

FRAMEWORK FOR THE EDUCATION STRATEGY FOR MALTA 2014-2024:
SUSTAINING FOUNDATIONS, CREATING ALTERNATIVES, INCREASING EMPLOYABILITY



THE CURRENT CONTEXT, OUR BELIEFS AND VALUES

The Ministry for Education and Employment is committed to consolidate and build on the successes achieved in education and employment in the past, and recognises the challenges of an ever-evolving and competitive world. While ensuring the promotion of our identity through the mastery of the Maltese language, to be able to navigate successfully in the world at large we need to be fluent and proficient in English, the global language. We would also like our young people to be competent in other languages that have global outreach.

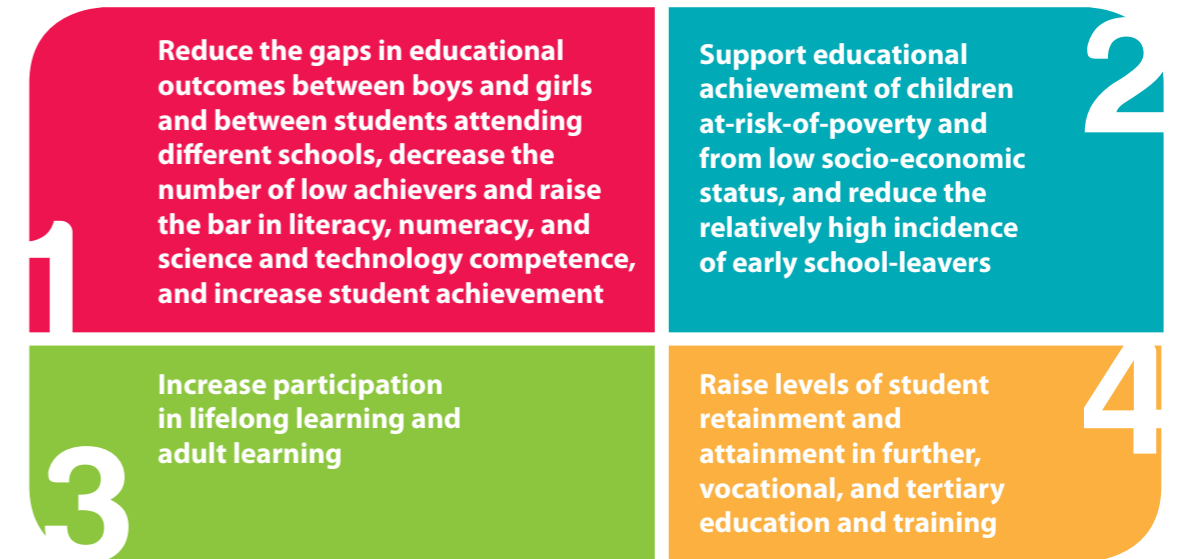
The Ministry positions itself at the forefront to provide present and future generations with the necessary skills and talents for employability and citizenship in the 21st century.

In close collaboration between the educational, economic sectors and civil society, the Ministry is facilitating a consultation process about an updated educational plan for our Nation. This consultation process will form the basis for the process of improvement from 2014 to 2024 during which time our students develop their personal and social potential and acquire the appropriate knowledge, key skills, competences and attitudes through a value-oriented formation including equity, social justice, diversity, and inclusivity.



The Ministry is proposing a coherent strategy for lifelong learning opportunities from early childhood education and care to adult learning to ensure that all children, young people and adults have the opportunity to obtain the necessary skills and attitudes to be active citizens and to succeed at work and in society. This should not be hindered by differences in socio-economic, cultural, racial, ethnic, religious, gender and sexual status. While acknowledging that out-of-school factors like poverty and social exclusion affect student achievement, the Ministry seeks to improve students' learning experiences by encouraging creativity, critical literacy, entrepreneurship and innovation at all levels.

This framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024 has four broad goals in line with European and world benchmarks:



In today's globalised world, the pace of educational change is not determined only at a national level. If we do not keep up with what is happening in the rest of the world, we will be putting our nation at risk and the future of our people will be jeopardised if we allow other nations to overtake us and if we do not catch up with other nations who are ahead of us because of the skills and talents of their people.

The development of Malta's education strategy would evolve around our collective knowledge of best practices and policies within the European region and beyond. Malta's strategic objectives can be developed, but not limited to, the seven strategic pillars in Table 1, that are derived from European policy and international initiatives in the education sector.

TABLE 1. STRATEGIC PILLARS FOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT

<p>Governance of Education Organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guarantee of long term financing • Sustainability of funding • Governance structure that enables modernisation and innovation • Support for the development of administrative processes • Transparency tools for governance, management and administration 	<p>Quality of Education Provision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality assurance of education programs • Quality through people programs: continuous development of education providers
<p>Social Dimension</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal opportunities in education • Employability and relevance of education • Lifelong learning • Skills assessment in view of society and industry • Open access to information on educational tracks and qualification opportunities 	<p>Student Focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different learning tracks and student centred learning • Student support through counselling, guidance, mentoring and tracking systems • Modernisation and automation of student processes
<p>International Dimension</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensive strategy for the teaching of English across all social sectors • International mobility of students and staff • International openness to new systems and processes • Harmonisation of qualification frameworks to European structures • Harmonisation of assessment and examination methods • International recognition of local qualifications 	<p>Strategic Innovation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing the interaction of the Quadruple Helix: Education, Society, Industry and the Public Sector • Training for educators on new teaching and learning methods • Feedback programs for students, educators and stakeholders • Realignment and development of strategic objectives based on international development in education and feedback from stakeholders
<p>Performance Dashboards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection and reporting • Measurement of achievements and gaps in the context of European targets 	



One of the main objectives of this Strategy is to improve the quality and effectiveness of our country and to develop a society which is competent, resourceful, critically conscious, and competitive in a global economy driven by information, knowledge and innovation. Other objectives include the provision of a relevant curriculum built on a learning outcomes approach, a variety of learning experiences and qualifications anchored to the Malta Qualifications Framework, different tracks and opportunities to increase relevance of learning to the labour market, preparation for highly skilled jobs through post-secondary education while ensuring that every learner becomes an active member of a democratic society.

In the next ten years, the Ministry will carefully update the existing learning programmes and modes of assessment in both general and vocational and training education. It will continue to support the modernisation of our vocational system, particularly in mainstream education, as well as support apprenticeship, traineeship, work-based and work-placed learning initiatives, in the context of lifelong learning.

Experiential and work-based learning will be accredited and certified. We will also ensure that our National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning continues to act as catalyst for quality assurance, accreditation and transparency of all learning experiences including the validation of informal and non-formal learning and forms of apprenticeships. We will strive to have a certification system (at all levels) that adds value to employability, mobility and higher standards of transparency.

There is no way our country can prosper and succeed as a democratic and just society if we retain the current high levels of children with low literacy, numeracy, science and digital skills, the low level of children who master higher-order thinking skills, and the current drop-out rates. Our children

need to be prepared for present and future jobs, and obtain more transferable skills to avoid skill obsolescence. It is estimated that by 2020, nearly 36% of all jobs in the European Union will require high skills, the ability to be innovative, and to adapt to new contexts. The biggest constraint on our economic growth and prosperity is our inability to equitably provide alternative learning tracks that are relevant and of high quality.

Job creation remains a formidable challenge. But lifelong learning is what education and employment can provide to our citizens in different educational contexts including places of work.

Ensuring that our young people acquire the necessary skills and strong work ethic to enable them to take up the jobs created is also a formidable task. At the moment half of our jobs are being taken up by people coming from overseas, either because our people lack the right skills or because they refuse to work in the jobs available. Welcoming talented persons from overseas to work in our economy is fully compatible with having a local workforce with the right skills and a healthy work ethic.

CHARTING OUR COURSE OF ACTION

The Ministry for Education and Employment recognises that current participation at Kindergarten level is very encouraging and above EU average but this must go beyond numbers and ensure that a stimulating and rich learning experience for children to have a sure start in life.

It acknowledges the challenges we face in increasing current participation and quality education in early childhood education and care. The proposed Strategy will also aim to increase the number of our 10-year olds who reach Intermediate and Advanced International Benchmarks in reading, mathematics, IT, and science and technology. Additionally, the Strategy will aim to decrease drastically the number of our low-achievers in these four areas among our 15-year olds and decrease the early school leavers' rate and dropouts, particularly in initial vocational training.

It is unacceptable that half of our fifth formers are leaving secondary school without the skills and qualifications expected of them after at least 12 years of schooling. We need to link much better the two worlds of education and employment to ensure the relevance of MCAST and the University of Malta to sustain the current employment rate of our graduates (20-34 years), and also improve the skill base of our 25 to 64 year olds.

Strategies for education reform need to be flexible, ongoing, inclusive and embrace a long-term and sustainable vision that is democratic nationwide. The proposed Strategy aims to cultivate student engagement and motivation, and to promote high aspirations in learning within an inclusive, safe and orderly environment both physical and psychological. Furthermore, it will enhance the teaching profession by providing teachers with the relevant continuous professional development, the right support and conditions to maximize their teaching skills. This course of action charts a new way forward, an improvement and innovation of class, school and college leadership and management, and in curriculum planning and development.

This Strategy will seek to build more effective synergies between education, the economy and civil society and between the educational resources in Malta and those at European level. Together, we want to address specific needs through the active participation of educators, parents and social partners including employers, unions, Local Councils, non-governmental organisations. Other key players such as the Faculty of Education, the teachers' union, the professional bodies which act as catalysts for change, will also be actively engaged in this process.



ON TARGET THROUGH NATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

In order to achieve what we consider as realistic and ambitious targets, the Ministry for Education and Employment will consult all stakeholders on the plan of education for 2014-2024.

The input of these discussions will be reflected in a strategic document which will outline the plan for the next 10 years, starting from early childhood education and care to adult learning, vocational and tertiary education and encompassing formal, informal and non-formal learning.

The successful implementation of the Strategy from 2014 to 2024 will rely heavily on the active engagement of all stakeholders throughout the process.

While we seek home-grown solutions to address our challenges we are ready to learn from others in Europe, from European process such as the Bologna and the Copenhagen Processes and beyond, but knowing full well that we cannot simply import solutions from abroad without adapting and adopting them to our reality.

All government entities and partners in education are invited to engage in a constructive dialogue on the challenges and the opportunities that education face in the coming decade, to draw up a strategy that will result in economic growth, prosperity and a better quality of life for all the people living on the islands of Malta and Gozo.

