VISIONING THE FUTURE BY TRANSFORMING EDUCATION

NATIONAL
EDUCATION
STRATEGY
2024 - 2030

VISIONING THE FUTURE BY TRANSFORMING EDUCATION

NATIONAL EDUCATION STRATEGY 2024 - 2030

GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION,
SPORT, YOUTH, RESEARCH
AND INNOVATION

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FOREWORD

Dr Clifton Grima
Minister for Education, Sport, Youth,
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Education has always been the cornerstone of
societal progress, shaping the minds of individuals
and preparing them for the challenges and
opportunities of the future. As we embark on this
transformative journey, it is essential to recognize the
dynamic nature of our world and the evolving needs
of our students.

In an era characterized by rapid technological advancements, globalization, and unprecedented societal changes, the importance of a robust and forward-thinking education system cannot be overstated. The *National Education Strategy 2024-2030* is a comprehensive blueprint designed to empower our students, educators and institutions to thrive in the twenty-first century.

This strategy is not merely a document; it is a commitment to fostering a culture of continuous improvement and innovation within our educational landscape. It seeks to build on the current education system, while embracing the opportunities presented by a rapidly changing world. Through a focus on inclusivity, diversity, and personalized learning, we aim to nurture the unique talents of every individual, ensuring that no one is left behind. A strategy that places the individual at its core.

Collaboration is at the heart of this strategy, recognizing that the collective efforts of policymakers, educators, parents, and the wider community are essential for success. By fostering partnerships and engaging in open dialogue, we can create an education system that is responsive to the needs of our society and equips our citizens with the skills and knowledge required to thrive in the years to come.

As we implement the *National Education Strategy 2024-2030*, let us remain steadfast in our commitment to excellence, equity and adaptability. Together, we can build an educational foundation that prepares our students not only for the challenges of today but also for the opportunities of tomorrow.

I take the opportunity to thank all those who contributed, for their dedication and commitment to our country's education and to see to the students' aspirations for their future.

Mr Matthew Vella
Permanent Secretary
Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth,
Research and Innovation

The primary aim of the *National Education Strategy 2024-2030* is to ameliorate the quality of life of educators and students, which we believe will positively impact society at large.

This document is based on a six-year plan, with a current strategic orientation and a strategic foresight up to 2050. The strategy is an integral part of the transformation process that the Maltese education system is currently experiencing, one which acknowledges past achievements and builds on consultation, support and empowerment.

The Ministry truly believes that education is a collective responsibility which requires the effort and commitment of various stakeholders. To this end, more than two hundred meetings were held during a wide pre-consultation exercise with different stakeholders, both internal and external.

It is becoming increasingly evident that due to the current global challenges, perpetual instability, and the rapidly evolving world, our children and young people are faced with multiple adversities, which affect their sense of wellbeing. To this end, the strategy embraces a person-centred approach whereby the first pillar addresses the **Wellbeing** of both educators and students.

Furthermore, this strategy aims for education to be a journey of growth to all, leading to the second pillar **Growth & Empowerment**. Through its initiatives, this pillar aims at giving students a holistic experience by nurturing active citizenship through the acquisition of basic literacy and numeracy skills, and also through the development of important twenty-first century skills.

The third pillar revolves around **Equity & Inclusion** as the Ministry strongly believes that a fair and just education system ensures that all students have an equal access to success. For this reason, the third pillar aims at reducing disparities and inequalities, whereby each child feels a sense of belonging and is provided with appropriate opportunities.

In particular, the Family-Community-School Link Programme and the transition from initiatives to programmes are the linchpin of the strategy. The Family-Community-School Link Programme aims at empowering families, engage communities and enrich schools through an integrated approach. The shift from initiatives to programmes aims at providing students with robust accredited programmes, both on curricular and non-curricular aspects, embedding digital skills within a context of sustainability, wellbeing, global citizenship and life skills.

We believe in the importance of accountability as this is a central component of good governance. In this respect, to ensure effectiveness and quality assurance, the strategy will be systematically monitored and evaluated by the Policy Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate within the Education Strategy and Quality Assurance Department.

I sincerely thank all the stakeholders for their contribution towards the development of this strategy. I am of the belief that this strategy will continue to support educators in their mission, and allow for students to steadily progress towards attaining their dreams and reach their aspirations.

LIST OF
ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
ELET	Early Leaving from Education and Training
ESCS	Economic, social and cultural status
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
EU	European Union
FLAP	Foreign Language Awareness in the Primary
FLLP	Foreign Language Learning Programme
IEP	Individual Education Plan
IfE	Institute for Education
IMU	Information Management Unit
ITS	Institute of Tourism Studies
MATSEC	Matriculation and Secondary Education Certificate
MAVC	Mikiel Anton Vassalli College
MCAST	The Malta College of Arts, Science & Technology
MFHEA	Malta Further and Higher Education Authority
MQF	Malta Qualifications Framework
MVPA	Malta Visual and Performing Arts School
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NQTs	Newly Qualified Teachers
NRTs	Newly Recruited Teachers
NSC	National Skills Council
PAR	Participatory Action Research
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
STEAM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics
UM	University of Malta
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VET	Vocational Education and Training

SHAPING THE NATIONAL
EDUCATION STRATEGY 2024-2030

The Framework of the
National Education Strategy 2024-2030

Education plays a decisive role in shaping the future of the individual and society. The Ministry holds the conviction that the essence of quality education lies in fostering an enriching journey for our students, aimed at nurturing them into well-rounded citizens equipped with essential skills to realize their full potential and pursue their dreams.

The framework of the *National Education Strategy 2024-2030* is embedded within the theory of transformation[1], a process which recognises and builds on past achievements, while orienting itself to future exigencies. The shift that takes place is gradual, steady and planned on strategic foresight, with multiple monitoring tools employed at key junctures that gauge the effectiveness, impact and outcomes of one's action plan. The notion of transformation being employed in this process is one that adopts a person-centred approach, built on consultation, support and empowerment.   While understanding complex issues requires the input of external stakeholders, with the latter having been involved from the onset of the venture leading to the *National Education Strategy 2024-2030*, the implementation phase also necessitates an integrated approach encouraging cross-sectional and cross-functional collaboration.

The *National Education Strategy 2024-2030* stemmed from an intense pre-consultation process which entailed meetings with both internal and external stakeholders. It is the belief of the Ministry that for this and other strategies to be successful, they need to be ingrained within the realities of today's educational institutions and the social and global context. Education does not operate in a vacuum and a collective effort is necessary to be able to provide students of all ages with meaningful experiences which lead to self-actualisation and engagement in active and global citizenship. The current global polycrisis, which embodies health, economic, political and social concerns, requires us to adapt ourselves even more promptly, while simultaneously aiming at preparing a resilient generation with sharpened human skills, namely empathy, emotional self-regulation and elevated flexibility.

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[1]   *Mezirow, J. (1989). Transformation Theory and Social Action: A response to Collard and Law. Adult Education Quarterly, 39(3), 169–175.*
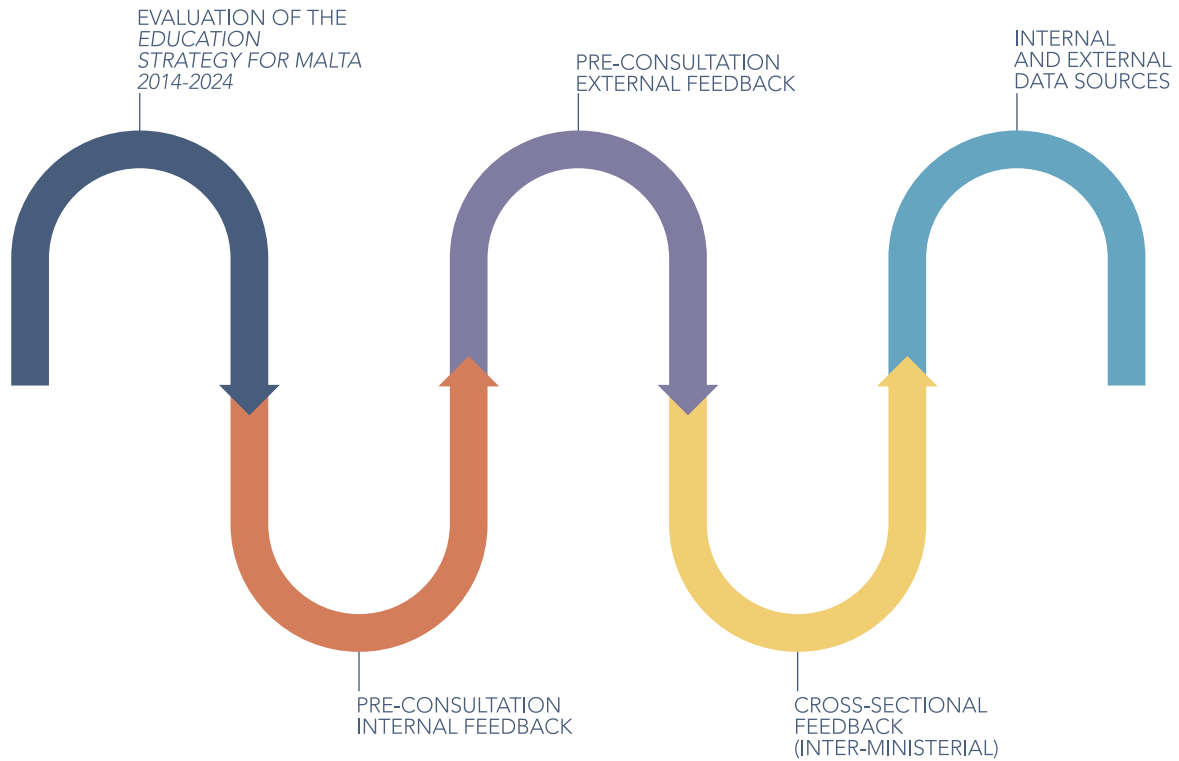
Education Strategy for Malta
2014-2024

The point of departure to this document was the establishment of a Thematic Review Committee whose primary task consisted of the review of the *Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024*, a policy document which addressed what were perceived to be the needs and priorities of the time.

The strategy's fundamental objective was to address the challenges that were leading to low retention within the educational system, being it within compulsory schooling and beyond. The *Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024* was built on the belief that quality education and equal opportunities for all are pivotal to Malta's economic success, two concepts which will remain crucial in the *National Education Strategy 2024-2030*. The 2014-2024 strategy followed a path from pre-compulsory schooling to employment, thus bringing together entities within the spheres of education, economy, and civil society in its conceptual framework. The evaluation of this strategy, together with related recommendations, were contributing factors that set in motion the preparatory work related to the *National Education Strategy 2024-2030*.

THE *NATIONAL EDUCATION STRATEGY 2024-2030*

FORMULATION PROCESS

EVALUATION OF THE
*EDUCATION
STRATEGY FOR MALTA
2014-2024*

PRE-CONSULTATION
EXTERNAL FEEDBACK

INTERNAL
AND EXTERNAL
DATA SOURCES

PRE-CONSULTATION
INTERNAL FEEDBACK

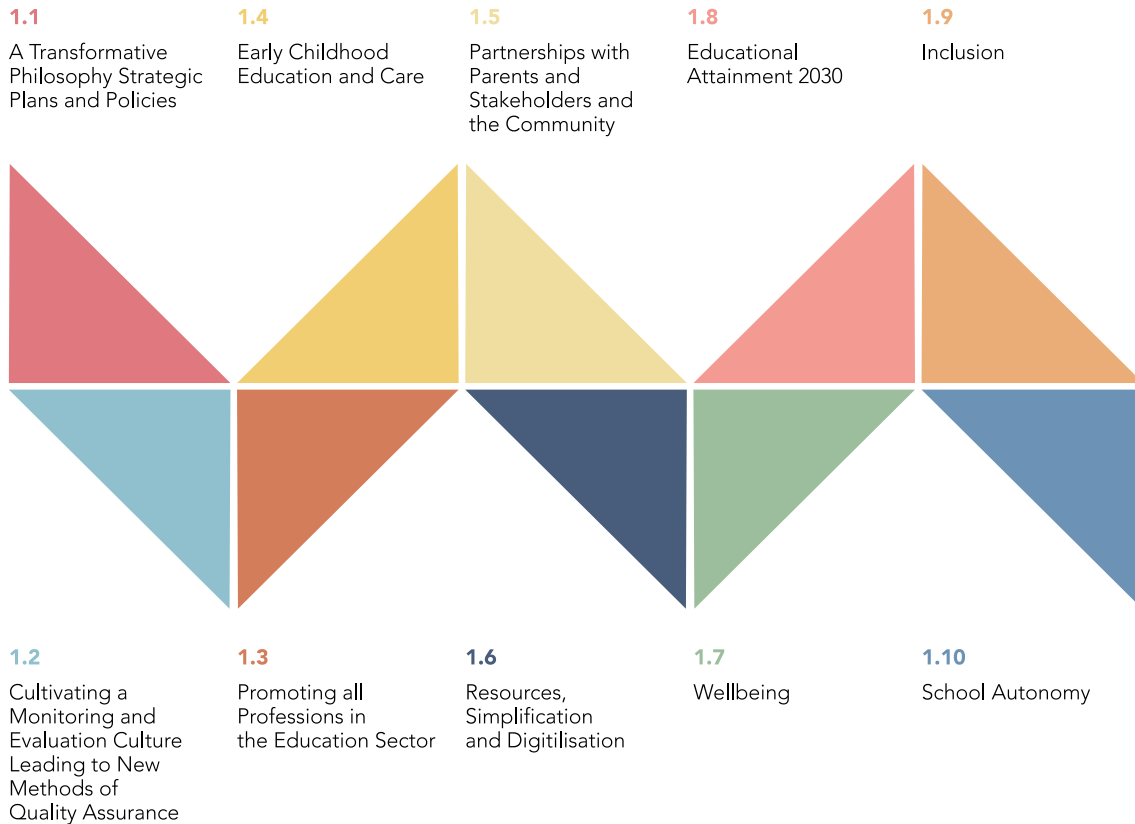CROSS-SECTIONAL
FEEDBACK
(INTER-MINISTERIAL)

The Principles Underlying the
National Education Strategy 2024-2030

The Ministry acknowledges the necessity for ongoing adaptation within the education system to ensure all students receive optimal knowledge, competencies, and skills. This needs to be carried out without major and sudden overhauls of the system so as to curb the effects of reform fatigue. To this end, forward-thinking and evidence-informed strategic planning will guide the comprehensive reassessment of the education system, aiming to strike a harmonious balance between quality education and innovative, evidence-driven policies. The Ministry will employ various approaches to actively involve and empower educators, fostering an open, secure, and autonomous atmosphere for dialogue and deliberation as essential elements of this transformative endeavour.

To this end, a number of principles have been identified and adopted in this process, with the aim of having a common understanding amongst all the stakeholders of what constitutes quality and holistic education in the current context.

TEN PRINCIPLES

1.1

A Transformative Philosophy Strategic Plans and Policies

1.4

Early Childhood Education and Care

1.5

Partnerships with Parents and Stakeholders and the Community

1.8

Educational Attainment 2030

1.9

Inclusion

1.2

Cultivating a Monitoring and Evaluation Culture Leading to New Methods of Quality Assurance

1.3

Promoting all Professions in the Education Sector

1.6

Resources, Simplification and Digitilisation

1.7

Wellbeing

1.10

School Autonomy

Stakeholder Engagement

Over the past two years, there has been a fundamental shift in the Ministry's operation with the aim of adopting a more person-centred approach. It is the Ministry's belief that educators[2], along with students of any age, including adult learners, and parents, are to be placed at the core of its tenet and processes. This principle has been further strengthened following the feedback received through the Job Satisfaction Survey, carried out amongst educators in 2022, and in which participants solicited a central role in the decision-making process, and in the development of the Ministry's policies. This appeal was particularly driven by the evolving classroom demographics and social realities which directly and indirectly impact how students and their families interact with the education system. Similar feedback was presented to us by educators through the *Learning Outcomes Framework* Survey (2023) which continued to highlight the fact that professionals in schools want us to place greater value on stakeholder communication, especially through direct involvement in the decision-making mechanism, for the benefit of all students.
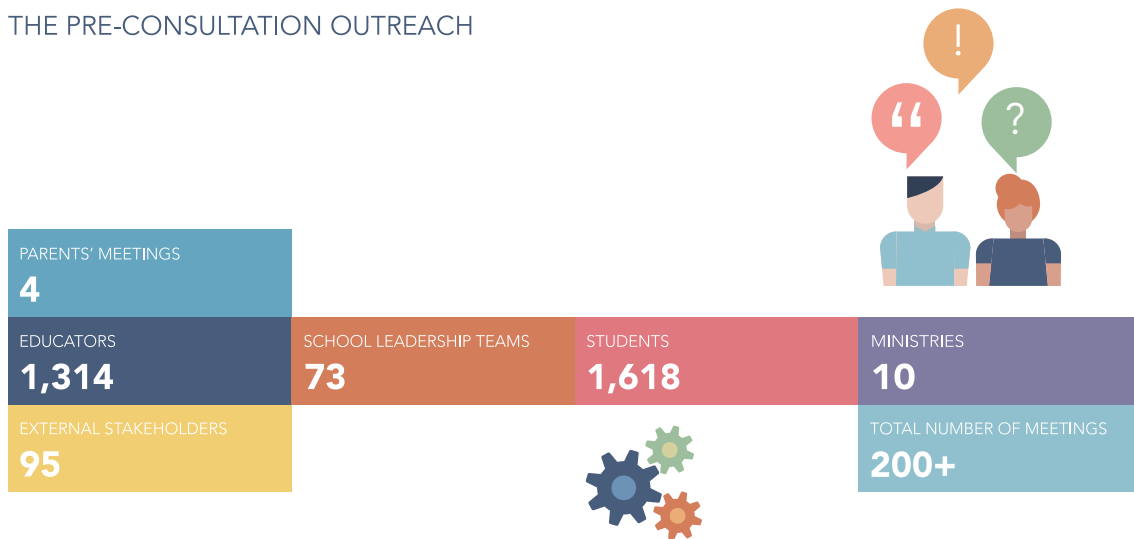
The concept of a pre-consultation phase originated from the Ministry's determination to better understand what educators view as current challenges in their profession. No draft documentation was presented to stakeholders in the pre-consultation stage. Each meeting, and the ensuing feedback, was documented and subsequently analysed. Most stakeholders agreed with the proposed pillars and each contribution was crucial in shaping the subsequent themes, measures and initiatives within each pillar.

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[2] *The term 'educator' in this document is being used to refer to professionals working within an educational institution.*

The pre-consultation phase also entailed meetings with and feedback from external stakeholders, which included public and private entities, political parties, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Ministries and Departments, the business community, and trade unions amongst others. While it is the belief of the Ministry that internal stakeholders can provide pragmatic evaluation, external stakeholders are also considered as critical allies. It was compelling to see how priorities and challenges outlined by both the internal and the external stakeholders were in alignment. The Ministry believes that through the *National Education Strategy 2024-2030*, we are addressing the priorities of a nation and thus, a cross-sectional and integrated approach is decisive and will secure the realisation and attainment of the set targets. The Inter-Ministerial Committee set up during the pre-consultation phase will continue having a prominent role in this strategy and subsequential action plans.

THE PRE-CONSULTATION OUTREACH

PARENTS' MEETINGS
4

EDUCATORS	SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAMS	STUDENTS	MINISTRIES
1,314	**73**	**1,618**	**10**

EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS			TOTAL NUMBER OF MEETINGS
95			**200+**

While the pre-consultation meetings were being carried out, the Ministry conducted a parallel mapping exercise of all the initiatives in the education system, from childcare to tertiary settings. This task and its conclusion revealed the complexities of what takes place in a typical educational institution, making it one of our primary goals to improve cross-functionality, while giving more autonomy to educators and schools. The Ministry acknowledges the research conducted by different entities in relation to the three pillars identified. This data can complement the more qualitative feedback gathered during the pre-consultation phase and make the policy development process a truly evidence-informed one, while also reducing the possibility of myside bias. Consequently, it was decided to combine the two so as to truly have a realistic picture of the priorities identified. From there, we could shape each pillar, its background, strategic objectives, measures and initiatives.

THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETINGS		NEW INTIATIVES SUGGESTED DURING THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION PHASE
6		**32**
MODES OF FEEDBACK GATHERING	• Email • In-Person Meetings • Online Meetings • App • Conferences	FEEDBACK SUBMISSIONS
5		**300+**

OCTOBER 2022	MARCH 2023	MAY-JUNE 2023	JUNE- AUGUST 2023	JULY 2023
Review of *Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024*	Launch of Pre-Consultation Phase	Gathering of Internal Feedback[3]	Gathering of External Feedback[4]	Setting-up of Inter-Ministerial Commitee[5]
Strategy and policy evaluation contributes to the attainment and maintenance of good governance. The review of the *Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024* is the foundation upon which the Ministry can improve the design, development and implementation of future policies and strategies.	Following the Job Satisfaction Survey, carried out by the Ministry 2022, it is decided that future policies and strategies issued by the Ministry will be developed in accordance with educators' feedback.	Meetings within and outside of schools, with all the grades, and within the three sectors, are organized and feedback documented. Meetings with students and parents are included in the internal feedback.	Meetings with external stakeholders, including entities, professional bodies and NGOs are organized and feedback documented.	Adopting a crossectional approach, the Ministry sets up an Inter-Ministerial Comittee to ensure consistency and strategic planning throughout.

[3] *Internal Stakeholders included: Senior Management Team (The Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research & Innovation), Heads of School, Education Officers, Assistant Heads of School, Heads of Department, Teachers, Kindergarten Educators, Learning Support Educators, students, parents.*

[4] *External Stakeholders: External stakeholders' meetings included single entities/agencies, group discussions, individual meetings and meetings on request.*

[5] *Ministry for Economy, European Funds and Lands, Ministry for the Environment, Energy and Enterprise , Ministry for Finance and Employment, Ministry for the Home Affairs, Security, Reforms and Equality, Ministry for Health, Ministry for the Home Affairs, Security, Reforms and Equality , Ministry for Inclusion, Voluntary Organisation and Consumer Rights , Ministry for the National Heritage, The Arts and Local Government, Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights & Ministry for Social and Affordable Accommodation, Ministry for Tourism*

JULY 2023 - APRIL 2024 Launch of 5 Key Documents[6]	AUGUST 2023 Collation of Feedback and Data	OCTOBER 2023 Draft *National Education Strategy 2024-2030*	JANUARY 2024 Incorporation of Public Consultation Feedback	MAY 2024 Launch of the *National Education Strategy 2024-2030*
Five key documents, all of which complement and supplement the *National Education Strategy 2024-2030* are launched.	Feedback gathered from internal and external stakeholders, together with existing data sets and quantitative research, are connected and analysed.	A public consultation period is launched, together with a dissemination plan for the engagement of a wider audience.	The public consultation period allows for internal stakeholders and the public to give their views on the strategy and its proposal.	*The National Education Strategy 2024-2030* is officially launched, and the ensuing action plan mobilised.

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[6] *A Quality Assurance Framework for Education in Malta (0-16 Years), National Quality Standards in Education (3-16 Years), Early Leaving from Education and Training Strategy 2023-2030, National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2023-2030, Digital Education Strategy 2024-2030*

Action-Based Strategic Orientation

Policy development requires a high degree of strategic orientation and foresight. This strategy covers the next six years, 2030 being the year in which a number of European Union (EU) targets and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are set against. However, this strategy does not fall short of a much longer vision of where we would like to see our nation in the year 2050.

EU Level Targets 2030
Council Resolution (2021)
Towards The European Education Area and Beyond (2021-2030)

1 By 2030, at least 96% of children between 3 years old and the starting age for compulsory education should participate in Early Childhood Education and Care.

2 By 2030, the share of early leavers from education and training should be less than 9%.

3 By 2025, the share of recent Vocational Education and Training (VET) graduates who benefit from exposure to work-based leaving during their vocational education and training should be at least 60%.

4 By 2030, the share of 25-34 year olds with tertiary educational attainment should be at least 45%.

5 By 2025, at least 47% of adults aged 25-64 should have participated in learning over the previous 12 months.

6 By 2030, the share of low-achieving 15 year olds in reading, Maths, Science should be less than 15%.

7 By 2030, the share of low-achieving eight graders in computer and information literacy should be less than 15%.

The outcome and impact level of the *National Education Strategy 2024-2030* will merge with and consolidate the major objectives of the five documents complementing it, namely *A Quality Assurance Framework for Education in Malta (0-16 Years), National Quality Standards in Education (3-16 Years), Early Leaving from Education and Training Strategy 2023-2030, National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2023-2030 and the Digital Education Strategy 2024-2030.*

Through strategic orientation and foresight, which the Ministry is developing with the help of local and foreign entities, we are confident that the roadmap being presented is insightful and prudent and will prepare the nation and its citizens for the opportunities, including those presented by the twin transition, and challenges of the future.

**A Quality Assurance Framework
for Education in Malta (0-16 Years)**
Disseminating a common understanding about what quality assurance in educational institutions entails, while providing educators with an essential tool for reflection.

**National Quality Standards
in Education (3-16 Years)**
Establishing a means which enables the evaluation of schools' effectiveness and their capacity for improvement.

**Early Leaving from Education
and Training Strategy 2023-2030**
Ensuring an equitable education system which, through strong prevention, intervention and compensation measures, ensures students' wellbeing and eventual active citizens.

National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2023-2030
Improving the lives of the most vulnerable through a diverse range of lifelong learning opportunities, particularly the enhancement and promotion of community, work based and other forms of informal and non-formal learning options.

Digital Education Strategy 2024-2030
Providing the necessary framework for the adoption of twenty-first century digital skills, particularly digital readiness, digital wellbeing and digital citizenship.

STRATEGIC ORIENTATION
AND THE THREE PILLARS

Change has always been constant – it is inherent within our nature, requiring a degree of adaptability to be able to actively engage in responsible citizenship. One of the phenomena we are currently experiencing is the accelerated rate by which change is happening. This is also true in relation to the evolution of skills required by the individuals in their adult life[7]. The geopolitical scenario is characterised by volatility and this necessitates the prioritisation of higher-order executive functions, transversal skills and mobilisation of knowledge that makes us resilient, flexible and future-ready.

[7] *Ministry for Finance and Employment. (2021). The National Employment Policy 2021 – 2030. https://finanzi.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/nep.pdf*

The pillars of the *National Education Strategy 2024-2030* are based on the belief that our education system, particularly compulsory schooling, is responsible for each student's acquisition of basic skills, socio-emotional skills and civic duties. Integrating Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) into the curriculum aligns with the United Nations (UN) SDG4's emphasis on literacy, numeracy, and the promotion of ESD for global citizenship. Moreover, one of the targets set on an EU level, through a Council Resolution towards the European Education Area, is the decrease in the percentage of students who are considered as low-achieving in reading, Maths and Science. The *National Education Strategy 2024-2030* also aligns with *Malta's Sustainable Development Strategy for 2050*, in which education features as an integral aspect, primarily through Strategic Goal 5 – Objective 4, relating to achieving high quality education responsive to labour market needs, and through outlined targets for 2030 in relation to education.

One of the biggest and unpredictable factors that has shaped the outlook of this *National Education Strategy 2024-2030* is the Covid-19 pandemic which has had a negative impact, to varying degrees, on every educational system in the world[8]. Communication skills, collaborative learning, a more pronounced learning gap and a broader digital divide[9] have been some of the effects identified by both internal and external stakeholders. Additionally, there are concerns on how the pandemic has affected the mental wellbeing of young people whose routine was disrupted during critical formation years.

This scenario, together with our commitment to a person-centred approach, contributed to the decision that the central pillar within the *National Education Strategy 2024-2030* would be that of **Wellbeing**.

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[8] *Horváth, A., Motiejūnaitė-Schulmeister, A., Noorani, S. et al. (2022). Teaching and Learning in Schools in Europe During the COVID-19 Pandemic – 2020/2021. Publications Office of the European Union. https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/1056 World Economic Forum. (2022). Catalysing Education 4.0 Investing in the Future of Learning for a Human-Centric Recovery. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Catalysing_Education_4.0_2022.pdf*

[9] *Premazzi, V. & Zuliani Queiroz, E. (2021). Space, Time and Concentration in Online Teaching and Learning, Malta Journal of Education, 2(1), 81-99 Vassallo, J., Doublet Meagher, G. L., et al. (2021). Students' and Parents' Perspectives on Emergency e-Learning in Kindergarten and Compulsory Education. Malta Journal of Education, 2(1), 167–196*

The pillar of **Wellbeing** is accompanied by a second pillar which signifies the core business of the sector – educational achievement. However, following the feedback received from both internal and external stakeholders and after a reflective process, it was decided that "achievement" can be interpreted as a restrictive term which does not necessarily mirror what the education system stands for. One of the indicators of quality education, as per SDG4, is the proportion of children and young people, per gender, achieving at least a minimum proficient level in reading and Mathematics. A second indicator of SDG4 is related to the proportion of youth and adults achieving a fixed level of functional literacy and numeracy, and this will be targeted through initiatives that address adult learners. However, the notion of basic skills has been expanded today to include important twenty-first century skills, and also data and digital literacy, media literacy, emotional literacy and emotional intelligence.

Adaptability will be key in the next years, not only in terms of skills and competences, but also as a prerequisite to maintain a healthy mental state[10]. Making an educational setting more inviting for students is even more challenging – not only are educational institutions competing with more attractive, less filtered content that piques students' interest, but the latter's sense of belonging in schools has been declining over the past years[11].

While we acknowledge the importance of results, and a significant number of initiatives outlined in this document will address this aspect since there are targets that need to be achieved, the educational experience, albeit being enclosed within a contextual framework, should be a personal journey of growth and regeneration, of personal goal setting and attainment, and of character and value formation.

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[10] Cefai, C., Caravita, S., Simões, C. (2022). *A Systemic, Whole-School Approach to Mental Health and Wellbeing in Schools in the EU – Executive Summary. Publications Office of the European Union.* https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/208726
[11] Avvisati, F. (2019). *Have Students' Feelings of Belonging at School Waned Over Time? OECD Publishing Paris.* https://doi.org/10.1787/bdde89fb-en.

In addition, the Ministry acknowledges the increased importance of values and the role these play both in our personal life, civic identity and the place of work. This strategy also recognises the importance of non-formal learning, and the role played by private service providers for lifelong learning opportunities.

To this end, it was concluded that the second pillar would be titled **Growth & Empowerment**, symbolising the holistic experience each student should have throughout their educational journey. Rising inequalities is another global concern, given more prominence during and after the pandemic and also as a result of economic inflation, growing populations and migration. Addressing disparity between sub-populations is another target within the SDG4. The belief that every human being deserves an equitable life prospect has delineated our system for years, but this has become more challenging due to the changing demographics. Moreover, through the integration of ESD we would be providing students with the knowledge and skills to address pressing sustainability challenges and fostering a sense of responsibility for environmental stewardship and social equity.

That is why the third pillar is **Equity & Inclusion**: through equity, we ensure fairness and a level playing field for each student so that one's identity is not predictive of one's chances in life. On the other hand, inclusion ensures that every child feels they belong within the system and that the system gives each child the appropriate opportunities to participate in it, irrespective of perceived boundaries. Inequalities emerge early in life, and if not addressed appropriately by compulsory schooling, they substantially compromise the student's chances of embracing a growth mindset, engage in lifelong learning opportunities and participate fully in society[12].

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[12] *United Nations. (2015). Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda For Sustainable Development. https://sdgs.un.org/sites/ default/files/publications/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf*

THE *NATIONAL EDUCATION STRATEGY 2024-2030*

GROWTH & EMPOWERMENT	WELLBEING	EQUITY & INCLUSION

| **13** Measures	**66** Initiatives	**14** Measures	**49** Initiatives	**9** Measures	**38** Initiatives

This strategy is also based on strategic foresight, and a thoroughly thought plan on how education can transform itself for a future-ready nation. Within this strategy, there is a conceptual framework that puts the person at the heart of the system – not only the student, but also the professionals who work within the system. It brings together the ideas of the different stakeholders, with the aim of a truly integrated approach that is evidence-informed, utilising labour market intelligence[13] and skills anticipation mechanism, while also engaging in a continuous dialogue with our educators and students who are the ones mostly impacted by our actions.

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[13] *European Training Foundation. (2022). Single Programming Document 2023-25 - Work Programme 2023. https://www.etf.europa. eu/sites/default/files/document/GB22DEC010%20SPD%202023-2025%20AWP%202023.pdf*

Generally, policies and strategies in the educational field are closely associated with labour market needs. As clearly indicated in Chapter 2 of this strategy, the main aim of the Maltese education system is to adopt a person-centred approach, while equipping our students with the required future-oriented skills. As a result, we are striving to have an educational system which is centred on cultivating a holistic set of values and fostering the comprehensive development of citizens.

THE *NATIONAL EDUCATION STRATEGY 2024-2030*

IMPACT

3 PILLARS

36 MEASURES

153 INITIATIVES
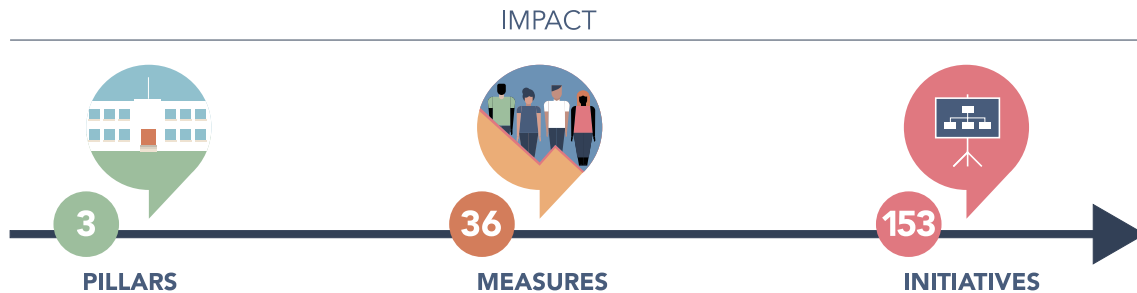
PILLAR 1
WELLBEING

4

Strategic Objective 1
Educators' Wellbeing

Context

Educators are crucial within the education ecosystem, especially in a time when the demands on schools and educators themselves are becoming more intricate. Schools do not only offer pedagogical and instructional assistance to students, but they are an integral part of their support structure outside of the home. In fact, education is one of the leading sectors when it comes to societal wellbeing and the strengthening of social resilience[14]. Educators are primary role models whose influence impacts children, adolescents and young adults and the latter's disposition to learning and to engage in a lifelong learning mindset[15].

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[14] World Economic Forum. (2023). The Future of Jobs Report. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Jobs_2023.pdf

[15] Bonnici, A. & Gatt, M. (2020). Perceptions of School Professionals on Bullying in Early Childhood. The Educator (A Malta Union of Teachers Publication). https://mut.org.mt/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/The-Educator-6-2020.pdf
Curmi, M. (2020). Together We Succeed: Supporting Children with Challenging Behaviour in a Primary School in the Cottonera Area. The Educator (A Malta Union of Teachers Publication). https://mut.org.mt/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/The-Educator-6-2020.pdf

The *National Education Strategy 2024-2030* recognises that educators need to be given all the necessary support to be able to adapt to several challenges they are facing, including the volatile demographics in the classroom, students' diverse needs and the unfavourable ramifications of social media.

The Ministry believes that the better the support, the more educators will feel adequately equipped to continue cultivating a sense of ethos within their class and in the school. In addition, it is our conviction that high-quality education is intrinsically related to educators' wellbeing, which, in turn, inevitably shapes students' sense of belonging in schools. The Ministry is committed to increasing the degree of job satisfaction within the teaching profession, while attracting others to join the profession.

Measure	Initiatives
1.1 A stronger support mechanism for educators which increases the level of job satisfaction and mental wellbeing.	1.1.1 An Engagement Programme that bridges the existing gap between educators in schools and senior management at the Ministry is designed, implemented and regularly evaluated for further improvement.
	1.1.2 A Support Needs Analysis and a Training Needs Analysis based on educators' feedback is conducted. Results are actioned accordingly.
	1.1.3 The launch of a Wellbeing Programme for Educators, which leads to the *Strategy for Educators' Wellbeing*.
	1.1.4 A professionally designed annual Educators' Wellbeing Survey that gives the Ministry visibility of changing trends in job satisfaction within the sector and educators' suggestions on which changes they would like to see.
	1.1.5 The setting up of a Wellbeing Unit for Educators, which includes professional on-demand help and mental health support, that works through an integrated approach with established support mechanisms within the public service.

Measure		Initiatives
1.1	**A stronger support mechanism for educators which increases the level of job satisfaction and mental wellbeing.**	1.1.6 Through the more active involvement of the Faculty of Education, a transition from an Induction Programme for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and newly recruited teachers (NRTs) to a Peer Support Programme for NQTs and NRTs which keeps the element of appraisal but places more emphasis on the concept of mentoring.
		1.1.7 In collaboration with the Faculty of Education, The Malta College of Arts, Science & Technology (MCAST) and the Institute for Education (IfE), the introduction and development of professional supervision services for educators, including members of the School Leadership Team, prioritising those facing challenges.
		1.1.8 The re-introduction of the Benesseri Programme (Wellbeing for School Leaders) for School Leadership Teams.
		1.1.9 A revised *Framework for Behaviour Management* that is reflective of the current behavioural challenges and informed by neuroscience research, which puts added emphasis on civic development and duty, as well as emotion regulation.

Measure	Initiatives
1.1 A stronger support mechanism for educators which increases the level of job satisfaction and mental wellbeing.	1.1.10 A Standard Operating Procedure that delineates the legal aid that is to be provided to the educator following school-related incidents, including direct attacks on social media.
	1.1.11 Through an integrated approach, the training of educators in dealing with children who faced trauma.
1.2 Systematic and direct involvement of educators in the policy development cycle.	1.2.1 Reinforcement of the Outreach Programme through a revised schedule of quarterly meetings between School Leadership Teams, Directors General and the Office of the Permanent Secretary.
	1.2.2 Planned communication of the main outcomes of Outreach meetings, including the programmed way forward, which is communicated to all the schools.
	1.2.3 Introduction of a pre-consultation mechanism as a requirement to policy development within the Ministry, which is confirmed by an official Standard Operating Procedure.

	Measure		**Initiatives**
1.2	**Systematic and direct involvement of educators in the policy development cycle.**	1.2.4	The setting up of a specialised team that maintains a regular pre-consultation mechanism process, generating data that contributes to the Ministry's decision-making cycle.
		1.2.5	Public Monitoring and Evaluation Interim Reports that outline the progress made in each of the strategies and policies launched by the Ministry.
1.3	**A targeted promotional campaign on the teaching profession as part of the Ministry's human capital planning.**	1.3.1	Market research on potential target audiences that would be interested in taking up a teaching profession.
		1.3.2	A plan for Profession Promotion aimed at two target audiences: (a) learners in higher education; (b) older adult learners interested in job mobility.
		1.3.3	Evolution of a Recognition and Appreciation Plan for teachers that includes structured mechanisms for sharing of good practice among the education community and the public, including those who embrace digital technologies.
		1.3.4	A revision of the aims, function and remit of the Council for the Teaching Profession.

Measure	Initiatives	
1.4 Simplification and cutting down of administrative burden on educators as a preventive measure for educators' burnout.	1.4.1	Following a Needs Analysis Exercise, the setting up of a Simplification and Digitalization Action Plan to introduce technological assistance for repetitive and time-consuming tasks.
	1.4.2	An evaluation of the current college system and how it can be modified and improved to better support schools and put into practice the concept of a Professional Learning Community.
	1.4.3	Following a pre-consultation process with educators and school leadership, the re-conceptualisation and re-design of the School Council that strengthens the connection between school and home.
	1.4.4	Support of administrative staff for School Leadership Teams.

Measure		Initiatives	
1.5	**The provision of more relevant and evidence-informed training that addresses the current challenges and promotes collaborative practices.**	1.5.1	In consultation with major stakeholders, the formulation of national standards for Initial Teacher Education.
		1.5.2	A revision of programmes being offered as part of the educators' continuous professional development.
1.6	**Consolidation of the professional development opportunities in digital literacy and technology-enhanced learning.**	1.6.1	Following a needs analysis, an enhanced quality continuous professional development training on the latest emerging technologies, including advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI), to help support educators in the acquisition of digital competences that support pedagogy and also their professional practice.

Strategic Objective 2
Students' Wellbeing

Context

The *National Education Strategy 2024-2030* recognises the different strands of wellbeing, namely physical, socio-emotional, mental and digital wellbeing. Although these are generally treated separately, they are not independent concepts but closely connected to one another. In fact, the measures being proposed in this strategy are aimed at addressing the general aspect of students' wellbeing, taking into consideration the disquieting rates of obesity[16], higher incidence of mental health issues[17] and the shift towards individualism[18]. Young people today live in complex and dynamic realties which require a high degree of flexibility, adaptability and resilience, key components in human capital development. The ability to connect to others, form meaningful relationships and navigate through insecurity and instability are key transversal skills and social competences that are shaping the future of any workplace[19].

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[16] Attard, J., & Vassallo, J. (2022). A Study on Childhood Obesity in Malta, with a Special Focus on 4-5-Year-Old Children. https://researchandinnovation.gov.mt/en/Documents/Childhood%20Obesity%20in%20Malta.pdf

[17] Sacco, R., & Camilleri, N. (2020). National Study on the Mental Health of Children and Young People in Malta. European Psychiatry, 63(s1), EPP0252. https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/european-psychiatry/article/national-study-on-mental-health-and-emotional-wellbeing-among-young-people-in-malta-phase-1/7108742DEEE797588A06DD9017F53EF3
Malta Suicide Rates 2016-2023. https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/MLT/malta/suicide-rate

[18] World Economic Forum. (2015). Could Our Growing Individualism Lead to Greater Dependence? https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/01/could-our-growing-individualism-lead-to-greater-dependence/

[19] World Economic Forum. (2020). The Future of Jobs Report. https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-future-of-jobs-report-2020/

Historically, interpersonal skills were construed as "soft" skills, de-prioritising them in favour of more technical skills[20], a notion which is being challenged by international organisations and the labour market, with wellbeing becoming a collective obligation. In today's context, a discussion on wellbeing necessitates a deeper understanding of the lure of online platforms and growing digital consumption and how these are affecting online and offline behaviour[21]. The juggling between online and offline communities and the intricacy of the digital space is one of several sources of students' sense of adequacy and it is the Ministry's belief that this concern needs to be addressed on a national level. Network silos prevent young people from being exposed to divergent opinions, thus confirming their beliefs, and limiting their ability to think critically[22].

The Ministry asserts that students' sense of belonging within the educational institution, coupled with tighter links between family and educational settings, shapes students' educational experience. This will be the principal function of initiatives that link the educational institution with the family, and ultimately with the community.   Furthermore, the Ministry maintains that students' increased sense of wellbeing can have a positive impact on behaviour management and on the formation of the student's civic self and potential civic engagement. While active and global citizenship is an underlying principle within this strategy, the Ministry acknowledges the digital transformation taking place and therefore the importance of students' acquisition of digital citizenship skills.

[20] Malta Further and Higher Education Authority. (2022). Malta's National Strategic Action Plan for Further and Higher Education. https://meae.gov.mt/en/Public_Consultations/MEDE/Documents/MFHEA%20National%20Strategic%20Plan%202030.pdf

[21] Azzopardi, A., Attard, R., Formosa, O., Vella, G., Cuff, A. (2023). Protecting our Children Exploring and Preventing Child Abuse. https://www.um.edu.mt/media/um/docs/faculties/socialwellbeing/mainpage/researchprojects/BOVProtectingourChildrenFinalReport.pdf

[22] Grech, A. (Ed). Young People and Information: A Manifesto. (3CL Publication). https://www.3cl.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/YPI-Manifesto-FINAL-for-web-v3-spreads.pdf

Measure	Initiatives
1.7 A robust and methodical link between the school, family and the community for a more holistic and homogenous approach to wellbeing.	1.7.1 Through the Family-Community-School Link Programme, intervention on a school level is extended to the family. 1.7.2 The engagement of community-based entities for a more integrated and cross-sectional approach. 1.7.3 Schedule of courses on Parental Skills, using synchronous and asynchronous modes, in collaboration with external agencies.
1.8 Stronger intervention services related to mental health and socio-emotional wellbeing.	1.8.1 Setting up of the National Students' Wellbeing Services, with strengthened psychosocial services offered by professionals. 1.8.2 A specialised programme related to social and emotional education offered to all students in pre-identified and research-informed critical age-groups.

Measure		Initiatives
1.9	**A more proactive, preventive and targeted approach to building young people's ability to manage social relationships and building their self-esteem.**	1.9.1 The introduction of a youth programme in Middle Schools with early identification mechanisms in Primary Schools.
		1.9.2 Rolling out of national studies on emotional wellbeing for data gathering and intervention purposes.
		1.9.3 Development of a manual for schools on mental health and the fostering of a positive school climate, informed by international recommendations and local research, as a tool to aid the school community.
		1.9.4 Provision of a Mental Health First Aid training for students in Middle and Secondary Schools.
1.10	**Structured programmes to enhance digital literacy and digital citizenship skills.**	1.10.1 Provision of a structured programme, offered as part of the extra-curricular modules and/or within the After-School Accredited Programmes, addressing digital literacy, media literacy and digital citizenship.
		1.10.2 Creation of a resource pack for teachers on how to pass on digital literacy and media literacy skills as cross-curricular themes.

Measure	Initiatives
1.10 Structured programmes to enhance digital literacy and digital citizenship skills.	1.10.3 Introduction of Ethics as one of the option subjects available at secondary level.
	1.10.4 The strengthening of the home-school link through the organisation of courses and other initiatives to help parents build resilience and learn effective coping skills to better support the progress and wellbeing of their children in the digital age.
1.11 An increase in the time and quality of physical activity in compulsory schooling.	1.11.1 Through the Edu Infrastructure Programme, there is the scheduled modernisation of indoor and outdoor sports facilities in schools to encourage the use of these spaces for a variety of learning activities.
	1.11.2 Increased entitlement related to physical activity in schools[23], including the possible introduction of movement breaks.
	1.11.3 Incorporation of units on healthy lifestyle, with clear learning outcomes and related project-based assignment, in the After-School Accredited Programmes.
	1.11.4 In collaboration with SportsMalta, the re-organisation of national tournaments and challenges in sports for students to revive intra-school competition.

[23] *Superintendence of Public Health, Ministry for Health Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability, Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation. (2022). A Study on Childhood Obesity in Malta. https://researchandinnovation. gov.mt/en/Documents/Childhood%20Obesity%20in%20Malta.pdf*

Measure	Initiatives
1.12 Sharpened awareness on how to deal with issues like radicalisation.	1.12.1 Creation of a Standard Operating Procedure, available to all educational institutions, on the steps to take when there is suspicion of radicalisation and extremism.
1.13 Student Councils which move away from an activity-organising body to become a true embodiment of a democratic process and one which advocates for SDGs.	1.13.1 Through the RIGHTS initiative, the setting up of a National Student Forum with a cross-sectional representation of all sectors, with the aim of discussing the role of the Student Council in compulsory schools.
	1.13.2 Set of guidelines and good practices disseminated across all schools on the revised functions of the Student Council within a compulsory school setting.

Measure	Initiatives
1.14 A steady and continuous investment in schools' infrastructure, with better physical and sensorial accessibility using the Universal Design Approach, for an enhanced learning environment for students and the community.	1.14.1 Through the Edu Infrastructure Programme, a detailed long-term plan related to infrastructural works in schools, complemented by a medium-term plan that ensures embellishment works are carried out steadily, while ensuring the health and safety of the school community.
	1.14.2 A coordinated effort with different stakeholders to make schools' physical environment more attractive to students, through an investment in new projects related to outdoor space with the appropriate elements of greening, encouraging a more nature-based and outdoors-based pedagogy.

PILLAR 2
GROWTH & EMPOWERMENT

Strategic Objective 3
Growth & Empowerment

Context

The re-establishment of the *National Curriculum Framework* Review Board, in 2022, started a discussion amongst multiple stakeholders on how the curriculum can serve as a means by which the individual evolves and continues to do so beyond the compulsory school age. The *National Education Strategy 2024-2030* is building on this dialogue and putting it into a context of evidence-informed long-term planning that guides us to the targets set for 2030 and eventually 2050.

In the light of the "attention economy", we understand the need of a curriculum which is focused on quality provision rather than mere knowledge delivery. Students, whatever the age, are increasingly disengaged when the content is not appealing or relevant, especially since there is so much more engagement opportunities offered by the online space. In addition, we need to seriously take on the challenge of phasing out content overlap, which is a result of a subject-based system. A more purposeful syllabus will give the teacher more time to focus on the mastery of knowledge and concepts, and the acquisition of key skills[24] that are nurtured through discussion, collaborative work, and self-reflection. This is part of a larger curriculum analysis, which will also propose a discussion on alternative and authentic modes of assessment that complement multi-modal teaching, and that balance out summative assessment techniques.

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[24] World Economic Forum. (2022). *Catalysing Education 4.0 Investing in the Future of Learning for a Human-Centric Recovery.* https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Catalysing_Education_4.0_2022.pdf

Traditionally, and before the introduction of the *Learning Outcomes Framework*, our assessment methods were highly based on knowledge and content. Metrics are still largely viewed as the end-product of the learning and teaching process, rather than a complementary stage that, through formative means, can help the teacher and student understand the next step in the learning process.

The Ministry acknowledges that more support needs to be given to our teachers so that the latter are better equipped to employ diverse assessment methods that can help them evaluate attitudes. This commitment is being complemented with the recognition of the importance of perpetuating feedback literacy.

We strongly believe in the professional judgement of our teachers, and we are committed to offering all the necessary support so that there is a gradual shift towards a more skills-based system[25]. It is our aim to have an education system with a finer balance between knowledge generation and practical application.

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[25] *World Economic Forum. (2023). Here's Why Education Systems Need to Start Taking a 'Skills-First' Approach. https://www.weforum. org/agenda/2023/03/heres-why-educations-systems-need-to-start-taking-a-skills-first-approach*

Measure	Initiatives
2.1 A revised *National Curriculum Framework* which reflects the needs and challenges of the future.	2.1.1 A cyclical review of the syllabi and learning outcomes to address overload and overlapping, promote deep learning and sustain long-term memory and critical thinking.
	2.1.2 A cyclical review of the *Learning Outcomes Framework* to address overload, and for it to become more reflective of the skills and attitudes envisaged for the next years.
	2.1.3 A comprehensive *Mathematical Literacy Strategy* that identifies, studies and addresses the challenges, from pre-compulsory to tertiary levels, in relation to Mathematics, including the labour gap in technical fields and the gender gap.

Measure		Initiatives
2.1	**A revised *National Curriculum Framework* which reflects the needs and challenges of the future.**	2.1.4 A *National Assessment Strategy*, informed by research in educational neuroscience, with the aim of: a. reaching the optimal balance between summative and continuous assessment; b. outlining the different assessment methods that can be used, while moving away from over-testing; c. providing varied assessment tools and models teachers can choose from; d. giving formative value to all types of assessment; e. determining forms of benchmarking that do not assess academic performance only but also areas like wellbeing; f. stretching high-ability students so that their potential is maximised.
		2.1.5 Strategic integration of educational technologies in the curriculum that prepare students for the twin transition (green and digital transitions). Additionally, in line with the guidelines issued by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the consolidation of ESD as a cross-curricular approach theme in the updated *National Curriculum Framework*. This involves embedding sustainability principles across all subjects, fostering critical thinking on real world issues, embracing diverse perspectives, instilling values through ethical dilemmas, and promoting experiential learning for active involvement in fostering sustainable change.

Measure	Initiatives
2.1 A revised *National Curriculum Framework* which reflects the needs and challenges of the future.	2.1.6 The provision of a curriculum which recognises and gives due importance to digital citizenship and digital education.
	2.1.7 The setting up of a Task Force that studies the provision and uptake of foreign language from the Secondary School to further and higher education and offers recommendations.
	2.1.8 The re-design of the Foreign Language Awareness in the Primary (FLAP) and Foreign Language Learning Programme (FLLP) provision so that students are exposed to and given basic communicative skills in a foreign language from an early age.
	2.1.9 Following an evaluation of the emergent curriculum and its implementation, the reinforcement of child-led pedagogies which are evidence-informed.

Measure	Initiatives
2.1 A revised *National Curriculum Framework* which reflects the needs and challenges of the future.	2.1.10 The revision of the current Option Exercise model, with a particular focus on the biological age students make their decisions, and the range of options on offer.
	2.1.11 A revised Matriculation and Secondary Education Certificate (MATSEC) model that reflects the changes carried out in the *National Curriculum Framework*.
	2.1.12 The setting up and maintenance of a Social Online Learning Environment, that includes local Edu-Vlogging, Edu-tubing and educational campaigns.
	2.1.13 The transformation of Teleskola into Eskola, to more closely mirror the functionalities of a traditional, in-person school, and which aligns with broader trends in digital education transformation.
	2.1.14 A discussion and eventual revision of the *Homework Policy*, to ensure a more balanced approach.

Measure	Initiatives
2.1 A revised *National Curriculum Framework* which reflects the needs and challenges of the future.	**2.1.15** The setting up of a Task Force that evaluates the uptake of Humanities in secondary and post-secondary level and delivers an action plan to address the decline in interest in this area.
	2.1.16 Quality assurance mechanisms that provide support to teachers, while promoting transparency and harmonization of school-based assessment.
2.2 Provision of After-School Accredited Programmes with clear learning outcomes and effectiveness criteria ingrained within quality assurance mechanisms.	**2.2.1** Expansion of the Accreditation Unit to ensure that the programmes offered after-school hours are accredited and quality assured.
	2.2.2 Rebranding and re-conceptualising of *Klabb 3-16* , *SkolaSajf* and Catch Up Classes to ensure accredited programmes are offered to students who make use of these services.
	2.2.3 Promotional campaign to attract more students to the After-School Accredited Programmes.
	2.2.4 Public access to the list of After-School Accredited Programmes available for compulsory school-age students so that parents can make an informed choice.

Measure		Initiatives	
2.3	**All the children, irrespective of their economic, social and cultural status (ESCS), possess a basic level of literacy.**	2.3.1	Distribution of age-appropriate books to each household, with follow-up activities to foster greater engagement.
		2.3.2	The incremental increase of reading time across the Early Years and Junior Years.
		2.3.3	The revision and reinforcement of the diagnostic testing carried out in Year 3 through targeted action for each child.
		2.3.4	The use of Participatory Action Research (PAR) on the use of AI technologies by educators, leading to a set of guidelines and good practice for further use of these tool.
2.4	**The learning gap is narrowed at Primary School level.**	2.4.1	Provision of the Reading Recovery Programme to reach all the students in Year 2 who are experiencing difficulties in literacy.
		2.4.2	Introduction of the Reading Recovery Programme (*Rimonta tal-Qari*) in the Maltese language.

Measure	Initiatives
2.5 Provision of alternative and supplementary learning pathways in compulsory schooling as a preventive and intervention measure for Early Leaving from Education and Training (ELET).	2.5.1 Through the action plan for the *Early Leaving From Education and Training Strategy 2023-2030*, a shift from the prevalent use of compensation measures to address ELET, towards a more preventive approach that addresses challenges from a young age.
	2.5.2 Introduction of quality accredited programmes in every Primary school, as part of and complementing the Learning and Assessment Time established by the Ministry, with a particular focus on programmes that enhance wellbeing, active citizenship, heritage appreciation, sustainable development and green skills, all within a twenty-first century skills framework.
	2.5.3 Introduction of accredited alternative programmes in Secondary Schools, with a particular focus on programmes that enhance wellbeing, active and responsible citizenship, including fiscal morality, financial literacy and financial capability, sustainable development / green skills, all within a twenty-first century skills framework.

Measure		Initiatives	
2.5	**Provision of alternative and supplementary learning pathways in compulsory schooling as a preventive and intervention measure for ELET.**	2.5.4	Introduction of after-hours supplementary accredited programmes in the Middle and Secondary schools that focus on current themes, including active citizenship, sustainable development[26][27] and global citizenship.
		2.5.5	The formulation and consolidation of accredited programmes in applied vocational subjects that are based on application criteria.
2.6	**Reinforcement of the Maltese language as a core subject and a means to preserve the local culture.**	2.6.1	Formulation of quality audio-visual resources aimed at local and international users.
		2.6.2	Internal administrative measures within the Ministry to reinforce the use of the Maltese language.
		2.6.3	Increase in digital content in the Maltese language.

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[26] *The term "Sustainable Development" refers to environmental, economic and social aspects*

[27] *OECD. (2018). The Future of Education and Skills: Education 2030. https://www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/contact/ E2030%20Position%20Paper%20(05.04.2018).pdf*

Measure		Initiatives
2.6	**Reinforcement of the Maltese language as a core subject and a means to preserve the local culture.**	2.6.4 The setting up of a Task Force whose primary aim is to analyse the current challenges being faced in the learning and teaching of Maltese at compulsory level, and the drawing of an action plan that addresses the aforementioned challenges.
		2.6.5 A discussion leading to the development of a *Strateġija għat-Tagħlim tal-Malti.*
2.7	**Improved quality in pre-compulsory settings.**	2.7.1 The establishment of an Inter-Ministerial Committee for Early Childhood Education and Care Advisory Group that ensures a comprehensive and targeted integrated approach within the early years.
		2.7.2 A study and discussion on the trends in pre-compulsory registrations and attendance.
		2.7.3 Revision of the quality standards, monitoring and external review mechanisms by the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education.
		2.7.4 A concerted effort to increase research on childcare settings and how these contribute to literacy and ELET.

	Measure		Initiatives
2.7	**Improved quality in pre-compulsory settings.**	2.7.5	The setting up of a specialised unit within the Ministry that provides support to Childcare Centre settings.
		2.7.6	A more robust legislative framework for the provision of quality education in childcare setting.
		2.7.7	A trained workforce in pre-compulsory settings who is provided with continuous professional development.
2.8	**A revised and improved higher and further education system which is relevant to current and future global and industry needs.**	2.8.1	Through the Post-Secondary Review Working Group, an action plan is set in motion to revise and improve on the current post-secondary system so that it truly reflects current challenges and needs.
		2.8.2	A curriculum alignment action plan, with the involvement of all stakeholders within further and higher education, including MCAST, Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS), the University of Malta (UM), IfE, and other critical enabling bodies, that promotes work-based learning and enhanced industry partnership.

| Measure		Initiatives
2.8	**A revised and improved higher and further education system which is relevant to current and future global and industry needs.**	**2.8.3** An increased investment in the scholarship scheme in focal areas, particularly Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) and green skills.
		2.8.4 A stipend system which is regularly revised so that a financial incentive may be given to students pursuing areas with unprecedented industry demand, including STEAM and sustainable development. The system is based on labour market intelligence and strategic foresight, and carried out in collaboration with the National Skills Council (NSC), JobsPlus and Malta Enterprise.
2.9	**A more robust and holistic education regulatory framework.**	**2.9.1** The establishment of a Task Force with the aim of developing a holistic education regulatory framework that covers pre-compulsory to further and higher education.
		2.9.2 The development of an action plan by Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA) that aims at strengthening quality assurance, both at conceptual and implementation phase, and ensuring a high level of compliance by private and public education institutions.
		2.9.3 Following the implementation of the action plan, a comprehensive study by the MFHEA on the quality level of public and private institutions.

Measure	Initiatives
2.10 Recognition of elite athletes effort in professional sport.	**2.10.1** Launch of the Talented Athlete Scheme, whereby the time spent in training, also including national and international achievements are formally recognised and embedded within academic certification.
	2.10.2 Expansion of the Scholarship programme in relation to sports, both at post-secondary and tertiary education level.
2.11 Further recognition of arts as a specialised area of studies.	**2.11.1** A specialised action plan that recognises the strengths and addresses the areas of development of the current model employed at the Malta Visual and Performing Arts School (MVPA).
	2.11.2 Increased investment, both in terms of financials and human capital, to address the actions established in the plan for the Mikiel Anton Vassalli College (MAVC).
	2.11.3 Establishment of a Visual and Performing Arts Academy, as an expansion of the existing MVPA, that offers accredited programmes and qualifications of up to *Malta Qualifications Framework* (MQF) Level 5.
	2.11.4 Research and analysis on the possibility of the Talented Artist Scheme, whereby the time spent in training, also including national and international achievements are formally recognised and embedded within academic certification.

Measure	Initiatives
2.12 The setting up of a Trade Institute for postsecondary students, based on a micro-credentials system, to promote careers in the traditional and modern trades.	2.12.1 A comprehensive study and needs analysis to establish which trades are to be offered within the Trade Institute.
	2.12.2 A campaign amongst Secondary School students and the public on what constitutes a trade today and the transformation from Trade Schools to Trade Institute within MCAST.
2.13 Improved synergy between the education sector, external and government entities and the industry.	2.13.1 The establishment of a new Planning and Strategic Foresight Directorate that will set up the Education Foresight Forum, led by a Steering Group composed of the industry, intra-ministerial entities and social partners, together with a Network of Experts.
	2.13.2 Comprehensive National Basic Skills Guidelines which are drawn, published and disseminated across all sectors of our education system.
	2.13.3 A more concerted effort to promote entrepreneurship across all levels of the education system, with the collaboration of MCAST, ITS, UM and other government entities.

Measure	Initiatives
2.13 Improved synergy between the education sector, external and government entities and the industry.	2.13.4 In collaboration with the NSC, the engagement of the industry in shaping the vocational programmes accredited by the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education.
	2.13.5 In collaboration with the NSC, a review of the uptake, impact and long-term outcomes of existing funding opportunities for adults who wish to continue their learning, with the aim of identifying gaps for a more proactive approach.
	2.13.6 The setting up of an Apprenticeship Database with the aim of connecting employers with students seeking an apprenticeship experience.
	2.13.7 A revamped Job Exposure Experience for students in compulsory schooling.
	2.13.8 A mapping exercise, carried out by the NSC, to build a comprehensive picture of the training opportunities in the area of green skills and identify existing gaps in Malta's twin transition.
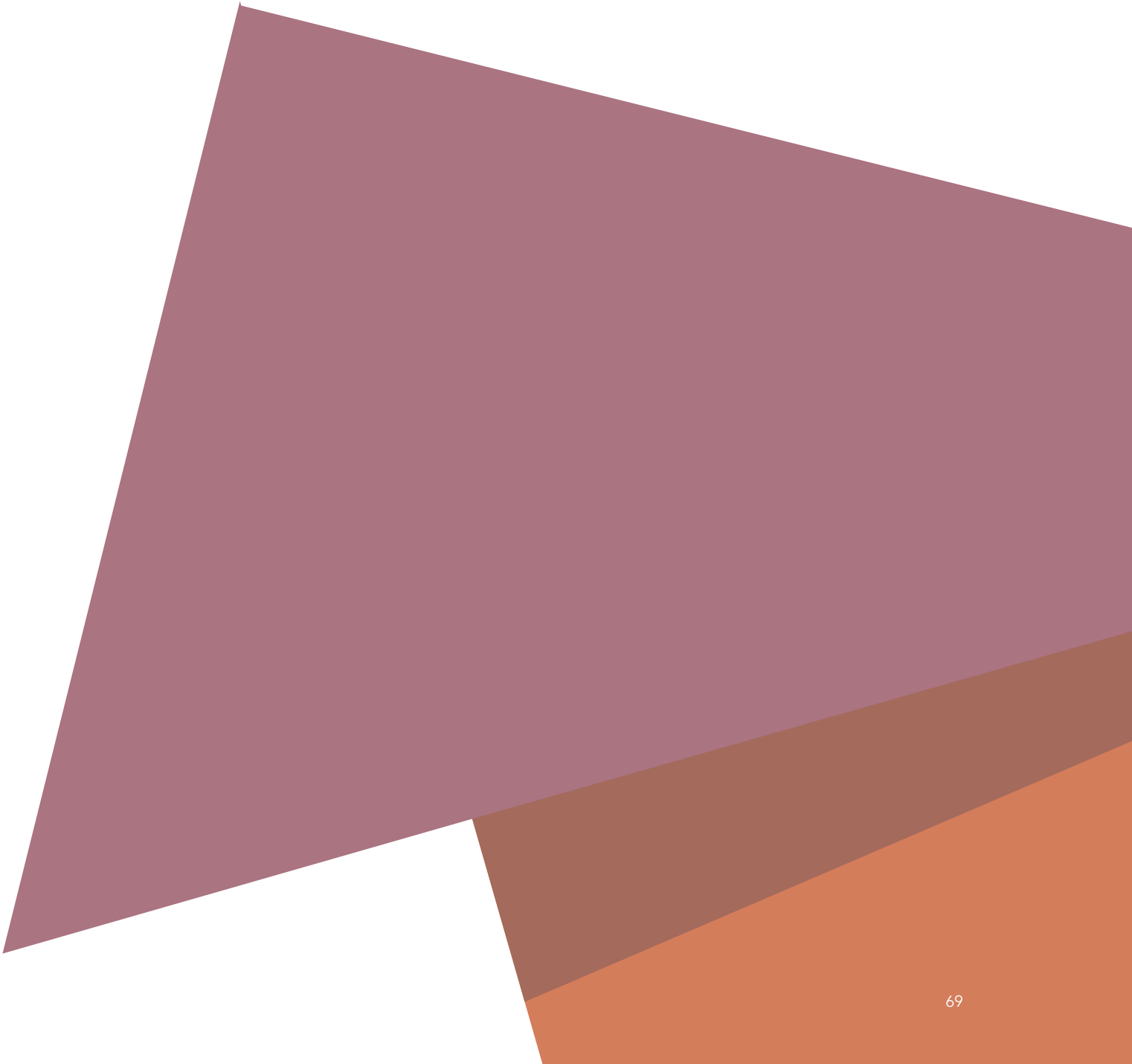
PILLAR 3
EQUITY & INCLUSION

6

Strategic Objective 4
Equity & Inclusion

Context

Internationally, equity and inclusion have been set high on the agenda since there is a general understanding that social gaps have been exacerbated following the pandemic, a higher rate of migration and due to the digital divide[28]. The Ministry is committed to addressing social fragmentation and inequalities since it is our belief that education is a fundamental tool through which everyone is given the opportunity to reach their potential. To this end, one of the first steps to be taken to understand how different policies and decisions are impacting different groups of students, is employing a system-wide data disaggregation exercise[29], which is also one of the SDG indicators for quality education.   Eventually, it is the Ministry's plan to employ AI technologies for data analysis and forecasting, the results of which will serve as evidence for future policies and strategies.

We recognise the impact of migration and cultural diversity on social realities within the local context[30]. Therefore, the third pillar is important not only to ensure that each child is given the help needed to flourish, but also to foster intercultural understanding and ingrain the capacity within our young people to handle tension due to cultural differences, what is commonly known as competence in cultural awareness[31.] This is also in line with the SDGs.

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[28] *Balestra, C. & Ciani. (2022). Current Challenges to Social Mobility and Equality of Opportunity, OECD Papers on Well-being and Inequalities, No. 10, OECD Publishing, Paris. https://doi.org/10.1787/a749ffbb-en.*

[29] *There are many instances in which data disaggregation is expected to help policy makers and educators in schools understand how different social groups behave differently and/or are being impacted by major decisions. This includes gender differences in relation to fear of failure and therefore self-confidence, risk factors in ELET based on ESCS, the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on disadvantaged students, the level of wellbeing for students with disabilities.*

[30] *National Statistics Office. Census of Population and Housing 2021: Final Report: Population, Migration and Other Social Characteristics (Volume 1). https://nso.gov.mt/events/census-of-population-and-housing-2021-final-report-population-migration-and-other-social-characteristics/*

[31] *Sala, A., Punie, Y., Garkov, V. and Cabrera Giraldez, M. (2020). LifeComp: The European Framework for Personal, Social and Learning to Learn Key Competence. EUR 30246 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg*

Students with a statement of needs are also being addressed in this strategy. The Ministry understands that the current model adopted has its challenges and might not be suitable for the changing demographics in the classroom. The Ministry commits to a revision of the system with the aim of further supporting students in their educational journey, while giving educators the necessary tools and framework to be able to reach everyone in class.

Measure		Initiatives	
3.1	**A revised model of inclusion that reflects the current challenges within today's classroom.**	3.1.1	A class support system for students who have learning difficulties, including dyslexia, but are not entitled to a statement of needs.
		3.1.2	A revised and more sustainable inclusion model following a thorough re-audit by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education of the current state of play.
		3.1.3	A study on how the current inclusion model is affecting several minority groups.
		3.1.4	A revised concept of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) so that this truly becomes a working document that is accessible to all stakeholders.
		3.1.5	Provision of alternative programmes, which are more therapy-based, and which better address the needs of students with disabilities.
		3.1.6	An integrated approach towards the provision of quality programmes for post-secondary students with disabilities.

Measure	Initiatives	
3.1 **A revised model of inclusion that reflects the current challenges within today's classroom.**	3.1.7	Introduction and strengthening of a Consultancy Model which will increase the presence of psychologists in schools.
	3.1.8	A more structured Peer Preparation Programme that helps students better understand the different needs in the classroom, especially those related to autism.
	3.1.9	The incremental increase of Reach Units, catering for students with autism, located within a mainstream setting for a truly inclusive model.
3.2 **Formal recognition of skills and abilities of students and young people in Resource Centres.**	3.2.1	An adapted *Curriculum Framework for Resource Centres* as specialised settings.
	3.2.2	An adapted *Learning Outcomes Framework for Resource Centres* as specialised settings.
3.3 **The reconceptualization of Learning Support Centres as specialised settings for severe behavioural difficulties.**	3.3.1	A revised concept of the Learning Support Centres with specialised programmes that target current challenges.
	3.3.2	Curriculum revision for Learning Support Centres so that the programmes offered better address the needs of the students.

Measure		Initiatives	
3.4	**A decrease in the rate of absenteeism, which in turn contributes to a drop in the rate of early school-leavers.**	3.4.1	Automatic notification for schools' administration staff through the online school system that identifies students whose absence rate is cause of concern.
		3.4.2	A revised standard procedure throughout all schools, in collaboration with the College Social Workers, on actions to be taken at various stages of the absenteeism spectrum.
		3.4.3	Engagement of the Family-Community-School Link Programme Liaison Officer for a personalised plan to prevent chronic absenteeism.
		3.4.4	Engagement of the Family-Community-School Link Programme Liaison Officer for a personalised plan in cases of long absenteeism, in collaboration with the Social Work Services.
3.5	**Provision of modular courses for adult learners at risk offered by the Directorate for Lifelong Learning and Employability.**	3.5.1	A needs analysis based on segmented data to identify gaps within the compulsory system that needs to be addressed through modular courses.
		3.5.2	Engagement of NGOs and entities that work with young people for the formulation of outreach accredited programmes.

Measure		Initiatives
3.5	**Provision of modular courses for adult learners at risk offered by the Directorate for Lifelong Learning and Employability.**	3.5.3 Provision of a database of entities and companies who are willing to offer a job exposure experience to students attending modular courses.
		3.5.4 The strengthening of the guidance system within the Directorate for Lifelong Learning and Employability, that provides independent educational and career guidance to all adults living in Malta.
		3.5.5 An outreach and promotion campaign for the national Career Guidance service that offers comprehensive guidance and advice on learning and work opportunities available locally.
		3.5.6 The formulation and implementation of a lifelong learning programme that targets international adult learners and which is embedded within an intercultural dialogue.
3.6	**A focus on reskilling and upskilling opportunities through quality courses by the Directorate for Lifelong Learning and Employability.**	3.6.1 Through the Directorate for Lifelong Learning and Employability, the development and reinforcement of the Edu Community Learning Programme, that works jointly with the community to offer quality courses targeting the elderly and persons with disabilities, while employing an intergenerational approach.

Measure		Initiatives
3.6	**A focus on reskilling and upskilling opportunities through quality courses by the Directorate for Lifelong Learning and Employability.**	3.6.2 Development of the Adult Diagnostic Assessment Tool for prospective students in lifelong learning courses. 3.6.3 In collaboration with MFHEA, a system that recognises prior learning for the Directorate for Lifelong Learning and Employability courses.
3.7	**A more comprehensive assessment of international students before entering the compulsory system.**	3.7.1 The re-conceptualising and re-branding of the Migrant Learners' Unit to reflect today's realities and demographics. 3.7.2 An assessment that is carried out for international students, which does not only cover linguistic competency but also educational background, socio-emotional health and mental health. 3.7.3 A thorough assessment of the impact of international students and their participation in compulsory schooling, followed by an action plan that addresses the identified challenges. 3.7.4 A revised model of the Induction Hub with the provision of a learning programme that addresses both linguistic ability and learning gap within the general curriculum.

Measure		Initiatives	
3.7	**A more comprehensive assessment of international students before entering the compulsory system.**	3.7.5	A mapping exercise which gives visibility of the services currently being offered to international children and young people, both within and outside of school hours with the aim of adopting more culturally-inclusive approaches.
3.8	**Disaggregation of data in terms of gender, nationality, geographical area, age and disability for more evidence-informed policy development and for an intersectional approach.**	3.8.1	Creation and dissemination of a Standard Operating Procedure that regulates data disaggregation across the Ministry.
		3.8.2	Development of an appropriate dashboard to cater for the disaggregated data.
		3.8.3	Forming of a technical Working Group which assists the Information Management Unit (IMU) in deciding the most appropriate technology that can be used for information and data processing.
		3.8.4	Reinforcement of the Ministry's Research Directorate so that the latter has a primary role in the research-informed approach outlined in the initiatives within the *National Education Strategy 2024-2030.*
		3.8.5	Through the use of AI, a study of the trends emanating from intersectionality.

Measure		**Initiatives**
3.9	**The employment of an integrated approach to address the complex difficulties children and young people face.**	3.9.1 A mapping exercise which gives visibility of the services currently being offered to children and young people with disability, both within and outside of school hours, with the aim of adopting more inclusive approaches.
		3.9.2 A specialised Task Force whose primary aim is to see how services, both given by the Ministry and also by other Ministries, can be better integrated.

MONITORING
AND EVALUATION

Policy monitoring and evaluation will be a fundamental component in the *National Education Strategy 2024-2030.* While it is the belief of the Ministry that policy monitoring and evaluation are decisive to good governance, we are determined to cultivate and sustain a culture in which each policy and strategy under its remit is pegged to a plan that establishes when, how and who is responsible for each action.

The *National Education Policy 2024-2030* is based on thorough planning which incorporates strategic foresight, triangulated research and open dialogue. Reporting related to the monitoring of each measure and initiative will be held on a regular basis, whereby each action owner is expected to report the progress made in each action on a quarterly basis.

The feedback received will feed an extensive and encompassing dashboard so that as a Ministry we have full visibility of the progress being registered in terms of targets. This dashboard and its contents will be accessible to key officers within the Ministry, to the Office of Permanent Secretary and the Office of the Principal Permanent Secretary. Data will also be used for regular reporting to international fora.

We firmly believe that this rigorous practice will reinforce accountability[32], and consequently strengthen the trust of internal and external stakeholders. Parallel to that, two professional bodies within the Ministry, namely the Policy Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate and the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education, both of which fall within the remit of the Education Strategy and Quality Assurance Department, will be analysing how the actions taken in relation to the *National Education Strategy 2024-2030* are impacting internal stakeholders within schools.

While targets have a coherent route within the *National Education Strategy 2024-2030* action plan itself, the Ministry recognises that some of the medium-term metrics might need to be re-adjusted to reflect the volatile scenario we are presently living in. This will be done responsibly, and in discussion with local and international experts in the field.

There will be a simultaneous monitoring of the policy environment, through the Planning and Strategic Foresight Directorate, so that the profile of this strategy is adapted accordingly[33].

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[32] *OECD. (2020). How Can Governments Leverage Policy Evaluation to Improve Evidence Informed Policy Making? https://www.oecd.org/gov/policy-evaluation-comparative-study-highlights.pdf*

[33] *European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation. (2010). Communicating Research for Evidence-Based Policymaking – A Practical Guide for Researchers in Socio-Economic Sciences and Humanities. Publications Office. https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/9276*

The monitoring and evaluation plan attached to the *National Education Strategy 2024-2030* will be using multiple quality tools that will gauge progress, all of which will be documented. The latter will serve as feedback upon which future policy documents are positioned and subsequent strategic foresight mapped out.

The Ministry believes that quality assurance and compliance are to be maintained not only within its structures, institutions and entities but also within the entire life cycle of all its policies. Ultimately, we do believe that with each attained milestone, we would be improving the quality of life of a segment of our stakeholders. A number of targets within the *National Education Strategy 2024-2030* have been extracted from the action plans related to the five key documents[34] sustaining this strategy. This ensures a coherent and unified plan that seeks to assist the individual, irrespective of their background and baggage, throughout their life course, with the aim of having a more resilient, compassionate and innovative society.

[34] *A Quality Assurance Framework for Education in Malta (0-16 Years), National Quality Standards in Education (3-16 Years), Early Leaving from Education and Training Strategy 2023-2030, National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2023-2030, Digital Education Strategy 2024-2030*
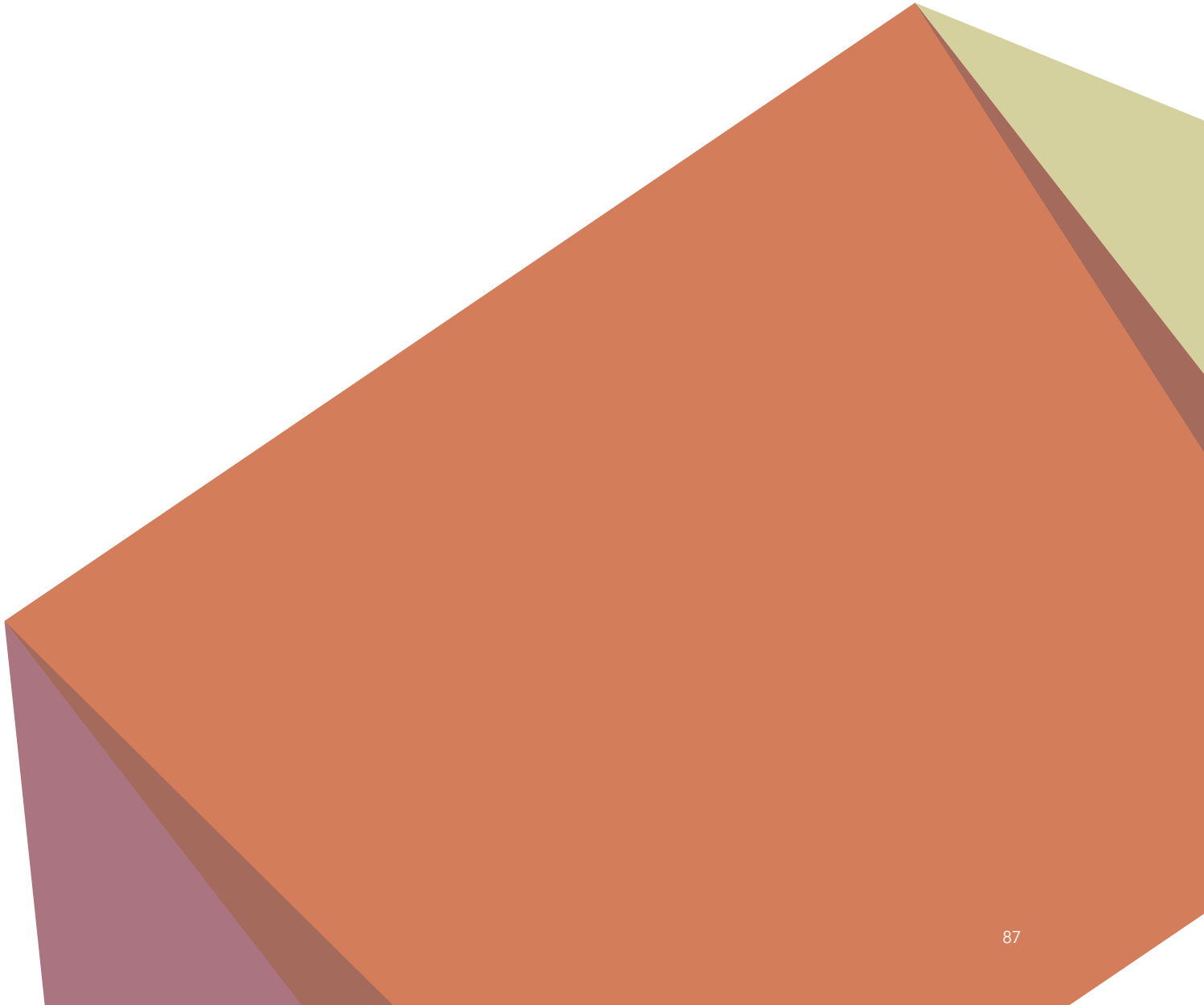
CONCLUSION

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The *National Education Strategy 2024-2030*, with its focus on ***Wellbeing***, ***Equity & Inclusion*** and ***Growth & Empowerment***, is yet another significant milestone in the transformative journey of our education system, one that has set targets for 2030 that will eventually set in motion our plan for 2050. The Ministry believes that through these priority areas, it is laying the foundations for a more humane, responsive and holistic system that benefits students, educators and society at large.

The spotlight on wellbeing recognizes that students' mental, socio-emotional and physical health is essential for their overall development and academic success. It underscores the importance of creating a nurturing and supportive learning environment, where both students and their educators feel supported and appreciated. The wellbeing of educators is intended to empower them and make them strategic partners in the policy development cycle.

Growth is another key aspect of this strategy, emphasizing continuous improvement in both students and educators. Encouraging lifelong learning and professional development ensures that our education system remains dynamic and adaptable to evolving needs. Student agency and ownership is at the heart of the second pillar, with the aim of helping future generations be in control of their future. Active participation also ensures that students embark on a lifelong and life-wide learning journey that helps them adapt to changing contexts. The guiding principles of equity and inclusion, which make up the third pillar, ensure that high-quality education is available for everyone, and that students' personal and social circumstances do not determine their chances in life.

The *National Education Strategy 2024-2030* has embarked on a paradigm shift that will transform education so as to better serve the needs and reach the aspirations of its students, educators and society, thus setting a path for a more inclusive, equitable, and empowering educational system.   This conversion sustains our commitment to a person-centred approach, one that values the individual and empowers them through their life.