

Educational Policies that Address Social Inequality

Country Report: Malta

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1. Historical overview and impact on social and educational disadvantage

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

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

State Schools

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

Church Schools

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

Private/Independent Schools

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

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

Main Laws/Decrees Governing Maltese Education

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

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

State Education Reform

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

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

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

The Current State of Maltese Education

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

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

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

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

-30 children in classes with no SEN students

-26 children in classes with 1 or more SEN students

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

Religious Minorities

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

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

Linguistic Minorities

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

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

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

Minority languages

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Other Linguistic Minority Groups

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

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

Linguistic Minority/Special Education

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

Indigenous minorities

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

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

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

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

Ethnic minorities

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

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

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

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

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

Socio-economic groups

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

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

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

Special Education

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

Gender

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3. Project summaries included in database

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4. A Summary of Educational Disadvantage in Malta Today

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Pre-School Education (3 to 5)

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

Primary Education (5 to 11)

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

Secondary Education (11 to 16)

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

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

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

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

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

Post Secondary –Tertiary- Education (16 to 18)

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

Appendix 2. Maltese Educational Statistics

(Source: National Statistics Office)

Enrolment at different levels of education (2002-2004)

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

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

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

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

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

Appendix 3: Project Summaries

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

Key: **E** ethnic minorities; **C** Socio-economic; **R** religious minorities; **L** linguistic minorities;
D disability; **I** indigenous minorities; **G** gender

Appendix 4: Project Overview

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

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

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