



# **Independent national experts network in the area of adult education/adult skills**

## **Full Country Report - Malta**

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October - 2017



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

Directorate E — Skills

Unit E.3 — VET, Apprenticeship and Adult Learning

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## **Full country report - Malta**

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Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2018

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## 1.0 COUNTRY OVERVIEW (STATISTICAL ELEMENT TO BE INSERTED BY ECORYS FROM UPDATED COUNTRY OVERVIEW)

### 1.1 Trends for the entire population

#### 1.1.1 Employment rate – entire population

**Table 1.1: Evolution of employment rate - national average (2010-2016) compared to EU data**

	Years									Targets	
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	EU 2020	National 2020
<b>EU-28 average</b>	:	67.9	68.6	68.6	68.4	68.4	69.2	70	71	75% of the 20-64 year-olds in employment	70
<b>Member State</b>	57.5	57.4	60.1	61.6	63.1	64.8	66.4	67.8	69.6		

*Source:* Employment rates by age and educational attainment level (%) Eurostat code *lfsa\_ergaed*, last updated 25 April 2017.

*Explanatory note:* This table compares the average employment rate of the population (ISCED all levels) aged 20 to 64 in a given Member State over the period 2000-2016 to EU targets and average, including the EU2020 target, national 2020 targets and the average EU employment rate for 2016.

#### -Comparison to EU2020 target

The employment rate in Malta as of 2016 stood at 69.6%, compared to a EU2020 target of 75%.

#### -Comparison to National 2020 target

The employment rate in Malta of 69.6% (2016) is practically in reach of the National 2020 target (70%).

#### -Comparison between 2016 national data and the EU-28 average for 2016

National employment data for Malta indicates that, at, 69.6%, the employment rate is very close to the EU-28 average figure of 71%. Over recent years, the rate of employment in Malta has edged closer to the EU average which is now almost in reach. The indications are that this will be fully reached and possibly surpassed in the forthcoming years.

*-Evolution over time:*

The employment rate in Malta has consistently been on the rise since 2000, with the exception of 2005 (which shows a small decrease of 0.1 percentage points since 2000). Otherwise, the rate has increased from 57.5% in 2000 to 69.6% in 2016. The rate of change over this period has outstripped that of change in EU-28 figures.

The gap between the national and EU-28 rate has narrowed, from almost 10% in 2000 to less than 2% in 2016. There has been a steady increase in employment of women owing to a number of measures. In the Pre-Budget 2017 document, it is claimed that "The promotion of flexible working arrangements as well as the provision of free childcare centres, tax exemptions for females joining the labour market and the reduction in the personal income tax rate all encouraged females into getting into sustainable employment" (MFF, 2016a p. 14).

1.1.2 *Participation rate – entire population*

**Table 1.2: Evolution of participation rate in education and training - national average (2010-2016) compared to EU data**

	Years									Targets	
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	EU 2020	National 2020 *
<b>EU-28 average</b>	:	9.6	9.3	9.1	9.2	10.7	10.8	10.7	10.8	15% of adults in lifelong learning (LLL)	15%
<b>Malta</b>	4.5	5.2	6.2	6.6	7.1	7.6	7.4	7.2	7.5		

*Source:* Participation rate in education and training by sex and age (%), Eurostat code *trng\_lfse\_01*, last updated 25 April 2017.

*Explanatory note:* This table compares the participation rate in lifelong learning of adults aged 25-64 to EU data over the period 2000-2016. \* MEDE, 2014b.

*-Comparison to EU2020 target*

The participation rate in education and training was 7.5% in 2016, and therefore, has some way to travel in order to reach the EU2020 target of 15%, which seems out of reach at present. The EU target for 2020 is double the current rate, unlikely to be reached in Malta within three years, given the pattern in the rate evident from 2000 onward. The gap remains steady at an average of almost 3% with respect to the EU average.

While there has been investment in generating new structures for learning, there is need for devising more imaginative ways of inducing people to fully engage with and take up the opportunities.

On the other hand, these statistics do not account for the myriad ways by which adults engage in learning, such as tuning into radio programmes, some, such as those provided by the university based Campus FM, providing a high level of educational content. This

radio station, which broadcasts nationally, boasts large numbers of people 'tuning in', according to listener surveys. In other words, non-formal and informal learning are very difficult to measure. Different countries and regions have their own different forms of learning not captured by traditional surveys. They occur below the radar. In a pilot study, involving telephone interviews with regard to current 'participation, content and forms of adult learning' in Malta (Borg et al, 2016), a number of interviewees remarked that they further their learning informally among friends, family members, including children (with regard to use of the internet, for example), and colleagues at work (Borg, et. al, 2016, p. 64). One wonders whether the EU instruments, measuring adult participation in LLL, cater for these informal processes of learning.

#### *-Comparison between 2016 national data and the EU-28 average for 2016*

The participation rate is 7.5% at the national level compared to 10.8% at EU-28 average level. The national rate has consistently stood below the level of the EU-28 average, with a gap of around 3% remaining steady over the years, indicating that gap between the national rate and that of the EU-28 is unlikely to be bridged in the near future.

#### *-Evolution over time*

The participation rate stood at 4.5% in 2000, and increased to 7.6% in 2013. The 2014 data signalled a drop in the rate to 7.4%, and again in 2015 (to 7.2%). At 7.5%, the 2016 data showed that the rate had partially recovered to its 2013 level.

The gap with the EU average, as regards the select choice of measured participation, has remained steady hovering around the 3% + mark.

## 1.2 Trends for low qualified adults

### 1.2.1 *Share of low qualified adults*

**Table 1.3: Share of low-qualified adults (ISCED 0-2) – national data (2010-2016) compared to EU-28 average 2016**

Geographical area	Years								
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>EU-28 average</b>	:	30.6	27.3	26.6	25.8	24.8	24.1	23.5	23
<b>Member State</b>	81.9	74.8	67	64.5	61.8	59.5	57.8	56.5	54.8

*Source:* Population by educational attainment level, sex and age (%), Eurostat edat\_ifse\_03, last updated 25 April 2017.

*Explanatory note:* this table compares the percentage of the population with low qualifications (ISCED levels 0-2) in 2016 to the EU-28 average for 2016 and the period 2000-2016.

#### *-Comparison to EU-28 average*

The national share of low qualified adults, at 54.8%, is well over double the EU-28 average share (23%). The gap with the EU average is therefore significant and has remained



steadily so since 2005. A particular issue is that the proportion of early school leavers is at present relatively high. There are high numbers of young people indicating dissatisfaction with and disengagement from the school system. It is generally thought that this has implications for the degree to which young people are keen to further their education through institutions that offer education and training in formalised settings.

#### *-Evolution over time*

The share of low qualified adults has fallen from 81.9% in 2000 to 54.8% in 2016. Over this time, there has been a continual and consistent drop in the share. This overall trend is also reflected in the EU-28 data (albeit the share was lower).

The gap with EU-28 on average has remained constant, which calls for imaginative ways of attracting people to learning at all levels. This should involve the creation of stimulating learning environments as well as serious measures to address socio-economic issues that impinge on educational attainment. Striking the right balance between market pull and public needs can prove crucial with respect to access to education and training across all social sectors.

#### 1.2.2 *Employment rate of low skilled adults*

**Table 1.4: Employment rates of low skilled adults (ISCED 0-2) – national data (2010-2016) compared to EU-28 average 2016 (%)**

Geographical area	Years								
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>EU-28 average</b>	:	55.7	53.8	53.4	52.7	52	52.6	53.2	54.3
<b>Member State</b>	49.1	46.7	47.6	49.1	49.5	50.9	52.6	54.2	56.5

*Source:* Employment rates by age and educational attainment level (%) Eurostat code *lfsa\_ergaed*, last updated 25 April 2017.

*Explanatory note:* This table compares the employment rates of those with low qualifications (ISCED levels 0-2) to the EU average over the period 2010-2016.

#### *-Comparison to EU-28 average*

As the figures show, the employment rates of low skilled adults in Malta is higher than that of the EU average, though the gap is not too large (56.5% at the national level compared to 54.3%).

The reason for this is that the economies of other countries in the EU are characterised by large swathes of people involved in basic work such as agricultural production, work that does not necessitate high levels of educational attainment. This is not the case with Malta where most of the employment occurs in the services sector. With a traditionally thriving hidden economy, many supplement their meagre earnings with unaccounted for jobs in this sector, hence less time for these people to pursue further education.

### *-Evolution over time*

The employment rate of low skilled adults has increased consistently between 2005 (46.7%) and 2016 (56.5%). Prior to 2005, there was a reduction in the employment rate from 49.1% in 2000.

The gap has been reduced during recent years, and the national rate seems to remain steadily close to the EU-28 average, although one must take account of the different occupational structures involved.

### 1.2.3 *Participation rate of low skilled adults*

**Table 1.5: Participation rate of low skilled adults – EU average in comparison to national average**

Geographical area	Years								
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>EU-28 average</b>	:	3.7	3.9	4	3.9	4.5	4.5	4.3	4.2
<b>Member State</b>	2.5	2.7	3.4	3	2.4	2.5	2.9	2.4	3

*Source:* Participation rate in education and training by sex and educational attainment (%), Eurostat code and trng\_lfse\_03, last updated 25 April 2017.

*Explanatory note:* This table compares the participation rate in lifelong learning of adults aged 25-64 with low qualification levels (ISCED levels 0-2) to EU data and over the period 2000-2016.

### *-Comparison to EU-28 average*

At 3% in 2016, the participation rate of low skilled adults in adult education and training is below the EU-28 average of 4.2%. It seems that a lack of education attainment in the formative years provides a lack of incentive for pursuing further education, especially of the formal type, later on in life.

### *-Evolution over time*

The participation rate in education and training has fluctuated since 2000. Between 2000 and 2016, the rate oscillated between 2.5 % and 3% indicating little development in this regard. The rate actually increased by 0.9 percentage points between 2000 and 2010 prior to a fall in the rate between 2010 and 2012.

A number of participants employed in jobs requiring low levels of skills, interviewed in the 2016 pilot study telephone AE survey (Borg, Mayo and Raykov, 2016, p.65), "indicated a lack of interest in learning," some even mentioning family commitments, inflexibility of work schedules and lack of courses that matched their interests as barriers. Unless imaginative ways to address this situation are devised, to increase the attractiveness of education and training options, then this pattern is likely to continue.

## 2.0 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF ADULT LEARNING SYSTEM

### 2.1 Main features and a concise summary of historic development

Adult education, as documented in the literature (see Mayo, 2007), developed through different historical and ideological Maltese contexts. Adult Education means different things to different people in Malta. Adult education was traditionally associated with adult literacy and basic education in the period ranging from the last part of the 19th century to the early part of the 20th century, at a time when there was no mass public education. Throughout most of the 20th century, it was linked with emigration and involved literacy education, especially in the English language. The main purpose was to assist prospective emigrants in moving to settlement colonies such as the USA, Canada and Australia, formerly British colonies.

From the 30s to the early 60s, vocational education, often with a strong focus on agriculture, was a key type of adult education provision. There was also adult education of a religious nature and adult education concerned with social development (Borg, Mayo and Raykov, 2016, p.15; Mayo, 2011, p. 4)

In the 1970s, the Church, unions and the main political parties established links with international donor agencies in adult education and related areas (Caruana and Mayo, 2002, p. 62, Caruana, 2004). The two major trade unions organised their provisions in adult education through their establishment of foundations named after their founding figures. Malta's EU accession heightened interest in adult education. Several agencies and individuals started competing for Grundtvig and Leonardo funds. A number of initiatives in adult education, focusing on 'employability', took place. They mainly depended on ESF funding (Borg, Mayo and Raykov, 2016, 2016, p.16).

The early 1990s also saw the establishment of an important centre for vocational education, the **Employment and Training Corporation (ETC)**. It has for years been providing a Training Aid Framework whereby it provides financial assistance to companies investing in their workforce's continuing professional or vocational education. Companies include private ones who can provide this service in-house or else out-source it, even through distance learning (Cedefop-, 2010, p. 77).

The first new millennium decade saw the re-emergence of another higher education college, dedicated to vocational education - the **Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology** (MCAST) - which also attaches importance to adult vocational education. In this regard, it complements the University of Malta, which traces its origins to 1592. This university has been providing different kinds of university continuing education (UCE) , for years, and especially since the late 1940s and 1950s, and more so since the 1960s (Mayo, 2003). A huge impetus for UCE was provided with the introduction of evening degree and diploma courses in 1960 and most recently with its liberal arts and science courses. These can be taken by anyone in the evening against payment of a nominal fee either on a one-off basis or else in a manner which allows participants to accumulate the amount of credits required for a liberal arts and science degree.

The University of Malta also has an extension centre hitherto focused on a specific region, but other similar centres might be set up in other regions in the future.

The publicly funded University of Malta's monopoly is now being challenged by many **other players in university continuing education**. It is challenged by MCAST and other, public and private (including foreign privately owned) institutions. People can access globally marketed online programmes provided by a plethora of institutions, including universities. The available programmes are in such areas as Management, ICT, Training, Communications and Education (Mayo, 2007; Darmanin, 2009). One area which has expanded exponentially since the 1970s is that of teaching English to foreigners, including foreign adults. The country surpassed England, a long time ago, as the most favoured destination for German students (Domas, 2004, p. 10).

The players or rather agencies involved in privately and commercially provided adult education are various, ranging from **English language schools to HRD agencies**. It would be fair to say, however, that historically the major adult education player has been the state through its general adult education programmes. They include programmes of learning held in the morning, and early afternoons frequented by people who do not engage in waged labour, especially women. They include others held in the evenings, especially as evening classes. The main state body for this purpose is the Directorate for Lifelong Learning in the Ministry of Education and Employment (DLL-MEDE) which organised around a hundred courses titles, with 500 courses starting in October 2016.<sup>1</sup> It also organises a course for practitioners leading to the National Diploma in Teaching Adults.<sup>2</sup>

The State is also responsible for a lot of training programmes through MCAST and the Employment & Training Corporation (ETC). There were times in the past when the latter would fall under the Ministry for Social Policy while the broader educational, rather than training, programmes traditionally fell under the Ministry of Education - now MEDE. All these areas are now under the administrative control of one entity, MEDE, with a view to providing greater coordination. Hence the governance of the VET programme falls squarely under MEDE and has been so for quite a number of years. This provides a modicum of coordination for the national Maltese system of education and training.

There were many earlier **attempts to get firms involved** in the education of personnel. One significant attempt occurred under the Labour Government from 1978 till 1987 when firms were encouraged to sponsor their employees and prospective ones to enrol in university courses involving study and work periods of five and a half months each, the latter within the premises of the firm concerned. Very few employers save for those in the public sector have shown keenness in sponsoring adult students (see Mayo, 2013). Another noteworthy project concerning CVET occurred in the late 90s through the Night Institute for Further Technical Education (NFTE) whereby firms were encouraged to open their premises at night for the training of adults who are not necessarily employees. This was part of a scheme involving the Maltese government, ETC and an Israeli training

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<sup>1</sup> Information provided by Directorate for LLL, Ministry of Education and Employment, Malta –DLL-MEDE

<sup>2</sup><https://www.gov.mt/en/Services-And-Information/Business-Areas/Education%20and%20Learning/Pages/Lifelong-Learning.aspx> Accessed 29<sup>th</sup> September 2016

agency, ORT (Mayo, 2007). Earlier data in section 1.1.2 indicated an increase in the percentage of employees in Malta provided with training organised or financed by their employer, which still falls below the EU average but marks a substantial contribution

According to Eurostat's CVET survey for 2010, 36% of employees (all enterprises) participated in CVT courses in Malta (European Commission 2015b, p.19). This seems a substantial number. Yet given that a great percentage of employees in Malta are employed in the public sector (25% of total employment in 2015 is in the public sector<sup>3</sup>), it remains to be seen whether it is the public sector which provides most of the continuous professional or vocational training rather than the private sector. A private company, MISCO is involved in an annual training rate of 2500 persons employed by around 300 organisations from the country's public and private sectors (Zahra, 2014). The public sector and especially the civil service has its own Staff Development Office within the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM). It is intended to cater for the ongoing preparation of employees and other entities such as the Centre for Development, Research and Training (CDRT) that prepares employees for a variety of tasks including outreach community tasks. The accusation levelled time and time again in Malta is that private firms do not sufficiently invest in training. The earlier point about the former worker-student scheme and the private sector's reluctance to sponsor full-time students and employees was indicative of this. A 2010 Cedefop report on Malta indicated "There is currently no official register of recognised vocational courses offered as CVET within the private sector." (CEDEFOP-Refernet-Malta, 2010, p. 52)

In a small country like Malta, the State encourages firms to provide training through the sort of incentives mentioned earlier. It encourage's mainly those who employ a minimum of ten people because of its awareness that many of the small firms, in Malta, do not enjoy the economies of scale that would make such as training programmes a viable option; there is also the fear, on their part, of their well-trained staff being poached. The costs per capita of training a small number of people is high, hence the need for the state to step in through its colleges and institutions to provide better economies of scale. MCAST also serves this purpose.

Quality assurance is of essence in the development of CVET (also covered in the following section). This falls under the **National Council for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE)** and covers such entities as MCAST, which has been restructured in the form of colleges in 2015, including a University level college for vocational education in 2015, the ETC and the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS).

Other important entities, traditionally involved in social purpose adult education, still include the **Catholic Church with Church-sponsored programmes** ranging from basic education, including functional literacy, and religious instruction (including catechesis) to more general education in areas such as 'new literacies' and, at university level, via the Theology faculty, to evening diplomas and degrees in religious studies. There are agencies, such as Caritas, involved in different forms of adult learning, that belong to the Church's

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<sup>3</sup><http://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2016-02-02/local-news/Public-sector-employment-as-a-percentage-of-total-employment-down-from-2008-Finance-Minister-6736152708>

larger social network. There are occasional attempts at adult community education at the parish level, often in tandem with the local council or an NGO. At least one of these entities, the Jesuit run Paulo Freire Institute, also offers basic education courses in concert with and financed by the ETC to facilitate the employment of these course participants.

**Local councils** (municipal councils in every locality) would appear as appropriate vehicles for adult education at the community level, capable of even competing for European funds for this purpose. Some adult education provision is carried out in certain localities under the aegis of the local council but these efforts have been few and far between. Zejtun is one locality that stands out in this regard, engaging in different learning activities with other entities, including the Paulo Freire Institute just mentioned. The Dingli Local Council is another entity that has been active in community adult education. In partnership with University academics, it has invested in the area of critical active aging (Borg and Formosa, 2013, 2015).

Finally **trade unions**, regularly competing for EU funds, have been and continue to be major players in workers' education in a range of areas from cultural accretion and practice oriented activities to others broaching 'tool courses' for trade union personnel (e.g. bargaining techniques) and 'issue courses' (e.g. Globalisation, Precarious Employment & Living) for members of the public in general. One of these, the Unjon Haddiema Magħqudin (United Workers' Union) set up a foundation for human resource development intended to provide members with continuing professional development and CVET.

**Table 2.1 Number of participants in formal education and training by level of education and age**

	Age 20-24	Age 25+	Total
<b>Level of education</b>			
<b>Primary</b>	0	0	0
<b>Lower secondary</b>	36	6	
<b>Upper secondary</b>	309	60	369
<b>Post-secondary non-tertiary education</b>		176	
<b>Short-cycle tertiary education</b>		971	
<b>Bachelor's or equivalent level</b>		943	
<b>Master's or equivalent level</b>		1,751	
<b>Doctoral or equivalent level</b>		110	

Source: Eurostat, Eurostat database table "Pupils and students enrolled by education level, sex and age (educ\_uoe\_enra02)", accessed 2017.08.21

## 2.2 Provision

The main providers of Adult education and VET include DLL-MEDE, the publicly funded ETC (it subcontracts adult education and training services to different companies, institutions and NGOs), community organisations, the Catholic Church, higher education institutions and organisations competing for ESF funding.

### 2.2.1 *Helps adults improve their Basic Skills*

The National Lifelong Learning Strategy (NLLLS) document calls for the development of the concept of 'key competences' – a generic set of skills and attitudes, which can be useful in all work situations – as a means of keeping education and training relevant in a fast-changing environment and to equip people to adapt to changing circumstances and deal with unknown situations. The document claims that, as well as instilling specific knowledge and skills, today's education and training systems must encourage motivation, reflection, self-evaluation, self-guidance, critical and cross-disciplinary thinking, teamwork and problem-solving skills.

It is argued that the systems should train people to respond to complex demands, communicate with and understand others, plan ahead, make innovative choices and take risks and accept the consequences. These kinds of competences cannot be taught or assessed in isolation nor can they simply be attached to existing programmes designed to produce narrow trade-related knowledge and skills. They call for a much more holistic approach to organising education and training in which both course content, and the roles of teachers and learners will change dramatically. A National Literacy Strategy (NLS) was set up for the purpose of improving provision in this area was established in 2014.

Basic skills, including New Basic Skills, as per EU's LLL Memorandum Message 1, feature among the range of provision of adult education provided by the DLL-MEDE. These include basic numeracy and literacy, languages (not only Maltese and English but also foreign ones that are quite popular among those in or seeking employment in the Tourist industry), ICT, and other forms of basic digital learning. Other providers of basic literacy skills are NGOs often operating at the parish level. They also include a community extension service in the low socio-economic status Cottonera region of Malta (one area that has been sadly underrepresented at the University for several years) operated by the University of Malta: the centre is called the University of Malta Cottonera Resource Centre (CRC-UM).

### 2.2.2 *Helps adults achieve a Recognised Qualification*

The Malta Qualification Framework (MQF) system grades courses taken at different levels: Introductory Levels A and B; General Level (school leaving certificate 1) and VET level 1; General level 2 and VET 2; General Education levels 1-5 and VET level 3; Matriculation Advanced Level and VET Level diploma 4; Undergraduate certificate and diploma levels; VET Higher diploma foundation degree to undergraduate, postgraduate certificate or diploma levels; Masters and Doctoral degree. The MQF was established in 2007. The National Council for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) is the national competent authority that recognises qualifications and accredits courses according to the MQF.

*2.2.3 Helps adults develop other knowledge and skills, not for vocational purposes*

The provision of courses by the DLL-MEDE covers a whole range of subjects, including areas of general interest and not specifically tied to one's vocational employment or aspirations for employment. In a country where tourism constitutes one of its mainstays, it is difficult to draw a fine line between say the teaching of foreign languages, art or history and employment opportunities.

One popular subject provided by various agencies in Malta, including the General Workers' Union, is Ganutell (a Maltese art form of making artificial flowers from wire, thread, and beads) which is one of many means whereby people singularly or collectively develop their popular creative spirit. The skills might lead to some economic return but can also be put to good use in communal celebrations such as the popular festas (feast of the locality's patron saint).

The NLLLS specifically calls for a holistic notion of LLL provision (Mayo, 2017). It also sees basic skills acquisition as a potential means for entry into areas of cultural development. For instance, in the case of immigrants, it states: "Literacy programmes for immigrants contribute to social integration and should be complemented by cultural orientation courses that will further help their integration into the community and into the workforce" (MEDE, p. 73).

*2.2.4 Facilitates Transition to the Labour Market for unemployed people or those at risk of unemployment (ALMPs)*

The ETC is set up to facilitate the transition to the Labour market. It has provided its own courses and has also created links with other providers for those who register for employment to be able to attend these institutions with profit. MCAST and LLL classes feature among the sources of provision. The ETC has often acted in tandem with NGOs such as the Paulo Freire Institute in the community of Zejtun for this purpose.

*2.2.5 Opens up Higher Education to adults*

In academic year 2014-2015 there were 276 students registered at MCAST and University of Malta under the 'maturity clause' (Ministry of Finance, Budget Speech 2016). Students over 23 years of age can join a number of courses at University under the 'maturity clause'. Students over 21 years can join MCAST under the same conditions (CEDEFOP-Refernet, Malta, 2014, p. 14). This means that they need not have to have the officially prescribed entry requirements for courses at the undergraduate level, provided that they can show that they can follow the course with profit. Furthermore, MCAST provides a series of evaluations on prior learning and work experience which can allow people exemption from certain modules (Malta Independent Report, 2013). A survey carried out between May and August 2013 among all students from the University of Malta, MCAST and ITS indicates



that percentage shares<sup>4</sup> of students who enter higher education and vocational Education and Training through 'non-traditional' routes, such as the so-called 'Maturity clause' are 11.6% and 10.5% respectively (NCFHE, 2014, p. 13).

Like other students, mature students can also benefit from a government student stipend provided on condition that they are Maltese citizens or have one parent who is Maltese, have been living in the country for five years, have completed their term of compulsory education and are registering satisfactory progress in the course they are following. No fees are charged to EU students attending full time undergraduate degree courses at University. The same conditions more or less apply to mature students attending MCAST. The maturity clause was introduced at MCAST in 2009 targeting a wide variety of people, including those who were early school leavers. Furthermore MCAST Principal, Stephen Cachia indicates, in an interview, that

#### *2.2.6 Enables adult employees to develop their work-related skills*

The economy is doing well, and unemployment is down to more than acceptable levels. There is therefore, the need for continuing education to reach people already in employment via vocational reorientation courses, more so given that, as indicated at the outset, Malta has a high percentage of people in employment with a low level of formal educational achievement. A recent pilot study on participation in adult learning (Borg et al, 2016, p. 63) indicates that more than half of the interviewed participants mentioned that they benefitted from informal learning, in job-related tasks, and the use of computers and new equipment.

#### *2.2.7 Other (if any)*

The last point in 2.2.6 suggests that informal learning should therefore, also serve as a focus when measuring adult learning activities, including job-related ones. The same pilot study also indicates that people in Malta also learn computer-related skills through interaction with their offspring in a process of intergenerational learning.

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<sup>4</sup> The NCFHE 2014 report states "A total of 1,190 students provided data on the above-mentioned variables and could, therefore, be considered in the analysis as valid responses. This ensures a margin of error of 2.69% of the findings presented in this report assuming a 95% degree of confidence, which is quite satisfactory. In order to further ensure that the data is representative of the diversity of the student population studied in this report, the data collected has been weighted. This data weighting was carried out based on administrative data of the student population at MQF level 5-7 at the university of Malta, MCAST and ITS during the academic year 2013/2014. For this purpose the distribution in the total population by higher education institution, gender, age and MQF level during the academic year 2013/2014 was compared to the same distribution among students, who provided valid responses. In cases, where this resulted in weighting factors lower than 0.2 or higher than 5, the weighting factor was rounded up to 0.2 or rounded down to 5 respectively. Following this adjustment of the weighting factors the arithmetic mean was calculated and all values were adjusted in order for the arithmetic mean to be 1." (NCFHE, 2014, p. 10)

### **3.0 ADULT LEARNING POLICIES**

#### **3.1 Context**

##### *3.1.1 Distribution of responsibilities regarding adult learning*

As previously indicated, it is only now that Malta has an NLLLS. Mayo (2012) regards the State as the major player in adult education, especially through its DLL-MEDE and ETC.

The Catholic Church is another important player in adult education. It provides adult education at national and parish levels, and through its larger network of NGOs (e.g. Caritas). Other providers include state-funded academic institutions and provided ones that create a private Higher Education market (see Darmanin, 2009). There are also private (for-profit) ICT and language schools, NGOs and cultural centres promoting a foreign country's language and culture (e.g. Alliance Française, Circolo Cultural Hispano Maltés; Mayo, 2012).

There is today no ostensible national regulatory body for adult learning as in the case of higher education, in this case the NCFHE. This is unlikely to occur in future given the different agencies involved, agencies, which are mainly keen to protect their specific identity and autonomy and safeguard their agenda.

The NCFHE, however, is the regulatory body for CVET. It is assigned responsibility" for licensing, accrediting, and quality assuring all further and higher institutions". These include VET institutions in Malta. The recent legal notice 296/2012 two accords the NCFHE "the legislative power to set the necessary standards and criteria which institutions need to fulfil in order to obtain their license as VET institutions, and to maintain their license" (NCFHE, 2013, p.12).

##### *3.1.2 Major national socio-economic strategies governing the provision of Adult Learning*

An NLLLS document has been introduced to guide the overall provision in Lifelong Learning. This follows on from and connects with the earlier NLS for adult basic skills acquisition with the emphasis on literacy.

The NCFHE is the regulatory body for accreditation of courses, including VET, CVET and other learning provision, in accordance with the MQF. This also includes qualifications obtained by distance online learning.

Main legislative act(s) governing the provision of adult learning strategies

The Maltese Government is about to launch two new acts, namely a new Education Act and a new University Act. One trusts that sections in these two acts are devoted to adult education, and one expects the NLLLS Task force is pushing the Ministry in this direction. At the moment, the content of these acts are not yet known. There has never been an Adult Education Act to date.

### 3.1.3 *Main Strategies*

The main strategies are highlighted in the NLLLS and will be indicated further on. The strategy reserves importance with regard to learning for employment but strikes a balance between this requirement and that of social development, viewing education holistically as serving broader purposes than 'employability'. The focus is on coordination of the various dispersed activities taking place in Malta and Gozo and the need to avoid duplication, which is costly in small nation states with an exiguous population. The emphasis is also on inclusion, sustainable development and a holistic approach to learning. It emphasises LLL not only within but also beyond institutions.

### 3.1.4 *Main implementing acts*

A Task force has been set up for this purpose, which draws people from different sectors. One of the ideas suggested by the NLLL is that of developing a University department for the preparation of and research into the education of adults. This has been realised with the setting up, in the academic year 2016, of the Department of Arts, Open Communities & Adult Education at the University of Malta. Much emphasis over the years has been dedicated to the preparation of adult educators with a highly successful (in terms of participants) National Diploma in Adult Education. With the cooperation of the new University department, this is now being upgraded to the status of a University diploma at MQF level 5 (University diploma level).

There is work being carried out in the development of a pilot project concerning Schools as Community Learning Centres, an important area in a small country where the cost per capita of duplication, regarding initial education institutions and adult education centres, is high in comparison to larger states. It is important to use resources in creative and multifunctional ways (Jules, 2013).

## 3.2 **Adult Learning Policy Framework**

### 3.2.1 *A summary of major developments/ changes since 2010*

The greatest development since 2010 is the publication of a NLLLS document to guide the development and coordination of LLL in the two substantially inhabited islands (Malta and Gozo) constituting the Republic of Malta, and the subsequent adoption of this document, following feedback, as the blueprint for a national LLL strategy set of guidelines. A task force was appointed for this purpose and is working on one important aspect of this policy, echoing previous national curriculum documents, namely that of converting schools as community learning centres. Work on a pilot project in the capital city, Valletta, is underway as far as the physical component of this school serving as a multifunctional learning centre is concerned. Two new acts, an Education Act and a University Act, are in the process of being completed although to date it is not clear whether adult education and university continuing education respectively constitute important sections of these acts.

### 3.2.2 *Main legislative act(s) governing the provision of adult learning*

The National LLL Strategy (MEDE, 2014b), the main declared policy change in adult education since 2013, indicates the priorities for policy in adult education and LLL in general are:

1. Coordinate delivery of LLL by public organisations: the DLL-MEDE is taking initiatives to organise workshops and seminars to bring stakeholders together to ensure constant exchange of information and gather ideas for coordinated action to avoid duplication as much as possible. This is a key issue in a small state where duplication is costly per capita (see Jules, 2013).
2. Promote Adult Skills and VET as the optimum, flexible route to employability, personalised professional development and economic well-being.
3. Develop a coherent, equitable and sustainable accreditation system for adult learning: the setting up of a Malta Qualifications Council (MQC) provides opportunities for prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) and this augurs well for the future in this regard. The MQC has made the validation of formal and non- formal learning one of its primary concerns. In its document (MQC, 2007), the Council states "Informal and Non-formal education and training as well as the recognition of prior learning (RPL) will eventually form part of the national qualifications framework for lifelong learning." With regard to the ETC, persons who claim to have acquired competences on the job, even though they have not had any lessons regarding the trade, have the right to apply to the ETC to undergo a Trade Test. If they are successful, they are awarded a Certificate of Achievement (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 2).
4. Improve the overall quality of adult learning in Malta and Gozo (the second most substantially inhabited island of the Maltese archipelago forming the Republic of Malta) : emphasis is placed on the preparation of adult educators b both the Ministry of Education and Employment and the University of Malta.
5. Embrace the emergence of Open Education Resources as an opportunity for Connected Learning.
6. Facilitate Women's participation at the workplace through LLL.
7. Develop LLL in a manner that supports inclusivity and empowers marginalised communities: There is a commitment to LLL also in the context of active aging. While the National Strategy for Active Ageing places emphasis on vocational retraining for active participation in the labour market (Parliamentary Secretariat for Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing, 2013), the NLLLS, while endorsing this view, seeks a broader remit for the education of older adults. This includes the need for educators to be present in homes for the elderly to turn these into educational settings for learning activities that extend beyond the vocational.
8. Foremost among policy initiatives in this regard is the transformation of 'Day Centres for the Elderly' into Centres for Active Ageing serving as 'lifelong learning hubs' Learning modules on information and communication technology for persons aged 60-plus in 22 diverse e-learning centres, as well as the running of state-sponsored pre-retirement learning programmes, are also being organised on an annual basis. Malta's University of the Third Age (U3A) is also a recipient of national funds as the government is sponsoring the running of two U3A centre, one at Mosta

and the other in the Cottonera district. The Cottonera, compared to other regions in the Republic of Malta includes the highest percentage of older persons at-risk-of-poverty. Finally, the government is now organising learning activities in care homes for older persons targeting mobile and cognitively alert residents and other residents experiencing a range of physical and psychological ailments, including dementia.

9. Improve the quality of life of older people through LLL Opportunities.
10. Coordinate ownership and delivery of Community Learning: A task force has been developed to spearhead the implementation of the National LLL Strategy. It is currently working on a number of projects, especially a pilot project for the development of schools as community learning centres.
11. Raise awareness of Greener living as a core component of LLL.

### **Recent programmes**

Several new programmes have been introduced to involve adults in LLL. Quite noteworthy is the National Literacy Strategy(NLS) launched in 2014 and implemented through the National Literacy Agency. The NLS is a comprehensive programme targeting people of all ages including youth and adults, including both nationals and foreigners. The target is general proficiency in both the Maltese and English languages. (European Commission, 2015a, p. 4) While Maltese is the national-popular language, English remains the language of international currency, knowledge of which prevents people from remaining on the periphery of economic and political life. The relevance of this type of language acquisition for employment cannot be overemphasised.

Following consultation with social partners, the government embarked on developing a single national apprenticeship scheme with a view to raising the quality of labour force provision, thus catering for the labour market needs. The scheme was intended to cover a larger number of qualification levels and also involved a system of tax deductions, one of the 2014 budget measures. (European Commission, 2015a, p. 7)

MCAST has been reorganised to facilitate this process. It has introduced a new programme called the Skills-Kits that allows people, not in employment and who have finished compulsory education, to learn various skills at their own pace and at no expense. Students can register for up to 30 skills kits a year, each comprising 20 hours of instruction.

There are several strands involved in this Skills-kits scheme: 1. Creativity and Services: includes creativity and basic services offered in the community; 2. Lifestyle Science strand, entailing care for people, animals and plants; 3. DIY Engineering Projects - basic technical skills such as domestic plumbing, low voltage device installation, motorcycle servicing; 4 Integration, which is especially targeted at foreigners wishing to study or work in Malta. It involves cultural immersion such as learning Maltese and English; 5. Personal skills; 6. Employability skills; 7. Functional skills, including basic education. <sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20160717/education/Skills-Kits-programme.619139>

Finally, the University of Malta has been involved in developing a programme to prepare people to act in the important area of Lifelong Vocational Education and Guidance. This course is jointly organised by the University's Centre for Labour Studies and the Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Educational Research also at the university. This is an important initiative which takes these two areas beyond schooling into the area of adult vocational education.

### 3.3 National quantitative policy targets

As Table 3.1 shows, over 32,000 adults are to be engaged in learning and training by 2020.

**Table 3.1 Targets linked to Adult Learning in broader economic policies/LLL strategies/framework or implementing act**

General information		Progress toward target		
Target (target figure and date to be achieved by)	Adoption date (e.g. 31/03/2018)	Initial value (at date of adoption)	Current value	Summary of progress against target
32,000 to participate in adult education by 2020	2016	10,000 apply to join MEDE LLL courses	Circa 5000 (50% attrition) in MEDE's LLL courses	This is a conservative estimate as it only factors in participants in MEDE's Adult Education programme carried out in its own institutions, NGOs and local council premises. The 50% attrition includes foreigners who join ESL and similar courses but who drop out because they leave the country.  Calculated 2014 number indicated in NLLLS (MEDE, 2014a, p. 9) Calculated percentage in NSO News Release 30/11/2016 Calculated from 25-64 age group numbers (split between sexes and between 24-55 and 56-64) in Index Mundi July 2016
32,000 to participate in adult education by 2020	2014	17550	15718 7.2% of 25-64 year-olds by 2015	

### **3.4 Quality assurance**

A document outlining the need and indicators for quality assurance (QA) has been produced (NCFHE, 2013). The indicators include: 1 Investment in training of teachers and trainers 2. Involvement of teachers and students in QA. 3. Participation in VET programmes 4. Completion rate in VET programmes 5. Placement rate in VET programmes 6 Utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace 7 Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market 8. Schemes used to promote better access to VET 9. Self-Evaluation 10. Transparency of QA system 11. Trans-institutional relations. (NCFHE, 2013, p.41)

The NCFHE document also indicates how established institutions such as MCAST have their own QA processes. We are told that MCAST 'carries out programme audits that serve as an early warning system in cases where the training does not reflect the desired level of quality. MCAST has external evaluators for BTEC courses and also for MCAST degree courses. These external examiners ensure that MCAST achieves the standards which should be accomplished by any institution in delivering training in the same sector/s" (NCFHE, 2013, p.48)

### **3.5 Future policy developments**

A task force has been set up for the implementation of the NLLLS, and it meets regularly to discuss potential initiatives in this regard. Its brief is to look at LLL holistically. Hopefully, the impending Education and University Acts will allow scope for further policy development in this regard.

## **4.0 INVESTMENT IN ADULT LEARNING SYSTEMS**

### **4.1 Total investment in adult learning and change over time**

The EU is increasingly becoming a key funding source for adult education. Funds are provided via its various actions and sources such as the European Structural Funds. According to the data on financial support to the Member States between 2014 and 2020, available in July, 2016 for the European Commission from Operational Programmes for the European Social Fund (ESF), the planned financial support from the European Union is €246.8 million. This is the financial support for the investment priority most directly targeting adult learning, i.e. Investment priority 10.3 – Enhancing access to lifelong learning. Total investment during the seven years (2014-2020) for education, training and vocational training for skills and LLL, amounts € 37.9 million. (European Commission, 2014)

In the case of ESF funding, the stress is placed on 'employability'. This restricts the range of NGO provision. Corporations such as the ETC benefit from ESF funding. Even prior to Malta's full accession to the EU in 2004, the ETC was successful with a number of bids. Six out of the 30 bids submitted in 2003 were approved (Mayo, 2007, p.35). The Foundation for Educational Services (FES), which falls under MEDE, and other agencies tapped into ESF funds. Through these funds, the FES sought to develop schools as community learning centres, in keeping with a provision, to this effect, in the 1999 National Minimum Curriculum document (NMC) (Mayo, 2007, p. 29). Alas, funding for this project was, however, subsequently halted (Mayo, 2011 p. 7).

Funds from the EU have now been secured to help develop a pilot project in the area via the task force for the implementation of the NLLLS. They are also being used for other projects in the area of community adult learning, as disclosed at the first meeting (August, 2016) of the Thematic Working Group on Community Learning called by the DLL-MEDE.

Other agencies such as the German SDP-oriented Friedrich Ebert Stiftung have, among other things, funded projects carried out by a university-based labour studies oriented centre, and an NGO linked to the Labour Party and the General Workers' Union. There were times when this NGO also sought sponsorship from local councils (Caruana, 2004, p. 64) for carrying out literacy programmes in their localities. Apart from these sources of funding, Maltese adult education agencies have little else on which to draw. The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung closed its offices in Malta (Mayo, 2007).

According to Mayo (2012), there is an "emerging private higher education market which caters for adult learners by offering a variety of programmes not found at the public [University]...", although it has recently been provided only in the areas of Theology, Youth Studies (now a full time course) and Work & HRD. There is a greater variety at diploma and Master's levels (Mayo, 2007; Mayo et al, 2008; Darmanin, 2009). The higher education market includes private institutes that provide courses leading to degrees offered by foreign universities and, which are available to adults and youngsters in the evening. There are also "the booming private HRD, ICT and the English language (to foreigners) industry" (Mayo, 2012)



## **4.2 Public national investment**

By means of its annual budget allocations, the State funds general adult education services rendered by its institutions. It also provides funds for health promotion and vocational education. Total budget estimates (recurrent expenses) for 2017 is the same as for 2016, i.e. €125,000, a marginal increase from 2015, which was €109,692. Government funding is available for participation in lifelong learning programmes for persons who are unemployed or who cannot afford the expenses involved. This level of support is in accordance with the relevant scheme under which it falls. The ETC provides one such scheme targeting minimum wage earners undergoing training and/or participating in adult courses. They are entitled to receiving 25 Euros per week throughout the course/training period. Free classes, especially in literacy and numeracy, are provided by several social-oriented NGOs.

Other numeracy and literacy classes are offered for free by the DLL-MEDE. There are free courses of choice for adult learners on social benefits and senior adult learners (60+ for females and 61+ for males).

Pension credits for accumulated years of study and training, in the context of lifelong learning, is being introduced for the first time as a result of the 2016 National Budget. According to the Budget document, "This should help in promoting human capital development. Credits will be given and can be accumulated for each MQF (Malta Qualification Framework –my insertion) level reached and will be given during the study period" (Ministry for Finance, 2015, p. 33).

Malta derives support from the ESF to realise its objectives with €112 million funding allocated for 2007-2013. Thanks to national co-funding, total ESF spending on education and jobs in Malta amounts to over €131 million. "Malta's ESF programme has four priorities: improving education and skills; investing in employability and adaptability; promoting an equal and inclusive labour market; and strengthening institutional and administrative capacity" (European Union, 2012, p. 3). There is little evaluation to date of the effectiveness of the ESF supported projects. Parliamentary Secretary for EU Presidency and EU Funds, Dr Ian Borg announced, in a 21 October 2016 Press Release that a budget of €47.4 million has been allocated for initiatives in LLL and training. This funding derives from the Malta ESF operational programme for the period 2014-2010.

**Table 4.1 Breakdown of public national investment**

Title of public investment source	Source of funding	Amount of funding	Targeted number of participants	Targeted level of provision	Start/ end date
Budget (recurrent)	Ministry of Finance	125,000€	Not indicated in financial estimates	Lifelong Learning from NQF levels 1 to 5	January 2017- December 2017
Budget (recurrent)	Ministry of Finance	€30,000	Not indicated in financial estimates	Training for Programme for Minimum Wage Earners	January 2017- December 2017
Budget (recurrent)	Ministry of Finance	€70,000	Not indicated in financial estimates	Active Labour Market Policies	January 2017- December 2017
ESF 01.001	EU Regional Dev Fund 80%	€6,877,181		Training for Employment	2016-2020
ESF 01.002	EU Regional Dev. Fund 80%	€5,031,569		Youth Guarantee 2.0	2015-2019
ESF 03.004	EU Regional Dev Fund 80%	€254,169		E-Commerce Training Programme	2016-2019
EU	European Agenda for AL in Europe	€20,000	20 parents	Community programme in schools	2015-2017
EU	Erasmus +	€430,000	60 adult learners: 30 hrs basic skills course; 500 adult educators attended training, 200 attended peer activity in Malta	Breaking Barriers (adult literacy using digital media, tool kit for adult educators)	2015-2017

#### **4.3 EU support via structural funds (primarily ESF)**

##### *4.3.1 Structural fund support planned as part of 2014-2020 financial framework*

Malta is eligible, during this period, for approximately €1.1 billion in EU funding. Priorities in LLL include VET and CVET. The increase in population of those in the 17-18 age bracket is expected to have an impact on these sectors. Importance will be thus accorded to developing "the capacity and teaching tools in further educational institutions, particularly VET institutions." The Malta Government is also "exploring the introduction of investments in ICT infrastructure that will enable continuous learning through measures such as e-Learning facilities, with the aim of attracting more students into further and higher education and facilitate teaching methods" (Government of Malta, 2013, p.84).

##### *4.3.2 EU support via structural funds (primarily ESF) provided as part of 2007-2013 financial framework*

The EU funds of €855 million were allocated between 2007 and 2013 for Cohesion Policy in Malta, €112 million being ESF funds. Expenditure during this period included LLL among voluntary staff working for a local council (€2,756), the Youth Guarantee project among unemployed youth carried out by an active labour market training committee within MEDE (€3,068,802), and active employability for parents carried out by MEDE's FES (€68,590). These are just a few examples of the projects that benefited from this funding.

#### **4.4 Effectiveness of investment**

Finally, there seems to be no document or report available seeking to explore return on investment with regard to continuing vocational education and training. The NCFHE, as the regulating body in this regard, would be expected to provide some indications on this matter in their evaluation of standards for the issuing and renewal of licences for VET providers in Malta from both the public and private sector. This is what one expects to see in the forthcoming years.

## **5.0 ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING POLICY**

The following sub-sections assess the existing policy through the lens of the six key success factors for effective adult learning policy that have been identified in a recent study.<sup>6</sup>

It would be naïve to suggest that any strategy for LLL (national, provincial or municipal) should eschew all kinds of considerations concerning the country's economy. Engaging with the area of work remains an important responsibility, more so within a ministry, as that of Malta.<sup>7</sup> The 2014 NLLLS document certainly does not fall short in this regard. It emphasises, especially in the first section, a correlation between learning that meets the needs of industry and employers. As a recent EU member, Malta, like other new member states, is still in its initial stages of reorganising its educational system to reach the goals concerning education targets set by the EU Lisbon agenda: "It meets Malta's obligations within the EU Lisbon process; addresses the challenges faced in embedding Lifelong Learning within our society and identifies the areas of national priority in the years to come" (MEDE, 2014b, p. 7). The policy, as reflected in the NLLLS, must be seen in this context.

### **5.1 Develop learners' interest in learning**

The policy strategy document (NLLLS) advocates important goals for the country. It places emphasis on the nature of teaching at all levels to improve one's disposition towards education and learning – to be eager to continue to learn and not be put off learning. The former involves becoming a self-directed learner.

### **5.2 Increase employers' investment in learning**

The policy strategy encourages employers' involvement in the provision of learning, a position backed by incentives mentioned in the already quoted national policy document on employment (MEDE, 2014a), a document which stresses the need for adult education and, as shown earlier, indicated the incentives provided for adults and ageing workers to participate in LLL (all referred to in earlier parts of this report). The emphases are on providing a chunk of ESF money to assist firms with providing training as well as assisting ageing workers with vocational-reorientation, giving their decreasing physical prowess for certain jobs. One must, however, keep in mind the point made earlier concerning the scale factor.

The small size of Maltese firms militates against this type of investment by employers. The costs involved in educating and training one or two employees are high. There is also the fear that the beneficiaries of this training can be poached. These small firms lack the

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<sup>6</sup> Key success factors, indicating the strength of evidence (available in all EU languages): <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/policy-tool/key-success-factors>. Study "An in-depth analysis of adult learning policies and their effectiveness in Europe" by EC (2015): <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/final-report-20150817-en.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> The Ministry in question is the Ministry of Education and Employment (MEDE)

required economies of scale of many of their counterparts and competitors in larger countries. In small states like Malta, the onus for organised education and training lies with the state and its institutions such as MCAST. These institutions provide economies of scale (Baldacchino and Mayo, 1996; Mayo, et al., 2008). There have been attempts in the past, precisely in the 70s and early to mid-80s, to bring employers on board to cover part of the cost of tertiary education provision. The Labour Government of the time had developed a worker-student scheme (involving work and study phases) at University. Employers were reluctant to play their part for a variety of reasons not least the concerns just raised (high cost per capita for small firms and fear of poaching). (Mayo, 2013a)

### **5.3 Improve equity of access for all**

The emphasis in the NLLLS is on inclusion in terms of gender, ethnicity and age. It devotes entire sections to each and makes suggestions for measures to be taken to bridge the divide in various areas between people located differently with regard to the three categories just mentioned. The emphasis on MQF levels and prior learning recognition is a measure to render access to training and education more accessible on the basis of experience and qualifications obtained by different routes from those of the mainstream.

### **5.4 Deliver learning that is relevant**

In its broader conceptualisation of LLL, the NLLLS document intimates that the needs of learners, and not only employers, are to be given importance. This is commendable since the kind of holistic LLL advocated by the document reflects a broad democratic agenda concerning education and the world of work. Improving people's disposition towards learning requires action at all levels of the education system, including initial education, which needs to place emphasis on whetting the pupils appetite for learning which they would hopefully carry into adulthood. Alas the high rates of early school leavers for Malta do not augur well in this regard.

LLL is recognised as extending beyond formal institutions (e.g. University, MCAST, schools, training agencies and cultural institutions) to other learning sites. This is illustrated by the conceptualisation of the LLL strategy, and in the way the strategic document is taken up in various areas of Maltese social life. Extension beyond these institutions should in no way detract from the important role these formal agencies play in adult and LLL.

### **5.5 Deliver learning that is of high quality**

The strategy lays emphasis on enhancing the quality provision through systematic programmes of preparation of adult educators. It advocates, in this regard, setting up an adult education department at the university for this. This has come to pass. It also recognises the work in adult education preparation carried out by the MEDE through its LLL Directorate (DLL-MEDE) and, which leads to a higher diploma level. This attracts a large number of people already engaged or intending to engage in the field.

## **5.6 Ensure coherent policy**

The policy document provides guidelines for a modicum of coordination of what is, in effect, an amorphous field with different players jealously guarding their autonomy -hence the emphasis on guidelines. The DLL-MEDE often brings different LLL players together through its various workshops and half-day seminars, a process facilitated by the small size of the island which renders such frequent meetings possible at low cost. The Ministry housing the Directorate (MEDE) also set up what was originally called a Task force for the purpose of steering the implementation of the policy.

## **6.0 STRENGTH AND WEAKNESSES OF THE ADULT EDUCATION SYSTEM**

**Different aspects of adult education have both their strengths and weaknesses.**

### **6.1 Strengths**

EU accession and funding has placed adult education firmly on the agenda. This is reflected by the growth of a directorate in the MEDE, a stark contrast in comparison to the late 1980s when limited attention was given to adult education with only a one-person unit in place.

The NLLS posits a broad holistic approach to adult education within the broader context of LLL.

There is an emphasis on multifunctional uses of resources and flexible specialisation with regard to educators. This has its positive aspects since it helps to cope with the high per-capita costs of duplication in small states, which cannot afford all the specialisations desired and often found in larger states.

### **6.2 Weaknesses**

Lack of a traditional adult education culture in a country which has for long restricted importance to the formal educational system, mainly in the 'lock-step' fashion, that is to say, the conventional pathway, e.g. primary to secondary to sixth form to university or vocational institute etc. Adult Education has for years been the 'Cinderella' in the structure of Maltese education provision and there is a broad impression is that it continues to be so.

An over-focus on exams and formal credentialing with less prestige attached to non-formal ways of learning. There might be remedies available in this regard through the MQF, but it remains to be seen whether prestigious institutions such as the University of Malta, to give one example, would recognise outcomes of this type of assessment for the purpose of enrolments in diploma and degree courses.

The special emphasis on multifunctional educators and buildings has its negative side. Unless educators have the disposition and /or preparation to adapt to the requirements of working with adults and school buildings are restructured to accommodate adults, we can have a situation of 'adult schooling' - a replication of traditional schooling methods and settings among adults, some also made to appear as 'granddaddy longlegs'\* in settings originally designed for children.

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\*\* This term is attributed to US adult educator, Myles Horton.

Finally, under the impact of globalisation, it is difficult for micro-states like Malta to attract the outsourcing of manufacturing jobs that are labour-intensive and so efforts must be channelled in preparing adults, through adult education programmes, in the direction of those 'quality' jobs that are knowledge-based. One important caveat must be made here. There is a global scramble for few middle-class jobs (the market value of which is lowered through the massive presence of a qualified labour pool from places such as China and India) which will leave so many qualified and experienced people disappointed, including youngsters, let alone older adults (Brown et al, 2010).



## **7.0 FURTHER POLICY REFORMS AND ORIENTATIONS NEEDED**

### **Challenges Malta is facing as regards adult learning /skills**

The challenges Malta is facing are many. It has a high percentage of early school leavers (the percentage of early school leavers in Malta hovered around the 22% mark in 2013, well below the EU's 12% average) (Mayo, 2017, in press). In response, Malta provides an alternative learning programme at a particular centre to address students at risk of early school leaving. This centre faces the challenge of providing adult continuing education for both these students in terms of their continuing education and others not caught by this safety net.

The other challenge is to bridge the digital divide and here further investment in support of adequate adult provision is necessary, including support for local council initiatives in the field. Malta needs to extend and improve the quality of its multimedia library provision in different localities on the understanding that these libraries are often considered as important sources of LLL. These libraries are to serve as hives of learning activities in terms of enabling adults and youngsters to improve their digital literacy, reading and information gathering and sifting skills, important skills for both citizenship and work. It needs to invest more in the sectors of intercultural adult education given the constantly changing nature of the country's multi-ethnic composition. As with all other countries of the world, it needs to foster adult education for sustainable development, the latter to be part of a holistic approach at all levels of education 'from cradle to grave'.

### **To what extent current policy sufficiently addresses those challenges?**

The NLLLS document covers most of these areas each of which requires more in depth guidelines, especially the issue of libraries, intercultural education and ESD. It does so because, while giving due importance to employability skills enhancement, the document espouses a very holistic approach to LLL and adult education.

### **Key additional future policy reforms and orientations needed**

Financial outlays are required, and Malta should seek to access available EU funding until 2020 to engage in the development of these areas. Partnerships with businesses, as part of 'corporate responsibility', should also be encouraged, although the State should set the agenda to ensure that this provision is primarily a public good. There is a need for greater investment in the continuing education of migrants for inclusion in Maltese society as well as for relocation. The Skills-Kits project provides a step in the right direction. The aging factor needs to be taken into account as the population becomes older. Some older persons would be attracted towards further employment beyond basic retirement age through vocational re-orientation, which can help them prepare for new roles that are physically less taxing but, which enable them to bring their experience to bear on the work process itself. People employed for the most part in strenuous physical work can be retrained as vocational educators to help pass the skills onto others.

**Any particular issues with policy implementation and the functioning of the adult education system**

Adult Education is alas still perceived to be the 'Cinderella sector' in the overall Maltese education system. The country needs to generate an adult education culture as in countries such as Denmark, for instance. This would take a long period of time to develop. Malta's EU accession has improved matters in this regard and the gradual growth of published research in the area can help generate a more sophisticated view of the area even though this research must not be confined to academic publications but be disseminated more widely.

Alas, however, the exiguous response to the draft document for a NLLLS, in the press and other media, and the feedback provided to the Ministry for Education and Employment, indicates the low level of interest in the area. The formal school and university oriented culture of educational discourse continues to prevail in the Maltese public sphere. All-new measures being introduced can succeed if abetted by the fostering of an adult learning culture, through a variety of means, including use of the media. It is one that should recognise continuing education and training as *sine qua non*, something it has always been in every society (it took different forms) with its presence perhaps being unacknowledged. This is probably owing to the dominance of schooling, which promotes the view of education as a time-conditioned process in the minds of many.

## **8.0 SUMMARY**

### **Summary of Country's Statistical performance**

Malta has a high percentage of employees in low-end paid jobs with low levels of formal educational attainment –ICSED level 0-2. There seems to be little incentives for many in this category to invest in their further education. The level of participation of adults in education in Malta is lower than that of several EU countries, as indicated in this report. Adult Education in Malta and Gozo, the two substantially inhabited islands of the Republic of Malta, is primarily provided by the State, the University of Malta, NGOs, the Catholic Church and its extended network, private commercially driven entities and institutions such as political parties and the trade unions.

There is emphasis on retraining of employees although it remains to be seen how much is provided by the State and how much by the private sector through different kind of firms. Incentives by Government are provided for this purpose. Recall that a 2014 source, quoted in the report, indicates that one private company is involved in training at an annual rate of 2500 employees scattered across 300 organisations from the country's public and private sectors. Government places pressure, through incentives, on companies with a minimum of ten employees to invest in CVET. The set minimum suggests that it recognises the situation regarding small firms and the cost per capita of training and retraining their exiguous staff and the fear of poaching. The official percentage of adults' participation in lifelong learning hovers around the 7% mark.

Much effort has been put into re-organising the LLL infrastructure through the reshaping of MCAST, efforts at providing and promoting adult education by the DLL-MEDE, courses on offer by the ITS for people working in the important tourism sector, and other initiatives by Heritage Malta and the University of Malta. In spite of all these efforts, it seems unlikely that Malta will reach the EU target of 15 % participation in LLL in the next five years.

### **Summary of policy reforms in CSR/NRP**

For the first time, the country's efforts in the field of adult education and LLL more generally are spearheaded by a national strategy (NLLLS) which was adopted in 2014. It attaches importance to the issue of up-skilling people from 20-64 and beyond. There has been a shift in the economy from manufacturing towards a service-oriented industry. The special emphasis is now placed on knowledge-intensive work (Bacchus, 2010, p.22). The areas involved include financial and insurance activities and information and communication, in addition to wholesale and retail trade, transportation and storage, accommodation and food services (Debono and Rizzo, 2016, p. 223). The NLLLS document is geared to reaching targets for education set by the EU and takes into account the special conditions of a small island state. It places importance on 'employability' but goes beyond it to provide a more comprehensive set of guidelines for a more holistic approach to education highlighting the field's social purpose dimension.

In keeping with the more holistic conceptualisation of LLL, the strategy document also conceives of older adults, as well as all persons, as citizens with their entitlements and

duties. There is mention therefore of mobilising efforts to convert places such as old people's homes into settings for adult learning. There is also further promotion of the idea of converting schools into community learning centres.

The NLLLS document is complemented by ideas expressed in other spearheading documents such as the Employment Policy Document (MEDE, 2014a).

A lot of effort has gone into the preparation of adult educators by the MEDE and the University of Malta. The programmes involved target those currently being engaged as practitioners and prospective ones. There is a good infrastructure in place for developing adult education through vocational entities such as the ETC, MCAST, the CRC-UM, a number of national and community broadcasting channels and the presence of a local council in each locality. The involvement of the local council in community adult education is, however, limited and often sporadic. There is no systematic use of the broadcasting channels for specifically organised distance/online learning projects. A channel, Education 22, originally set up with this purpose in mind, stopped functioning several years back.

The publication of the National Employment Policy by the same Ministry during the same year as the NLLLS (MEDE, 2014b), also provides policy direction in terms of steering future efforts in CVET, outlining incentives for firms employing ten persons minimum to invest in training and also to attract older workers to further employment through retraining programmes. These programmes are intended to be relieved of physically demanding jobs and engage in others that are less taxing and more suitable – a means of making good use of their expertise in the field. Entrusting the direction and regulation of CVET in the hands of a recognised national body, the NCFHE, is also a step in the right direction.

### **Summary of key challenges faced; (in-sufficiency of current policies, reforms, financing**

*"The challenge for small states such as Malta these days is to compete on higher value added, strong work ethic and reduced transport costs as well as engage in strong and serious attempts to discover niche markets for indigenous industries regarding history, culture, agriculture, food processing, wine and certain crafts"* (Mayo et al, 2008, p. 235). It is this challenge among others that future adult education policy should address with regard to employment.

Adult Education has also been developed against an important relatively recent change in Malta's history: the country's accession to the EU (Mayo, 2012). The challenge here is to examine which of the policies forthcoming from the EU need to be critically adopted and adapted, if not critically appropriated, to suit the conditions of the country. There is no case for a 'one size fits all' strategy in adult education, which remains context based.

Adult Education also needs to be seen against the changing demographics of Maltese society. Multi-ethnicity and older adulthood have become prominent features of this ever-evolving society. Provision should be provided in a manner which accounts for social difference in terms of age, 'race'/ethnicity and gender, as well as in an enabling and ecologically sensitive manner.

It is imperative to not simply issue policy documents but ensure that the guidelines contained therein are followed. Otherwise, what we would have is simply a source of reference to lend authority to criticisms levelled at the current state of affairs. The great challenge is for these documents to extend their lifespan beyond a party's single term in government. Education and training require a steady and uninterrupted path of growth and not a series of sudden U turns owing to a change of party at the helm and therefore, change of policy. Educational policy should not be treated as a 'political football'.

Another main challenge is to help foster an adult continuing education and training culture whereby the point is driven home that education is not simply a time-conditioned process but an ongoing one in a society which sees itself as the learning society or rather the network of learning societies it has always been –the form it took changed over time and will continue to do so. 'What form does the learning society or do the networks of learning societies take today?' is the question we should ask, bearing in mind the relevant context.

### **Summary of further policy reforms needed**

A great effort is to be made to translate many of the points made in the NLLLS into reality. Adult Education should be given as much importance as formal education in the country's legislation. It needs to feature across the new education acts, if not being itself the subject of a specific act.

There should be a policy to help provide employment opportunities for those who undertake professional education and training in the field of adult education from diploma to master's degree levels and beyond. The National LLL strategy recognises the importance of a department to provide such preparation at these qualification levels. It ought to be followed by a policy that helps generate an employment structure in this regard. At an age when people constantly question the economic returns of qualifications, such a development becomes all the more necessary. There is room for well-trained adult educators to be employed with local councils, local libraries, local community organisations to whom important community work is subcontracted by Government, old people's homes, higher education institutions with their extension programmes and jobs-plus centres, to name but a few.

There should be policies targeted at active aging, which includes older adults as lifelong learning participants. These policies should target such hubs of older adult living as old people's homes that need to be turned into hives of LLL activities to activate the residents' citizenship roles.

There should be policies, regarding adult education and training, to enable migrants to be included in Maltese society or to learn the skills necessary to relocate in another country of their choice, within the spirit of international human solidarity.

There is room for further policies regarding the development of entities such as libraries and museums as multimedia learning centres. There is little investment in museum education and in outreach multimedia regional libraries – key sources of LLL anywhere.

Policies regarding schools should cater for their development as multipurpose community learning centres, which would enable them to be fully utilised as a resource and not represent idle capital for most of the day. The policy should allow them to be conceived of as sites developed in such a way that they accommodate both children and adults without any of them feeling out of place. This has architectural implications for the sites themselves, as well as for the preparation of adult educators, some of whom, in a small state such as Malta, need to be prepared as multifunctional educators with 'flexible specialization' (Mayo, 2013b). Space has been prepared out of EU funds for a pilot school to develop as a SCLC in the capital Valletta – the St. Ġorg Preca Valletta Primary School. The space is meant to accommodate adults from the locality in which they would feel at ease and treated as adults.

While a national vocational qualification system is in place there needs to be further investment in the area of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR). There should also be recognition of and greater sensitivity, in data collection, to the various and different ways in which people learn non-formally and informally. Furthermore, the outcomes of these non-traditional forms of assessment need to be respected by the institutions that matter both for employment and further learning purposes. These would include all higher education institutions. Provision in this regard should be included in the University Act currently being put in place.

In sum, the above efforts must be seen in the context of adult participation in adult education, in Malta, which is on the increase but which, as indicated in the statistical section at the outset, lags behind that of other EU countries.

## **GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS**

<b>CRC, UM</b>	Cottonera Resource Centre, University of Malta
<b>CVET</b>	Continuing Vocational Education and Training
<b>DLL-MEDE</b>	Directorate for Lifelong Learning, MEDE
<b>ESF</b>	European Social Fund
<b>ETC</b>	Employment and Training Corporation
<b>FES</b>	Foundation for Educational Services
<b>LLL</b>	Lifelong Learning
<b>ITS</b>	Institute for Tourism Studies
<b>MCAST</b>	Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology
<b>MEDE</b>	Ministry of Education and Employment
<b>MQF</b>	Malta Qualifications Framework
<b>NCFHE</b>	National Council for Further and Higher Education
<b>NIFTE</b>	Night Institute for Further and Technical Education
<b>NLS</b>	National Literacy Strategy
<b>NLLLS</b>	National Lifelong Learning Strategy
<b>NMC</b>	National Minimum Curriculum
<b>NSO</b>	National Statistics Office
<b>OPM</b>	Office of the Prime Minister
<b>QA</b>	Quality Assurance
<b>SCLC</b>	School as Community Learning Centre
<b>VET</b>	Vocational Education and Training

## ANNEXES

### Annex 1: List of adopted legal acts, strategies, laws

Name	Date of adoption	Short description of content
Education Act	Expected in 2018	The Maltese Government is about to launch a new Education Act. A section of the national trusts is devoted to adult education. At the moment, the content of these acts is not yet known. This Act is highly significant since to date, there has never been an Adult Education Act in Malta.
University Act	Expected in 2018	The Maltese Government has also initiated consultations about a new University Act. The proposed framework, for the new University Act is promoted as a "tool for change" that aims to improve the role of the University of Malta in society, with a focus on addressing the current and future challenges, modernisation of the existing structure, professional development, social inclusion and free access to higher education.



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**Annex 2: Inventory of policy interventions**

Name of intervention	Source (with hyperlink)	Which of the 6 building blocks for successful adult learning policies does it target? (tick all relevant)						Further details/description (purpose, duration, responsible entity etc.)
		Fosters learners' interest in learning	Employers' investment in learning	Improve equity of access for all	Learning that is relevant	High quality learning	Coherent policy	
Malta National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020	Ministry for Education and Employment <a href="https://education.gov.mt/en/Documents/Malta%20National%20Lifelong%20Learning%20Strategy%202020.pdf">https://education.gov.mt/en/Documents/Malta%20National%20Lifelong%20Learning%20Strategy%202020.pdf</a>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	The Learning builds on ideas and processes already taking shape in different organisations and institutions

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									in Malta. It is a coherent guide for national actions within the domain of Lifelong Learning.
A national literacy strategy for all in Malta And Gozo 2014-2019	Ministry for Education and Employment <a href="http://education.gov.mt/en/Documents/Literacy/ENGLISH.pdf">http://education.gov.mt/en/Documents/Literacy/ENGLISH.pdf</a>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	The main objectives for adults are: Increase opportunities for the professional development of adult literacy educators of Maltese and English. - Involve further Local Councils and local. - Promote training schemes with employers.

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National Vocational Education & Training Policy	Ministry for Education and Employment <a href="https://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/resources/Documents/Strategy%20Documents/National%20Vocational%20Education%20and%20Training%20Policy.pdf">https://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/resources/Documents/Strategy%20Documents/National%20Vocational%20Education%20and%20Training%20Policy.pdf</a>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	This policy builds on the achievements in the VET sector in Malta. VET is perceived as a key factor in enabling the educational sector to remain relevant for Malta's economic growth.
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