

National **LIFELONG LEARNING STRATEGY**

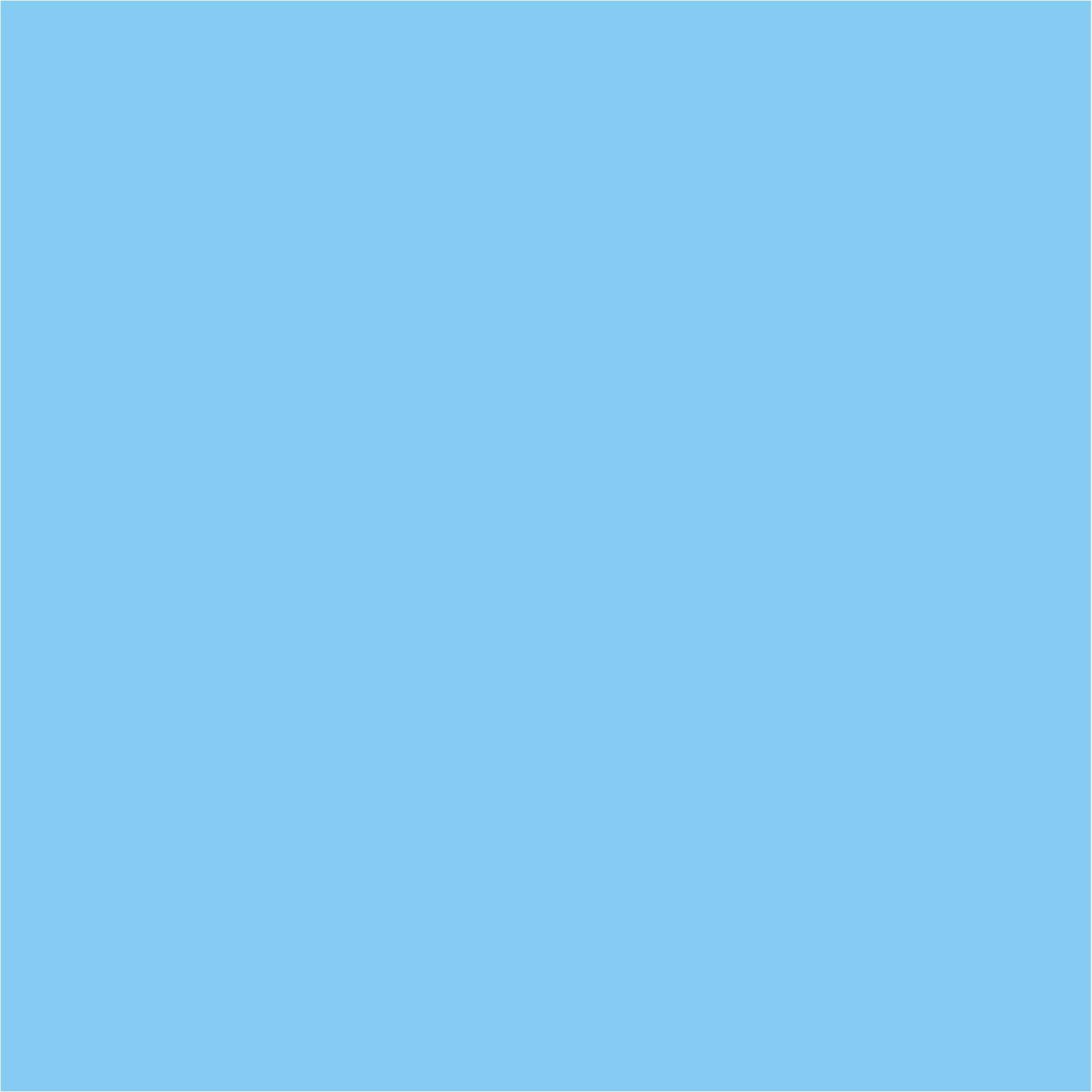
2023 - 2030



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



**LIFELONG
LEARNING**



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Foreword by the the Minister

This Lifelong Learning Strategy emphasises the importance of continuous education and personal development throughout one's life. Learning is not to be confined to a classroom or to a formal educational setting but should extend to a wider range of opportunities and experiences.

The world is rapidly evolving, particularly due to the advancement of technology and the increasing demand for digital skills. The labour market is more competitive than ever, thus requiring individuals to possess a diverse set of skills. Lifelong learning plays a crucial role in meeting these demands by enabling individuals to upskill, reskill, and enhance their existing abilities.

The National Strategy for Lifelong Learning is built upon the work of our Ministry within this area and provides a roadmap for our future endeavours. This strategy is centred around the individual, recognising their personal growth, social inclusion, active citizenship, and employability as key outcomes of lifelong learning.

The strategy encompasses three main pillars. These pillars focus on providing learning opportunities for adults who require basic skills. This includes individuals who have not had the opportunity to acquire essential literacy, numeracy, or digital skills. We are also aware that people have different learning preferences, thus we aim to provide

flexible and accessible learning options that cater to various needs. The strategy also ensures quality in lifelong learning training.

Ultimately, our goal is to empower individuals by fostering personal confidence and equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed not only for today's workplace but also for the challenges that the future might hold. Lifelong learning is an investment that benefits all those involved, and we encourage adults and those who have completed compulsory education, to seize the opportunities presented.

I believe that this Lifelong Learning Strategy will serve as a catalyst for widespread participation in lifelong learning and help individuals realise the numerous benefits it offers. By embracing lifelong learning, we can create a society that is adaptable, knowledgeable, and equipped to thrive in an ever-changing world.

Dr. Clifton Grima
Minister for Education, Sport, Youth, Research,
and Innovation



Foreword by the Permanent Secretary

Nowadays, education is not merely seen as a tool for one's future, but it is part and parcel of one's life. In truth, it is life itself.

There are no doubts that education is the key for social mobility. When a mature person continues to receive training, they are increasing their chances to improve the quality of their life and of those around them. This is another step towards the transformation that is taking place within the field of education. The aim of the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning within the Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability (DRLLE) is to adopt a person-centred approach to make it easier for adults to access learning.

In a world which is rapidly evolving, where 21st century skills are given more importance and where new jobs and different working methods are continuously being created, basic skills in literacy and the use of digital tools remain fundamental competences. In short, these skills are the basis of everything.



In fact, a significant advancement in this strategy is the development of the basic skills guidelines for adults. The core aim of this strategy is the national responsibility to lower the risk of unemployment, poverty, and social exclusion. Therefore, this strategy is a leap towards social inclusion where its main aim is to reach the most vulnerable people, the minorities and the socially marginalised.

This strategy is based on three main pillars, backed up with several measures and actions that aim to strengthen, promote, and develop opportunities for learning. The first pillar covers the opportunities for learning aimed at adults who need basic skills, whereas the second pillar presents different learning methods and opportunities to ensure inclusivity. Ultimately, the third pillar ensures the quality of training in lifelong learning (LL).

One's best investment is to continue investing in personal training. I believe that this strategy will not only promote the personal well-being and quality of life of the individual, but the society in general will reap benefits from it on a national level.

Mr. Matthew Vella
Permanent Secretary, Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth,
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Executive Summary

The National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2023-2030 has a social mission at its core and aims to improve the lives of those most vulnerable through a diverse range of LL opportunities. The strategy, in fact, will play a key role in reaching national targets to increase both the employment rate and the participation of adults in learning, whilst reducing the rate of people at risk of poverty and/or social exclusion. A rapidly changing world means that LL is not an option but a must. The benefits of LL do not stop on an individual level but have ripple effects on all levels of society including the industry, the civic community, and the country at large. The strategy aims to reach these goals through three pillars, each one focusing on an important aspect of LL.

Pillar I focuses on improving those educational opportunities aimed at low-skilled and low-qualified adults who face a higher risk of unemployment, poverty, and social exclusion. The aim of this pillar is to introduce measures that improve access and remove those learning obstacles that hinder the vulnerable cohorts, such as persons with chronic disabling conditions and problems, migrants and early leavers from education and training. Through the introduction of The National Basic Skills Guidelines for Adults, this Pillar emphasises on the importance of measuring the basic skills of adults, to better understand the local scenario and to build solutions based on facts. It also proposes the development of diagnostic and learner progress tracking systems to provide more relevant and personalised guidance and learning opportunities. Finally, it proposes the importance of additional and improved financial support.

Pillar II aims to diversify the methods and opportunities for learning through the enhancement and promotion of community, work-based and other forms of informal and non-formal learning options. These options show that formal education is not the only route to be taken to learn and provides the much-needed flexibility and alternatives that adult learners, with their multiple commitments, require. This Pillar also proposes measures to increase work related, entrepreneurial, and other transversal skills and also encourages an active citizenship, since these are as crucial as any other skill known for a good quality of life and resilient societies. The recognition and validation of prior learning will also increase the opportunities for learning of individuals.

The goal of Pillar III is to ensure quality in the LL's course provision. The strategy proposes to ensure this, through the facilitation of a paradigm shift in the perceived role of the DRLL, highlighting its wider national role to coordinate and create synergy amongst its stakeholders. Other measures include the professionalisation of educators working in the field of adult education, setting up mechanisms to constantly monitor and improve LL course provisions and to support adults to make informed decisions through an independent guidance system.

To ensure the successful implementation of the strategy, a three-layer monitoring and evaluation system has been set up which includes the National Lifelong Learning and Upskilling Pathways Task Force, the Policy Thematic Committee and at a Ministerial level the Policy Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate (PMED). In conclusion, the strategy aims to achieve the above with the help of adequate human and financial resources and by adopting a holistic approach where all stakeholders, both within and beyond the education sector, work together to ensure LL for all.

Abbreviations

AROPE	At Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CRPD	Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability
DRLLE	Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability
ELET	Early Leaving from Education and Training
EQA	External Quality Assurance
EU	European Union
FITA	Foundation for Information Technology Accessibility
FSWS	Foundation for Social Welfare Services
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNLC	Global Network of Learning Cities
IQA	Internal Quality Assurance
LL	Lifelong Learning
MEYR	Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research, and Innovation
MFHEA	Malta Further & Higher Education Authority
MQF	Malta Qualifications Framework
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PIAAC	Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies
PMED	Policy Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate
SAR	Self-Assessment Report
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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Background

Through [The National Lifelong Learning Strategy](#), by 2030, Malta has committed itself to achieve the following ambitious targets:

1. To have an employment rate of at least 86.4% of the population aged 20-64;
2. To at least have 57.6% of all adults aged 25-64 to participate in learning every year and;
3. To reduce the percentage of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) in people aged 20-64 by 3.1 percentage points (European Commission, 2022a).

In the words of [Ursula von der Leyen](#), "Education is not just a preparation for life, it becomes a way of life." ([European Commission, 2023](#)) On the 12th of October 2022, the European Commission declared 2023 as the European Year of Skills (European Commission, 2022b), emphasising that investing in training is not only the right thing to do, but also the smart thing to do. The world is being transformed by technology and by the [Green Transition](#), resulting in new jobs and different ways of working (European Commission, 2023). This increases the demand for technical skills, but it simultaneously means that basic skills remain as fundamental competencies on which the other skills are built upon. Numeracy, literacy, and digital skills remain the pillars for emerging 21st century skills.

One fifth of adult Europeans struggle with basic reading and writing, numeracy, and using digital tools in everyday life. The same number of adult Europeans (around 22%) obtained a lower secondary education level. Without such skills, and with low-level qualifications, adults face a higher risk of unemployment, poverty,

and social exclusion (European Commission, n.d.). This National Strategy for Lifelong Learning is proposing the development of [National Basic Skills Guidelines for Adults](#), which is an important step towards decreasing these numbers.

Presently, it is vital to disassociate the concepts of learning and education from compulsory schooling. The world is constantly evolving and now, more than ever, it is important to embrace LL. The [European Commission](#) states that LL encompasses all learning activities undertaken throughout life with the aim of improving one's knowledge, skills, and competences, with personal, civic, social, or employment-related perspectives. Adult learning means the participation of adults in LL. It usually refers to learning activities after the end of initial education and is a vital component of the European Union's (EU) LL policy. The main indicator to measure adult learning is the participation rate in education and training, which covers participation in formal and non-formal education and training (Eurostat, n.d.).

The right to education, training, and LL is enshrined in the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), which states that by 2030, 60% of all adults should be participating in some form of training every year. Too few participate in regular learning after completing their initial education across Europe. According to [Eurostat](#) data, in 2022, only 12.8% of Maltese citizens aged 25-64 participated in a form of education and training (Eurostat, 2023c). This is a worrisome statistic, as it suggests that a large portion of our adult population may not have the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in [today's world](#).

Participation rate of adults (ages 25-64) in education and training in the last 4 weeks

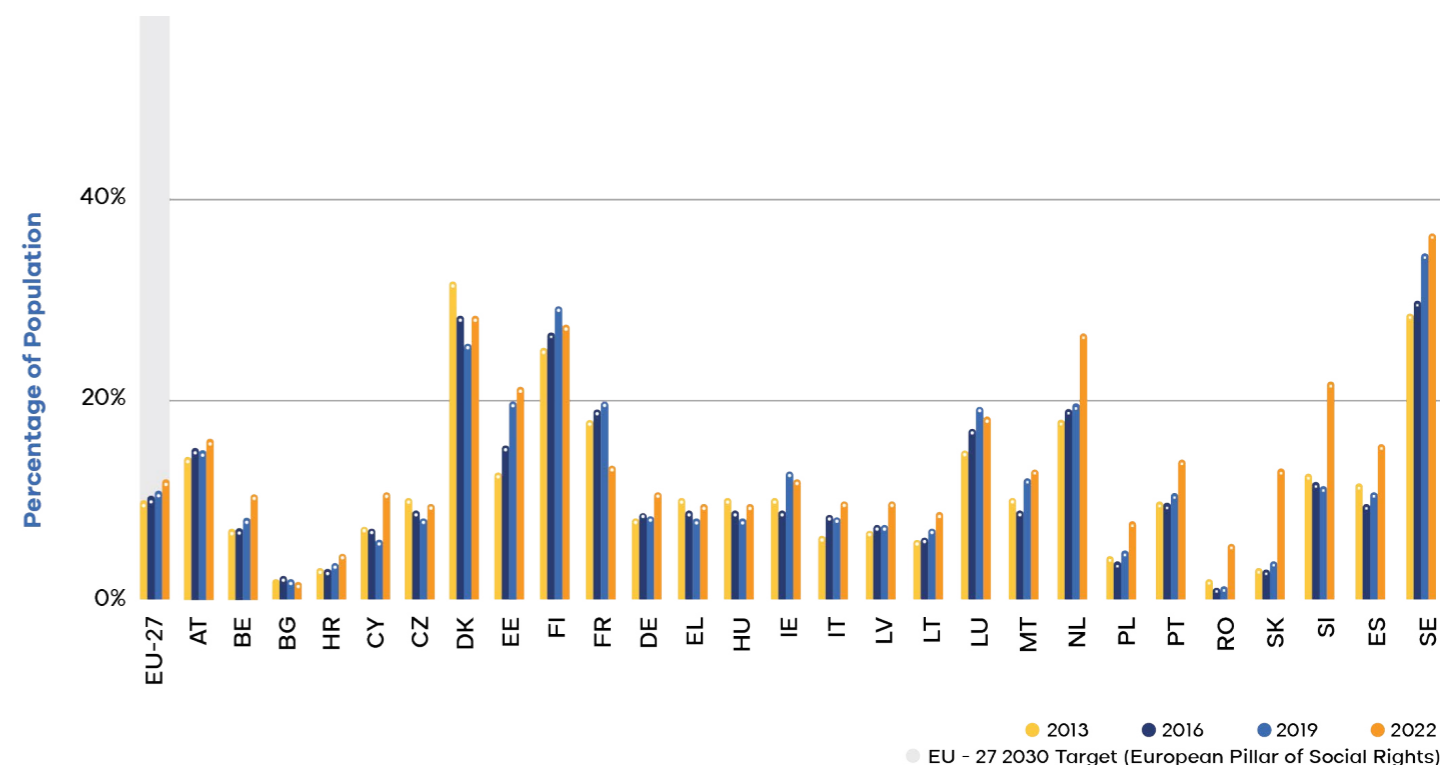


Figure 1: Participation rate in education and training amongst adults aged 25-64 (last 4 weeks) and EU-2030 national targets for participation in education and training (European Commission, 2022a; Eurostat, 2023c).

The National Strategy for Lifelong Learning represents a significant step forward in the efforts made to ensure that all persons living in Malta have access to the education and training they need to succeed in their personal, professional, and social lives.

Adults engage in LL to enhance their employability, acquire new skills, and to facilitate their personal development. As a result, this contributes to improve social cohesion. The importance of skilled and educated adults goes beyond the notion of formal education, as it also encompasses learning acquired in non-formal or informal ways within the community. Learners must be able to demonstrate what they have learnt and to apply this knowledge in their work and to enhance further their education and upskilling. This strategy is proposing several measures and actions that will enhance, develop, and promote provision of such learning opportunities.

The strategy has a strong social mission at its core, with the aim to meet the needs of hard-to-reach cohorts and those at risk of poverty, including vulnerable and marginal groups which require upskilling and reskilling. In recent years, the LL Unit has invested in the digitalisation of its services. This was done through the diversification of service provision via synchronous and self-paced online courses. The European Commission's recommendations on the promotion and adoption of Micro-credentials to facilitate a more modular and flexible service provision will also be adopted so that learners can choose the best pathway that is tailored to their personal needs and circumstances. In addition, the strategy is taking inclusivity a step further by applying an Inclusive Design for Learning to create learning experiences that are truly accessible to all.



Aims and Objectives

Learning happens over the course of a lifetime. The previous National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2014-2020 paved the way for change. Programs and actions implemented by this previous strategy have led to certain policy changes and initiatives that are reflected in the recent National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2023-2030. Research, consultation sessions with stakeholders, and focus groups have allowed this National Strategy to be drafted in a manner that categorises the major ambitions and direction of the sector into three pillars, each having several strategic actions. Adult learning is an investment that pays off for all. There is no learning without economic and societal benefits. It is the key for personal development, social inclusion, active citizenship, and sustainable development. The benefits of LL reach far and wide and can be felt at an individual, industrial, and national level.

Individual learners can yield numerous benefits from engaging in LL. Economically, it usually results in better quality of work, a higher income, and improved employability. Furthermore, adult learning contributes to improved general well-being and better overall health.

Engaging in adult learning also yields social benefits for learners by improving engagement in community and civic activities. (European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs, and Inclusion, 2020)

The industry in general also stands to gain from a workforce that is continuously learning. Companies that invest in the learning and development of their workforce can observe improvements in their competitiveness, productivity, innovation, and profitability. Additionally, LL helps to create a more motivated workforce, which leads to increased job satisfaction and subsequently better performance. (European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs, and Inclusion, 2020)

On a larger scale, communities also benefit from adult learning initiatives. In terms of the economy, adult learning yields greater economic competitiveness and a higher Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Social benefits include positive effects on health, the environment and community integration. (European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs, and Inclusion, 2020)

This National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2023-2030 aims to:

Facilitate access to adult learning
Contribute to the goal set by the European Pillar of Social Rights to reach the target of 60% of all European adults participating in training every year by 2030
Create synergy between multiple stakeholders
Push for a national conversation about adult learning
Continuously improve the quality of adult learning
Support other entities within the Ministry for Education, such as the Unit for the Prevention of Early School Leavers, the National Literacy Agency, and the National Skills Council, whose remit overlaps with or complements that of the LL Unit, and to implement elements from their strategies
Align course provision of the LL Unit with Malta's changing skills needs and the economic vision of the Government of the day
Improve the accessibility of LL to persons with disabilities
Promote community learning
Enhance informal and non-formal learning


Table 1: National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2023-2030 Aims

Strategy Outline

The National Lifelong Learning Strategy comprises of three main pillars. These pillars are embedded within the vision and priorities set in the National Education Strategy for Malta 2024-2030.

Pillar 1	Pillar 2	Pillar 3
Improving educational opportunities for low-skilled and low-qualified adults	Diversifying the methods and opportunities for learning	Ensuring quality in LL course provision
7 measures	4 measures	5 measures
21 actions	10 actions	19 actions

Table 2: Summary of the National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2023-2030 Pillars, Measures, and Actions



The National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2023-2030 includes a total of 3 Pillars, 16 Measures and 50 Actions. Under the direction of the DRLL within the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research, and Innovation (MEYR), these need to be implemented by several stakeholders over a period of seven years. Attention was paid to focus on measures and actions that are clear, measurable and those that will eventually leave the greatest impact and benefits for citizens.

Pillar I focuses on improving educational opportunities for low-skilled and low-qualified adults at higher risk of unemployment, poverty, and social exclusion. Specific measures and actions in this pillar to address gaps in skills include; the development of National Basic Skills Guidelines for Adults, exploring the feasibility of introducing the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), better skills assessment tools and tracer studies of adult learner progress and improved access and programmes customised for the needs of hard to reach cohorts such as migrants, persons with chronic disabling conditions or problems and early leavers from education and training.

Pillar II aims to diversify the methods and opportunities for learning through the enhancement and promotion of community, work-based and other forms of informal and non-formal learning options. In terms of measures and actions to reach this goal, the strategy is proposing the identification and development of flexible spaces for adult learning, the creation and promotion of such learning opportunities and collaboration with the industry and the crafts sector to focus on those much needed skills in these areas, such as entrepreneurship. It is also committing to promote the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) with the aim of building learning cities and increasing LL within communities.

The goal of **Pillar III** is to ensure quality in LL course provision. This goal will be reached through dialogue and coordinated efforts between stakeholders, improving the institutional and programme quality of LL courses and by striving to professionalise and give importance to the adult education sector. It also emphasises the development of an independent guidance unit which includes the services of an educational psychologist and other specialists in the field to support adults in their LL journey and to promote a culture where guidance throughout life is normalised.

Pillar I: Improving Educational Opportunities for Low-Skilled and Low Qualified Adults at Higher Risk of Unemployment, Poverty, and Social Exclusion

Pillar I aims to reduce the gaps in skills and to improve the educational opportunities for vulnerable cohorts living in Malta, whether native citizens or migrants. According to Eurostat, as of March 2023, Malta has one of the lowest rates of unemployment standing at 2.9%, when compared to the European average of 6% (Eurostat, 2023b). This low level of unemployment, coupled with the country's economic growth, have potentially distracted many from the need to address certain issues including a basic skills crisis. For example, high employment rates, make the 10.1% of individuals who leave early from education and training (Eurostat, 2023a) and the 36.7% of 15-year olds from a low socio-economic background who struggle with basic skills (Education and Training Monitor, 2022) seem like less of a problem. It also distracts from the fact that at 12.8%, adults living in Malta are amongst the least to participate in Education and Training in Europe (Eurostat, 2023c).

Huge shifts and changes in the world have become a constant, raising concern that people will not have the skills needed, such as digital skills, to communicate effectively, to sustain the economy and to maintain a good standard of living in times of crisis and/or later in life. For individuals with low educational attainment, the challenge comes when their lack of basic skills starts limiting their independence and blocks them from moving on or up in various aspects of their life. Pillar I brings these issues to the forefront in order to address them by taking specific actions that increase the educational attainment of the low skilled and low qualified.

Measure	Action No	Action
Strategic Measure 1: Address basic skills gaps by introducing National Basic Skills Guidelines for Adults	1	Explore the feasibility of introducing the OECD Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) to measure the literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills of adults living in Malta.
	2	Development and adoption of the National Basic Skills Guidelines for Adults. The creation of guidelines and a framework for basic skills by collaborating with foreign and national partners. These guidelines are to be aligned with the National Literacy Strategy 2021-2030 and are to be followed by national stakeholders offering basic skills courses.
	3	Increase the number of adult educators specialised in teaching basic skills, as well as improve the skills of current educators by encouraging stakeholders to develop and regularly offer awards and other forms of continuous development opportunities.
	4	Develop educational programmes in modular form on literacy, numeracy, digital skills, and life skills through different modes of learning. These will also take into consideration the UNESCO sustainable development goals and local/global needs such as the green transition, ocean literacy, health and wellbeing.
Strategic Measure 2: Addressing skills deficit by introducing skills assessment measures for LL Unit courses	1	Develop a diagnostic assessment to increase better matches between learners and courses. This diagnostic assessment needs to inform the delivery of courses and allows for a review to ensure its efficacy.
	2	Provide support for learners to enrol and engage in learning at the appropriate level.

Strategic Measure 3: Carry out a tracer study of learning at the LL Unit	1	Develop the technical infrastructure to enable automated and timely tracking of learners' attendance and participation in class to be able to immediately detect potential dropouts so that the Guidance team will be able to provide mentoring, support and where necessary mediation with a view to preventing dropouts.
	2	Develop a learner tracking policy for students enrolled in the LL Unit, literacy, and numeracy courses. This tracking policy should include tracking the educational and employment progression of learners of employment age.
	3	Collect and analyse longitudinal data and understand practices of participation for further improvement in services.
Strategic Measure 4: Support adults to access financial support for learning	1	Review the uptake, impact, and long-term outcomes of existing funding opportunities available to adults who wish to continue their learning to identify gaps and put forth recommendations.
	2	Offer amended or new funding opportunities based on the study recommendations.
Strategic Measure 5: Improve the accessibility of LL course provision to persons with chronic disabling conditions or problems	1	Carry out research to document all current opportunities available and inform the development of new courses aimed at teaching skills for independent living and employment.
	2	Create a repository of these available learning opportunities on the LL Unit portal. Raise awareness of these courses to increase participation of persons with chronic disabling conditions or problems.
	3	Develop and seek recognition for courses aimed at teaching skills for independent living and employment where gaps in the current available offer exist.

	4	<p>The LL Unit will adopt an inclusive design for learning when reviewing and developing its Essential Skills Programmes to make them accessible to all. The methods and resources developed will be reviewed by persons with chronic disabling conditions or problems and entities and/or experts in the field of inclusion.</p> <p>Access and meeting the needs and overcoming barriers experienced by different groups is to also be considered in relation to course information and promotion, duration, time, location, and transportation to courses.</p>
	5	Carry out an accessibility audit of learning spaces within which LL Unit courses are provided to ensure conformity to standards. Plan infrastructural improvements or alternatives in the absence of conformity.
Strategic Measure 6: Reduce the educational inequality gap between Maltese nationals and migrants living in Malta	1	Establish a community working group that also tackles migrant education. This working group is to ensure that the learning offer is reaching all migrants to allow for fair and equal treatment.
	2	Creating outreach activities focusing on adult learners' motivation through an educational campaign targeted at migrants that increases awareness of courses, guidance measures and support that is available.
	3	Develop agreements with stakeholders in the migration field so that newly arrived migrants, particularly young people, will be referred to the LL Units' guidance team. It is to be ensured that the guidance team develops cultural competences.
Strategic Measure 7: Adult learning as a compensatory measure for Early Leaving from Education and Training (ELET)	1	The LL Unit is to work with the ELET Unit within the DRLLE to support schools in providing training to parents and guardians of students at risk of becoming early school leavers. The ELET Unit is to also refer any parent and guardian for specific individual requests or needs to the LL Unit guidance professionals.
	2	Introduce micro-credentials by promoting flexible, modular courses with starting dates at several points throughout the calendar year to ensure accessibility to compensatory education programmes.

Pillar II: Diversifying the Methods and Opportunities for Learning

According to Eurostat data, in 2022, only 12.8% of Maltese citizens aged 25-64 participated in a form of education and training yearly (Eurostat, 2023c). This statistic is alarming, as it sends out the message that a good portion of our adult population may not have acquired the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in today's world let alone in tomorrow's. Malta has now made a commitment to increase this figure to 57.6% by the year 2030 (European Commission, 2022a). This is what Pillar II aims to address by moving away from a traditional model that focuses solely on formal education delivered within educational institutions and towards diverse methods and opportunities for learning.

Adults have various individual needs and commitments ranging from family to work, which pose huge demands on the little time they have left at their disposal. By increasing and promoting different methods of learning such as informal, non-formal, community and work-based learning as well as the use of modern technologies, adults will be provided with the much-needed flexibility they require to learn. The likelihood that adults engage in learning activities increases when they are given options to decide when, where, how often, and how long, they may wish to learn. Furthermore, research (Borg, Mayo & Raykov, 2016) has shown that people with low educational attainment, such as early school leavers, are averse to traditional school settings and prefer participating in hands-on informal learning over formal education.



Measure	Action No	Action
Strategic Measure 1: Promote Community Learning	1	Develop a Community Learning function as a part of the LL Unit with a view to understand the needs and to promote learning within specific communities. The setting up of a working group that enhances collaboration and synergy between various stakeholders within the community with the aim of improving, strengthening, and promoting provision to hard-to-reach adults.
	2	Identify and develop flexible spaces for adults to engage in learning, through collaboration with entities within the community including Schools, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Local Councils, Libraries, and Museums.
	3	Strengthen the provision of active citizenship education, offering non-formal educational opportunities focusing on different aspects of becoming an engaged member of the community.
Strategic Measure 2: Strengthening work-based learning in collaboration with the industry	1	Develop an outreach campaign for employers to explore the possibilities of providing training for better employability and to explain the importance of basic skills and transversal skills to cope with a changing market. Collaborate with employers' associations and chambers to encourage companies and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to provide such training to their employees.
	2	Liaise with the Malta Crafts Sector with a view to raise awareness and alter the LL Unit's course provision in a way that enables learning pathways and sensitises social entrepreneurship. Explore the possibility of adding further crafts courses, especially those at risk of dying out to the LL provision.
Strategic Measure 3: Recognition and validation of prior learning	1	Explore the introduction of a Recognition of Prior Learning Policy for the LL Unit within the DRLLE which is a licensed Education Institution by the Malta Further & Higher Education Authority (MFHEA).

Strategic Measure 4: Raise awareness, enhance provision, and create environments conducive to Informal and Non-Formal Learning	1	Explore the possibility of enhancing and developing informal and non-formal learning provision by taking stock and reviewing current opportunities available. Liaise with stakeholders including European counterparts to learn from best practices.
	2	Raise awareness and increase participation in informal and non-formal learning opportunities by creating an easily accessible repository of such opportunities on the LL portal.
	3	Embark on Erasmus funded projects that focus on non-formal Learning Opportunities with the possibility of study visits for both educators and learners.
	4	Collaborate with Local Councils to promote the UNESCO's GNLC with the aim of building learning cities and increasing LL opportunities within communities.

Pillar III: Ensuring Quality In Lifelong Learning Course Provision

The measures and actions within Pillar III outline the commitment to improve the overall quality of the LL course provision. Quality in provision cannot develop adequately without recognising that adult education is a sector on its own right, necessary of educators who are trained and recognised as specialists in the field. This Pillar sets out to improve this by implementing a system that formally recognises, trains, and creates communities of practice for professionals in this sector. Dialogue and coordination between stakeholders, both within and outside of the Education sector, is another must as to ensure quality in the LL course provision as this creates synergy, reduces duplication of work, and helps learners to easily navigate the system. In fact, such dialogue is also crucial to ensure the reduction of the AROPE rate of people aged 20–64 which in 2022 stood at 15.5%. By 2030, Malta needs to reduce this by 3.1 percentage points (European Commission, 2022a). This LL Strategy is one of the keys aiming to reduce this.

The adult education system does not seem to be the most effective way of reaching out to low educated adults in need of basic skills, as this system is not one that the target group normally engages with. This highlights the importance of the development of an independent guidance service and the need for successful collaborations with other services, enabling a cross-organisational referral system (Carpentieri et al., 2018). By meeting the direct service providers of organisations such as Jobsplus, Aġenzija Sapport, and the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS) a collaborative relationship can be established which helps to engage in learning hard to reach cohorts and the collaborating organisation itself, since the staff within that organisation will be more informed on how to support their users with needs related to their education.

Measure	Action No	Action
Strategic Measure 1: Spearhead a paradigm shift in the perception of the DRLLE to a wider national role and respected point of reference	1	Coordinate and create dialogue amongst stakeholders, including adult education institutions, other Ministries, public and private entities, industry, NGOs, and members of civil society, with the objective of creating synergy, sustainability and learning from best practices.
Strategic Measure 2: Professionalise educators and other staff working in andragogy	1	Explore the possibility of developing and implementing a system that formally recognises adult educators.
	2	Work with the University of Malta, the Institute for Education, and the Institute for Public Services to ensure regular provision of accredited courses in andragogy and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) opportunities.
	3	Create communities of practice and spaces where educators collaborate and share knowledge, resources, and their best practices. Promote these opportunities and activities amongst educators and staff working within adult learning provision.
Strategic Measure 3: Improving the institutional quality of the LL Unit	1	Establish an internal 'Think Tank' to propose ideas for broadening and improving Lifelong Learning course provision.
	2	Enhance, formalise, or develop new standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the LL Unit including those related to teaching and learning, student participation and feedback and staff CPD.
	3	Review and update the Internal Quality Assurance document (IQA), taking into consideration the feedback and recommendations from the External Quality Assurance Audit (EQA) report.

	4	Prepare a Self-Assessment Report (SAR) in preparation for the next EQA.		
	5	Enhancing quality of course provision by implementing the recommendations of the MFHEA EQA.		
Strategic Measure 4: Improving the programme quality of the LL Unit	1	Review the LL Unit course provision to ensure alignment with the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) levels and update and upgrade all programmes as necessary.		
	2	Introduce a virtual learning environment to complement in-class instruction and enhance the E-College provision.		
	3	Introduce a system to collect learner feedback annually while also analysing data already available to inform the LL Unit's business information process as well as course design, review, and range of offer.		
Strategic Measure 5: Supporting adults to make informed educational decisions through the provision of a guidance system	1	Provide training to LL Unit staff who may interact with current or prospective learners at the LL Unit, on the course offer, disability equality training and other relevant matters.		
	2	Develop a marketing and outreach plan to steer outreach and promote guidance with stakeholders, learners, and educators. This needs to happen in tandem whilst the DRLLLE increases the staff capacity of the LL Unit to provide guidance to those requiring such services.		
	3	Establish an independent guidance system, together with stakeholders, aimed at supporting adults about educational opportunities in a learner-centred, neutral manner that is sensitive to diversity and adopts practices that are conducive to equality.		
			4	The Guidance team is to enter dialogue with industry's stakeholders to entice the industry to enable education and training opportunities for their staff and to reduce existing mismatches between the career aspirations of learners and opportunities in the labour market.
			5	Create a culture where guidance throughout life is of the norm and expected and to promote LL to encourage adults to consider learning as an option for improving themselves and their prospects.
			6	The guidance team is to be complemented by an Educational Psychologist and Learning Difficulties specialist to support learners with overcoming barriers to learning.
			7	Engage hard to reach cohorts, including low-skilled and low qualified adults, through a referral system, by fostering strong relationships and working hand in hand with entities, NGOs, and professionals whose service users come from these same cohorts.

Monitoring And Evaluation Of Strategy

The National Strategy for Lifelong Learning will be measured annually against the strategic actions set and outlined. To ensure the successful achievement of the goals set by this strategy, a three-layer monitoring and evaluation system has been put in place. The first layer is the DRLLE and the National Lifelong Learning and Upskilling Pathways Task Force whose primary objective is of owning, leading, and coordinating the implementation of the strategy.

The task force is not just limited to members coming from the adult education sector, but it also includes inter-ministerial ones to ensure better representation and wider perspectives from other sectors. The second layer is a Policy Thematic Committee which is appointed by the Permanent Secretary and sees that targets are being reached on time. Additionally, a third layer is formed by the PMED within the MEYR, this adds a Ministerial level of monitoring since the Directorate has the function to monitor all MEYR policy related targets.



Figure 2: Three-layer monitoring system for the successful achievement of the Lifelong Learning Strategy 2023-2030 goals

Conclusion and Way Forward

Learner testimonials and staff feedback reflect the positive impact of the LL Strategy of 2014-2020. Hence, the Lifelong Learning Strategy 2023-2030 was built to perpetuate the values and initiatives put forward in its precursor and seeks to pave the way for a successful future for Lifelong Learning in Malta, in a post-Covid context.

All educational policies are related, to varying degrees. Within the wider context of education, adult education, especially basic skills in adult education, will remain a method of compensation to permit adults the chance to learn the skills that were meant to be taught during primary and secondary education. By implementing effective policymaking that targets students in compulsory education, this will contribute to better literacy rates amongst adults, more youth in employment, education, or training and a more skilled workforce. This shows the importance of all related strategies being in sync and working towards common goals.

The ambitious learner-centric goals and targets set by this strategy cannot be achieved without trained adult educators and human resources, as well as adequate funding. Emphasis will once again be placed on providing the LL Unit with multiple opportunities to further their training through various multifaceted and multidisciplinary CPD sessions that provide them with the necessary skills to constantly improve the DRLLE's services and monitor the implementation of this strategy.

In its continued efforts to build a service that caters to the diverse cohort of learners in Malta, the LL Unit aims to continue to develop, strengthen and promote a guidance service that is open to all current and prospective adult learners.

There are no competitors, only collaborators in this endeavour and the guidance service will provide adults living in Malta with the correct guidance vis-à-vis their lifelong education journey, regardless of which learning institution their journey may lead them on to.

Accessibility is another pinnacle priority of the National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2023-2030. By committing to the development of the National Basic Skills Guidelines for Adults, liaising with the Foundation for Information Technology Accessibility (FITA) and the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) ahead of the revamp of the LL website, and by consulting national and foreign experts on the implementation of an Inclusive Design for Learning, the strategy aims to promote the values of diversity and inclusivity.

In conclusion, the Lifelong Learning Strategy 2023-2030 depicts the way forward for the LL Unit within the DRLLE, but it also includes the direction for LL and adult education on a national scale. Collaboration between the various adult learning services provided in Malta and the other stakeholders will contribute towards a stronger and more resilient economy, and more importantly, more skilled, resilient, and fulfilled citizens.

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