institutions which are dedicated to vocational education and training, which include the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) and the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS). The extension of provision of vocational subjects at post-secondary level of education will be an ongoing measure throughout the years 2011-2015. In this respect:

The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) are currently implementing an ERDF Project for the extension of its Campus. This is planned to be completed in 2013, after which it is expected that MCAST will be able to increase its student intake, as well as provide a better learning environment for its current students.

The Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) is currently building a new vision and strategy based on a clearly-defined mission to provide quality learning to lead to excellence in the tourism industry, with a view to enable more individuals to participate in tourism studies, including the low-skilled and unskilled.

3) The introduction of embedded learning for Foundation (first level) students, providing them with the opportunity to learn the key subjects of Maltese, English and Mathematics through the students' own preferred area of vocational studies. Embedded learning in vocational education started in September 2010 at MCAST, which is to be piloted until June 2011. Depending on its success, it will continue thereafter.

Projections carried out by NCHE indicate that despite the projected decline in the overall number of students up till 2020, vocational students will continue to increase. It is therefore inevitable that this sector will require significant funds in order to meet the infrastructural requirements. The total cost of these measures is estimated at €9.1 million over the entire 2011/14 period covered by this Programme. This is almost entirely devoted to the extension of MCAST between 2011 and 2013, primarily an EU Funded project.

Introducing Life-Long Learning into the Community through a Pilot Out-Reach Programme

The aim of this measure is to tailor lifelong learning, in the form of various educational opportunities, to the needs of the community, with particular attention being paid to the needs of certain key groups in society where there is much potential for raising of educational levels, such as unemployed mothers and other unemployed persons with low or no skills. The aim of such a measure is to provide:

- A different experience to previous learning paths through which might have failed the learner.
- The adequate level and type of learning (whether general or vocational).
- The appropriate style of learning (tailor-made to the needs and strengths of individual learners).
- The most feasible time for learning (e.g. during school hours for mothers).
- The most convenient place for learning, close to one's place of residence.
- A welcome environment for learning, with other learners from one's own community.

Time-frame: It is envisaged that the necessary policy and action plan will be formulated throughout 2011-2012, with a pilot phase to be in place in 2013 in time to assess results by 2015.

Setting up of a National System for Accreditation and Licensing of Further and Higher Education Programmes and Providers and of Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Prior Learning

This measure envisages the setting up of a framework for:

- The accreditation of formal further education programmes (defined as programmes at levels 1-4 of the Malta Qualifications Framework and which are not provided in the form of compulsory education).
- The accreditation and licensing of (public or private) further education providers eligible to operate in their respective sector.
- The accreditation of formal higher education programmes (defined as programmes at levels 5-8 of the Malta Qualifications Framework).
- The accreditation and licensing of (public or private) higher education providers eligible to operate in their respective sector.
- Recognition of prior non-formal or informal learning, as linked to specific individuals on the basis of previous work or other experience.

Legislation (primary and secondary) relating to the setting the legal basis for the setting up of such a framework, outlining the main criteria on which such a framework is to be built, is to be adopted by 2011. Policy and guidelines relevant to the procedures of internal and external quality assurance on which accreditation and licensing is to be based to be adopted by the relevant competent authority by mid-2012. Policy and guidelines relevant to the procedures of recognition of non-formal and informal prior learning shall be adopted by the competent authority by mid-2012. Relevant capacity building is to take place both within structure of providers as well as within the structures of the competent authority throughout 2011 and 2012. The framework will be operational by 2012-2013, with providers being given an appropriate transition phase to align themselves to the framework.

The use of EU funds is being contemplated in the setting up of the above-mentioned framework with a view to sourcing good practice from abroad and building capacity in Malta.

Introducing New Possibilities and Modalities of Learning in Higher Education

The measure will provide a longer higher educational pathway than in traditional higher education, with a view to allowing learners to study during late evening hours and during periods of their life in which they find it to be most convenient and most practical. This measure aims to capture adults into higher education. It is expected to raise the qualification level of such persons with a view to providing them with higher intellectual and analytical capabilities and offering them better job prospects. It is expected that this measure will be implemented by relevant educational institutions as from 2011-2012.

This measure is expected to target adult learners who are self-sufficient and able to pay a reasonable cost for their tuition, with some of the costs being subsumed into the operational costs of the institutions which provide such education. Therefore the measure is expected to be budget neutral.

Extension of the Malta Government Scholarship Scheme (MGSS)

Malta's competitive position can only be improved if the country's workforce skills and capabilities are improved by continual and persistent investment in education and research which would enable human resources to complement the high value added activities that Government is continuously seeking to attract to Malta. It is only continual improvements in the quality and value added of the goods and services exported by Malta that would enable the country to improve its growth potential and living standards.

Government is proposing to increase the current scholarship scheme from €466,000 to €600,000 as from 2012. This implies an additional fiscal outlay of €134,000. This measure is expected to be beneficial to the overall education levels but more specifically raise the proportion of science and technology graduates and potentially increase the number of researchers carrying out research and development activity.

EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING (approx. 3 PAGES)

QUESTION 2

What measures has your country taken to reduce early school leaving?

Introduction

Whilst for statistical reasons, the Early School Leaving rate at an EU level is taken to be composed of "the share of the population aged 18-24 with only lower secondary education or less and no longer in education or training", it is pertinent to note that Education in Malta is compulsory for all children between the ages of 5 and 16. Compulsory education is subdivided into a six-year primary cycle (five to ten years) and five years of secondary education (eleven to sixteen years). The government is committed to a policy of inclusive education throughout compulsory education.

To date the following measures to reduce early school leaving have been taken:

A National Core Competences Policy and Strategy has been introduced in 2009 and is presently being implemented through the deployment of over 100 teachers fully dedicated to literacy support and recovery, intensive continuous professional development and the development of diagnostic, assessment and teaching resources. A similar effort is also starting with respect to Mathematics, with the initial focus being in the capacity building of a central team with respect teacher support and numeracy recovery. Furthermore the school plans for individual students in the latter three years of primary will further consolidate efforts being done in the first three years. With such a strong start in primary school it is hoped that in future all students will have the basic skills to gain access the complete curriculum and hence complete compulsory education successfully and continue on with further and higher education institutions.

Streaming in the upper primary years (Year 5 and 6) has been removed giving way to differentiated learning in mixed ability classes in all year groups. In September 2009, streaming was removed in Year 5 and in September 2010 it was removed in Year 6. In addition, selective examinations at the end of the primary cycle were removed in June 2010. Both changes are significant as now we have mixed ability classes throughout the primary cycle and thus children do not experience failure and selectivity from a young age.

Furthermore, children will proceed to the same secondary schools in their college (one for boys and another for girls) from September 2011, and therefore will no longer be channelled into different schools according to their performance on an end of primary selective examination. It is hoped that such changes will lead to the nurturing of all students to remain in the education system and develop lifelong learning skills and attitudes which are important within a lifelong learning context.

The introduction of Vocational Subjects at the secondary cycle as an option at Form 3 in September 2011 will widen the repertoire of subject and methodologies of teaching and learning. These content and methodologies of these subject are attractive to students who learn by doing and therefore will be working on their certification throughout three years . It is hoped that such subjects also give scope to a number of students to experience more success at secondary level and be motivated to continue with their studies in further and higher education institutions.

2.1 Measures to analyse current situation and monitor developments in early school leaving (e.g. data collection, surveys and research):

Since 1990 the Guidance and Counselling Services have been organising a series of tracer studies –for school leavers. This Study is indicative of student routes to further education but is dependent on the students who respond.

Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) results at the end of the secondary cycle are used as basis for an annual statistical report indicating the number of students ending up with an end-of-secondary education SEC certification in every age cohort and year cohort. Analysis is carried out by gender, type of school, island, and age.

Malta has also participated in PISA + in 2010 and the results will be indicative of the levels reached re important applied skills at the end of compulsory education.

2.2 Please indicate the areas of priority areas your country is focusing on (e.g. target groups, educational sectors):

A new National Curriculum Framework (NCF) will shortly be published for consultation. Its main focus areas include the early years, the learning and teaching process within a context of differentiation and levels of attainment for the range of students in each year group.

A vision for Science Education in Malta has also been prepared alongside the draft NCF. The aim is to ensure that science becomes a core subject in both the primary and secondary cycles with the motivation to increase science literacy for all and to have more students studying science subjects at post-compulsory school level.

2.3 Measures to prevent early school leaving. Please mention the most effective measures taken at system level, at school level and in support of individual pupils/learners:

The removal of a selective external examination at the end of the primary cycle.

Individualised programmes for students still experiencing difficulties in the core skills in secondary schools.

The introduction of job shadowing in secondary schools may encourage students to stay on to develop the necessary skills to be employed in their areas of interest.

The introduction of vocational BTEC Courses in IT, Hospitality, Engineering, Health and Social Care in secondary school as a pilot study in September 2011.

A secondary school certificate and profile was introduced in September 2010. This recognises all forms of learning during the five years of secondary education. In fact it gives credit to formal education as well as to non-formal education received throughout the previous five years. It also gives credit to positive personal qualities that are nurtured during compulsory education as well as attendance. This certificate has been pegged as a level 1 qualification on the national qualifications framework. It ensures that learners are given credit for all learning that takes place and this will help motivate them to move into further and higher education. Currently in different institutions (MCAST, ITS and ETC) different courses have been developed that would allow students to access courses which then build on competences and outcomes of learning and allow further progression to other courses.

Strong career guidance in all secondary schools.

2.4 Measures to compensate early school leaving. Please mention the most effective measures taken:

The University of Malta offers higher education in Malta at undergraduate and post-graduate levels. Students over 25 years of age are considered under a maturity clause entitlement even if they do not have all the necessary formal qualifications.

The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) provides post-compulsory, post-16 vocational education and training in Malta and Gozo (except for tourism studies and health care). Its mission is to provide universally accessible vocational and professional education and training with an international dimension, responsive to the need of the individual and the economy. A significant number of courses can be accessed by means of a school leaving certification or even less or else a minimum number of subjects at SEC level. MCAST also introduced the maturity clause for prospective learners aged 25 years, or above.

The Institute of Tourism Studies prepares students for the hospitality and tourism industry. The hospitality and tourism industry provides work placements for students. There are a number of courses that can be accessed by means of a school leaving certificate or less or else a minimum number of subjects at SEC level.

Students following technical/vocational upper secondary education are eligible to enrol in apprenticeship schemes. These schemes are the Technician Apprenticeship Scheme (TAS) and the Extended Skills Training Scheme (ESTS).

The Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) offers a wide range of training opportunities for persons willing to learn a trades and skills and thus improve their chances of finding full time employment and/or retaining. Vocational courses offered by ETC are linked with industry through the two training schemes available (TAS and ESTS). In 2010 nearly 700 participants were enrolled in these courses.

The Directorate for Lifelong Learning is responsible for the provision of adult education. It provides various services including vocational, academic, craft and leisure subjects as well as courses in drama, music and art. It also runs courses for adult basic literacy and a Lifelong Learning Centre that provides courses in a number of subjects at secondary level particularly aimed at giving citizens a second chance. In 2010, over 9,900 learners were registered in courses offered by the Directorate.

TERTIARY EDUCATION ATTAINMENT (approx. 3 PAGES)

QUESTION 3

What measures has your country taken to increase tertiary (or equivalent) education attainment?

3.1 Measures to increase entry rates to higher education, including widening access to under-represented groups:

Measures to increase access to higher education in Malta to under-represented groups include the development of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF), the development of competence and learning outcomes-based curricula and the development of ‘embedded learning’, which combines the development of literacy, language and numeracy with vocational and other skills.

Information and guidance to increase participation in higher education

In 2009, the Ministry responsible for Education, through the National Commission for Higher Education, developed a guide for students in their final year of compulsory education outlining the pathways in the education system in Malta. This guide provides information about the role of key government agencies in Malta delivering services such as the recognition of qualifications or the management of the European Union Funding Programmes. The guide also includes information about the key institutions which provide post-secondary and higher education in Malta. Users are also informed about funding schemes available to students continuing their studies after compulsory education and sets out the benefits of, and the practical steps to participate in learning mobility. Furthermore, the booklet informs about the importance of student life and voluntary work as a tool for effective student representation and an opportunity to gain valuable practical experience and transversal skills. The guide is available in both Maltese and English and can be accessed at:

http://www.nche.gov.mt/mediacenter/PDFs/1_Student%20Guide%20English%20WEB.pdf

In 2009 the National Commission for Higher Education also compiled comprehensive information on all available funding schemes for Maltese wishing to follow programmes in Further and Higher Education both in Malta and abroad. This information was published in a “Guide to Financial Support Schemes for Maltese Students in Further and Higher Education”

and was also made available on the website of the NCHE, which now contains a complete list of all funding schemes for Maltese with the latest regulations as well as links to further information. The guide can be accessed at:

https://www.nche.gov.mt/MediaCenter/PDFs/1_NCHE%20scholarship%20booklet_web.pdf

In addition, the Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family organized an annual Learning Expo in Malta in 2009 and 2010 to give students in their final year of compulsory education the opportunity to discover learning opportunities and career pathways after finishing school through the provision of informative material and guidance directly by higher education providers.

Financial incentives to increase participation in higher education

Students following a first full-time programme at undergraduate level at the University of Malta, or following a vocational programme leading up to a Bachelor degree at the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology are entitled to receive a monthly Student Maintenance Grant. In 2009 the scheme was revised, removing the age limitation so that students over 30 years of age following their first full-time undergraduate programme may also receive financial support for their studies.

In 2007 the Government of Malta established the Malta Government Scholarship Scheme Undergraduate to support those students following their first full-time undergraduate programme at recognised private higher education institutions in Malta, at a level equivalent to the Student Maintenance Grant. In 2008 the scheme was extended to also include Maltese students following a first full-time undergraduate programme in higher education institutions abroad (subject to the recognition of the awarded qualification by the Malta Qualifications Council). In line with the amendments to the Student Maintenance Grant, the Malta Government Scholarship Scheme Undergraduate was revised in 2009 to include also those students following their first full-time undergraduate programme at private higher education institutions in Malta or abroad, which are above 30 years of age and opening the scheme to all those students who have already enrolled in an undergraduate programme, but not yet received the scholarship. Over 450 participants benefitted from these schemes since they were launched in 2007.

In 2010, the Government of Malta also established the Malta Arts Scholarship to support students following specialised programmes of studies in any discipline of the arts. The scholarship supports only full-time studies which lead to a qualification, such as an undergraduate or postgraduate qualification.

In addition, the Training Aid Framework managed by the Employment and Training Corporation and funded through the European Social Fund is an opportunity for local companies to receive financial support for investing in their human resources. The subsidy is offered to companies in the private sector and varies according to the type of training offered and the size of the enterprise. Self-employed persons are also eligible for this scheme. Training can be either in-house or outsourced and can be given in Malta or abroad through distance learning. The training includes all courses at all levels, organised both locally or abroad and may lead up to a doctoral degree.

Finally with effect from the year of assessment 2011, individuals can claim a deduction in income tax in relation to study related fees paid as from 1st January 2010 paid to local or

foreign recognised tertiary education institution. This, on condition that they have not benefited from any other form of financial support with regards to tuition costs of the study programme in question. This deduction is capped at €10,000 and is allowed against the income derived during the year of successful completion of studies. Any unutilised deduction will be carried forward to future years. The person claiming such deduction has to submit a certificate proving the completed programme of studies together with the income tax return within which the claim is made.

Structural measures to increase participation in higher education

A number of workers within the Maltese and European labour market possess no official qualifications from formal institutions, yet have acquired knowledge, skills and competences as a result of informal and non-formal learning, often through work experience. Being competent yet unqualified, these people run the risk of being excluded from the workforce due to lack of formal recognition and also limit themselves from progressing within the European Qualifications Framework, as part of a lifelong learning process.

In view of this, the INLearning project, which was spearheaded by the Malta Qualifications Council from 2009 to 2011, aimed at promoting social inclusion through the development of a methodology framework for the validation of informal and non-formal learning. The 'Lifepass' portfolio pen drive is applicable across different sectors and may be utilized across Europe. The methodological tool has been tried and tested in connection with a number of jobs in different sectors that were considered in this project namely, printing, agribusiness, construction, hospitality, transport, security, and childcare. Lifepass aims to reduce inequalities and promote social inclusion among those who do not possess any formal qualifications within National and European Qualifications Frameworks. This methodological framework tool will help achieve coherence across European countries and facilitate recognition of the validation process. It shall also help individuals become aware of the richness of their learning and competences. Further information about INLearning <http://www.inlearning.eu/content/about-inlearning>

The Malta Qualifications Council also engaged between 2009-2011 in another project entitled 'NQF-Inclusive'. This project aimed to develop a model for accreditation and certification of training courses for individuals with (learning) disabilities or low educational achievement by utilising the European and National Qualification Frameworks. The reason for this initiative is that often people with (learning) disabilities or people from sectors of society where educational achievement is low are not able to graduate from formal vocational training-like apprenticeships. As a result, these people tend to join basic vocational training courses specifically designed for them by certain institutions, in order to gain knowledge, skills and competences for use in particular vocations. Although they are often well trained and learn how to do specific tasks in these courses, they do not receive any officially accredited certification of this, as the training programmes are mostly non-formal. For employment, the development a model for accreditation and transparent certification showing potential employers what a person is able to do as a result of their training, would therefore be very helpful.

3.2 Measures to improve completion rates of students in higher education:

A measure taken by the University of Malta has been to award a Higher Education Certificate to students who have successfully completed 60 ECTS but who do not wish to continue their studies. These awards form part of the Malta Qualifications Framework which in September was referenced to the European Qualification Framework. MCAST has also introduced VET Bachelor degrees in a number of areas and this is encouraging students to remain in higher education even after successfully completing a higher VET award at MQF level 5 (aligned to the Bologna Short Cycle).

MOBILITY (approx. 2.5 PAGES)

QUESTION 4

What measures has your country taken to promote learning mobility?

4.1 Measures to promote outgoing/incoming learning mobility of students in different education sectors (schools, VET, higher education, adults):

The governing authority of the University of Malta has asked all faculties to indicate the semester or year when students are encouraged to follow a period of study abroad. In this way, the problems that arise when students start a study-unit in Malta during semester 1 and cannot complete it as it continues during semester 2 are avoided. This arrangement also gives the opportunity to students to plan their studies abroad well ahead of time since they know when they are advised to go for a study period abroad even from the beginning of their course.

Outgoing higher education students used to complain about the transfer of the grades or marks obtained abroad (particularly those obtained from UK and Ireland). The University governing authority has taken steps to ensure a fairer transposition of marks and grades obtained abroad into the University's grading system and no complaints are now being received.

Having undergone a focused transition towards harmonisation of courses and adopted ECTS as the internal system of credit accumulation as from October 2003, the University of Malta introduced earlier on, the tools that were most required to ensure the smoother management of incoming and outgoing mobility. As an English-speaking destination, offering high quality education and a safe, Mediterranean environment, the University of Malta attracts approximately 500 students per year on various exchange and transfer programmes. Such volumes of students require the University to have the necessary structures to manage the incoming flow as efficiently as possible. The University presently sends just over 200 students on mobility semesters abroad and here again, the management tools have been improved in line with our increasing knowledge and experience in the area. Information campaigning, publication of testimonials provided by former beneficiaries of Mobility grants and general promotion of study abroad opportunities certainly encourage a higher take-up rate every year. This becomes more crucial as we seek to address the substantial imbalance between the amount of incoming and outgoing mobility students.

4.2 Measures to promote outgoing/incoming learning mobility of teachers and other education professionals in different education sectors (schools, VET, higher education, adults)?

At a higher education level, the University of Malta sustained good mobility levels between incoming and outgoing academics. With English as its medium of instruction, the University has a long tradition of hosting academics from Europe and the rest of the world, with visiting lecturers and examiners coming over for short and long term periods to deliver classes, examine students, participate in research and contribute to the University in other ways. Maltese academics participate extensively in organised mobility programmes (Erasmus, Fulbright, etc), joint research, collaboration programmes, individual visits and other academic forums abroad. Academics are actively encouraged to travel extensively in order to increase their knowledge and establish wide collaboration in their areas of study and expertise. In terms of organised calls for funds available through various mobility programmes, the University ensures that such information would reach all interested parties in order to ensure equal access possibilities to all academics interested in the opportunity.

4.3 Steps to identify and reduce the obstacles to learning mobility?

Beneficiaries of mobility grants are requested to submit reports where they provide feedback on the activity undertaken. This allows the University of Malta to gather data from outgoing students and academics regarding difficulties encountered before, during and after the mobility period abroad. In terms of incoming students, the University of Malta conducts evaluation sessions with short and long term stay students to ensure that their expectations are met, to identify obstacles and difficulties that they may be facing and ensure that the support structure that has been developed will improve and evolve according to their demands. Being forward looking, conducting internal training on skills required with European and international visiting and exchange students and academics, and acting pro-actively are crucial to ensure that difficulties are identified before becoming serious obstacles.

NEW SKILLS AND JOBS (approx. 2.5 PAGES)

QUESTION 5

What measures has your country taken to improve the assessment of future skills requirements matching since 2009?

5.1 Recent measure to improve skills forecasting (in addition to information provided through Eurydice in June 2010):

On 19 September 2008, the National Commission for Higher Education organised a conference entitled 'Skills for the Future'. The Conference was aimed at addressing skills mismatches which exist in the economy as well as those which could emerge following growth in targeted sectors taking into consideration Government of Malta's "Vision 2015". Over 200 participants representing industry, commerce, employers, educational institutions, government sectoral agencies, students, and other social partners, attended the conference. A report on the research and outcomes of the conference was published in December 2008 entitled "Skills for the Future." As a follow-up of this conference the National Commission for Higher Education in conjunction with the Employment and Training Corporation attended

CEDEFOP meetings related to pan-European studies on anticipating future skills requirements. The National Commission for Higher Education also hosted a Skillsnet workshop in Malta in October 2009, bringing over 40 leading economists together in Malta to discuss current and future analytic methodologies for forecasting skills demand and supply. In order to develop structured research on skills supply and demand in Malta that would allow for skills forecasting and pro-active initiatives to avoid skills mismatches the National Commission for Higher Education developed an ESF project proposal submitted for funding in 2010.

The INlearning project (mentioned under 3.1 above) engages with employers in 7 different sectors, namely printing, agribusiness, construction, hospitality, transport, security and childcare, who wished to identify the competences of their workforce and any gaps in skills supply. The project undertook research on occupational demands as well as the knowledge, skills and competences associated with a number of jobs in the aforementioned 7 sectors. Further information about INLearning <http://www.inlearning.eu/content/about-inlearning>

The Malta Qualifications Council is currently implementing a European Social Fund project entitled ‘Accrediting Quality Vocational Training (VQPACK)’, which initiates a restructuring process in vocational training in order to bridge the existing gap between education and training on the one hand and employability on the other. The project, which spans from 2009 to 2011 targets nine key areas, namely Art & Design; Community Services; Agribusiness; Building & Construction Engineering; Business & Commerce; Electrical & Electronics Engineering; Mechanical Engineering; Tourism Studies and Heritage Studies at the three vocational education institutions in Malta, i.e. the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) and the Institute for Conservation and Management of Cultural Heritage (ICMCH). The project will contribute to strengthening the accreditation function of the Malta Qualifications Council, set up a consultation research task force for each qualification field; undertake research on the competence areas in sectoral VET qualifications; set up joint expert groups made up of training providers, employers and trade union activists to advise the project and disseminate its results; develop a competence matrices manual for the nine selected sectoral areas illustrating the relationship between training and employability and develop interactive information about all nine sectors to secondary schools in Malta and Gozo. Further information on VQPack: <http://www.mqc.gov.mt/esf-1-28-vqpack?l=1>

In addition, the Malta Qualifications Council is also undertaking another European Social Fund project entitled ‘Valuing All Skills for the Labour Market’ (SKILLSPLUS), which studies and proposes the legal and management structure for the design of occupational standards and the validation of informal and non-formal learning in nine key sectors equivalent to those in VQPack. Furthermore the research focuses on the demands of the industry within these vocational sectors to identify any skills gaps that might need to be addressed by vocational institutions in Malta in order to enhance employment. The project is implemented from 2009 to 2011. Further information on SKILLSPLUS: <http://www.mqc.gov.mt/esf-1-29-skillsplus?l=1>

5.2 Recent measures to take the results on board in education and training planning processes, information and guidance:

As follow-up to the abovementioned ‘Skills for the Future’ conference the National Commission for Higher Education in collaboration with the University of Malta and the Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry launched the first University-Business Thematic Forum on 5 March 2011 on the issue of Digital Games Production. The Digital Games Production industry can generate and employ a wide variety of local talent from the arts, science and technology, social sciences and education fields amongst others. Many skills already exist in our local talent-pool. The forum served to stimulate discussion on this new growth area by: presenting different views on long-term developments abroad and in Malta; putting forward new teaching and research initiatives being undertaken; analysing ideas for collaboration with the business sectors; and assessing the future skills base needed to support its growth. Further information: <https://www.nche.gov.mt/events.aspx?eid=63>

EDUCATION BUDGETS (approx. 2 PAGES)

QUESTION 6

How has the economic and financial crisis affected education and training budgets in your country (please refer to developments in particular education sectors, if appropriate)?

According to the national pre-Budget 2011 document, ‘the objectives for the development of education in Malta shall be aimed at having an educational sector of excellence, in line with the strategic frameworks of the renewed Lisbon Agenda, the EU 2020 Strategy, and Government’s Vision 2015 which focus include having a knowledge-based society, reducing the number of early school-leavers and equipping citizens with the key competences needed, and increasing the number of people with higher educational qualifications. This entails making lifelong learning a concrete reality through coherent and comprehensive strategies.

Over the years, the Government of Malta has embarked on a programme of investment in education, both of recurrent and capital nature. The increase in recurrent expenditure was mainly due to the improvement in the wages and salaries of the academic staff as well as increase in the funds forwarded to schools for their daily requirements. On the other hand, capital expenditure focused on the building of modern school facilities and increased investment in the tertiary sector. The table below analyses the expenditure on education for the period 2006-2010.

Expenditure on Education 2006 - 2010

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
	€	€	€	€	€
Kindergarten to Higher Secondary Education					
<i>Recurrent Expenditure</i>	91,787,665	79,238,808	105,034,642	95,073,240	97,507,055
<i>Capital Expenditure</i>	1,538,791	1,189,486	1,077,670	1,700,833	1,671,929
Construction Programme of Schools	3,494,060	2,562,311	3,389,000	4,799,939	5,900,000
ITS					
<i>Recurrent Expenditure</i>	2,036,755	2,037,209	2,067,896	2,055,582	2,497,000
<i>Capital Expenditure</i>	46,587	46,588	4,675,002	44,702	45,000
MCAST					
<i>Recurrent Expenditure</i>	9,643,610	9,841,603	10,296,015	12,961,998	14,600,000
<i>Capital Expenditure</i>	1,385,977	1,674,455	2,299,054	2,214,353	1,500,000
University of Malta / Junior College					
<i>Recurrent Expenditure</i>	30,664,990	32,844,165	35,437,999	46,191,996	49,000,000
<i>Capital Expenditure</i>	1,511,721	372,541	1,926,801	1,760,591	3,900,000
Students Maintenance Grants	18,931,179	19,268,747	19,445,122	21,015,934	21,450,000
Scholarships	239,788	445,586	447,287	403,856	666,000
Contribution to Church Schools	29,699,511	32,028,884	32,116,000	34,500,000	38,500,000
LSAs in Private Schools	-	-	-	17,762	200,000
Training / Employment ETC Programmes	1,945,027	1,998,602	2,255,000	2,602,000	3,315,000
Youth Special Training Scheme	-	-	-	-	500,000
	<u>192,925,661</u>	<u>183,548,985</u>	<u>220,467,488</u>	<u>225,342,786</u>	<u>241,251,984</u>

The above table shows that expenditure on education and training, has increased especially over the period 2008-2010 notwithstanding the international financial crisis which hit the local economy.

LIFELONG LEARNING STRATEGIES (approx. 2 PAGES)

QUESTION 7

What progress has your country made in the development and implementation of a coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategy?

7.1 Does your country have such a strategy (please indicate where it is laid down):

During the past twenty five years, Malta saw fast development in policies regarding compulsory, post-secondary and tertiary education. Most of the foundations are laid in the Education Act (Chapter 327 of the Maltese Laws). In 2005, the policy document “For All Children to Succeed” was published. Several other sectoral policy documents were published to complement the main framework documents.

In 2009, Ministry of Education set up the Directorate for Lifelong Learning (DLLL) to focus on those areas related to adult learning. Its mission is:

- to design a national strategy in lifelong learning;
- bring about coordination in this sector by making optimal use of diverse lifelong learning opportunities;
- lift the barriers for participation in adult learning so that the overall participation is increased;
- adopt the Action Plan on Adult Education as set out by the European Commission;
- address the imbalances in participation in order to achieve a more equitable state of affairs;
- to nurture creativity and promote the visual and performing arts;
- provide undergraduate and postgraduate scholarships to create more opportunities for further specialisation at higher levels of education, therefore increasing the availability and employment of high-level graduates in the priority sectors of the knowledge-based economy in Malta.

During the past two years DLLL:

- took stock of the services provided and started working towards defragmentation of services;
- brought adult learning in line with accepted EU policies;
- laid emphasis on outreach programmes in the community to bring learning closer to the learner;
- through scholarship schemes, increase participation and supported adults who wished to follow post-graduate courses, thus increasing the availability and employment of high-level graduates in the priority sectors of the knowledge-based economy in Malta.

These were the priorities because the volume of participation in these sectors was relatively low. Since October 2008 DLLL registered a steady rise of adult participation in lifelong learning. In October 2010, 9,932 learners were registered in courses offered by DLLL, of which 6,439 were adults in the age bracket of 25-64 years old. This showed a 36% increase

in participation. Malta has a 7% adult participation in lifelong learning. In 2010, services provided by DLLL accounted for 3.04% of the national participation rate.

DLLL is contributing towards four other priorities under the ET2020 strategic framework, namely: early school leaving, tertiary education attainment, mobility and elements in new skills and jobs.

Most of the learners under 25 years attending courses offered by DLLL (35% of the total cohort), do so as part of their “second chance education” to obtain entry qualifications in post-secondary and tertiary institutions. Most of them are successful and thus this measure contributes towards decreasing early school leavers.

In the field of tertiary education attainment, during 2009-2010, 785 scholarships were awarded (as compared with 311 scholarships awarded from 2006 to 2008). 512 out of the 785 scholarships awarded in the past two years, were for post graduate studies. Additional allowances for travel and family friendly measures were awarded for studies abroad to encourage mobility. The scholarship schemes were tailored made to address priority areas in the Maltese economy, thus addressing new skills for jobs.

Within this context, the lifelong learning strategy is evolving. A working commission has been appointed and it is expected to present a Green Paper by the end of 2011. This shall be based upon a lifelong learning strategy/policy which shall be finalised by Q3 2011. The Green Paper shall focus on adult learning. Among the main focus areas, it shall outline how to consolidate what has been achieved; lay emphasis on providing quality learning with emphasis on learning outcomes in adult learning; eliminate defragmentation; set clear benchmarks up to 2015 (when the strategy has to be reassessed and renewed); address social inclusion; promote lifelong guidance; and establish further ways how to increase the availability and employment of high-level graduates in the priority sectors of the knowledge-based economy in Malta.

7.2 Please briefly refer to the main measures addressing the principles of shared responsibility, effective financial mechanisms, flexible pathways and quality initial and targeted continuing training:

Government continues to heavily subsidise adult learning. Legal Notice 374/2009 and 396/2010 regulate payments made by participating learners. In a national effort to improve literacy and numeracy, Government exempts adults from any fees when they follow courses in Maltese, English and Mathematics at EQF Level 1. Pensioners are exempted from paying for the first course attended. As from October 2010, Local Councils are further subsidising courses organised jointly by DLLL and the Department of Local Government. The aim of such courses is to promote lifelong learning in the community; a step closer to the learner.

One of the main priorities is the training of Adult Trainers. Almost all Adult Trainers in Malta lack androgogy. In the area of handicrafts, most Adult Trainers never had professional training in learning strategies. DLLL has applied for ESF Funds to finance an intensive programme to train all Adult Trainers by end of 2013.

In the meantime, DLLL has initiated short training sessions on assessment procedures of learning outcomes for Adult Trainers of basic literacy and numeracy courses.

As part of the Lifelong Learning Strategy, DLLL intends to apply for funds under ESF and ERDF to develop further the visual and performing arts.

The project is earmarked to offer flexible pathways to those who wish to pursue learning pathways, other than academic and VET, and into the creative industry. When this is achieved, it is expected that this measure contributes towards lessening of early school leavers.

DLLL has also embarked on an extensive exercise to bring all courses being offered in line with the Malta Qualifications Framework. The aim is to validate all learning and ultimately encourage vertical and horizontal mobility of learners.

A total of 550 courses are offered. A lot of progress has been made.

Furthermore, DLLL has successfully applied for ESF Funds to finance one of the three scholarship schemes administered by this Directorate. The scheme is called Strategic Educational Pathways Scholarships (STEPS). Local funds are financing the two other scholarship schemes (the Malta Government Scholarship Scheme and the Malta Arts Scholarships).

OTHER SIGNIFICANT REFORMS IN THE PRIORITY AREAS (approx. 2 PAGES)

QUESTION 8

What progress has your country made in making reforms in the priority areas not directly addressed in questions 2 – 7? (Please indicate relevant priority area and give a short description)

In the past few years, significant progress has been made in **capacity building in the education sector**, especially, in the recruitment of professionals who offer support services to students experiencing obstacles in their educational journey. Major effort was placed in the past three years to increase professionals working in this area including counsellors, trainee psychologists, prefects of discipline, youth workers, speech therapists, occupational therapists, resource workers, career advisors and social, emotional behavioural difficulties specialists, amongst others. All new recruited personnel are working on a 40 hour weekly basis all year round. Hence, for the first time in our schools there was a continuation of services even during the summer holidays, school holidays and even after school hours. In full collaboration with teaching staff, individual educational programmes are planned for children so as to ensure that they maximise their access to quality education.

The increase of personnel in the **career guidance** sector saw the implementation of various activities. A number of colleges organised various career-related initiatives, including job exposure / job shadowing initiatives, orientation visits. A Learning Expo was also held in 2010 so as to promote Lifelong Learning and Further Education through the participation of Vocational and Post Secondary Schools/ Institutions and Training Institutions

The student services sector has also seen major changes in the **whole reform process** with a restructuring of the early intervention service, the introduction of a special schools reform, whereby students are placed in school according to their age rather than their special needs, the decentralization of psychosocial services at a College and school level, rather than at national level and the re-organization of learning support services, especially within the secondary school years.

No quality change can occur without the **appropriate infrastructure**. Malta has invested heavily in the past few years to ensure that its reform is provided with new schools, refurbished schools and well equipped schools that are ready to engage in the technological demands of this century. Malta has a long term new school building plan, especially in the secondary sector. Many primary schools are also undergoing refurbishment, and high level technological equipment is being introduced in schools. Teachers have all been provided with their own laptop. Interactive whiteboards are finding their way into the classrooms and gradually becoming an irreplaceable teaching tool. Transportation to schools has also be rationalised so as to ensure the best possible services to students.

(Kindly refer to ANNEX 1 for more details)

PROPOSALS FOR THE PRIORITY AREAS OF THE SUBSEQUENT PERIOD (APPROX. 1 PAGE)

QUESTION 9

Under the 4 broad strategic objectives, described below, the Council also defined mid-term priority areas for the period 2009-11. Which mid-term priority areas would your country wish to cooperate on during the next cycle (please indicate order of priority – high, medium, low)?

9.1 Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality:

- Improve process of harmonisation of the validation of informal and non-formal learning.
- Build upon learning mobility developed during the first cycle.

9.2 Improving quality and efficiency of education and training:

- Encourage VET as an alternative educational path in compulsory education.
- Develop further induction programmes for newly-qualified teachers. In creating learning communities in school, focus should be upon the need to support teachers and school leaders with relevant continuous development training.
- Develop leadership training at class, school, college and system level.

9.3 Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship:

- Develop programmes to empower socially disadvantaged groups.
- Developing inclusive education programmes through progression which celebrate achievement and set targets.

- Work upon the development of programmes targeting migrants' induction in schools.

9.4 Enhancing innovation and creativity, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training:

- Take stock of the incorporation of the key competences in education and training programmes.
- Encourage embedded learning through the use of ICT in compulsory and upper secondary education and training programmes.
- Promote the development of Young Enterprise initiatives at a European level.

9.5 Other comments:

Following the setting up of a Malta Qualifications Framework (2007) and its referencing to the European Qualifications Framework and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (2009), in Summer 2011 amendments to the Education Act will merge the Malta Qualifications Council and the National Commission for Higher Education into one agency. This will accredit, quality assure and licence all further and higher education institutions, validate, through the setting up of sectoral skills councils, informal and non-formal education and training and maintain the Malta Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning.

Malta has also been invited to offer its expertise on the design of a National Qualifications Framework and its referencing to the EQF by Greece, Portugal, Cyprus, Latvia and Bulgaria.