

Country Report MALTA

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1. Overall country information

General

Malta is a small open economy with a strong manufacturing base for high value-added products, such as electronics and pharmaceuticals produced mainly in foreign-owned export oriented enterprises. The financial services sector is very active and increasing in importance due to the very high standards and regulations under the laws of Malta, tightly imposed by the regulator. The most important economic sector is, however, tourism.

Distinctive features of the labor market in Malta are **the limited number of large enterprises**, and related to that is the dominance of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs), of which many are micro-enterprises, and **a low overall employment rate** (54.6 per cent in total), but in particular of women (33.1 per cent). SMEs and micro enterprises are of a largely local character with relatively few connections to international markets. The large majority of these enterprises are family-owned. As a consequence in this category, there are hardly any drivers for change to stimulate productivity increases through rationalization and efficiency in general.

Secondly, the labour market is highly segmented, especially in terms of gender, with somewhat limited employment opportunities for women. The employment rate for women is well below the levels found in many other European countries. In Malta females represent only around 30/35 per cent of the gainfully occupied workforce. However, as in many other EU countries, the number and proportions of females working on a part-time basis has been on a constant increase.

Thirdly, the current enterprise structure also results in fewer continuing training opportunities for the employed labor force, as these tend to be provided mainly by larger firms. The limited scope of continuing training provision in enterprises combined with relatively low levels of educational attainment is a potential obstacle to advancing towards the **European Employment Strategy**. This relates in particular to the employability and adaptability pillars, but also to **life long learning**.

Another important characteristic of the Maltese market is the legacy from British colonial times of a strong public sector. Although this is being monitored and controlled by the present administration, this sector remains the largest single employer and therefore, exercises a powerful influence on the labour market.

One other distinctive feature of the Maltese labour market has been the relatively low level of unemployment over the past fifteen years. While other European countries have seen a significant increase, the rate of unemployed in Malta has remained stable at around 7 per cent per annum.

Within this scenario there has been, until now, little or **no institutionalized social partner involvement in vocational education and training**, either as an input into the decision making process or through financial contributions. The result has been a **set of training opportunities and forms of certification with no structure and no unified recognition**.

Education

Education has traditionally been an important aspect of Maltese society. Social prestige has always been part of certain professions, for instance doctors, lawyers, accountants and bankers. Given the recent changes to the Maltese economy, in which the services sector has grown in relation to industry or agriculture, and as the demands of the knowledge economy increase, VET is becoming more important to individuals, enterprises and the wider society. The liberalisation of the Maltese economy and the impact of technology are accelerating these trends. The policy priorities in recent years have been to adapt to EU norms.

In general there has been a significant investment into quality management, as seen for example in teacher training, quality charters, the adaptation of European qualifications standards and similar activities. The main investment in initial and continuing VET remains state-provided. Decision-making and policy development tends to be driven by government, which is often an early adopter of VET and wider human resources and employment guidelines and standards.

The government is often the *avant-garde* of adapting to new labour and educational requirements. The foundation of the Institute of Tourism Studies, the foundation of the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology, the ever steady expansion of the University of Malta, the empowerment of the Employment and Training Corporation to administer apprenticeship schemes with independent Trade Testing Boards, and the increase of a number of other training providers from the private and non-governmental sectors has resulted in a beneficial increase of training and educational opportunities.

2. How is the work and training of trainers organised?

The formal training of trainers for employment in the public and private educational sectors falls under the Education Act XXIV of 1988 which requires a recognised University Degree. At secondary level a postgraduate diploma in further education is essential.

Moreover, in conjunction with the Malta Union of Teachers (MUT) and the Faculty of Education of the University of Malta, the Malta Education Department has developed a range of training and qualifications opportunities which are now required for or available to professional management/administrative and teaching staff in the national school system.

Some examples:

- Training Needs Analysis plans for the Department of Education in the Ministry has resulted in the formulation of Individual Education Programmes (IEPs) for staff and teachers. A range of general and individual training programmes have been developed in response, on topics such as curriculum development, teaching and learning strategies, pedagogical competencies and others.
- Training for administrative staff (heads and deputy heads of schools) has been implemented on a widespread basis on themes such as leadership, examinations and others.

- Certificate and diploma courses for Inclusive Education have been launched, focussing on special learning needs for challenged or disadvantaged individuals.

A number of opportunities and resources have also been made available for specialised institutions or post-secondary teachers. These include programmes launched within relevant institutions, such as the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technonoly, the Institute of Tourism Studies, the Employment and Training Corporation or the University of Malta, as well as exchange and EU-related projects, such as Socrates or Leonardo da Vinci.

The situation in the private sector, however, is different. Given the absence of resources that are allocated on the same basis and availability as the public sector, and given the fact that no formal certification and recognition of vocational teachers and trainers presently exist, private sector teachers and trainers have had to rely on own resources or market reputation to enhance their knowledge and skills and find the necessary employment.

From the available data at hand it is apparent that in **most cases** VET adult teachers and trainers within the **private sector** work part time, and on the basis of *predetermined working agreements*. Most of these trainers and instructors are specialists in their work but lack formal pedagogical and teacher/trainer certification. As far as distribution is concerned male trainers predominate in most sectors except for language training, health and general vocational education

3. How are trainers qualified?

In the 1960s most of the teachers involved in the technical education field used to come from **St Michael's Teacher Training College of Education**. They used to be competent and highly knowledgeable in the technical field since they were employed as supply teachers and trained in pedagogy at the college.

In the 1970's other teachers were employed in trade schools as Instructors. These people were highly competent in their respective trade and practical knowledge (most of them came from the Malta Drydocks or similar enterprises, where they had passed through a **tough apprenticeship scheme under the British colonial authorities**). At a later stage they were given a Pedagogy course for Instructor by the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta so as to be in line and competent with the professional status of a teacher.

The first set of Vocational teachers that were ever appropriately trained to become **Vocational Technical Teachers** in the field of technical education was as recent as 1993. Todate, **MCAST** provides a **BTEC Certification in FE** teaching (stage 3 - Level 5) for all those fulltime lecturers who are employed with the organisation and do not yet possess pedagogical certification.

The Education Act of 1988 regulated the formal **training of teachers** for employment in the public educational system. This demanded a recognised University Degree for employment at the primary level and an additional postgraduate diploma for teaching at Secondary and higher level. The University of Malta degree structure has traditionally been based on three cycles so that Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral programmes are available and recognised by most well-established European Universities.

Subsequent amendments to the Education Act were introduced during the past three years so that the Act now covers all levels of education in Malta from ISCED 0 to ISCED 6. Furthermore, the National Commission for Higher Education was established in September 2006.

In October 2005, Parliament approved the establishment of the **Malta Qualifications Council**, whose main objective is to steer the development of the “National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning”. *The Council will also establish and maintain a qualifications framework for the development, accreditation and award of professional and vocational qualifications, other than degrees, based on standards of knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes to be acquired by students.*

4. How is the work and training of trainers financed?

Working conditions of teachers in the national educational sector are good (favourable leave regulations and remuneration packages: starting salaries of Euro 13,380 compared to an average national salary of circa EUR 11,600). This has made teaching an attractive profession.

At a national level, teachers as well as learning facilitators belong to a **publicly recognised profession**, with a strong trade union which also functions as a professional association. The knowledge and competence base of public teachers and learning facilitators has been codified in teacher training programmes.

Vocational teacher and trainer training on the other hand does not belong to a “profession” as such. As yet there are no clearly defined entry routes, no career progression paths and no established set of standards or codes of conduct.

Presently, three qualified Vocational Teacher Trainers are involved in the setting up, administration and delivery of the vocational teacher course catering for MCAST teachers who have no pedagogical certification. Experts in certain subjects are used as auxiliary staff to fulfil certain areas of the course. Hence trainers in the vocational field are being selected on the basis of teaching experience and their CPD in the field area of teaching.

There are no statistical figures that reveal the amount spent on training of vocational trainers in general. Private enterprises make use of ETC facilities in the Training of Trainers and this is mostly subsidised. Training courses provided by private training agencies and institutions have mushroomed, with supply and demand stimulating each other. There is little information on the extent of this provision or its quality.

Since most of the trainers in the large enterprises are technical personnel employed on full time basis with the same employer, they do not command separate remuneration for any in-house training of staff members. Where training takes place after office hours the parties preagree to fixed hourly rates.

A major aspect will be the extent to which the overall private sector will adapt to and invest in VET policies, while at the same time dealing with competitive pressures introduced by changing regulatory, technological and economic factors. The costs of full implementation of some policies, for instance the employment policy, depends to a fairly large extent on continued government spending and direct public support to enterprises and individuals.

5. How is the reputation of trainers and how are they integrated in enterprises/society?

Because vocational teachers and trainers do not belong to a “profession” their status is not officially recognised by the majority of private enterprises. On the other hand, the majority of trainers and instructors in private industry are specialists in their work with the majority lacking formal pedagogical and teacher/trainer certification.

Once they have made a good name within their organization they may be chosen by their employer to follow a certificate course in “**train the trainer**”, usually held by the Employment and Training Corporation. These courses are heavily subsidized under the **Business Promotion Act**.

On a national basis the reputation of trainers is considered by society as very good. This is the result of the reputation enjoyed by teachers who belong to the publicly recognised profession which is backed by a strong trade union.

6. How are trainers selected and how are human resources allocated?

No official selection process of vocational trainers exists. In general most organisations would use trainers that have already made a name or are experienced in their particular field. With a shift towards competence-based vocational qualifications, the whole system of education and training in Malta is presently promoted by employer associations, most notably the Malta Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise, the Federation of Maltese Industries, the Building and Construction Council and the unions.

With the increased industrialisation of Malta gaining a fast pace, the area of **human resources has taken** an important role. There are, as yet, no set criteria for trainer selection. Allocation of human resources in the public and private sector vary. An important development over the last ten years has been the awareness of training and development of human resources.

It is, therefore, no wonder that the **social partnership model** in the formulation of VET and LLL policy comes across most strongly in the constitution of the governing boards of the Institute of Tourism Studies, MCAST, ETC and the Malta Professional and Vocational Qualifications Award Council. In all four cases, the boards are composed of educators and employers, but representation of unions is scarce.

Of note is the allocation of more human resource to the training of staff within the public sector which has been ongoing for a good number of years. In the private sector the only exception has been the highly developed and well regulated banking, insurance and investments sectors. Training of trainers in the banking sector usually takes place within specialised United Kingdom training institutions and banking colleges. This is the result of over two centuries of close connections with the British banking system.

Recent Announcement

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM FOR MALTA'S NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

The recent announcement of the National Qualifications Framework is a welcome piece of news for all. It is an essential step in the educational reform programme laying the

foundation of Malta's National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. Malta's proposed NQF lays the groundwork for a bridging exercise between vocational education and compulsory education on the one hand, and higher education on the other.

Major reforms have been taking place in Malta in the Education and Training fields since the 1990s when a comprehensive review of the past national minimum curriculum led to the publication of the current NMC. Another important milestone was the setting up of the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology in 2001. This brought together a number of separate institutions providing vocational education qualifications for secondary school leavers.

In December 2005 the Malta Qualifications Council was set up to steer the development of a national qualifications framework and to oversee the training and certification leading to qualifications within the Framework.

The NQF illustrates and emphasises the various routes to learning. It aims at valuing all learning in formal, informal and non-formal contexts. Thus it provides clear pathways of learning experiences.

The National Qualifications Framework

- is based on the principle that levels of education and qualifications can be measured by what a person is capable of doing rather than by what an individual has been taught;
- aims at being a common reference and translation device between various qualifications, qualifications systems – including sectorial qualifications frameworks - and levels;
- aims at increasing transparency of qualifications, recognition of learning outcomes and building of mutual trust among all stakeholders;
- adheres to the Bologna and Copenhagen processes and aims at attracting more individuals to learning experiences and to employability;
- has eight levels of qualifications and is compatible with the Framework of Qualifications of the European Higher Area (EHEA) or the Dublin descriptors.

The National Qualifications Framework gives Malta the opportunity to have an autonomous and self-regulatory system of education and training at all levels and in all sectors (including officially recognised training of VET teachers and trainers). It places challenges so that Malta can build on its human resource capacity to create qualifications that are demand driven and directly related to Malta's economic and social needs. It also places Malta on the map of obtaining further international recognition of its qualifications.