Lifelong learning strategy

The legal framework regulating lifelong learning in Malta was established through Chapter 327 of the Laws of Malta[1] – the Education Act 1988 (as amended by Act No. XIII of 2006). Through this amendment, the then National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE) was set up in April 2009 and launched its first strategy document entitled ‘Further and Higher Education Strategy 2020’. Through legislation enacted in September 2012 the NCHE was superseded by the National Commission for Further and Higher Education[2] (NCFHE), whose remit includes the licensing, accreditation and quality assurance of further and higher educational institutions and the validation of informal and non-formal learning.

The then Directorate for Lifelong Learning, set up in 2009 within the Ministry of Education, was tasked with designing a national lifelong learning strategy and to coordinate the various initiatives then being implemented in this sector by making optimal use of the diverse learning providers and settings which characterised lifelong learning programmes. In 2012, the National Curriculum Framework[3] (NCF) issued by the Ministry for Education and Employment had as its ultimate goal that of enabling individuals to become lifelong learners. The NCF led to the developing of a Learning Outcomes Framework (LOF) beginning in 2014. The LOF has the goal of freeing schools and learners from centrally-imposed knowledge-centric syllabi and giving schools the freedom to develop programmes that fulfil the framework of knowledge, attitudes and skills-based outcomes that are considered as an education entitlement of all learners in Malta. These outcomes in turn will lead to learners who look at educational attainment as a lifelong endeavour.

The Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability

The Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability[4] within the Ministry for Education and Employment[5] launched the Malta National Lifelong Strategy 2020[6] in 2014 which sets out the national strategy for Malta up to 2020. Through the integration of formal, informal and non-formal learning experiences, this strategy addresses the development of lifelong learners from early childhood education through compulsory schooling to vocational education and training, higher education, adult education and learning in the senior years. In a fluid global economy this strategy’s vision is to improve the economic development, the social and civic participation, and the personal fulfilment and well-being of Maltese citizens.

The Malta National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 has five main objectives:

1. To stimulate participation in Lifelong Learning of adults by creating a demand and a desire for learning.
2. To place the learner at the centre of the process by means of innovative learning methods and environments beyond those defined by formal learning, and to make learning flexible, personal, accessible and relevant.

3. To improve skill sets that contribute to professional development, employment mobility and active citizenship.

4. To develop support structures for adult learning.

5. To improve governance in the lifelong learning sector, exploring the available structural, institutional, fiscal, legal, political and administrative measures.

The Lifelong strategy puts forward seven key performance indicators (Table 1).

Table 1: Key Performance Indicators of the Malta National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Performance Indicators</th>
<th>Malta 2014</th>
<th>Malta 2020 (target)</th>
<th>EU 2020 (target)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Early leavers from education and training</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Level of participation of adults aged 25-64 in Lifelong Learning</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Share of students in vocational education and training at ISCED level 3</td>
<td>38.9%*</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 30-34 year olds completing tertiary or equivalent education (MQF Level 6)</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Women in employment aged 20-64</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Literacy skills in men aged 25-64</td>
<td>96.7%*</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Digital Technology skills in adults aged 25-64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- MQF Level 5 for working-age adults</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Level 5</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- MQF Level 6 for people aged 18 to 29</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Level 6</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Women in employment figure for Malta (Q4, 2014) refers to women aged 15-64. The comparable figure for Males is 80.3%.

* Refers to 2013 base values.

The key indicators included in each year’s Education and Training Monitor illustrate the progress that Malta is making towards reaching the set targets. The ET Monitor 2018 indicates that, by the end of 2017:

- The early leavers from education and training rate has been reduced to 18.6%;
- The level of participation of adults aged 25-64 in lifelong learning has increased to 10.1%;
- The percentage of 30-34-year-olds completing tertiary education or equivalent has increased to 30.0%.

Likewise, Eurostat data for 2017 showed that in Malta, the rate of women aged 20-64 who are in employment had reached 60.6% of the total population.[1]

The lifelong learning strategic plan has ten strategic aims to achieve the five main objectives.

1. To coordinate the delivery of lifelong learning by public and non-public organisations.
2. To promote adult skills and VET as the optimum, flexible route to employability, personalised professional development and economic well-being.
3. To develop a coherent, equitable and sustainable accreditation system for adult learning.
4. To improve the overall quality of adult learning in Malta and Gozo.
5. To embrace the emergence of Open Education Resources as an opportunity for Connected Learning.
6. To develop a coherent, equitable and sustainable accreditation system for adult learning.
7. To improve the overall quality of adult learning in Malta and Gozo.
8. To coordinate ownership and delivery of community learning.
9. To leverage on lifelong learning to support inclusivity and empower marginalised communities.
10. To improve the quality of life of older people through lifelong learning opportunities.

Each strategy looks at the current challenges it aims to address and the strategic measures to be taken to overcome them. The Malta National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 document lists 40 target-specific programmes that emerge from these ten strategies. Of note in these programmes is the setting up of a National Lifelong Learning Task Group to ensure a single, coherent entity to guide actions in lifelong learning thus avoiding duplication of efforts and measures.

The Lifelong Learning Strategy also entailed the setting up of a National Skills Council (which was in fact established in August 2016) with the aim to first review the available skills within Malta’s labour work force and evaluate the changes required to meet current and future needs so as to minimise any skills.

A technical working group was also established to address the accreditation and recognition of skills and competencies acquired via lifelong learning and non-formal and informal learning routes.

The Lifelong Learning Unit within the Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability (DRLLE) coordinates a number of day and evening courses in the following areas:

1. Cultural awareness
2. Digital competence
3. Family learning
4. Languages
5. Maths, Science and Technology
6. Sense of Initiative and Entrepreneurship
7. Social, Health and Civil Competence
8. Vocational Education and Training
9. Visual and Performing Arts

These courses take place across the Maltese islands to ensure ease of accessibility.

[1] Eurostat data: Employment and activity by sex and age - annual data[ifsiemp_a];

Last update: 10-10-2018
(http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ifsiemp_a&lang=en [7])
Scholarships

The Scholarships and Skills Council Unit within the Ministry for Education and Employment is responsible for the administration of a number of undergraduate and postgraduate scholarship schemes. These schemes are intended to augment the number of persons furthering their qualifications at tertiary level, especially at post-graduate level. It is through these schemes that the Unit contributes to the realisation of the country’s long-term development potential in terms of innovative research, creativity and intellectual growth both on a national and international level.

The following scholarships were available during 2018:

- Get Qualified Incentive Scheme [8]
- Malta Scholarships for Doctoral Programme [9]

On the other hand, the following scholarship schemes were active during 2018:

- REACH HIGH Post-doctoral grants [10]
- ENDEAVOUR scholarship schemes [11]
- TESS – Tertiary Education Scholarship Scheme [12]
- Malta Financial Sector Scholarship Scheme [13]
- Malta Arts Scholarships [14]
- Malta Sports Scholarships [15]

Jobsplus

Jobsplus [16], the national Public Employment Service (PES), offers a number of training schemes and traineeships and courses together with a work exposure scheme and a training subsidy scheme. These are mostly funded through the European Social Fund and target the unemployed, unskilled workers, those without formal qualifications, employees seeking to move upwards in their career, persons who are already studying or training, the self-employed and also employers.

Further and/or Vocational Training for Adults with Special Needs

Such training programmes are offered at the Secondary/Young Adult Resource Centre administered by the Department for Educational Services. This centre provides physical, cognitive, communication and emotional support as necessary to enhance learners’ independence as much as possible. This centre also serves as a transition for students as they seek to move on to further educational institutions or vocational training.

The Lifelong Learning Unit within DRLLE launched and manages the first learning centre for disabled persons in Gozo, opened in 2016. The main aim of the centre is to prepare disabled people to the labour market by strengthening their skills. With the help of professionals, disabled persons are trained to develop their skills. This centre is the result of an agreement between the government and the Diocese of Gozo and will help disabled adults to advance in their education.