



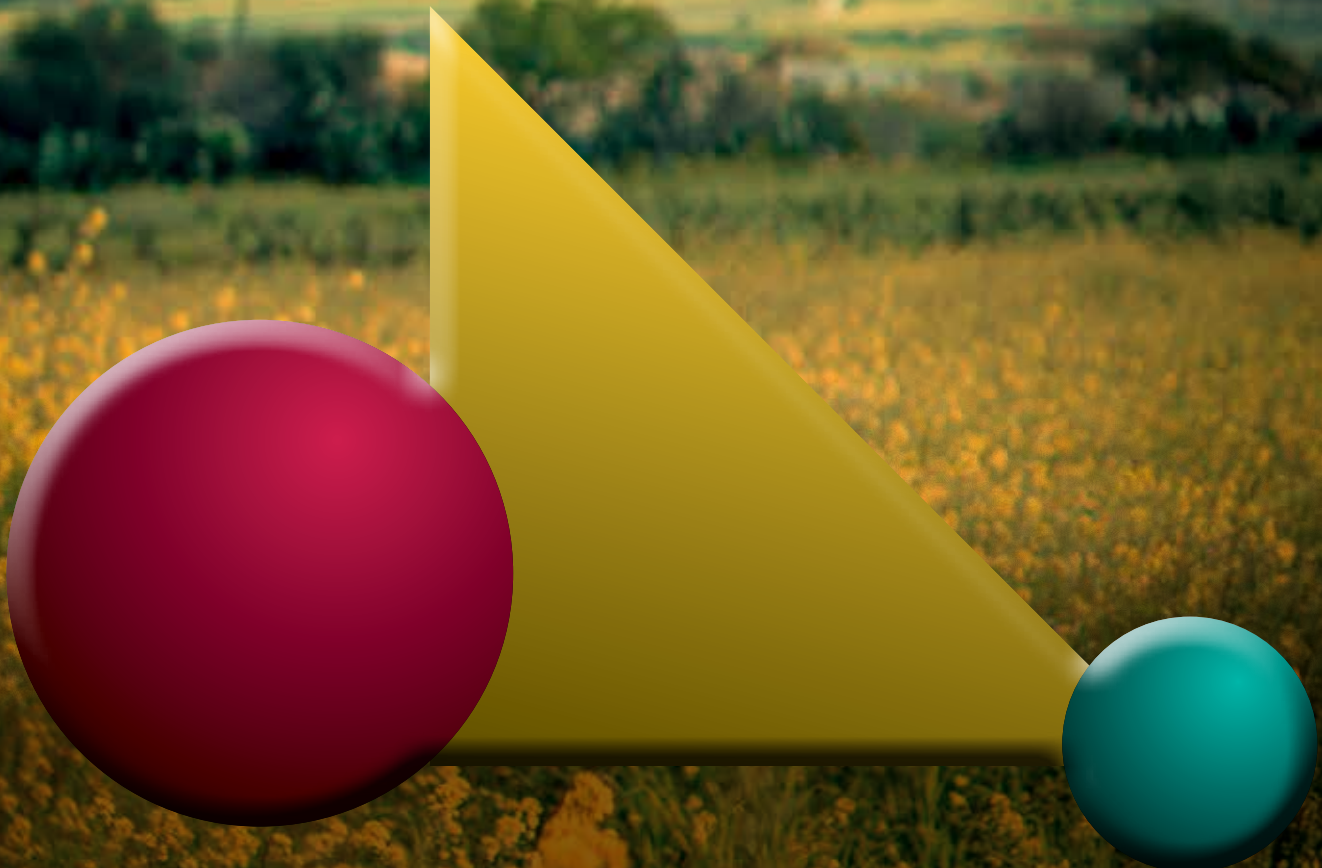
NATIONAL  
ACTION PLAN

FOR A CHILD GUARANTEE  
2022-2030



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA  
MINISTRY FOR SOCIAL POLICY  
AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

MALTA  
FIRST  
BIENNIAL  
REPORT  
2024







# NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

**FOR A CHILD GUARANTEE  
2022-2030**

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**GOVERNMENT OF MALTA**  
MINISTRY FOR SOCIAL POLICY  
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# Minister's Foreword



The National Action Plan (NAP) for Child Guarantee emphasises on equal opportunities and support for children in disadvantaged situations, as key for breaking the cycle of poverty and ensuring a more inclusive society. Investing in key services for social protection including education, healthcare, housing, and healthy nutrition is fundamental to providing a solid foundation for children’s development.

Breaking the cycle of poverty and ensuring that every child has an equal start in life is not only of social importance but also an investment for the future generations. The financial commitment of the NAP to implement and sustain the measures outlined in the plan is particularly important, as societies are recovering from the impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic and other global instabilities which have directly affected vulnerable populations, including children.

Effective implementation and monitoring of the National Action Plan for Child Guarantee is key to achieve the desired outcomes and continuously address evolving challenges to remain responsive to the needs of the children in most vulnerable situations and their families.

The commitment to leave no one behind, particularly the well-being of children and the measures outlined in the National Action Plan are essential towards building a more inclusive and equitable society. This will endeavour our target to support children in vulnerable situations and their families.

**Hon. Michael Falzon**

Minister for Social Policy and Children’s Rights



# Permanent Secretary's Foreword



Government's continued commitment to providing children with diverse opportunities to realize their full potential and contribute meaningfully to society remains a national priority. The focus on addressing the challenges faced by children experiencing poverty and social exclusion reflects a dedication to inclusivity and social justice.

At a local level, the number of children-at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) has seen a decline in recent years. This is a positive outcome and reflects progress in the efforts to create a more supportive environment for children in disadvantaged situations. Sustained and consolidated efforts remain crucial and emphasise the need for ongoing commitment and intervention.

The adoption of the European Child Guarantee (ECG) is a significant step and through the development of National Action Plans, Member States have drawn country-specific approaches to combat child poverty. The key services outlined in the National Action Plan, including early childhood education and care, education, healthcare, and housing, form a comprehensive framework to address the multifaceted nature of the needs of children.

It is of utmost importance to ensure that the National Action Plan is effective and well monitored throughout its implementation. Even though, as reflected in this report children in Malta already benefit from various services and existing initiatives, including children in disadvantaged situations, continuous efforts to safeguard the needs and aspirations of children remains key. By building upon existing initiatives in Malta's National Action Plan for a Child Guarantee, Government has shown its commitment towards a forward-looking strategy that aims to continuously consolidate national measures and initiatives targeting children.

**Mark Musù**

Permanent Secretary

Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights



# Executive Summary

The National Action Plan for Child Guarantee (NAP), launched in 2022, reflects Government's continuous commitment towards consolidating the strategic direction adopted towards children, including those in disadvantaged situations.

The NAP defines 'Children in need' as those under 18 years at risk of poverty or social exclusion, including those in households at risk of poverty, experiencing severe material and social deprivation, or living in households with very low work intensity. Malta's Child Guarantee National Action Plan focuses on all children-at-risk-of-poverty and social exclusion, with particular attention to those in precarious family situations. This is being done through several measures addressing early childhood education and care, inclusive education and school-based activities and a healthy meal each school day, healthcare, adequate housing and social protection.

Given that the National Action Plan for a Child Guarantee encompasses a wide spectrum of areas whose responsibility fall under different Ministries and entities, within this context, MSPC as Ministry responsible for Children's Rights has taken upon the role of Child Guarantee Coordinator.

The Ministry has consulted with the relevant stakeholders in relation to childhood, with a view to coordinate the progress registered in the implementation of the respective measures targeting children in disadvantaged situations as identified in the National Action Plan for a Child Guarantee 2022-2030. The primary stakeholders in this exercise include the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (MEYR), the Ministry for Health and Active Ageing (MHA), Ministry for the National Heritage, the Arts & Local Government (MHAL), Ministry for Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector (MIV), Ministry for Finance and Employment (MFE), Ministry for Social and Affordable Accommodation (MSAA), amongst others.

Following the consultation process undertaken with the stakeholder Ministries and a national conference organised on 4th December 2024, a total of 115 measures (including 2 ancillary measures) were found as being implemented. Among these, 34 measures pertain to social protection, 34 to education, 40 to healthcare (2 of which are ancillary measures), and 7 to adequate housing. The updates provided clearly indicate significant advancements in these services and benefits over the past two years, reflecting a concerted effort to better serve the needs of children in vulnerable situations and uphold the principle of leaving no child behind.

In addition, 70% of the NAP planned measures for 2022-2027 have been also implemented and are ongoing. Looking ahead, new budgetary measures aimed towards children have also been implemented in Malta's Budget 2024 with a number of wide-spread measures under the umbrella of social protection systems, education and health amongst others. An effective and well-monitored implementation of the National Action Plan for a Child Guarantee would not be possible without commitment of all the stakeholders involved in the development and provision of all relevant services.

# Introduction

The European Child Guarantee (ECG) Recommendation (EU) 2021/1004 serves as a guiding framework for Member States to address the diverse needs of children and ensure they have equal access to essential services and support. Malta recognises the significance of these recommendations and is committed to advancing the welfare and opportunities of all children, with a particular focus on those who are disadvantaged, or at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Through this Report, Malta demonstrates its dedication to implementing the ECG initiatives by providing comprehensive updates on the progress made in various areas, including healthcare, education, healthy nutrition, social protection, and housing. By detailing the strides taken in each of these areas, Malta showcases its proactive approach to improving the well-being and life chances of children across the nation.

Moreover, Malta's commitment to the ECG initiatives extends beyond mere compliance with recommendations. The government actively engages in collaborative efforts with stakeholders, including ministries, NGOs, community groups, and individuals, to ensure that policies and measures are inclusive, effective, and responsive to the diverse needs of children and families.

By elaborating on Malta's efforts to implement the ECG initiatives, this report not only highlights the country's progress but also serves as a testament to its dedication to creating a supportive and nurturing environment where every child can thrive. Through continued collaboration and concerted action, Malta aims to further advance the welfare and opportunities of children, laying the foundation for a brighter and more inclusive future for all.



## 1. National Context

In 2023, the child population aged 0-17 in Malta represented 15.1% of the total population, amounting to 81,963 individuals.<sup>1</sup> This marks a decrease of 0.78% compared to the years 2020, 2021, and 2022, during which the child population consistently constituted 15.9% of the total population. This share of the child's population corresponds to the locally decreasing total fertility rate which continues to rank the lowest in Europe<sup>2</sup>.

The long-lasting impacts of poverty and social exclusion during childhood can lead to negative physical and mental health effects, limited access to education and healthcare, and challenges in social and emotional development. These difficulties often persist into adulthood, contributing to unemployment, poor health, and reduced life prospects. In this context, Table 1 below shows the AROPE rate for children, disaggregated by sex, from 2019 to 2023, revealing that 25.2% of individuals under 18 years old in Malta were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2023<sup>3</sup>.

**Table 1. Children at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion (0-17 years)<sup>4</sup>**

Year	Male	Female	Total	Total Population
2019	24.7%	22.6%	<b>23.7%</b>	<b>19,299</b>
2020	21.3%	24.1%	<b>22.6%</b>	<b>18,729</b>
2021	23.8%	22.6%	<b>23.2%</b>	<b>19,343</b>
2022	24.0%	22.2%	<b>23.1%</b>	<b>19,489</b>
2023	24.5%	25.9%	<b>25.2%</b> <sup>5</sup>	<b>20,807</b>

The data presented above indicates that following the baseline rate of 23.7% in 2019, poverty or social exclusion among children lowered during the period 2020-2022 and remained relatively stable, despite increasing to 25.2% (reflecting a break-in-series) in 2023<sup>6</sup>. In fact, when considering the actual child population, there was an increase of 1,508 children over a five-year period. With reference to gender disparities, in 2019, a higher percentage of males (24.7%) compared to females (22.6%) were at risk. This scenario was also reflected in 2022 with slightly lower rates. However, by 2023, this trend reversed, with females at a higher risk (25.9%) compared to males (24.5%).

Malta has made remarkable efforts to address poverty and social exclusion, especially to mitigate the immediate impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, structural challenges and recent global crises may have contributed to a higher AROPE rate for children, requiring more targeted policies and interventions. Children's AROPE is expected to decline again, once the increases in family benefits in 2023 and 2024 are considered in the reference data. Important opportunities lie ahead to focus on supporting children in Malta,

1 Population on 1 January by age and sex. Accessed on 04/09/2024 from: Eurostat online data code: DEMO\_PJAN

2 Fertility indicators. Accessed on 04/09/2024 from: Eurostat online data code: demo\_find

3 Persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion by age and sex. Accessed on 04/09/2024 from: Eurostat online data code: ilc\_peps01n

4 Persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion by age and sex. Accessed on 04/09/2024 from: Eurostat online data code: ilc\_peps01n.

5 This data reflects a break-in-series. Following the 2021 Population and Housing Census, the National Statistics Office introduced a new sampling frame of households and individuals which was used for the first time EU-SILC as from 2023. In addition, EU-SILC was benchmarked with updated demographic estimates derived from this census. The National Statistics Office ran several tests which revealed little impact of statistical significance on the core EU-SILC indicators. Consequently, it was concluded that revisions on past time series data were not necessary. These methodological changes are flagged primarily because they may influence the interpretation of changes in household and individual counts in EU-SILC 2023, when compared to previous years.

6 Ibid.

ensuring they have the resources and conditions needed to thrive. By addressing the needs of children in the at-risk category, Malta can work towards, amongst others, improving educational achievements, reducing dropout rates, and fostering greater long-term independence, ultimately enhancing their future opportunities and overall well-being.

#### Children's Policy Framework 2024-2030 - Investing in our Children for a Better Tomorrow

In alignment with the National Action Plan (NAP) for Child Guarantee, the Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights has developed the Children's Policy Framework 2024-2030<sup>7</sup>, which encompasses a range of measures and initiatives aimed at addressing child poverty amongst other objectives. This framework has been meticulously developed through consultations with diverse stakeholders, including other ministries, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), professionals directly involved with children, and the broader public.

The Policy Framework also adopted an innovative approach to engaging children directly through the Empowering Children App<sup>8</sup>. By actively involving children in the decision-making process, Government has gained invaluable insights into children's needs, allowing to tailor efforts more accurately and effectively to ensure no child is overlooked or marginalised.

#### A Social Plan for the Families – Shaping the Future of our Society

To address the broad spectrum of social challenges that impact children, Malta is on the verge of introducing the proposed **Social Plan for Families**. This initiative represents a concerted effort to respond to the dynamic and multifaceted needs of our society, with a specific emphasis on families encountering substantial hurdles. The primary aim of the plan is to empower families and enhance their overall well-being. The plan encompasses four key thematic areas: Social Justice for Families, Fostering Healthy Family Relationships, Empowerment through Knowledge and Skills, and Addressing Malta's Low Fertility Rate. Through targeted strategies and interventions in these areas, Malta seeks to bolster family resilience, strengthen social cohesion, and create a more supportive environment for children and their families to thrive.

#### National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion 2025-2035

Complementing the NAP for a Child Guarantee 2022-2030 is the development of Malta's renewed **National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion 2025-2035**. This Strategy is a continued commitment on the progress made through the previous National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion 2014-2024. Children and their families will still form a main target group of the renewed strategy in this area, with the main aims of reducing by 2030 the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) by 3.1% and reducing the total number of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion by 6%. These national targets are envisaged to be reached by the efforts that will be implemented in line with the key principles that underpin the new National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion 2025-2035, namely Thriving Together, Empowerment, Opportunity, Solidarity, and Dignified Quality of Life.

7 Children's Policy Framework 2024-2030 – Investing in our Children for a Better Tomorrow. Available at: [https://socialsecurity.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Childrens-Policy\\_Framework\\_2024-2030\\_EN.pdf](https://socialsecurity.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Childrens-Policy_Framework_2024-2030_EN.pdf)

8 Empowering Child Participation in Malta. Available at: <https://empoweringchildren.gov.mt>

## 2. Target Groups

Within the context of the National Child Guarantee, 'Children in need' refers to children under the age of 18 years who are at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE). This refers to children who either:

- live in households at risk of poverty; or
- are experiencing severe material and social deprivation; or
- live in households with very low work intensity.

In this regard, apart from targeting all children at risk or poverty and social exclusion, Malta's Child Guarantee places specific attention on a specific group of children in precarious family situations.

### Children in precarious family situations

The terminology for the specific group of children referred to as '*children in precarious family situations*' refers to a broad concept which encompasses different risks. The three broad factors that may result to family precariousness include economic fragility, household composition and (other) social risk factors. It is pertinent to note that the National Action Plan for a Child Guarantee in Malta targets the children in precarious family situations with economic fragility. This refers to a situation where the household's assets and resources are insufficient to protect the child against poverty or hardship.

## 3. Roll-Out of Services

The implementation of the ongoing measures outlined in the action plan is detailed below. These measures, which most of them were in effect before the recommendations put forth by the European Child Guarantee, signify a proactive approach towards addressing the needs of children. They encompass a range of initiatives aimed at improving the well-being and opportunities available to children within our society. By prioritising these measures, we demonstrate our commitment to ensuring that children receive the support and resources they need to thrive.

**All tables in this section are updated with data as at end 2022/2023 unless otherwise specified.**

### Overall Ongoing Measures

As illustrated in Figure 1 below, a comprehensive consultation process with stakeholder Ministries resulted in the identification of 115 (including 2 ancillary measures) ongoing or implemented measures across four key areas. Among these, 34 measures pertain to social protection, 34 to education, 40 to healthcare (2 of which are ancillary measures), and 7 to adequate housing. The updates provided clearly indicate significant advancements in these services and benefits over the past two years, reflecting a concerted effort to better serve the needs of children in vulnerable situations and uphold the principle of leaving no child behind.

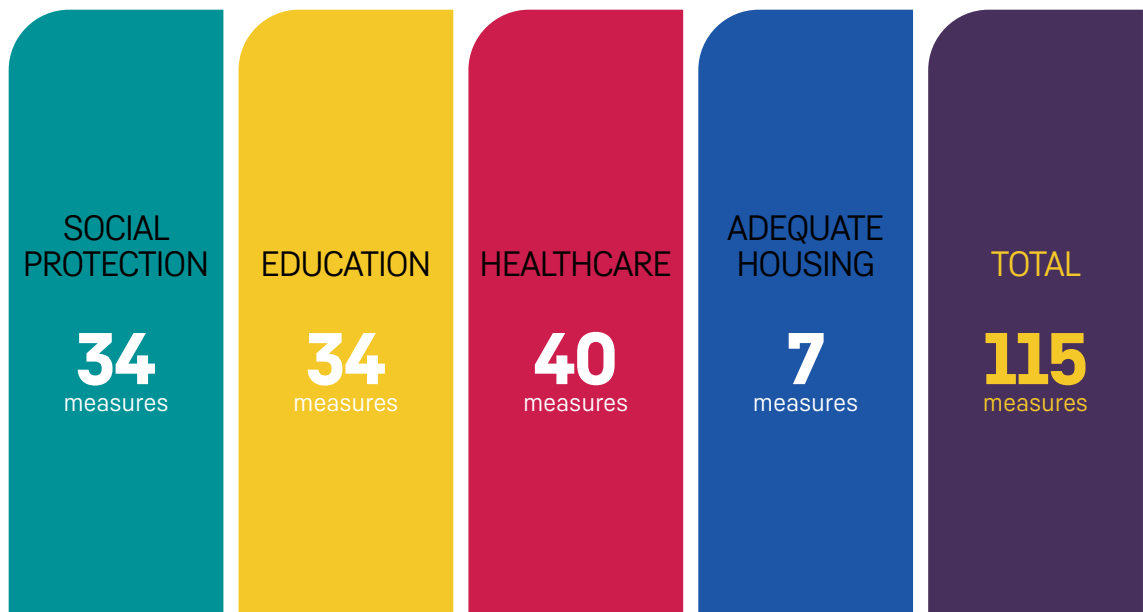


Figure 1: Ongoing measures

### 3.1 Social Protection for Children in precarious family situations

Malta's Social Protection System is purposely designed to safeguard society against the social risks in relation to individual, familial and societal wellbeing.

**Table 2** provides an update on the implementation status of a number of social benefits and social welfare services provided to families with children in need to alleviate the low socio-economic status capturing the years 2022, 2023, and 2024, according to latest available data.

# Table 2

## Social Benefits and Social Welfare Services

Target Groups being addressed by ongoing/planned measures

- ▶ All children aged 0 – 17 years and their parents/guardians
- ▶ Low-income families with children aged 0 – 17 years



## Children's Allowance

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Children's Allowance is awarded weekly to families with children from birth until 16 years of age amounting to a total weekly minimum of €8.66 per child. Households who do not exceed the means test, are awarded higher rates of these allowances per child, up to a total weekly maximum of €24.08 per child.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

*As from 2023, the Children's Allowance was increased by €90 per child per year, while in 2024, this was increased by €250 per child per year.<sup>9</sup>*

### No of Beneficiaries<sup>10</sup>

2022:  
44,499 beneficiaries

2023:  
44,925 beneficiaries

<sup>9</sup> The Budget 2024. Available at: <https://finance.gov.mt/budget24/>

<sup>10</sup> National Statistics Office. Government Expenditure on Social Security Benefits: January-December 2023. Table 3 Accessed on 04/09/2024 from: <https://nso.gov.mt/government-expenditure-on-social-security-benefits-january-december-2023/>

## Children's Allowance Supplement

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

A Children's Allowance Supplement has been introduced as from the 1st of January 2021. The payment is issued quarterly together with the Children's Allowance.

### Updates/Remarks<sup>11</sup>

Implemented and ongoing.

*As from 1st January 2023, Children's Allowance beneficiaries who exceed the means testing threshold of €25,924, are awarded €140 per child per year. Those not exceeding the means testing threshold are awarded €160 per child per year.*

*As from January 2024, Children's Allowance beneficiaries who exceed the means testing threshold of €27,006, are awarded €390 per child per year. Those not exceeding the means testing threshold are awarded €410 per child per year.*

### No of Beneficiaries<sup>12</sup>

2022:  
43,762 beneficiaries

2023:  
44,243 beneficiaries

<sup>11</sup> Children's Allowance Supplement. Available at: <https://socialsecurity.gov.mt/en/information-and-applications-for-benefits-and-services/family-benefits/childrens-allowance-supplement/>

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

## A one-time €300 Bonus

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

A one-time €300 Bonus is paid to the mother of a new-born child or adoptive parent. Should the mother give birth or adopt more than one child at the same instance, the bonus is also paid for each new-born or adopted child.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

*As from January 2022 this 'one-time bonus' was increased to €400 per child in 2022.<sup>13</sup>*

*As from January 2024 this once-only payment was increased to €500 for the first child and €1,000 for each subsequent child.*

### No of Beneficiaries

2022:  
**Approximately  
4,000 families<sup>14</sup>**

2023:  
**3,073 beneficiaries**

## Widows' Pension (for Widows with Children)

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Widows' Pension (for Widows with Children) amounting to a weekly maximum of €277.63 is payable to widows who have the care and custody of children.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

*As from 2023, the weekly amount was increased to €307.56 for widows born prior to 1962 and €335.29 for widows born after 1962.*

### No of Beneficiaries

**Number of  
beneficiaries cannot  
be determined as  
the amount related  
to children is now  
being included within  
the pension rate.**

13 It-Twettiq tal-Bagitt 2022. Available at: [https://publicservice.gov.mt/Media/Publications/Twettiq\\_tal-Bagitt\\_2022.pdf?id=2024-07-17](https://publicservice.gov.mt/Media/Publications/Twettiq_tal-Bagitt_2022.pdf?id=2024-07-17)

14 It-Twettiq tal-Bagitt 2020. Available at: [https://publicservices.gov.mt/en/Documents/Twettiq\\_tal-Bagitt\\_2020.pdf](https://publicservices.gov.mt/en/Documents/Twettiq_tal-Bagitt_2020.pdf)

## Foster Care Allowance

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Foster Care Allowance amounting to €110 per week is awarded to authorised foster carers providing a foster care service to a child.

Similarly, the **Child in Care Benefit (Residential Service)** amounting to €110 per week is provided to residential/community children's homes for each residing child. Beneficiaries of these allowances are not in receipt of the Children's Allowance.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

*A change in the implementation of payment schedule for the foster care allowance came into effect as from 2023.*

*Previously this benefit was terminated upon parental adoption. This mechanism has now been replaced with a gradual decrease in allowance over a period of four years or until the child's 21st birthday, whichever comes first. In this way, 80% of the fostering allowance will be paid in the first year of adoption, 60% in the second year, 40% in the third year and 20% in the fourth year.*

### No of Beneficiaries

**2022:**  
**203** beneficiaries<sup>15</sup>

**2023:**  
**208** beneficiaries<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> National Statistics Office. Government Expenditure on Social Security Benefits: January-December 2023. Table 3. Accessed on 04/09/2024 from: <https://nso.gov.mt/government-expenditure-on-social-security-benefits-january-december-2023/>

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

## Fostering Services

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Fostering Services mainly work on:

- i) eligibility of prospective foster carers;
- ii) carrying out foster care placement agreements and their regular revision;
- iii) drawing up review reports on foster carers; and
- iv) permanent fostering and adoption through fostering whereby minors placed in foster care have less chance of being lost in care. **In addition, a designated helpline i.e., 1778 Helpline** is specifically aimed to provide support to persons who are interested in fostering.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

**2022:**  
**238** beneficiaries

**2023:**  
**253** beneficiaries

## Supportline 179

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

This National helpline is a crises hotline accessible on a 24/7 basis for children.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

*Calls received on the EU Emotional Support Helpline 116 123 and EU Child Helpline 116 111, are also dealt with by the Supportline 179 team.*

### No of Beneficiaries

**2022:**  
**169** children

**2023:**  
**175** children

## Disabled Child Allowance

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Disabled Child Allowance is granted to children who are certified to be suffering from a physical and/or mental disability. This allowance is paid in addition to the Children's Allowance.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

*This allowance was increased by €5 per week, for a total of €1,560 per annum during 2022.*

### No of Beneficiaries

**2022:**  
**2,028** beneficiaries<sup>17</sup>

**2023:**  
**2,330** beneficiaries<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> National Statistics Office. Government Expenditure on Social Security Benefits: January-December 2023. Table 3 Social Security Non-Contributory Benefits by period and description. Accessed on 04/09/2024 from: <https://nso.gov.mt/government-expenditure-on-social-security-benefits-january-december-2023/>

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

## Orphan's Allowance

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Orphan's Allowance is a weekly allowance (amounting to €66.44) paid to a guardian who is taking care of a child/ren aged under 16 years and where parents of the child are both dead. Similarly, a guardian is paid the weekly **Orphan's Supplementary Allowance** of €111.52 if they are taking care of a child/ren aged between 16 and 21 years where parents of the child are both dead and where the child is not following any gainful occupation and the gross earnings of which do not exceed the national minimum wage. Beneficiaries of these allowances are also in receipt of the Children's Allowance.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

*During 2024 the Orphan's Allowance was increased to €74.70, while the Orphan's Supplementary Allowance was increased to €126.66.*

### No of Beneficiaries

**2022:**  
**9 beneficiaries<sup>19</sup>**

**2023:**  
**7 beneficiaries<sup>20</sup>**

<sup>19</sup> National Statistics Office. Government Expenditure on Social Security Benefits: January-December 2023. Table 2 Social Security Contributory Benefits by period and description. Accessed on 04/09/2024 from: <https://nso.gov.mt/government-expenditure-on-social-security-benefits-january-december-2023/>

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

## Sustainable Baby Box initiative

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Sustainable Baby Box initiative: Distribution of starter-kits with 10 sustainable baby products to all parents welcoming a child. Products include amongst others a baby blanket, a reusable nappy and a tote bag, a feeding bib, teether, socks and mittens.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

**2022:**  
**Approximately 4,000 families**

**2023:**  
**Approximately 3,500 families**



## Domestic Violence Services

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Domestic Violence Services include: Risk assessment services, access to secure shelter, legal aid and accompaniment to Court sittings by the Domestic Violence Unit at FSWS, the Gender-Based and Domestic Violence Police Unit and the Victim Support Unit situated at the Police Headquarters and Legal Aid Malta.

A timely service to help perpetrators of violence and abuse. This also includes the Child to Parent Violence Service through which both the minor perpetrators and parent victims of violence are supported.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2022: **25** cases of children  
2023: **3** cases of children<sup>21</sup>

### Ghabex

2022: **36** cases of children  
2023: **50** cases of children

### STOP!

2022: **nil** cases of children  
2023: **6** cases of children

### Child to Parent Violence

2022: **27** cases of children  
2023: **36** cases of children

## Intake and Family Support Service (IFSS)

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Intake and Family Support Service (IFSS) provides social work interventions and assistance to children and their families. Services provided include home visits, referral to the most appropriate services, regular follow-ups, etc. This service covers also **Homelessness and Human Trafficking**.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2022:  
**115** cases of children

2023:  
**92** cases of children

### Human Trafficking Service

2022:  
**1** case

2023:  
**0** cases

<sup>21</sup> These minors are receiving a service from domestic violence service with parental consent.

## High Support Service

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

High Support Service offers one-to-one support for minors at the community level concerning their needs, particularly their reintegration within the wider community.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2022:  
**13 cases**<sup>22</sup>

2023:  
**15 cases**

## Community Services

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

One stop shops in various localities across Malta and Gozo offering support to families at risk of poverty or social exclusion, through social work, community mentoring and community development, including help with social/life skills, education and employment. The Community Services operate in different ways according to the various communities they serve in. These one stop-shops also serve as distribution points of the food boxes given as part of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) and the State Funded Food Distribution (SFFD). The Community Services opened the first community mental health clinic on one of its premises, in collaboration with the Ministry for Health.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2022:  
**37 cases of children**

2023:  
**30 cases of children**

<sup>22</sup> Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS). Interim Half-Yearly Statistical Report. Available at: <https://fsws.gov.mt/en/Documents/StatisticalReports%20by%20Agency/AlternativeCare/ALTCARE%20HYearly%20report%202023%20%28f%29.pdf>

## BeSmartOnline!

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

BeSmartOnline! Is a project to create awareness amongst children, educators, parents/primary caregivers and other stakeholders on how to make safe use of the internet. This project also includes the **Child Web Alert Hotline**.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

*Hotline reports are those URLs containing Child Sexual Abuse Material which are reported through our online reporting platform: **childwebalert.gov.mt***

*The helpline reports are those cases which come through the Supportline 179 or else through referrals from schools, other professionals, parents or caregivers, or children themselves who would need help and support regarding internet related risks such as cyberbullying, grooming, sexting or over-exposure online.*

### No of Beneficiaries

2022:  
**840** reports  
through the **Hotline**

2023:  
**1,943** reports  
through the **Hotline**

2022:  
**704** reports to **Helpline**

2023:  
**889** reports to **Helpline**

## Out of Hours Emergency Service

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

A team of social workers who are on call after office hours to intervene in special situations requiring immediate assistance, primarily cases related to child protection, domestic violence and children in care.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2022:  
**179** cases were children

2023:  
Malta  
**722** cases were children

Gozo  
**125** cases were children

## Adoption Services

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Adoption Services support families who are in the process of adopting a child/ren as well as families who adopted (including post-adoption support). The unit works to facilitate local and international adoptions and to prevent placement breakdowns.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2022:

**766** cases –  
191 adopted children,  
10 children referred  
for adoption, and  
565 were prospective  
or adoptive parents.

2023:

**717** cases –  
183 adopted children,  
9 children referred  
for adoption, and  
525 were prospective  
or adoptive parents.

## Looked After Children (LAC)

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Tailor-made care plans and monitoring in line with the Minor Protection (Alternative Care) Act (Chapter 602 of the Laws of Malta) for children in need of being looked after/ in out-of-home care/ living away from their natural family. These children could be living either in a community/ residential home or in foster care.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

**\*LAC Health Service:** Furthermore, minors living in alternative care usually have particular health circumstances which arise out of their biological family. Children have physical, emotional problems and mental health problems. This service is run by a paediatrician who specializes in this field. Together with nurses, this aims to offer an individualised and comprehensive assessment for the children's health needs, as well as to see that these understand their health history and voice their opinion.

Health recommendations are included in the child's care plan, which may include a referral to other health services. With the aim to work with other professionals and ensure that these children reach their full potential. The team will be following the guidelines issued by the social regulatory standards whereby children under five will be assessed at least twice a year and minors above the age of five are assessed once a year.

### No of Beneficiaries

LAC

2023: **461** cases

2022: **456** cases

**\*LAC Health Service**

2022: **799** cases

2023: **771** cases

## After Care Service for children in care aged 15-21 years

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Support to persons leaving institutional care to facilitate their independent living and ensure a good quality of life. An after-care plan is drawn, and a key worker follows this individualised plan together with the young person.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2022:  
116 cases were children

2023:  
112 cases were children

## Supervised Access Visits (SAVs) and Court Services

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Supervised meetings between children and the non-custodial parents/ other family members when access is not possible otherwise. The service is child focused and offered in a safe environment, while it facilitates communication, relationship and maintenance building among all members.

Social workers strive to enhance contact with the biological parents where appropriate. Moreover, for this purpose, Court Assessments are carried out and recommendations put forward to address access, therapy, and referrals to other services.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

#### SAV

2022: 46 cases  
2023: 48 cases

#### SAV (Gozo Directorate)

2022: 1 case  
2023: 3 cases

## Children's House

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

A child-friendly, developmentally sensitive procedure/ house that aims at making judicial procedures and investigations less traumatic for children.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2022:  
**50** forensic interviews  
were carried<sup>23</sup>

2023:  
**8** interviews were  
carried out at the  
Children's House, and  
**11** were carried out at  
the Child Protection  
Services offices.



<sup>23</sup> Segregated data for 2022 is not available.

# Several holistic initiatives, interventions and services targeting young people experiencing precarious situations

Status	Updates/Remarks
<p>Ongoing Measure</p> <p><b>Description</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Social work and youth work one to one interventions for young people.</li> <li>→ Engaging Through Active Learning Programme (E.T.A.L.): Through this programme a youth worker and social worker intervene with young people who engage in challenging attitudes within the school and home environment.</li> <li>→ Embark for Life (EFL): This project supports and addresses several needs of young people, mainly related to finding and retaining employment and to engage in training opportunities.</li> <li>- Opportunity Knocks (OK) project works with youth to learn and enhance skills, boost their employment possibilities and other opportunities to help them reach their goals and advance in their career.</li> <li>→ Interventions with youth inmates within correctional facilities.</li> </ul>	<p>Implemented and ongoing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ (E.T.A.L.): This programme focused on the themes of anger management, communication, gender and sexuality, substance misuse and fear.</li> <li>→ (OK) project: This EU Project came to an end in March 2023 however its services were incorporated in the YIF.</li> <li>→ Various ad hoc projects and initiatives amongst youths including a drama group and other activities for young people; a Service Facebook Page wherein the uploaded positive educational material is developed by young people; communication with young people through the Messenger app; an adolescent day programme consisting of informal learning; virtual youth groups and workshops.</li> <li>→ other ad hoc initiatives with disadvantaged youths in communities, situations of bullying in schools and offering specialised help in particular groups of disadvantaged youths.</li> <li>→ The Adolescent Day Programme (ADP) addresses the needs of young people who are at risk of poverty and social exclusion. The service caters for young people between the ages of 14 and 18 who exhibit challenging behaviour.</li> </ul>

**No of Beneficiaries**

**Youth in Focus (YIF)**

2022: **184**  
2023: **206**

**Embark for Life (EFL)**

2022: **113**  
2023: **57**

**(OK) project<sup>24</sup>**

2022:  
**512** grants given  
**2,181** OK packs distributed  
**173** assisted to enter further study or in employment  
Capacity of the residential safe house of youths - **25**.

**Adolescent Day Programme (ADP)**

2022: **11** cases  
2023: **28** cases

24 Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS). 2022 Annual Report. Available at: <https://fsws.gov.mt/en/Pages/Annual-Reports.aspx>



## Home Start (HS) Service

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Home Start (HS) Service helps children and their families in need through family visits (both in HS offices and in the families' homes), follow-up phone calls, outdoor activities, virtual and reading sessions and food donations.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

#### Home-start Malta

2022:  
**10 cases**

2023:  
**13 cases**

#### Home-start Gozo

2022:  
**41 cases**

2023:  
**50 cases**

## The Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD)

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

The Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD): Food boxes are distributed 3 times a year to families who are most in need or vulnerable.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2022:  
**10,107 children<sup>25</sup>**

2023:  
**6,308 children<sup>26</sup>**

<sup>25</sup> Children between 0-16years - Not unique cases but as a total from three distributions.

<sup>26</sup> Children between 0-16years - not unique cases but as a total from three distributions.

## The State Funded Food Distribution (SFFD)

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Food boxes are distributed twice a year to families who are most in need or vulnerable and is totally funded by the State.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2022:  
**4,177** children  
benefitted<sup>27</sup>

## Programmes and Resources for Positive Parenting

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Three different types of positive parenting programmes are offered according to the type of household, including a specific programme for parents who are separated or in the process of separation.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2022:  
**2** groups of  
**5** and **3** participants  
respectively.

2023:  
**2** groups with  
**7** and **6** participants  
respectively.

<sup>27</sup> Children between 0-16years – not unique cases but as a total from two distributions.

## A social welfare services branch in Gozo

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

A regional team based in Gozo offers the main services that are provided by FSWS in Malta, according to Gozo's social needs.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2022:  
**183 cases**

2023:  
**190 cases**

## Prevention Services

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Prevention Services (in schools, in workplaces, in the community and through the media) concerning alcohol, drugs, gambling and other addictions. A team of youth workers, social workers and psychology graduates inform and help people, including children, parents and teachers amongst others, to lead healthy lifestyles away from addictions.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2022: **3,568** sessions were provided to **18,879** children/youth participants, and **129** participants who were a mixture of age groups (this includes both minors and adults because they do not target one specific age group).

2023: **3,874** sessions were provided to **17,978** children/youth participants, and **106** participants who were a mixture of age groups<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Figures include both minors and adults because they do not target one specific age group.

## A Substance Misuse In-patient Unit (SMIPU)

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

A Substance Misuse In-patient Unit (SMIPU), also known as Dar L-Impenn. A 24/7 medical observation unit operating by a multi-disciplinary team for substance misusers who need medical attention during the stabilisation of treatment, the substitution of treatment regimes, or the detoxification from substances of abuse.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2022:  
0 cases

2023:  
0 cases

## A Substance Misuse Outpatients Unit (SMOPU)

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

A Substance Misuse Outpatients Unit (SMOPU), also known as the Detox Centre. A centre to engage individuals with a substance misuse problem in low threshold interventions, whereby basic medical, social and psychological needs are assessed, and the necessary assistance provided. For this reason, there is a multi-disciplinary team made up of doctors, nurses, social workers, a pharmacist, as well as a visiting psychiatrist.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2022:  
3 cases

2023:  
5 cases

## Court Services<sup>29</sup>

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Court Services (for persons having problems with alcohol, drugs, and gambling).

The Psychological Services offers a generic service and hosts an interdisciplinary team made up of Psychologists, Family Therapists, Gestalt Psychotherapists, an Art Psychotherapist and Counsellors.

Court Services include psychotherapy service and coordination with persons who are being regularly seen and followed up on their progress by the Drug Offenders Rehabilitation Board (DORB).

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

During 2022 and 2023 there were no minors benefitting from the service.

## Additional Measures

### ACTS- Therapeutic Services

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

The Home-Based Therapeutic Services (HBTS) is composed of a multi-disciplinary team of professionals, providing therapeutic support to families, children, and individuals around Malta and Gozo.

The Incredible Years® (IY) Parent and Children Programmes form one of the pillars falling under Home-Based Therapeutic Services. It works on the prevention and treatment of behavioural problems among children and parenting difficulties. Home-Based Parenting Programme can be provided for parents, in their family home setting, on a one-to-one basis.

The Psychological Services (PS) offer a generic service and host an interdisciplinary team made up of psychologists, family therapists, psychotherapists and counsellors.

The service also offers positive parenting courses and courses for parenting when separated.

### Updates/Remarks

Ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

#### HBTS

2022: **206** cases of children

2023: **193** cases of children

#### IY

2022: **5** cases of children

2023: **2** cases of children

#### PS

2022: **236** cases of children

2023: **229** cases of children

<sup>29</sup> 2023: Psychological Services is no longer under Sedqa but is now included under ACTS.

## Child Protection Directorate

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Child Protection Directorate ensures an Integrated Child Protection System that places the child at the centre of the system and endorses and promotes the rights of the child by, as stipulated by the CAP 602, ensuring all stakeholders (education, health, welfare, justice, civil society, community and family) work collaboratively to prevent abuse, exploitation, neglect and other forms of violence against minors and protect and assist accordingly. The Directorate is made up primarily of social workers and social welfare professionals with the aim to investigate

and monitor child protection referrals within the legal parameters stipulated by the CAP 602 of the Laws of Malta. The point of entry is the Intake Team whereby all reports are assessed and evaluated and if further action is required, each case is then followed by 4 Investigation and Monitoring Teams split up according to regions or Court Services which primarily deals with Family Court referrals. The Directorate is also responsible of the Children's House and offers the service of a paediatrician, the Parenting when separated course, forensic interviewing and also interventions aimed at family preservation.

### Updates/Remarks

Ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

On a Directorate level the service worked with:

2022: **3,621** cases

2023: **3,671** cases

In 2023, DCPS received 2250 reports of which 115 were referred to Juvenile Court as per CAP 602 whereby there were:

- **15** Emergency Orders
- **27** Care Orders
- **21** Supervision Orders
- **20** Provisional Orders
- **3** Removal Orders
- **1** Treatment Order
- **28** Unaccompanied Minors Care Orders

# Children's Dreams and Children's Fund

## Status

Ongoing Measure

## Description

The Children's Fund is a collective voluntary effort to raise funds to support children in need who currently use the services provided by the FSWS.

The Fund assists children to provide them with equal opportunities in life as their peers. It tries its best to provide basic amenities for each child, and the help provided varies according to the different needs which are identified by the social workers, and which are presented in the application.

The Children's Dreams is an initiative where gifts are donated to children in need (as asked for by the children themselves).

## Updates/Remarks

Ongoing.

## No of Beneficiaries

### Children's Fund

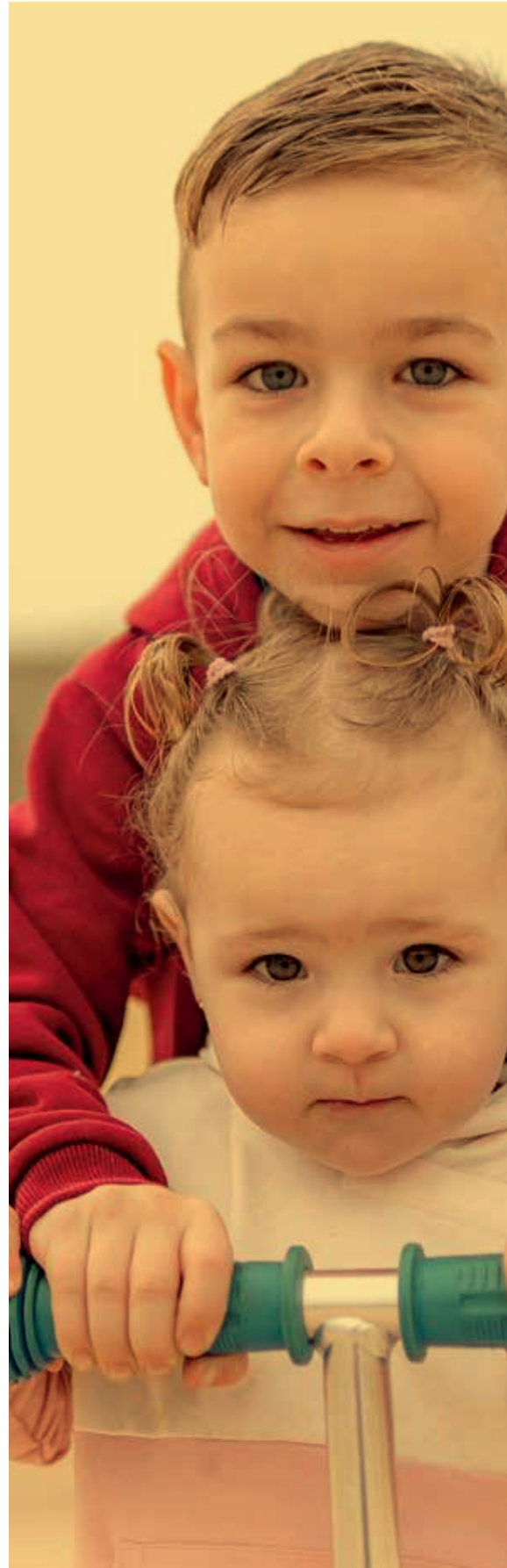
2022:  
helped **287** children

2023:  
helped **166** children

### Children's Dreams

2022:  
helped **2427** children

2023:  
helped **1830** children





# Health and Social work services

## Status

Ongoing Measure

## Description

The Bennisena service provides assistance from the social aspect of care to pregnant women both minors and adults, and paediatrics from babies up to the age of 18 who require hospitalisation themselves or their guardians. The service for pregnant women is also offered to non-patients and their families, throughout the pregnancy and after the baby is born. Our service offers emotional and practical support through ward visits, office visits and home visits. Further to this, the social work service works closely with the other professionals including consultants, doctors, nurses, midwives, occupational therapists, and physiotherapists in order to provide a more holistic care. The social workers are provided with regular supervision in order to provide a high standard and quality service, according to our Agenzija Appogg Policy.

## SAMOC Paediatrics

The Service provides assistance from the social aspect of care to young patients, babies up to the age of 16, and their family members. The service is being offered to patients and their families from when the bad news is being given to them, throughout the cancer journey, until survivorship or palliative, end of life and bereavement. Our service offers emotional and practical support through ward visits, office visits and home visits. Further to this, the social work service works closely with the other professionals including consultants, doctors, nurses, occupational therapists, teachers and physiotherapists in order to provide a more holistic care. The social workers are provided with regular supervision in order to provide a high standard and quality service, according to our Agenzija Appogg Policy.

## Children and Young People's Services (CYPS)

The multidisciplinary team (MDT) is composed of child and adolescent psychiatrists, psychiatric trainees, nurses, psychologists, psychology practitioners, occupational therapists, social workers and a speech language pathologist.

Access to these services is by referral from the child/young person's doctor.

## Generic child and adolescent mental

health clinics offer an assessment and intervention to all young people aged 3-18 years with difficulties of anxiety, depression, psychosis, bipolar disorder, adjustment disorders, oppositional defiance disorders, attachment disorders.

## Specialised Clinics- Family Focused Clinic

Multidisciplinary team that provides a specialized service to children and young people and their families. The aim of the clinic is to address situations where children's and young people's mental health is being negatively impacted by family dynamics.

## Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

*Health-related services:*

- MDH
- Bennisena
- SAMOC
- QHC
- SVDP
- Primary Health
- CYOS
- Bormla health

*Mtarfa health*

## No of Beneficiaries

2022: 674

2023: 360

## 3.2 Early Childhood Education and Care, Inclusive Education and School-based Activities, including a Healthy Meal Each School Day

In Malta, the government has implemented various services aimed at reducing financial barriers and promoting inclusive education from the early years onwards. These services encompass a comprehensive approach to support children's educational journey and ensure equal opportunities for all. Specifically, these initiatives include:

**Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC):** Malta offers childcare services to support families with young children, providing them with access to quality early education and care. These programs are designed to foster children's development in a nurturing and stimulating environment, laying the foundation for their future learning.

**Free Education:** The government ensures that all children between the ages of 3 to 17 have access to free education. This policy removes financial barriers that may hinder children from attending school, enabling them to receive quality education regardless of their socioeconomic background.

**Before, After, and Beyond School Programmes:** Malta provides comprehensive support to children beyond regular school hours through various programmes. These initiatives include extracurricular activities, tutoring, and enrichment programs aimed at enhancing students' academic performance, personal development, and overall well-being.

**Table 3** outline the ongoing and planned initiatives for 2022-2030, highlighting both financial and non-financial measures aimed at addressing barriers to education throughout childhood. These initiatives reflect Malta's commitment to ensuring that every child has the opportunity to access education and thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.



# Table 3

## Initiatives addressing barriers to education throughout childhood

Target Groups being addressed by ongoing/planned measures

▶ All children aged 0 – 17 years



## Free pre-primary, primary, secondary and post-secondary education

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Free pre-primary, primary, secondary and post-secondary education to all children\*. Educational Facilities are also equipped to cater for children with disabilities/special educational needs.

*\*Free compulsory and post-secondary education to those who qualify for exemption of fees under Maltese legislation and per policy of the exemptions board.*

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.  
*Additionally specialised programmes (such as individualised education plans, therapy sessions and adaptive technology use) and trained staff are in place to provide individualised support, fostering equal opportunities for academic success and personal development.*

### No of Beneficiaries

Academic year  
2021/2022:

State pre-primary,  
primary, secondary  
and post-secondary:  
**39,888**<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Data for academic year 2022/2023 will be available by the end of October 2024.

## Free Childcare Services

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

The childcare centre coordinators work closely with other professionals and with the families to help ameliorate the families' situation. New childcare centres will also start operating in new localities. A new measure has recently been introduced to have childcare centres open during the weekend and late hours.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

*In 2023, there was a significant increase, with 51.0%<sup>31</sup> of children under 3 years attending formal childcare. Children (0-3) living in households with low-income earning less than €10,000 yearly are also eligible for the free childcare service, even if both parents are unemployed.*

*Childcare centres who wish to offer night services must apply for a dedicated license which also has specific criteria. No license has been issued so far for night childcare services.*

### No of Beneficiaries

2022: **8,437** children  
of which **4,029** were  
newly enrolled in the  
Free Childcare Scheme.

2023: **8,960** children  
of which **3,905** were  
newly enrolled in the  
Free Childcare Scheme.

<sup>31</sup> Trading Economics. Malta - Children aged less than 3 years in formal childcare. Available at: <https://tradingeconomics.com/malta/children-aged-less-than-3-years-in-formal-childcare-eurostat-data.html>

## Breakfast Clubs

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Children attending State Pre-Primary and Primary School whose parents are employed or studying, are given the opportunity of having a healthy breakfast. Parents can drop their children early before school starts.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

Academic year 2022/23:  
**10,003** students  
applied for this service,  
out of which **5,279**  
attended daily.

Academic year 2023/24:  
**10,363** students  
applied for this service,  
out of which **6,059**  
attended daily.

## Klabb 3-16

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

An after-school care service within school structures is provided during the Scholastic year, particularly to bridge the gap between day school and regular working hours of parents in employment. It is currently being operated in 30 localities and one may choose the centre that is most convenient. The service is also offered to working parents during holidays.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

June 2022:  
**4,898** students

June 2023:  
**6,585** students

## Skola Sajf

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

A beyond school care service within school structures during Summer. The service engages children in a series of cultural, artistic, physical activities and outings. This service is offered in various centres around Malta and Gozo.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

Academic year  
2021/2022:  
**10,258** students

Academic year  
2022/2023:  
**12,000** students

## Waiver of the Matsec and Sec Examination Fees

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

Academic year  
2021/2022:  
**9,909** students

Academic year  
2022/2023:  
**9,651** students

# Students Maintenance Grants for all students (including those students who repeat a year)

## Status

Ongoing Measure

## Description

The Maintenance Grants include the initial grant (payable to first-year or promoted post-secondary students, amounting to €322.94), the one-time grant (payable to first-year tertiary students, amounting to €465.87 or €698.81 depending on the course priority), the stipend (amounting to a maximum of €322.07 every four weeks depending on the course priority), the supplementary allowances for students facing specific disadvantages (amounting to a maximum of €324.70 every four weeks, depending on the course type and year), the single parents' grant (varying by increased amounts as the MQF level gets higher and amounting to a maximum of €1,000), Summer Special Stipends (amounting to €243.83 every four weeks); and Top-up Stipends.

## Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

*Students' Maintenance Grants include the initial grant, the one-time grant, the stipend, the supplementary allowances, the single parents' grant, Summer Special Stipends and Top up Stipends.*

*Stipends are paid periodically in backdated four-weekly payments. To students who are not in full-time employment including those in part-time employment and working more than 25 hours weekly.*

## No of Beneficiaries

Academic year 2021/2022:  
**14,903** students

Academic year 2022/2023:  
**15,259** students<sup>32</sup>

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32 Data is based on the number of students by end of academic year, that is 1st week of August when the last stipend is paid.



## 10,000 funds for disadvantaged students

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

The government will provide €10,000 per year to heads of State primary and secondary schools to spend on food and other basic resources for disadvantaged students coming from disadvantaged (low socio-economic) families.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

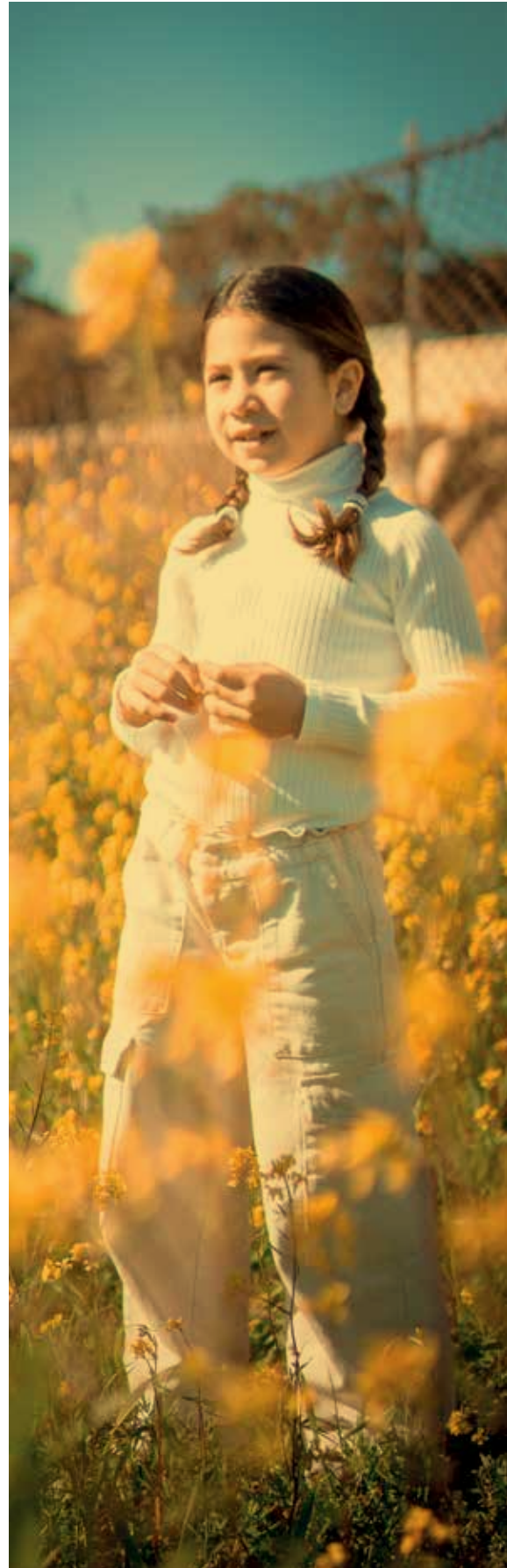
*The allocation of funds was calculated in a way that considers not only the student population but also how much of the population comes from an economic band that qualifies for Scheme 9.*

*A manual was published with guidance for the use of these funds and meetings were held with all the Heads of Schools with the aim of informing them on making the maximum use of these funds for the wellbeing of children.*

### No of Beneficiaries

**2023: Approximately 1,800 eligible low-income families<sup>33</sup>**

**These funds are administered by Colleges and Schools and so far, no centralised data is available. The current approximate data is based on the number of learners benefitting from other schemes such as Scheme 9.**



<sup>33</sup> It-Twettiq tal-Bagitt 2023. Available at: [https://publicservice.gov.mt/Media/Publications/Twettiq\\_tal-Bagitt\\_2023.pdf?id=2024-08-01](https://publicservice.gov.mt/Media/Publications/Twettiq_tal-Bagitt_2023.pdf?id=2024-08-01)





## Early Leaving from Education and Training (ELET)

Malta recognizes the critical importance of addressing early school leaving and dropout rates to ensure the success and well-being of its students. As part of its commitment to combatting this issue, the country has implemented the **second Early Leaving from Education and Training (ELET) Policy: The Way Forward 2020-2030**<sup>34</sup>. This policy represents a comprehensive and inclusive approach that goes beyond merely targeting students identified as at risk. Instead, it recognizes the need to support not only those students who are currently at risk of leaving school early but also those who have already dropped out, as well as their families and communities.

**The ELET Policy: The Way Forward 2020-2030** aims to create a supportive and nurturing educational environment that enables all students to thrive and succeed. It recognizes that early school leaving can result from a variety of factors, including academic challenges, socio-economic disparities, family dynamics, and community influences. Therefore, the policy takes a holistic approach that addresses these underlying issues and provides targeted support to individuals and communities.

**Table 4** outlines the ongoing and planned measures that Malta has put in place to prevent early school leaving and support students at risk. These measures include a range of interventions and initiatives designed to meet the diverse needs of students and address the root causes of early school leaving.

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<sup>34</sup> Early Leaving from Education and Training (ELET) Policy: The Way Forward 2023-2030. Available at: <https://education.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/ELET-Strategy-English-18th-July-1530.pdf>

# Table 4

## Measures to prevent early school leaving

Target Groups being addressed by ongoing/planned measures

- ▶ All children aged 5-17 years attending State Primary, Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools
- ▶ Unmarried pregnant minors aged 13-17 years, their families and their partners
- ▶ Parents of children in Year 7 (attending State and Church Schools) aged 11 years
- ▶ Migrant Children

## One to one career guidance sessions

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

This service aims to inform and prepare students about available education, training and employment opportunities, even before students finish compulsory schooling. The service mostly focuses on secondary school students, with the aim of helping students to choose their post-secondary institution or career path according to their skills, interests and abilities. Year 9 students participate in career orientation visits which helps them see the benefits of academic subjects in preparation for employment. Year 10 and 11 students attend post-secondary talks, visits and fairs to make informed decisions in relation to future course choice. The service is also provided within primary schools.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

Academic year  
2021/2022:  
Approximately  
**4,500** students

Academic year  
2022/2023:  
Approximately  
**4,500** students

## The Alternative Learning Programme (ALP)

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

A vocational and creative centre that offers many hands-on and practical opportunities through a number of programmes and courses. It engages students to develop themselves for the needs of a society that is increasingly demanding skilled and knowledgeable workers. The programme is available for students who are in their final year of formal compulsory schooling (Year 11) and can be pursued for two years. The ALP+ is also available for students between the ages of 16 and 18.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

Academic year  
2022/2023:  
**91** students

Academic year  
2023/2024:  
**115** students



## Gem16+

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

A new school offering the opportunity to continue academic and work-related learning to those students aged 16 years and over who only attained 1 SEC exam, or the Secondary School Certificate and Profile. This is a 1-year educational programme.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

Academic year  
2022/2023:  
**87** students

Academic year  
2023/2024:  
**93** students

## A one-year induction course offered to non-Maltese students

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

A one-year induction course offered to non-Maltese students who cannot communicate in Maltese or English; and an intensive course during the summer to cater for the needs of those migrant learners who do not understand English and Maltese and who were finding language barriers an issue in terms of integrating in Malta. After following the induction course, the learners achieve not only a linguistic fluency but also the skills to transition smoothly into mainstream schooling.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

Academic year  
2022/2023:  
**826** students

Academic Year  
2023/2024:  
**819** students

# Servizz Għożża

## Status

Ongoing Measure

## Description

A support service and an educational programme is provided to pregnant minors with the intention of leading them to adopt a positive attitude towards motherhood while empowering them to pursue their career paths.

The services offered include:

i) a programme for pregnant girls; ii) a counselling service for girls, their partners and their respective families; iii) meetings for parents of pregnant girls; iv) support groups for mother and baby; v) prevention programmes for parents of students in Year 7 and to students in Year 9; vi) targeted outreach prevention programmes focusing on relationships and sexual education vii) psychological, moral and educational support programmes aimed at enhancing the girls academic development; viii) facilitating contacts with and the support of other relevant organisations and services for the benefit of both schoolgirl mother and her child; and ix) liaising with and advising school administrators regarding pregnant students according to specific needs of each case.

## Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

## No of Beneficiaries

Academic year 2022/2023:

**54** Pregnancy Programmes were delivered.

**15** Mother and Baby Support Groups.

**19** Outreach Programmes.

Prevention Programme in State Schools:

**341** parents of Year 7 students attended the programme, and

**378** parents of Year 9 students attended the programme.

Academic year 2023/2024:

**22** pregnant mothers attended the programme three times weekly.

**9** young mothers attended the programme once weekly.

**100** students participated in Outreach Programmes.

Prevention Programme in State Schools:

**365** parents of students in Year 7 attended the programme, and

**338** students attended the programme delivered to Year 9 students.



## Work-based learning

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Students are being provided with apprenticeships and experience on the workplace through work-based learning (WBL).

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2022 (MCAST data):  
**632** full time registered students who have been fee-exempted.

2023 (MCAST data):  
**701** full time registered students who have been fee-exempted.

## Support to increase school attendance

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Social workers contact parents of students who are not attending school to encourage them to send their children physically to school and offer support in this regard.

Contact is also maintained with schools to update them regarding contact with students as well as conduct school visits to check on the students who returned to school. Most of the issues raised are solved and students resume attending.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

Academic year  
2022/2023:  
**1,072** students who are habitually absent from school were followed by the College social work teams.

Academic year  
2023/2024:  
**1,026** students who are habitually absent from school were followed by the College social work teams.

## Community Liaison Workers (CLWs)

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Community Liaison Workers (CLWs) work with the psychosocial support teams in colleges to follow cases of children out of school or at risk of social exclusion and poverty. The CLWs also work in particular with families of migrant learners who are at risk of underachievement or school drop-out or who are not attending school, through explaining education-related procedures, helping the family to overcome challenges by facilitating access to services.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

Academic Year  
2022/2023:  
CLWs supported  
**3,247** parents.

Academic Year  
2023/2024:  
CLWs supported  
**3,979** parents.





## Inclusive Education

Malta is committed to promoting inclusive education and ensuring equitable access to learning opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities. The country has implemented various measures and policies to support this goal, including the **National Strategy on the Rights of Disabled Persons**<sup>35</sup>, which provides a roadmap for the disability sector up to the year 2030. This strategy aims to enhance accessibility to a wide range of educational resources, including books and learning materials, in accessible formats. Additionally, it includes provisions for training individuals with disabilities on the use of digital technology, thereby empowering them to fully participate in educational activities.

Furthermore, Malta has adopted the **Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion and A National Inclusive Education Framework**<sup>36</sup>, which underscores the right of all students to access an inclusive education in environments that are both equitable and accessible. These frameworks prioritize creating supportive and inclusive learning environments that accommodate the diverse needs of students, including those with learning difficulties and special educational needs.

During the academic year 2021/2022, Malta reported a total of 7,013<sup>37</sup> students with disabilities enrolled in educational institutions. Among these students, 5,490 were supported by Learning Support Educators (LSE), while 284 attended special schools.<sup>38</sup> These figures highlight the commitment of Malta to provide tailored support and accommodations to ensure that students with disabilities have the opportunity to thrive academically and socially.

**Table 5** outlines the planned initiatives for 2022-2030, many of which have been ongoing and continuously enhanced over the years, to promote inclusive education throughout childhood. These initiatives encompass a range of strategies aimed at addressing the diverse needs of students with disabilities, including providing specialized support services, fostering inclusive classroom environments, and promoting awareness and understanding of disability issues among educators and peers. Through these efforts, Malta is working to create a more inclusive and equitable education system that enables all students to reach their full potential.

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35 Ministry for Inclusion and Social Wellbeing. Malta's 2021 – 2030 National Strategy on the Rights of Disabled Persons. Available at: <https://inclusion.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Disability-Doc-ENG-SEP-21.pdf>

36 A National Inclusive Education Framework. Available at: <https://educationservices.gov.mt/en/NSSS/Documents/National%20Inclusive%20Education%20Framework.pdf>

37 Figures include students listed as SEN students by the respective schools, enrolled in pre-primary (excluding childcare), primary and secondary education in state, Church and private institutions – National Statistics Office.

38 Respective data for the academic year 2022/2023 will be available in November 2024.



# Table 5

## Measures seeking to ensure inclusive education throughout childhood

Target Groups being addressed by ongoing/planned measures

- ▶ Children aged 0 to 7 years and their parents/guardians
- ▶ All low ability primary school children attending Year 3 to Year 6 (aged 7 to 11 years) and their parents/guardians
- ▶ All State Primary school children
- ▶ All educators (including KGEs, Teachers and LSEs) in all primary, secondary and post-secondary schools

## Read with Me programme

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Free one-hour sessions which include sharing of stories from books, singing of nursery rhymes and other fun activities for this age group. The sessions are held once a week and support the development of reading and other literacy abilities.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2022:  
**1,500** babies  
and toddlers  
(**719** boys and **781** girls).

2023:  
**3,095** babies  
and toddlers  
(**1,451** boys and  
**1,644** girls).

## Reading Ambassadors Programme

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

A school-based literacy initiative which promotes the pleasure of reading through events involving local personalities to motivate children and young people to read. Reading Ambassadors include authors, singers, actors, footballers, presenters, broadcasters, and journalists.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2022:  
**2,281** students  
benefitted from  
these sessions.

2023:  
**2,741** students  
benefitted from  
these sessions.

## Nwar Programme

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

An afterschool, family literacy programme to support low ability primary school children with literacy difficulties (who have not acquired the required basic skills level by end of Year 3) to acquire basic literacy skills by the end of Year 6.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

**2022:**  
**322** students and their parents/guardians benefitted from this programme.

**2023:**  
**276** students and their parents/guardians benefitted from this programme.

## The Magic of Stories

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

This programme aims to promote reading among children and their parents/guardians. Weekly sessions are held free of charge, where a number of stories are read in a fun and motivating environment, to stimulate children's imagination.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

**2022 & 2023:**  
Approximately  
**10,500** children aged 4 to 7 years.



## Training for Teachers

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

All educators are given pedagogical training to remain abreast with new methods of learning through innovative and modern approaches including on-line courses to be better equipped to offer a higher level of teaching. Educators also received pedagogical training in vocational subjects, to be able to teach at secondary level, through foreign local universities and further and higher educational institutions. Courses also provided to Supply Teachers to become regular teachers. Training might also involve train-the-trainer sessions.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

**2022:**

Teacher Upskilling: **158**  
Initials Teacher training graduates: **93**

Head of Schools graduates: **44**

**2023:**

Teacher upskilling: **168**  
Qualified teachers: **188**  
Head of schools: **69**

## Instalment of Autism Units and Braille Machines

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

More schools will have Autism Units and Braille Machines to improve and assist multi-sensory learning, as well as to increase knowledge and awareness amongst educators and students.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

*This pilot project was launched during the 2021-2022 scholastic year and continued such that the Reach Units are open in four middle schools and two secondary schools.*

*Brailers and Braille printers were distributed to eligible students and schools to be able to access the curriculum as their peers.*

### No of Beneficiaries

**2022:**

**22** students

**2023:**

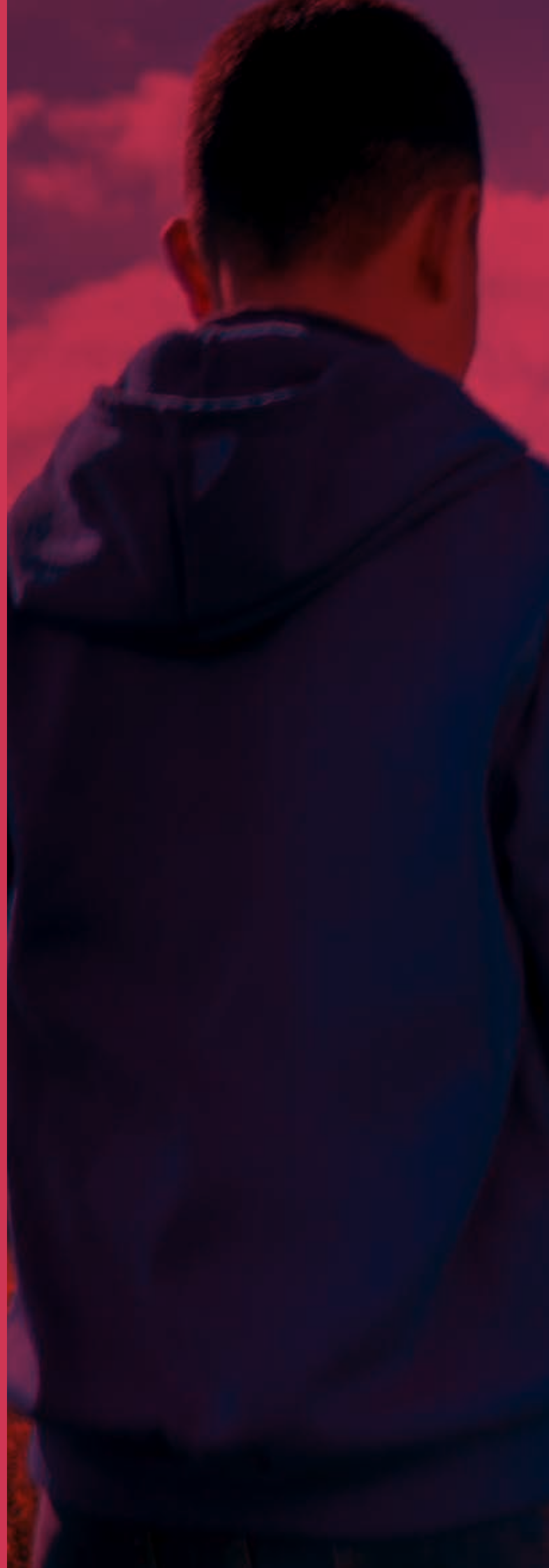
**28** students

## Provision of healthy meal, educational materials and uniforms

Families facing financial constraints or limited educational backgrounds often encounter difficulties in providing their children with adequate nourishment and essential educational resources. The cost of nutritious food and necessary learning materials can place a significant burden on these families, particularly if they lack knowledge about healthy dietary practices.

To address these challenges, Malta has implemented various measures, including **Scheme 9**, aimed at supporting disadvantaged families and promoting digital educational tools. Through Scheme 9 and other initiatives outlined in Table 6 below, Malta is committed to providing families with access to digital resources and educational materials. These efforts aim to empower families with limited financial resources or educational experiences by equipping them with the tools and knowledge needed to support their children's learning and development.

Additionally, Malta is taking a proactive approach to digitalization, recognizing the importance of digital skills in today's society. By investing in digital educational tools and promoting digital literacy among disadvantaged families, Malta seeks to bridge the digital divide and ensure that all children have equal opportunities to access quality education. These initiatives not only alleviate financial burdens but also empower families to make informed choices about their children's health and education, ultimately contributing to the overall well-being and development of future generations.





# Table 6

Measures addressing students' basic necessities for the provision of quality education in schools

Target Groups being addressed by ongoing/planned measures

- ▶ All children in Kindergarten to Year 11/end of Secondary school (aged 3 to 15 years) whose family income is equivalent to or less than the minimum wage, whose family relies solely on social benefits, or whose household composition includes more than one child and has an annual income below €15,000
- ▶ All primary and secondary school students (aged 5 to 16 years)

## Scheme 9

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Scheme 9 caters for students from difficult socio-economic and socio-cultural backgrounds as well as to alleviate the effects of poverty on the teaching and learning process.

Through Scheme 9, parents of eligible students can choose one between the provision of the following five benefits at the start of the scholastic year:

- free uniform
- a free daily healthy school lunch
- free stationery
- free photocopies,
- free extracurricular activities, including SkolaSajf, the Klabb 3-16 after school services and sports programmes through SportMalta.

Besides this benefit, every child on this scheme also receives free reading books, adapted according to their age (Home Libraries).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, lunches continued to be distributed at the students' homes. Students without an internet connection and/or a tablet or computer at home, were also provided with one.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

Academic year  
2022/2023:  
**2,659** students

Academic year  
2023/2024:  
**2,493** students

## Books are lent for free

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Books are lent for free to the student per scholastic year. Books are returned by the student once the scholastic year finishes.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

*In addition to the school textbooks that are lent for free to all students in state schools (from pre-primary to secondary level), the Read at Home Programme is offered throughout the calendar year. In 2023, there were 1,363 new subscribers.*

*Moreover, all students in State Primary Schools could benefit from the 'Enriching Classroom Libraries Scheme' and all students in State middle and secondary could make use of their School Libraries for free.*

### No of Beneficiaries

Academic year 2021/2022:  
**34,369<sup>39</sup>** students in primary and secondary state schools.

Academic year 2022/2023:  
**34,074** students in primary and secondary state schools.

Academic year 2023/2024:  
**34,762** students in primary and secondary state schools.

<sup>39</sup> National Statistics Office. Pre-Primary, Primary and Secondary Formal Education: 2021-2022. Table 2. Accessed on 04/09/2024 from: <https://nso.gov.mt/pre-primary-primary-and-secondary-formal-education-2021-2022/>



## Strengthening the teaching of different languages

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Strengthening the teaching of different languages other than Maltese and English, by:

- a number of in-schools activities to promote the learning of foreign languages.
- increase access to books and digital resources.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

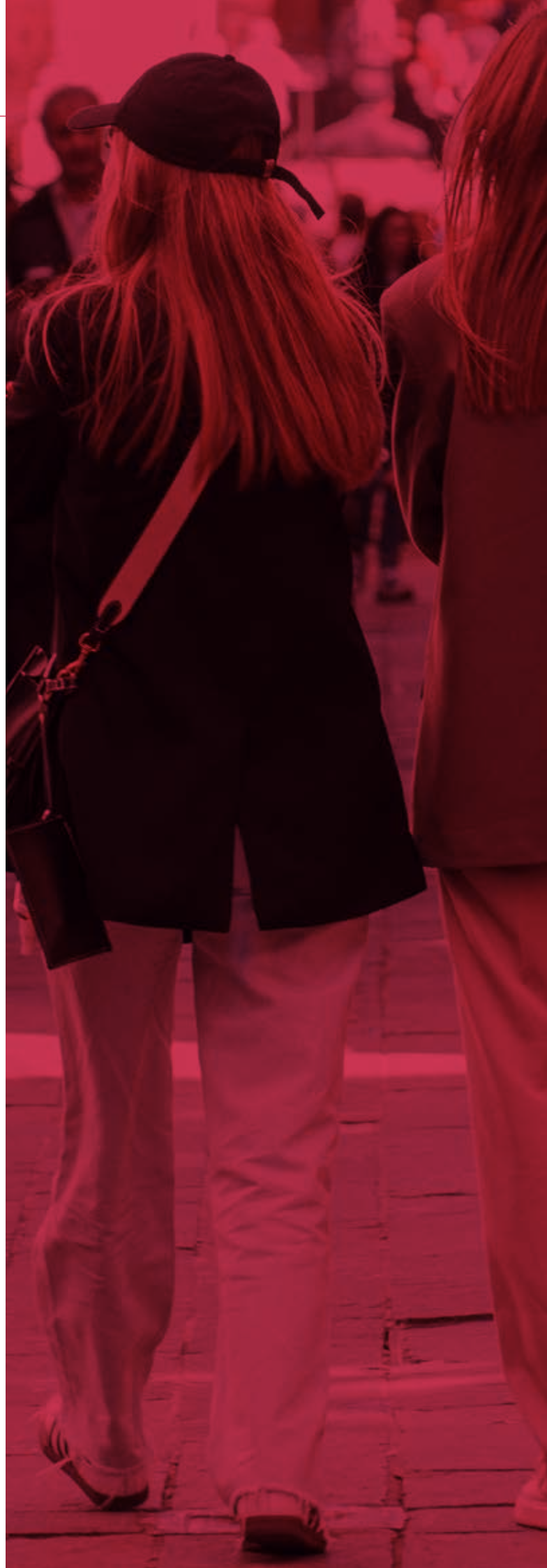
*For the past few years MCAST has promoted and implemented the provision of Foreign Language courses to students and staff. These courses are offered optionally, for free, over and above their learning programmes. The languages offered are Spanish, Italian, French, German, Arabic (started in year 2022/2023), and Chinese (started during scholastic year 2023/2024). Intake of approximately 120 participants (between students and staff);*

*One activity on language awareness for year 8 students (a selected school - piloted the activity);*

*Foreign Awareness Language Programmes are delivered to year 5 and year 6 students in all primary schools; This is also delivered to year 3 students in one college.*

### No of Beneficiaries

**Academic years 2022/2023 & 2023/2024: approximately 2,350 Year 6 students and 240 Year 8 students.**



## Connectivity, digital services and equipment

Addressing digital literacy skills is crucial in empowering learners to become proficient users of technology, capable of navigating the digital landscape with confidence and competence. Malta recognizes the importance of fostering digital literacy among students and has implemented a range of measures to support their development in this area.

Over the past years, Malta has made significant strides in promoting **digital literacy**, including initiatives such as providing free Internet access in schools and dedicated Wifi access<sup>40</sup>. Additionally, the provision of Microsoft Office 365 and Microsoft Teams to all primary school students has facilitated collaborative learning and digital skill development. Malta has also invested in initiatives related to Artificial Intelligence (AI), such as the establishment of a Data Warehouse<sup>41</sup>, to enhance technological capabilities and innovation in education. To further ensure knowledge in digital literacy, Malta is presently undergoing public consultation of the **Digital Education Strategy 2024-2030**<sup>42</sup>.

Furthermore, continuous awareness campaigns and courses for both teachers and students have been instrumental in promoting specific digital skills, such as coding<sup>43</sup>, and ensuring that educators are equipped to integrate technology effectively into teaching practices. These initiatives aim to address equality of access to digital connectivity, services, and adequate equipment necessary for distance learning, as well as educational content online. By prioritizing digital literacy and providing equitable access to digital resources and skills development opportunities, Malta is empowering learners to thrive in an increasingly digital world.

**Table 7** depicts the measures addressing equal access to digital connectivity, educational content online, and increased digital skills.

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40 The Internet is based on a fibre-based, high speed connectivity. Possible introduction of even better connectivity, such as 5G, are being studied to be introduced till 2030.

41 Moreover, it is planned that some AI websites will be introduced to help children during their curriculum studies, especially to early years school children.

42 Digital Education Strategy. Available at: <https://education.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Digital-Education-Strategy-Consultation-Document-ENG-Version-3.pdf>

43 Additional specific digital skills courses are offered to girls.



# Table 7

Measures addressing equal access to digital connectivity, educational content online, and increased digital skills

Target Groups being addressed by ongoing/planned measures

- ▶ All educators (including KGEs, LSEs, teachers, HODs, HOSs, Assistant HOSs) in pre-primary, primary and secondary schools (Kindergarten to Year 11)
- ▶ All children in Kindergarten to Year 11 (aged 3-16 years) and their parents/guardians
- ▶ All first year Post-Secondary School Students (Children aged 16-17 years)

## One Tablet per Child project (OTPC)

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Year 4 to Year 6 students and educators (teachers and LSAs) are provided with a tablet. Digital education training was provided to educators.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

*Although the figures are estimates, the OTPC project component, aside from the tangible hardware (the tablets for all primary students from year 4 to year 6) include other measures such as exam reader pens, catch-up classes, and VR equipment, which were purchased and distributed to colleges across Malta.*

*As of 2021, 2,621 pupils and students have been supported through monitoring and preventative measures to reduce early school leaving, primarily through catch-up classes.*

*A total of 1,000 exam reader pens were purchased along with 5 VR headsets for special educational needs, and 30 VR headsets for mainstream education.*

*Furthermore, it should be noted that although the project was EU funded until 2023, all measures will continue under national funds.*

### No of Beneficiaries

**2023:**  
**Approximately 22,500 students yearly<sup>44</sup>**

## Online training by Head of Departments and Support Teachers

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Teachers on the e-learning platform to facilitate distance learning. All educators have been trained to use a digital platform for remote teaching and learning as well as for digital pedagogy in class.

Related initiatives included:

- online support (a set of detailed Frequently Asked Questions - FAQs covering all cycles in the education sector were published and regularly updated).
- helplines.
- webinars (for school management teams and educators).
- distribution of training material (laptops to educators; and free online courses to parents and educators to improve their skills).

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

**2022:**  
**23 educators**

**2023:**  
**50 educators**

<sup>44</sup> It-Twettiq tal-Bagitt 2023. Available at: [https://publicservice.gov.mt/Media/Publications/Twettiq\\_tal-Bagitt\\_2023.pdf?id=2024-08-01](https://publicservice.gov.mt/Media/Publications/Twettiq_tal-Bagitt_2023.pdf?id=2024-08-01)

## Free Internet Vouchers

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Free Internet Vouchers (amounting to €300) to first year post-secondary students.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2022:  
**2,343** redeemed the voucher

2023:  
Approx **1,300** students redeemed their voucher





## Free Transport

Malta recognises the importance of ensuring access to education for all students, regardless of their geographical location. To address transportation barriers, the government provides transportation services free of charge for students attending Kindergarten or compulsory schooling (Primary to Secondary School) if they live more than 1km away from their school. This initiative aims to facilitate students' access to education by alleviating the financial burden associated with transportation costs.

Moreover, young children in pre-primary education receive supervised care during their commute, ensuring their safety and well-being during transportation. This additional support further enhances accessibility to early childhood education and promotes inclusivity by accommodating the needs of young learners and their families.

By offering free transportation services and supervised care for students, Malta is committed to promoting equal access to education and removing barriers that may hinder students' ability to attend school. This initiative reflects Malta's dedication to ensuring that all children have the opportunity to access quality education, regardless of their circumstances or location as indicated in **Table 8**.



# Table 8

## Free transport for all

Target Groups being addressed by ongoing/planned measures

- ▶ All children in Kindergarten to Year 11 (aged 3 to 16 years)

## Free Transport for all

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Free Transport for all (home - school - home). Supervision is offered on transport used by pre-primary children

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

Scholastic year  
2022/2023:  
**33,690** students

Scholastic year  
2023/2024:  
**32,734** students

## School-based activities

Ensuring equal and inclusive opportunities for children to participate in school-based activities is crucial for their holistic development and overall educational experience. These activities, integrated into the daily curriculum, go beyond academic subjects to encompass spiritual, religious, and ethical experiences. By offering a diverse range of activities, schools aim to enrich students' educational prospects and unlock their full potential.

Participation in school-based activities allows children to explore their innovative capabilities, collaborate with peers, unleash their creativity, and develop an appreciation for diverse cultures. These activities play a significant role in fostering social, emotional, and cognitive skills, contributing to a well-rounded education.

**Table 9** outlines the ongoing and planned initiatives for 2022-2030 aimed at promoting equal and inclusive access to school-based activities for children in need. These initiatives encompass various strategies, such as providing additional resources, support services, and specialized programs to ensure that all children, regardless of their background or circumstances, can actively participate in and benefit from school-based activities.

By prioritising equal access to school-based activities, Malta demonstrates its commitment to promoting inclusivity, diversity, and educational equity, ultimately empowering every child to thrive and succeed in their educational journey.





# Table 9

## Measures for equal and inclusive access to school-based activities

Target Groups being addressed by ongoing/planned measures

- ▶ All students attending pre-primary, primary, secondary and post-secondary level education (children aged 3-17 years)
- ▶ Physical Education (PE) teachers
- ▶ Children with a disability (attending mainstream and special schools)



## Physical Education within the National School Curriculum

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Children have regular lessons of physical activity at their schools (pre-primary, primary, secondary); thus, promoting a healthy and active lifestyle among students. Through a variety of games, subject content focuses on the development of psychomotor skills and promotes physical, social and psychological development. Through this subject, children learn more about teamwork, fair play, leadership and social inclusion.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

Academic year  
2021/2022:  
**58,377** students<sup>45</sup>

Academic year  
2022/2023:  
Approximately  
**60,000** students

<sup>45</sup> National Statistics Office. Pre-Primary, Primary and Secondary Formal Education: 2021-2022. Table 2. Accessed on 04/09/2024 from: <https://nso.gov.mt/pre-primary-primary-and-secondary-formal-education-2021-2022/>

## The Heritage Malta Passport card

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

The Heritage Malta Passport card is provided to all students. This card provides free unlimited access for one student and any two accompanying adults to all Heritage Malta sites and museums. The card remains valid till the end of year of last school term of Year 11 (Different events during the year as well as various promotions throughout the Christmas and Easter holidays are held to encourage holders of the said passport to visit Heritage Malta Sites and Museums.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

*During 2023, 21 activities were offered to HM Student Passport holders, reaching an audience of 210 students plus 1 accompanying adult.*

### No of Beneficiaries

Academic year  
2021/2022:  
**4,611**  
(all year 1 students)<sup>46</sup>

Academic year  
2022/2023:  
**5,000**  
(all year 1 students)

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*

## Outreach programs

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Outreach programs, including talks on Heritage Sites and Museums which are not easily accessible, such as the Hal Saflieni Hypogeum. During the pandemic, these educational talks were held online.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

*During 2023, five different online programmes were offered:*

- The Hypogeum
- Neolithic Life
- Holocaust Memorial Day
- World War 2
- Id-Dgħajjes tal-Latini

### No of Beneficiaries

Academic year  
2021/2022:  
Approximately  
**5,500** children per year

Academic year  
2022/2023:  
**650** children (virtual  
and physical sessions)

## Thematic programmes

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Thematic programmes are delivered in different heritage sites to provide cultural information on these sites to children with disability. During the COVID-19 pandemic (2020/2021), instead of these physical thematic programmes, children with disability benefitted from 15 short visuals in sign language and audio-descriptive texts targeting the visually impaired at the National Museum of Archaeology. Currently work is in progress to transform museums into spaces that are accessible to children on the autism spectrum.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

*During 2022, an activity was organised for students on the autism spectrum and material that facilitates museums visits for people on the autism spectrum was launched. 5 special tours were organised for people suffering from ALS, and 4 Activities were done for visually impaired audience. Moreover, audio-visuals in sign language were recorded.<sup>47</sup> During 2023, a number of activities were also delivered catering for students with different abilities. Target audiences were students on the autism spectrum, students with down syndrome, students attending Resource schools, students with speech impediments, students with service dogs, students with hearing impairment and students with challenging backgrounds.*

### No of Beneficiaries

2022: Around **2,400** students  
2023: **4,500** students

<sup>47</sup> MSPC Internal Report (still to be published). Implementation and Evaluation Report 2020-2022 National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion 2014-2024.

## Culture Pass

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Culture Pass aims at creating cultural and artistic events/productions by creative practitioners to be offered to school children. The content of the activities is linked to topics covered by the national curriculum, such as Media, Globalisation, Human Rights and environmental Issues. Schools are invited to book any of these productions for their students. Events may take place at the school or outside the school.

During scholastic year 2020/2021, the measure was extended to post-secondary students (MQF Level 4) and due to restrictions caused by COVID-19, the productions were offered to schools via an online programme.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2022/2023:  
**38,499**

2023/2024:  
**47,167**



## Cooperation of educational establishments, local communities, social, health and child protection services, families, and social economy actors

The National Inclusive Education Framework<sup>48</sup> underscores the pivotal role of school leaders and educators in fostering a nurturing and inclusive environment that caters to the diverse needs of every student. This collaborative effort extends beyond the school walls to engage parents, primary caregivers, and other community stakeholders in the educational process.

Central to the framework is the promotion of positive behaviour management strategies that create a supportive learning environment where all students feel valued and respected. This involves implementing tailored teaching methods that accommodate different learning styles and abilities, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to succeed.

Furthermore, the framework emphasises the importance of providing mentorship and support for staff well-being, recognizing that educators play a critical role in shaping the school culture and fostering inclusive practices. By prioritising the professional development and training of educators, the framework aims to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the diverse needs of their students effectively.

In addition to professional development, the framework focuses on ensuring inclusive access to education through a range of preventive measures, screening processes, and early interventions. This includes providing support services in child-care centres, early childhood settings, and throughout compulsory school years to identify and address barriers to learning at an early stage.

By addressing these key aspects, the National Inclusive Education Framework seeks to create an educational system where every student, regardless of their background or abilities, can thrive and reach their full potential. Through collaborative efforts involving school leaders, educators, parents, caregivers, and community members, Malta is committed to building a more inclusive and equitable education system that supports the success of all students.

### 3.3 Healthcare

Access to free healthcare services in Malta is a fundamental right extended to all children from pre-birth through their formative years and beyond. Recognising the critical role of early childhood healthcare in preventing and addressing physical and psychological issues later in life, the Maltese government ensures comprehensive healthcare coverage for children at every stage of development.

Families experiencing At Risk of Poverty or Exclusion (ARPE) often face additional challenges and complexities, which may impact the health and well-being of both parents and children. These families may be more susceptible to physical and mental health issues, underscoring the importance of providing tailored healthcare services and support.

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<sup>48</sup> National Inclusive Education Framework. Available at: <https://educationservices.gov.mt/en/NSSS/Documents/National%20Inclusive%20Education%20Framework.pdf>

To address the unique needs of AROPE families and their children, the Maltese government provides adequate free healthcare services and initiatives aimed at promoting healthy lifestyles, including awareness campaigns on the benefits of healthy eating habits. Additionally, various policy documents, such as the **Mental Health Strategy for Malta 2022-2030**<sup>49</sup>, the **National Cancer Plan 2017-2021**<sup>50</sup>, the **National Strategy for the Elimination of Hepatitis C Virus 2018-2025**<sup>51</sup>, and the **Transgender Healthcare Policy**<sup>52</sup>, have been developed to address the specific healthcare needs of children within the broader population.

While many of these policies and initiatives target the general population, they also acknowledge and address child-specific needs. This includes provisions for early intervention, preventive care, and specialized services designed to promote the health and well-being of children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

By implementing a comprehensive approach to child healthcare that prioritizes prevention, early intervention, and access to quality services, Malta is committed to safeguarding the health and well-being of all children, ensuring they have the opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential.

## Early detection and treatment of diseases and developmental problems

The healthcare system in Malta places a strong emphasis on the early detection and treatment of developmental, growth, sensory, and learning issues, as well as physical disorders among children. This proactive approach is crucial as it enables healthcare professionals to intervene early, develop tailored care plans, and mitigate potential challenges that may arise later in life.

Planned programs and measures within the healthcare system as indicated in table 10, below, encompass a range of interventions, including screening programs, physical assessments, provision of medication, vaccinations, and regular check-ups. These initiatives aim to ensure the overall well-being of children, with a particular focus on those in disadvantaged situations. Additionally, social welfare support is provided both within schools and communities to address the diverse needs of children, including those experiencing mental health difficulties.

By offering comprehensive healthcare services and support, Malta is committed to promoting the health and development of all children, regardless of their background or circumstances. These initiatives not only address immediate health concerns but also contribute to the long-term well-being and resilience of children, paving the way for a healthier and brighter future.

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49 Ministry for Health. 2019. 'Building Resilience, Transforming Services: A Mental Health Strategy for Malta 2020-2030'. Available at: [https://health.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Building\\_Resilience\\_Transforming\\_Services\\_A\\_Mental\\_Health\\_Strategy\\_for\\_Malta\\_2020-2030\\_EN.pdf](https://health.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Building_Resilience_Transforming_Services_A_Mental_Health_Strategy_for_Malta_2020-2030_EN.pdf)

50 Ministry for Health. 2017. The National Cancer Plan for the Maltese Islands, 2017-2021. Available at: [https://health.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/The\\_National\\_Cancer\\_Plan\\_for\\_the\\_Maltese\\_Islands\\_2017%E2%80%932021\\_EN.pdf](https://health.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/The_National_Cancer_Plan_for_the_Maltese_Islands_2017%E2%80%932021_EN.pdf)

51 Ministry for Health (MfH). 2018. A National Strategy for the Elimination of Hepatitis C Virus as a Public Health Threat in the Maltese Islands 2018-2025. Available at: [https://health.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/National\\_Strategy\\_for\\_the\\_Elimination\\_of\\_Hepatitis\\_C\\_Virus\\_EN.pdf](https://health.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/National_Strategy_for_the_Elimination_of_Hepatitis_C_Virus_EN.pdf).

52 Ministry for Health. Transgender Healthcare. Available at: [https://health.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Transgender\\_Healthcare\\_EN-MT.pdf](https://health.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Transgender_Healthcare_EN-MT.pdf)

# Table 10

Key characteristics of healthcare measures for early screening, detection and immunization

Target Groups being addressed by ongoing/planned measures

- ▶ All AROPE children aged 0-17 years
- ▶ All children in alternative care
- ▶ All children referred to Social Services<sup>53</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Referrals to Social Welfare Services can be made by social workers or other health professionals working within health centres, child protection and domestic violence entities, therapeutic services, and community family- or addictions- related centres or services.

## Free periodic screening for children

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Free periodic screening for children aged 6 weeks to 18 months with the aim to identify the signs of developmental delays, learning difficulties and/or educational needs at an early stage.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

**2022:**  
**4,462** children attended appointments.

## Lenti fuq I-Izvilupp ta' Wliedna

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

An Autism screening programme for children aged between 18 and 30 months.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

**2022:**  
Approximately **4,400** eligible infants<sup>54</sup>

**2023:**  
Approximately **4,500** eligible infants<sup>55</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Estimate based on National Statistics Office data as at end 2022. Accessed on 04/09/2024 from: [https://nso.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/NR2023\\_119\\_T2.xls](https://nso.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/NR2023_119_T2.xls)

<sup>55</sup> Estimate based on National Statistics Office data as at end 2023. Accessed on 04/09/2024 from: <https://nso.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/NR-2024-124-Table-8.xlsx>



## Pre-school entry assessments

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Pre-school entry assessments of children for early detection of diseases or developmental issues in pre-school children.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2022:  
**5,072** pre-school entry developmental assessments were carried out.

---

## Comprehensive vision screening

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Comprehensive vision screening (including screening for colour blindness) for all students attending State and Church Schools.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2022:  
**7,417** students benefitted from vision screening.

## Scoliosis screening for all children attending state and church schools

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2022:  
**4,948** students were screened for scoliosis in schools.

---

## Periodic TB screening and vaccination record checking

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Periodic TB screening and vaccination record checking for non-Maltese pupils who come from TB endemic countries.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2022:  
**388** students

## Monitoring of children diagnosed with Scoliosis

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Monitoring of children diagnosed with Scoliosis by GPs (whether in the school setting or not) by a specialized clinic. Here, children are monitored until the age of 18 or until the scoliosis improves. Complications or issues following the age of 18 are referred to Orthopaedic Surgeons.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

**2022:**  
**976** children are currently on Scoliosis Review Clinic database.

## Multi-modal assessments for various developmental difficulties

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Multi-modal assessments for various developmental difficulties including Autism, Learning Difficulties, Attention-Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) conducted by a specialized clinic dealing with developmental assessment.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

This initiative is coordinated by a number of professionals under different healthcare specialties.

The data required is currently not gathered.

## Remote Patient Monitoring of Blood Sugar Levels

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

The blood sugar levels of children below 16 years with Type I diabetes are monitored remotely through the use of mobile technologies.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2022:  
Approximately  
**134** children  
under the age of 16.

## COVID-booster vaccine

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Nationwide dissemination of the COVID-booster vaccine is provided to all children aged 5-17 years.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

Primary and booster COVID-19 vaccination is offered to all children registered as living in Malta, as of the age of 6 months up until 17 years of age.

2023: During the COVID / flu campaign 2023/2024 (Oct 2023- Jan 2024) **3,911** children aged 16 and under benefited for the flu and COVID vaccines, as registered in Nintex.

# Free vaccinations

## Status

Ongoing Measure

## Description

Free vaccinations to Maltese or EU infants, children, and young persons up to 16 years.

## Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

*\*Specifically: 99.1% for DTP containing vaccine dose 1, 97.6% for DTP-containing vaccine dose 3, 98% for PCV10, 97.8% for Men B1, 96.3% for Men ACWY and 94.8% for MMR (birth year 2021, as this is taken at age 1 year 1 month.*

*Also, HPV vaccination is now being offered to both males and females aged 12 years, with an ongoing catchup campaign for those born as of the year 2000. Uptake is in the high 70% for males in the 12-14 age groups. Outreach activities are ongoing through 6th forms, university and now an attempt is also being made to reach young men who have left the education system through outreach (on site vaccinations) through sports entities. The outreaches done in University and MCAST last in April and May 2024, were very successful-over 400 young men came forward for the vaccine in the 4 days of outreach and so this is now being extended to all 6th forms and post-secondary educational facilities in Malta and Gozo, through collaboration with the Sexual Health unit of HPDP. HPV uptake in females aged 12 has remained in the higher 80% specifically 87% uptake for the full course of the HPV vaccine (2 doses).*

## No of Beneficiaries

**2022: Approximately 4,400 infants<sup>56</sup>**

**2023: Approximately 4,500 infants<sup>57</sup>**

**Free vaccination is offered to all children registered to be living in Malta irrespective of nationality. 3rd country nationals also benefit from full cover against the vaccine-preventable diseases currently covered by the national immunisation schedule.<sup>58</sup>**

<sup>56</sup> Estimate based on National Statistics Office data as at end 2022. Accessed on 04/09/2024 from: [https://nso.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/NR2023\\_119\\_T2.xls](https://nso.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/NR2023_119_T2.xls)

<sup>57</sup> Estimate based on National Statistics Office data as at end 2023. Accessed on 04/09/2024 from: <https://nso.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/NR-2024-124-Table-8.xlsx>

<sup>58</sup> For the birth year of 2023, uptake of these vaccines is above 95% for most of the vaccines.

## Provision of Medications and Specialised Paediatric Feeds

Patients suffering from chronic medical conditions (Yellow Card Holders) are entitled to free of charge medicines which are specified under the Social Security Act (Schedule V). Moreover, another provision (Schedule II – Pink Card Holders) also includes access to free medicines from a restricted list of essential medicines to children in alternative care, fostered children living with a family, or students attending full-time education. The **Government Formulary List**<sup>59</sup> includes a list of medicinal products, vitamins, food supplements and borderline substances available in Malta. This List also provides feeds for medical use: sip feeds, tube feeds, specialised formulas and feeds for metabolic diseases in childhood. **Exceptional Medicinal Treatment (EMT)**<sup>60</sup> requests can be made for the procurement and provision of treatments that are not otherwise on the Government Formulary List such as specialised paediatric feeds or treatments, feeds for rare diseases and paediatric formulations.

The Mental Health Strategy for Malta 2020-2030 states that new medicines will be reviewed to be potentially included within the Government Formulary List, targeting a variety of health issues to be provided on a general population level.

The key characteristics of the abovementioned initiatives are outlined in **Table 11**.

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59 Ministry for Health Government Formulary List. Available at: <https://pharmaceuticalaffairs.gov.mt/en/resources/the-government-formulary-list/>

60 Ministry for Health. Exceptional Medicinal Treatment (EMT). Available at: <https://pharmaceuticalaffairs.gov.mt/en/units/exceptional-medicinal-treatment/>





# Table 11

## Measures for access to medicinal products

Target Groups being addressed by ongoing/planned measures

- ▶ All AROPE Maltese and EU children aged 0-17
- ▶ All children in Alternative Care
- ▶ All children requiring medicines and treatments for chronic conditions

## Medications and treatments issued under Schedule V of the Social Security Act (Yellow Card)

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Covering a total of 83 chronic conditions – is offered to all children suffering from any of these conditions. Meanwhile, Schedule II (Pink Card) offers access to free medicines from a restricted list of essential medicines to particularly children in disadvantaged situations.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

**2023:**

Data not available

## Exceptional Medicinal Treatment (EMT) requests

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Persons now have the options to make requests for treatment (including specialised paediatric feeds or treatments, feeds for rare diseases and paediatric formulations) not currently listed on the Government Formulary List.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

**2023:**

Data not available

## New and Innovative treatments, including Cystic Fibrosis Treatments and medicines for Anaphylaxis

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

New and Innovative treatments, including Cystic Fibrosis Treatments and medicines for Anaphylaxis to over 325 schools in case of emergency.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

*Cystic Fibrosis: Implemented and ongoing.*

*Anaphylaxis: Still to be implemented.*

### No of Beneficiaries

2023:

Data not available



## Provision of Mental Healthcare

Mental healthcare, particularly in childhood, plays a pivotal role in detecting and addressing mental health disorders early on, thereby facilitating timely intervention and support. **The National Strategy for Mental Health in Malta 2020-2030**<sup>61</sup> underscores the importance of early detection, prevention, and promotion of mental well-being as key objectives.

Early detection initiatives aim to identify signs of mental health disorders in children at the earliest possible stage, enabling healthcare professionals to intervene promptly and provide appropriate support and treatment. By addressing mental health concerns early, these initiatives can help prevent the exacerbation of symptoms and mitigate the long-term impact of mental health disorders on children's well-being.

Furthermore, prevention efforts focus on promoting mental well-being and resilience among children, equipping them with coping strategies and skills to navigate life's challenges effectively. These initiatives encompass educational programs, awareness campaigns, and community-based interventions aimed at fostering positive mental health outcomes and reducing the risk of mental health disorders.

Overall, the National Strategy for Mental Health in Malta underscores the holistic approach to mental healthcare, emphasizing early detection, prevention, and promotion of mental well-being among children. By prioritizing mental health from an early age, Malta aims to create a supportive environment that nurtures children's mental well-being and enables them to thrive.

In Malta various specialised mental health services are provided free of charge as follows:

- Child-oriented psychiatric services through Malta's General Hospital; 24/7 crisis service for acute mental health disorders; and Malta's psychiatric hospital (12-18 years of age with Bipolar disorder, Depression, and autism spectrum disorder).
- Services through a community-based team who can follow up after discharge from inpatient and emergency care and standalone clinics in the community.
- School services through evaluation, information, advice, intervention, and provision of support for children; and professional training for school personnel/professionals.
- Social welfare services also play a key role since these include outreach services for families who need support, including those with children in disadvantaged situations.

These services are supported by the following comprehensive list of provisions related to mental health, as well as their key characteristics, as found in **Table 12**.

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61 Ministry for Health. 'Building Resilience, Transforming Services. A Mental Health Strategy for Malta 2020-2030' Available at: [https://health.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Building\\_Resilience\\_Transforming\\_Services\\_A\\_Mental\\_Health\\_Strategy\\_for\\_Malta\\_2020-2030\\_EN.pdf](https://health.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Building_Resilience_Transforming_Services_A_Mental_Health_Strategy_for_Malta_2020-2030_EN.pdf)

# Table 12

## Measures for mental healthcare

Target Groups being addressed by ongoing/planned measures

- ▶ All AROPE Maltese and EU children aged 0-17
- ▶ All children in Alternative Care



## Psychiatric services for youths

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Psychiatric services for youths with any mental health conditions in Malta's psychiatric hospital.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2023:  
113

## Child-oriented psychiatric services (including a 24/7 day crisis service)

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Child-oriented psychiatric services (including a 24/7 day crisis service) offered within Malta's general hospital.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2023:  
138

## Four week intensive follow-up

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Four week intensive follow-up within the community of children after being seen at- and/or discharged from- the above services.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2023:  
158

## Innovations Clinic

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

In depth, intensive and flexible approach for hard-to-reach clients with multiple complex mental health disorders, with the assistance of a keyworker.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2023:  
483 sessions with adolescents and family components.



## Sensory Integration Therapy (SIT)

**Status**

Ongoing Measure

**Description**

Sensory Integration Therapy (SIT) provided by a dedicated clinic to children with Autism.

**Updates/Remarks**

Implemented and ongoing.

*This initiative is coordinated by a number of professionals under different healthcare specialties.*

**No of Beneficiaries**

**2023:**

Data not available

## Family Focused Clinic

**Status**

Ongoing Measure

**Description**

Family Focused Clinic (taking referrals pertaining to mental health issues associated with poor dynamics within family members).

**Updates/Remarks**

Implemented and ongoing.

**No of Beneficiaries**

**2023:**

**209 sessions with families.**

## Performance Clinic for young people (aged 11-18 years) struggling to perform in their respective arts/sports/music

**Status**

Ongoing Measure

**Description**

Performance Clinic for young people (aged 11-18 years) struggling to perform in their respective arts/sports/music due to mental health issues through the assistance of a keyworker.

**Updates/Remarks**

Implemented and ongoing.

**No of Beneficiaries**

**2023:**

**18 persons (approx. 5 sessions each)**

## Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT) Groups

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT) Groups offered for clients that benefit from DBT and Skills covering 4 modules (Mindfulness/ Walking The Middle Path, Emotional Regulation, Distress Tolerance, Interpersonal Effectiveness).

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

**2023:**  
**34** children benefitted from this service, receiving sessions weekly throughout the year.

## Evaluation, advice and intervention related to child learning and development

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Evaluation, advice and intervention related to child learning and development is provided to children attending church and state schools, within such schools.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

**2023:**  
Data not available

## Social Skills Group

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Social Skills Group (structured program offered for clients with high functioning autism spectrum disorder).

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2022:  
**16** children  
(x7 sessions each).

2023:  
**20** children  
(x7 sessions each).

## Anger Management Group

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Anger Management Group (offered for clients facing mental health and anger management difficulties).

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

*All sessions are provided for children and adolescence and the final feedback session is provided with the parents.*

### No of Beneficiaries

2023:  
**37** persons  
(x8 sessions each).

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## CYGNET

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Psychoeducational group for parents of children who have been newly diagnosed with ASD.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2023:  
**10** parents

## Learning Disability Clinic

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Learning Disability Clinic (reviews of children/adolescents with learning/intellectual disabilities).

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2023:  
338 sessions

## Neuro-developmental pathways

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Multi-disciplinary approach involving clinical interviews, various assessments and school visits determining diagnosis primarily of ADHD & ASD.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2023:  
83 persons

## Follow-ups & MDT discussions

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Holistic reviews, follow-ups, input, and evaluation/ advice/ interventions according to speciality or profession<sup>62</sup>.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

Active clients at Children and Young Persons Services (CYPS) benefitting from these reviews and follow-ups simultaneously:

2022: 2399

2023: 2812

2024: 2932

<sup>62</sup> Professions include psychiatrists, general practitioners, social workers, nurses, occupational therapists, psychologists, family therapists, dieticians, speech and language therapists.



## Rehabilitation and habilitation services for children with disabilities

In Malta, the publication of various strategies, including the National Strategy on **the Rights of Disabled Persons**<sup>63</sup> and the **National Autism Strategy 2021-2030**<sup>64</sup>, underscores the country's commitment to ensuring equal treatment and opportunities for individuals with disabilities. These strategies aim to raise awareness, promote accessibility, and foster inclusion to enhance the well-being of children with disabilities, with a particular emphasis on early detection and intervention.

The National Strategy on the Rights of Disabled Persons lays out a comprehensive framework to safeguard the rights of individuals with disabilities, encompassing measures to address societal attitudes, improve accessibility, and enhance support services. By promoting equal treatment and opportunities, this strategy seeks to empower children with disabilities to fully participate in society and realize their potential.

Similarly, the National Autism Strategy 2021-2030 focuses specifically on addressing the needs of individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and their families. This strategy emphasizes early detection and intervention, recognizing the importance of timely support in maximizing outcomes for children with ASD. Through targeted initiatives, such as awareness campaigns, training programs, and service enhancements, the strategy aims to improve the quality of life for individuals with ASD and promote their inclusion in all aspects of society.

Together, these strategies reflect Malta's commitment to advancing the rights and well-being of children with disabilities. By prioritising early detection and intervention, promoting awareness, and enhancing accessibility, Malta strives to create a more inclusive and supportive environment where all children can thrive, regardless of their abilities.

**Table 13** gives an overview and update of the measures related to disability, as at end 2022 unless otherwise indicated.

63 Malta's 2021-2030 National Strategy on the Rights of Disabled Persons. Available at: <https://inclusion.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Disability-Doc-ENG-SEP-21.pdf>

64 National Autism Strategy 2021-2030. Available at: <https://inclusion.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/National-Autism-Strategy-EN.pdf>



# Table 13

## Measures for children with disability

Target Groups being addressed by ongoing/planned measures

- ▶ All AROPE children with disability and their families
- ▶ All children with disability in alternative care

## A specialised unit offers speech / occupational therapy services and necessary tools to support communication

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

A specialised unit offers speech /occupational therapy services and necessary tools to support communication by augmentative and alternative communication technologies.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

**2023:**

Data not available

## A one-stop-shop within the community

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

A one-stop-shop within the community offers a wide range of services and assistance with independent living for persons with disability.

### Updates/Remarks

Data not available.

### No of Beneficiaries

**2023:**

Data not available

## A scheme offering vouchers

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

A scheme offering vouchers for private occupational therapy sessions to children with disabilities and their families.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

**2022:**

**15** beneficiaries

## Support specialised for children on the Autism spectrum

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Support specialised for children on the Autism spectrum that facilitates the learning experience within the school environment

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

**2022:**

This pilot project was launched during the 2021-2022 school year, and as of December 2022, there were four Reach Units and **22** students benefitting from the program.

## Small community residential homes for children with disabilities

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Small community residential homes for children with disabilities offer 24-hour support to children who are under a care order or whose parents are unable to care for them.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

**2023:**

Data not available

## Accessible health promotion and disease prevention programmes

Health promotion in Malta encompasses a range of services and initiatives tailored to expecting couples, new parents/guardians, and beyond, with a focus on fostering lifelong healthy habits and providing essential information. Specialized multidisciplinary units play a key role in delivering this support, operating in clinical, educational, and community settings to reach individuals and families at various stages of life.

Particular attention is given to disadvantaged populations, including families at risk of poverty or social exclusion. By providing targeted support and resources, health promotion initiatives strive to address the unique needs and challenges faced by these individuals, ensuring equitable access to essential health services and information.

Overall, health promotion efforts in Malta are grounded in the principles of equity, empowerment, and prevention. By engaging with individuals and communities across the lifespan, these initiatives play a vital role in promoting the health and well-being of families and children, ultimately contributing to a healthier, more resilient society.

**Table 14** illustrates how the promotion of healthy lifestyles for children and their families are locally pertinent and provided in different settings.



# Table 14

## Measures related to the promotion of healthy lifestyles

Target Groups being addressed by ongoing/planned measures

- ▶ All AROPE children aged 0-17 and their families
- ▶ All children of mothers with psychosocial issues

## Education and support are provided to expectant or new parents/guardians

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Education and support are provided to expectant or new parents/guardians on various topics from as early as the pre-natal stages. These include, but are not limited to pregnancy, childbirth, adoption, positive parenting, teenage pregnancy and parenthood, dental care and speech and language development.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

**2022:**  
Approximately the parents of **4,400** eligible new borns<sup>65</sup>

**2023:**  
Approximately the parents of **4,500** eligible new borns<sup>66</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Estimate based on National Statistics Office data as at end 2022. Table 2. Total population by sex and single years of age as at 31 December 2022. Accessed on 04/09/2024 from: [https://nso.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/NR2023\\_119\\_T2.xls](https://nso.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/NR2023_119_T2.xls).

<sup>66</sup> Estimate based on National Statistics Office data as at end 2023. Table 8. Total population by sex and single years of age as at 31 December 2023. Accessed on 04/09/2024 from: <https://nso.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/NR-2024-124-Table-8.xlsx>.

## Specialised walk-in clinics

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Specialised walk-in clinics provide help and information related to breast-feeding, and paediatric weight issues.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

**2023:**  
Data not available



## Physical and Nutrition Education are embedded in the National School Curriculum

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Regular lessons aim to teach children about physical activity and nutrition through hands-on activities with an aim to instil healthy lifestyle perspectives and skills.

### Updates/Remarks

*Pilot Project has been concluded.  
Targeted towards 15-30 children aged between 5-7 years and their families.*

### No of Beneficiaries

**2023:**  
Measure still at implementation stage.

## Ancillary Measures to Health

The services currently provided within the CDAU and the CYPS will be centralised in a major state-of-the-art centre so that the service provided is consolidated and integrated according to the needs of the children.

*AN ESF application for the training for professionals and adolescents was submitted. A site for Malta within SLH has been identified.*

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In the coming years, the new Acute Psychiatric Care Hospital will be built in the vicinity of Mater Dei to offer a specialised service that complements the one currently offered at Mount Carmel Hospital. This will be done through European funds.

*The mental health reform has just been announced by the Ministry. One of these reforms is the introduction of an Acute Psychiatric Unit, which is planned to be relocated to MDH. The reform will continue reducing the stigma associated with institutionalisation.*

### 3.4 Healthy Nutrition

In Malta, school schemes play a crucial role in promoting healthy nutrition among children, with a focus on improving access to healthy nutritious and wholesome food for all students. The ongoing EU-School Scheme, available in both state and non-state primary schools, targets children between the ages of 3 and 11 years, aiming to instil healthy eating habits early on. This initiative emphasizes the importance of consuming fruits, vegetables, and milk, contributing to overall awareness and education on the benefits of a balanced diet.

The renewed School Scheme Strategy for school years 2023-2027 aims to build upon these efforts by further promoting healthy eating habits and raising awareness with a focus on local and seasonal food sources. Specifically, this initiative places greater emphasis on disseminating information on the benefits of healthy eating while exposing children to the variety of healthy food options readily available in the local food sources. The strategy also includes an educational element on sustainable development through the reduction of food wastage.

Additionally, the Strategy incorporates within it the supply and distribution of fruit and vegetables per week, thereby emphasising the need to increase awareness on the recommended nutritional intake of children. Children facing barriers in accessing nutritious food, particularly those in disadvantaged situations, living in poverty, or from disadvantaged backgrounds particularly benefit from this measure.

**Table 15** includes data on healthy nutrition provisions.



# Table 15

## Healthy nutrition provisions

Target Groups being addressed by ongoing/planned measures

- ▶ All children aged 3-11 and their families

## School Scheme

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

A School Scheme to encourage school children to consume milk, fruit and vegetables regularly as part of a healthy and balanced diet. Children and their families will also be provided with information on healthy nutrition as part of this scheme.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

**2023:**  
Approximately  
**20,000** students<sup>67</sup>



<sup>67</sup> It-Twettiq tal-Bagjit 2023. Available at: [https://publicservice.gov.mt/Media/Publications/Twettiq\\_tal-Bagjit\\_2023.pdf](https://publicservice.gov.mt/Media/Publications/Twettiq_tal-Bagjit_2023.pdf)

## Nutrition standards in early childhood education and care and education establishments

In Malta, child-care centres are required to implement a healthy eating policy to ensure that children receive nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs. Staff members are also trained to pay special attention to any special dietary requirements of the children under their care. Additionally, free accessible drinking water is provided to children attending these centres to promote hydration and overall health.

Moreover, the breakfast club available for primary school children follows strict guidelines outlined in the Healthy Eating Lifestyle Plan issued by the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research, and Innovation. This plan ensures that any food procured by schools, including outsourced food for breakfast clubs, complies with regulations and policies aimed at promoting healthy eating habits among students.

## Restrict the availability of foods high in fat, salt and sugar in early childhood education and care and educational establishments

Schools in Malta are strictly prohibited from promoting foods that are high in fat, salt, and sugars unless such advertisements comply with **Legal Notice 266/2018**<sup>68</sup> regarding the procurement of food for schools. To reinforce these regulations and further restrict the availability of unhealthy foods, tailored programs are in place, including information dissemination, community outreach, and support to schools, which includes staff training.

Under Legal Notice 266/2018, schools are required to prohibit any promotions of fats, sugars, and salts, and failure to comply can result in fines. Similarly, educational programs such as the Breakfast Club must adhere to the Healthy Eating Policy, ensuring that no promotions or advertisements for fats, sugars, and salts are allowed. These measures aim to promote healthy eating habits among students and create environments conducive to their overall well-being.

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<sup>68</sup> Healthy Lifestyle Promotion and care of non-communicable diseases Act (CAP. 550) Procurement of Food for Schools Regulations, 2018. Available at: <https://legislation.mt/eli/ln/2018/266/eng>



### 3.5 Adequate Housing

The **National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion 2014-2024**<sup>69</sup> identifies the improvement of living conditions, homelessness, and inadequate housing as significant challenges. In response, Malta prioritizes initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality of life and well-being, particularly through the growth and accessibility of social housing.

The subsequent sections detail the primary ongoing and planned measures aligned with the recommendations of the Council Recommendation establishing a European Child Guarantee. Unless specified otherwise, these measures and services are designed to benefit all children, including those experiencing poverty or social exclusion.

**Homelessness:** Malta takes proactive steps to address homelessness and housing exclusion, aiming to provide access to suitable and affordable housing for all individuals. The government collaborates with non-profit and non-governmental organizations, allocating significant funding to support homeless services. In 2022, the Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights entered social agreements with eight organizations, securing approximately €2 million in funding.

**Social Housing:** Ensuring access to adequate housing is a priority for the Maltese government, particularly through social accommodation initiatives. The Ministry for Social and Affordable Accommodation oversees various aspects of housing, including social housing management, affordable housing programs, rental arrangements, and the supervision of housing projects and improvements.

**Community-Based Care and Foster Care:** Malta provides residential care for children in need of support and assistance, with nine community homes established in 2022. These homes offer a community setting for children to live together. Additionally, children may be placed with foster care families as part of the support system. The Housing Authority offers special rates on housing benefits when families in the rental market, foster children. The government also implements schemes to support young adults transitioning from the care system to independent living. Young adults leaving alternative care receive double the entitlement under the Housing Benefit scheme, to further assist them in leading an independent life.

**Table 16** contains information on the main measures that address housing for children:

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<sup>69</sup> National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion 2014-2024. Available at: <https://familja.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Poverty-Strategy-14-EN.pdf>



# Table 16

## Measures addressing housing for children

Target Groups being addressed by ongoing/planned measures

- ▶ Families with children that experience housing deprivation
- ▶ All low-income families with children, in particular all low-income families with children who are renting
- ▶ Families with children with disabilities

## Prioritisation of families with children

**Status**

Ongoing Measure

**Description**

Prioritisation of families with children in the social housing allocation policy.

**Updates/Remarks**

Ongoing.

**No of Beneficiaries**

Data not available

## Scheme to provide financial assistance

**Status**

Ongoing Measure

**Description**

Scheme to provide financial assistance to enable low-income earners to render their home energy efficient.

Promoting accessible and affordable housing for families through targeted schemes and initiatives backed by in-depth research into the housing market.

**Updates/Remarks**

Implemented and ongoing.

*Government continued to help with investments in photovoltaic panels together with batteries for energy storage. Grants on the restoration of domestic wells, and grants on the purchase of solar water heaters and heat pump water heaters were also continued.*

*In addition, free house visits to guide the most disadvantaged families on how to reduce the excess consumption of light and water and be more energy efficient are also offered. This is combined with an informative campaign on efficient technologies for home use, with more information on what the Government offers.<sup>70</sup>*

**\*Pilot Project: Nearly-Zero Energy Building** - Energy efficient renovation of a block of social housing. This is a pilot study whereby, The Housing Authority joined forces with the University of Malta, through the Institute for Sustainable Energy, to cooperate together in the field of sustainable energy and energy performance of buildings. The overall objective of this project is to carry out a deep energy renovation of one block of the Housing Authority for almost zero energy performance (NZEB). This will serve as a pilot project of good practice.<sup>71</sup>

**No of Beneficiaries**

Data not available

70 It-Twettiq tal-Bagitt 2022. Available at: [https://publicservice.gov.mt/Media/Publications/Twettiq\\_tal-Bagitt\\_2022.pdf?id=2024-07-17](https://publicservice.gov.mt/Media/Publications/Twettiq_tal-Bagitt_2022.pdf?id=2024-07-17).

71 Housing Authority. Annual Reports. Available at: <https://housingauthority.gov.mt/annual-reports/>

## Financial assistance to assist in rent payments

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Financial assistance to assist in rent payments targeting low-income families with children will not pay more than 25% of their income in rent. The benefit varies according to the annual income of the applicants, the household composition and the rent being paid by them.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

*\* In addition, the 2022 Budget saw the introduction of a **care plan for social accommodation beneficiaries** and applicants following the conclusion of a study in collaboration with the Faculty for Social Wellbeing at the University of Malta. The HA published an expression of interest for social work professionals who could operate the various facets of the plan.*

*\* Until May 2024, the Social Work team within the Housing Authority was currently working on 57 care plan cases.<sup>72</sup>*

### No of Beneficiaries

**2022:**  
**4,154** beneficiaries were receiving the improved and strengthened rental benefit<sup>73</sup>

72 It-Twettiq tal-Bagitt 2023. Available at: [https://publicservice.gov.mt/Media/Publications/Twettiq\\_tal-Bagitt\\_2023.pdf](https://publicservice.gov.mt/Media/Publications/Twettiq_tal-Bagitt_2023.pdf).

73 2022: 4,154 beneficiaries were receiving the improved and strengthened rental benefit.

## Prioritisation of families with children with disabilities

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

Prioritisation of families with children with disabilities on the waiting list for social accommodation. Several housing units which are designed specifically for individuals who suffer from a disability are being built and shall be allocated accordingly.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

*\* The specialised accommodation program (**Sustainable Communities: Housing for Tomorrow**) and the intergenerational living project continued throughout 2022. The former program continued expanding with various organizations operating in the third sector benefiting from financing and the design competition organized in collaboration with the Chamber of Architects.*

### No of Beneficiaries

**2022:**  
More than **145** individuals and families with two children or more were benefiting from this initiative and were allocated flatlets with shared amenities as per the intergenerational principle<sup>74</sup>

74 MSPC Internal Report. Implementation and Evaluation Report 2020-2022 National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion 2014-2024.

## A Sens-Ability scheme

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

A Sens-Ability scheme to provide financial assistance of up to €6,000 per family to enable parents of children and adults with autism or who have difficulty processing sensory information, to make a sensory room at home.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2022:

Approximately **49** families have benefitted or were in the process of benefitting from this financial aid<sup>75</sup>

2023:

There were approximately **76** families who benefitted since the beginning of the scheme till December 2023.

June 2024:

Approximately another **56** applications have been accepted during the first half of 2024.

## Energy Benefit

### Status

Ongoing Measure

### Description

The two types of energy benefits mitigate the effect of the increase in expenditure on water and electricity bills of low-income families. By the Energy Benefit, the consumption of electricity is reduced by 30%, with up to a maximum assistance of €75 per year per person in the household, while by the Energy Benefit – Humanitarian, the consumption of electricity is reduced by 80%.

### Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

2022:

The number of unique beneficiaries was **16,004**, out of which **8,213** are unique beneficiaries having children. The total number of children represented by the **8,213** households is **9,358**.

<sup>75</sup> Housing Authority. Annual Reports. Available at: <https://housingauthority.gov.mt/annual-reports/2022>

# Community homes to house a small number of children together

## Status

Ongoing Measure

## Description

A number of community homes to house a small number of children together in the community: The aim is to keep siblings together or else to provide a secure, stable environment with more individual attention for them to thrive. Support workers offer care to these children and all professionals ensure that their holistic needs are being met.

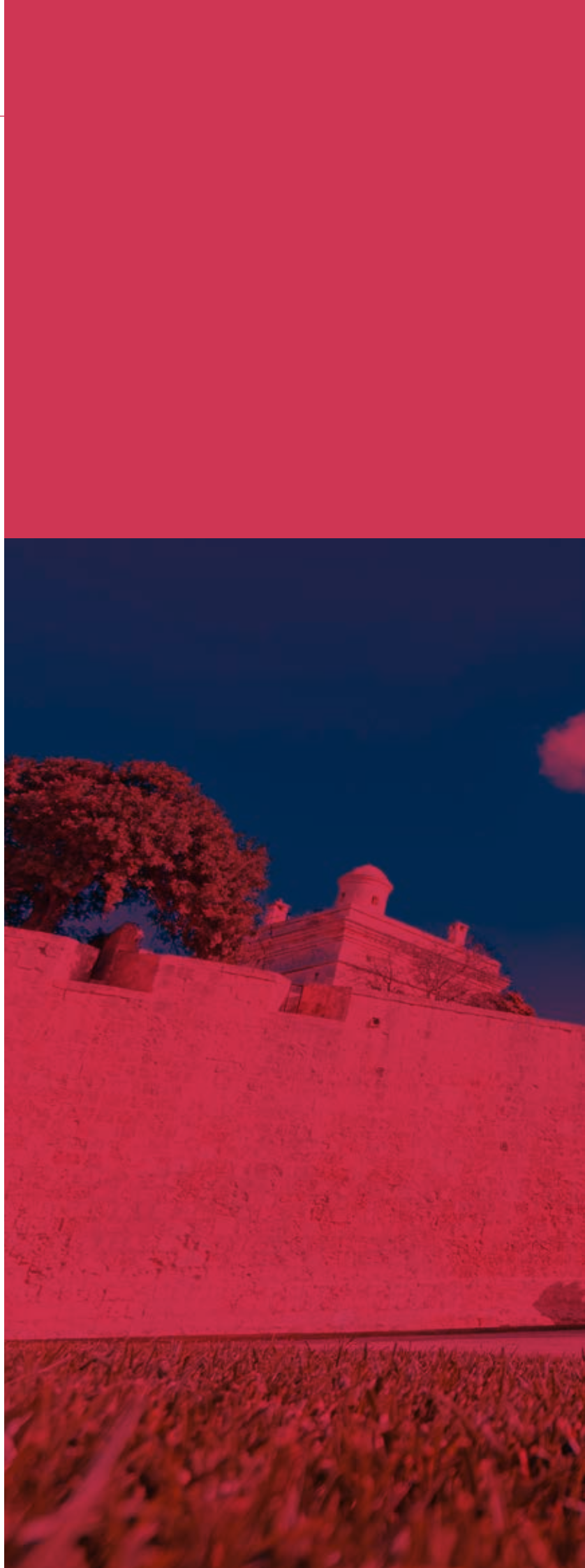
## Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

## No of Beneficiaries

2022:  
42 placements in  
9 community homes<sup>76</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS) Directorate Alternative Care Yearly Statistical Report. Available at: <https://fsws.gov.mt/en/Documents/StatisticalReports%20by%20Agency/AlternativeCare/ALTCARE%20Yearly%20online%20report%202022%20%28f%29.pdf>





### 3.6 Planned Measures 2022-2027

With a substantial investment totalling €145 million earmarked for the Child Guarantee initiative spanning the period from 2022 to 2027, the primary aim is to bolster existing measures while introducing new ones. This investment is designed to cater to the needs of all children, including those identified as being in need, with the overarching goal of fostering their success.

As delineated in **Table 17**, the progress in implementing these planned measures, as outlined in the National Action Plan, has been significant. By Q2 of 2024, approximately 70% of the planned measures had already been successfully implemented, underscoring the commitment and effectiveness of ongoing efforts to realize the objectives of the Child Guarantee initiative.





# Table 17

## Planned Measures for a Child Guarantee

Target Groups being addressed by ongoing/planned measures

- ▶ All children aged 0-17 years and their parents

## Measure 1

### Description

Tax reduction from €100 to €300 per year for parents who send their children to sport, artistic or cultural activities. Parents whose income is not taxable will receive the same amount in the form of a grant of up to €300.

### Status of Implementations at December 2022

Implemented in 2023 and ongoing.<sup>77</sup>

### No of Beneficiaries

**2022: 10,000 students**

## Measure 2

### Description

Extending the free childcare service to all children, regardless of whether or not their parents work. In addition, the service offered by childcare centres will be improved to ensure good maintenance and top-level educational training.

### Status of Implementations at December 2022

Partially implemented and ongoing. Children (0–3) living in households with low-income earning less than €10,000 yearly are eligible for the free childcare service, even if both parents are unemployed.<sup>78</sup>

### No of Beneficiaries

**As at 31st December 2023 there were 25 children making use of free childcare coming from families within the low Income Bracket.**

<sup>77</sup> It-Twettiq tal-Bagitt 2023. Available at: [https://publicservice.gov.mt/Media/Publications/Twettiq\\_tal-Bagitt\\_2023.pdf?id=2024-08-01](https://publicservice.gov.mt/Media/Publications/Twettiq_tal-Bagitt_2023.pdf?id=2024-08-01)

<sup>78</sup> The Foundation for Educational Services recognises that the root causes of poverty extend beyond mere financial hardship and are deeply intertwined with issues of social inclusion and access to essential social services. The organisation has identified that many children come from challenging backgrounds, which may include experiences of abuse, severe mental health difficulties, addictions, criminality, and social discrimination. These factors contribute to the perpetuation of poverty and social exclusion. In response, the Foundation is committed to promoting social inclusion by providing access to childcare services, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. To support these children, the Foundation offers free childcare services, ensuring that access is not contingent upon the parents' employment status. This initiative aims to create a supportive environment where all children, regardless of their circumstances, can benefit from quality care and early education, thereby helping to break the cycle of poverty and social exclusion.

## Measure 3

### Description

Distribution of a set of books each year to all the primary school children, so that they can build a small library in their home.

### Status of Implementations at December 2022

Implementation started in December 2023  
The implementation of this measure will be spread out over 3yrs+ until the end of 2026.

### No of Beneficiaries

In December 2023, a total of **3,368** books were distributed among **842** children.

## Measure 4

### Description

Extending the one-tablet-per-child initiative and distribute a new laptop to every student in their seventh year.

### Status of Implementations at December 2022

Partially implemented.

### No of Beneficiaries

**One-tablet per child:**

Academic year  
2021/2022:  
**13,695** students

Academic year  
2022/2023:  
**13,574** students

## Measure 5

### Description

All primary and secondary school students from families earning €14,300 or less will be entitled to one free basic uniform and internet service each year.

### Status of Implementations at December 2022

Partially implemented.

### No of Beneficiaries

**Free uniforms:**

Academic year  
2022/2023:  
**1,285** students

Academic year  
2023/2024:  
**2,118** students

## Measure 6

### Description

Extending the Scheme 9 initiative so that eligible children do not have to choose from the services offered but are eligible for all of them.

### Status of Implementations at December 2022

Implemented in 2022 and ongoing.

### No of Beneficiaries

Academic year  
2022/2023:  
**2,659** children

Academic year  
2023/2024:  
**2,493** children

## 4. Indicators, Targets and Monitoring

### Coordinating and Monitoring of the Implementation of the Child Guarantee Action Plan

In line with article 11(a) of Council Recommendation (EU) 2021/1004 establishing a European Child Guarantee, National Child Guarantee Coordinators will enable the effective coordination and monitoring of implementation of the Child Guarantee.

Given that the National Action Plan for a Child Guarantee encompasses a wide spectrum of areas whose responsibility fall under different Ministries and entities, MSPC as Ministry responsible for Children's Rights has taken upon the role of **Child Guarantee Coordinator**.

The Ministry has consulted with the relevant stakeholders in relation to childhood, with a view to coordinate the progress registered in the implementation of the respective measures targeting children in vulnerable situations as identified in the National Action Plan for a Child Guarantee 2022-2030. The primary stakeholders in this exercise include the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (MEYR), the Ministry for Health (MFH), Ministry for the National Heritage, the Arts & Local Government (MHAL), Ministry for Inclusion, Voluntary Organisations and Consumer Rights (MIVC), Ministry for Finance and Employment (MFE), Ministry for Social and Affordable Accommodation (MSAA), amongst others.

As previously mentioned, within the scope of the Child Guarantee, "*precarious family situations* (economic fragility)" encompass families with children under 18 whose income falls below the National Minimum Wage threshold. In this context, policy targeting, monitoring, and reporting rely on established indicators as displayed in **Table 18**.



# Table 18

Pertinent Indicators



INDICATOR	2020	2021	2022	2023	
<b>AROPE Children living in a single parent household</b>	<b>Single Parent Households with one or more dependent children AROPE:</b>				
	Percentage	51.5%	52.6%	52.4%	48.3%
	Persons	8,154 <sup>79</sup>	9,097 <sup>80</sup>	8,230 <sup>81</sup>	9,277 <sup>82</sup>
	<b>Children AROP<sup>83</sup></b>				
	Percentage	20.4%	19.6%	19.3%	22%
	Persons <18 years	17,000	16,000	16,000	18,000
<b>Children living in low-income households</b>	<b>Children in Households with Low Work Intensity<sup>84</sup></b>				
	Percentage	6.4%	6.6%	4.8%	4.3%
	<b>Children experiencing Severe Material and Social Deprivation<sup>85</sup></b>				
Percentage	6.7%	7.2%	6.5%	5.6%	
	<b>Children experiencing Material and Social Deprivation<sup>86</sup></b>				
	Percentage	10.3%	10.4%	9.2%	11.5%

Within a national context, as depicted in Table 18, AROPE rates among children in single-parent households decreased from 51.5% to 43.3% between 2020 and 2022. Similarly, there was a decline in figures for children living in low-income households during the same reporting period. This contrasting trend, unlike that seen in other EU member states, underscores the cumulative impact of implemented initiatives and measures.

During 2023, a Children's Unit focusing on various areas directly relating to children was set-up. This unit is responsible for the overall implementation of the European Child Guarantee across Government.

<sup>79</sup> National Statistics Office. EU-SILC. 2020 Salient Indicators (data for 2020 = 8154). Accessed on 09/09/2024 from: [News2022\\_220.pdf \(gov.mt\)](#)

<sup>80</sup> National Statistics Office. EU-SILC. 2021 Salient Indicators (data for 2021 = 9097) Accessed on 09/09/2024 from: [News2022\\_220.pdf \(gov.mt\)](#)

<sup>81</sup> Data provided by the National Statistics Office. Source: EU-SILC

<sup>82</sup> Data provided by the National Statistics Office. Source: EU-SILC

<sup>83</sup> Eurostat. At-risk-of-poverty rate by poverty threshold, age and sex - EU-SILC and ECHP surveys [ilc\_li02]. Accessed on 09/09/2024 from: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc\\_li02\\_custom\\_11083110/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_li02_custom_11083110/default/table?lang=en)

<sup>84</sup> Eurostat. Persons living in households with very low work intensity by age and sex (population aged 0 to 59 years) - EU 2020 strategy [ilc\_lvhl11]. Accessed on 09/09/2024 from: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc\\_lvhl11\\_custom\\_11084265/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_lvhl11_custom_11084265/default/table?lang=en)

<sup>85</sup> Eurostat. Severe material and social deprivation rate by age and sex [ilc\_mdspd11]. Accessed on 09/09/2024 from: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc\\_mdspd11\\_custom\\_11083202/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_mdspd11_custom_11083202/default/table?lang=en)

<sup>86</sup> Eurostat. Material and social deprivation rate by age and sex [ilc\_mdspd07] Accessed on 09/09/2024 from: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc\\_mdspd07\\_custom\\_11083241/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_mdspd07_custom_11083241/default/table?lang=en)



## 5. Financing

For the period 2022-2027, Government has earmarked €145 million for the new measures Child Guarantee, reaffirming its commitment to providing equal opportunities for all children. This substantial investment aims to bolster existing measures and support the success of all children, including those in need. Through targeted initiatives and support, the government seeks to empower children to thrive and reach their full potential, fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.



## Financing of Planned Measures 2022-2027

No.	Description	Total Budget	ESF+ Funding allocation (EU + MT Share) As applicable
1.	<b>Tax reduction from €100 to €300 per year for parents who send their children to sport, artistic or cultural activities.</b> Parents whose income is not taxable will receive the same amount in the form of a grant of up to €300.	Total projected budget: <b>€4.5M<sup>87</sup></b>	100% Local Funds
2.	<b>Extending the free childcare service to all children, regardless of whether or not their parents work.</b> In addition, the service offered by childcare centres will be improved to ensure good maintenance and top-level educational training.	Actual 2022 budget: €610,991 Actual 2023 budget: €414,477 Total projected 2024 budget: €399,744 <b>Total projected budget: €3M</b>	100% Local Funds
3.	<b>Distribution of a set of books each year to all the primary school children,</b> so that they can build a small library in their home.	<b>Total projected budget: €980,000<sup>88</sup></b>	100% Local Funds
4.	<b>Extending the one-tablet-per-child initiative</b> and distribute a new laptop to every student in their seventh year.	A) One tablet/child: <b>€13,477,220</b>  B) New laptop for every 7th year student: <b>€54,107,262</b>	A) One tablet/child: 80% EU & 20% local funds  B) New laptop for every 7th year student: 60% EU & 40% Local funds
5.	All primary and secondary school students from families earning €14,300 or less will be entitled to one <b>free basic uniform and internet service each year.</b>	<b>Total projected budget: €6.6M</b>	100 % Local Funds
6.	<b>Extending the Scheme 9</b> initiative so that eligible children do not have to choose from the services offered but are eligible for all of them.	Budget allocation: Euro 800,000 yearly <b>Total projected budget: €4.8M</b>	100 % Local Funds

87 This estimate for the duration of the workplan is worked out based on the households that benefitted from this scheme in 2022 and 2023.

88 This projection covers 2023-2026.

## 6. Lessons Learned and Further Development

In December 2023, further consultations were conducted to augment the measures outlined in the original National Action Plan for a Child Guarantee 2022-2030. These consultations aimed to bolster the effectiveness and inclusivity of the plan by gathering insights, feedback, and suggestions from various stakeholders, including ministries, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, community groups, and individuals. Through these collaborative efforts, the plan underwent refinement and enhancement to better address the diverse needs and challenges faced by children and families across the nation.

During the consultations several critical issues were highlighted pertaining to children's well-being, focusing on health, social security benefits, housing stability, childcare and education. Here are the main aspects discussed and the key takeaways:

### **Social Security Benefits:**

- Efforts to break the cycle of dependency on social security benefits were discussed, emphasizing further incentives for working parents and bonuses for children pursuing post-secondary education.
- Collaboration with various partners, including relevant ministries and technology offices, is necessary to prevent fraudulent exploitation of benefits and ensure their effective distribution.

### **Childcare and Education:**

- Free childcare for all, along with initiatives like Scheme 9, Read with Me, and the Culture Pass, play a crucial role in ensuring comprehensive education and nutrition for children.
- Collaborative efforts and targeted measures are needed to enhance project effectiveness and ensure maximum reachability of service users, including assessing the uptake of services and supporting eligible individuals who are not benefiting from available services.

### **Health Concerns:**

- Further attention is required to address health concerns such as obesity, lack of physical exercise, and tobacco exposure among children.
- Over-development causing various stresses on children's well-being, such as noise pollution and limited green spaces.
- Preventive measures are essential to break cycles of behaviour contributing to child poverty and ill health.
- Early diagnosis and intervention are crucial for addressing children's mental health issues, emphasizing community or school-based approaches over hospitalisation.

### **Stable Housing:**

- Stable housing is fundamental for child well-being, with various schemes and subsidies aimed at supporting disadvantaged families, single parents, and those with sensory needs.
- Specialised Housing Programmes (SHP) can be utilized by NGOs to identify and support disadvantaged individuals, ensuring they have access to safe and stable living conditions.

### **Engaging Stakeholders and Educating the Population:**

- Collaboration among stakeholders is essential for the success of initiatives aimed at improving child well-being, with a focus on sustainability and larger-scale planning.
- Efforts to increase awareness and address mental health issues, as well as the need to engage diverse populations, including foreign residents and third-country nationals, were emphasized.
- Involving children in decision-making processes and providing them with opportunities for participation is crucial for addressing their needs effectively.

Discussions concluded that the addressing the multifaceted challenges affecting child well-being requires collaborative efforts, targeted measures and a holistic approach that prioritises preventive measures, stable living conditions and comprehensive support systems for children and their families. Government will be taking the necessary action as per above suggestions.

**Empowering Children's Participation in Malta - <https://empoweringchildren.gov.mt/>**



To provide children a better awareness of the National Action Plan for Child Guarantee 2022-2030 a child-friendly version of the plan was created and uploaded onto the Empowering Child-Friendly App, tailor-made for children, to encourage their active participation. This version of the document was designed to engage children in understanding their rights and empowering them to advocate for a better future.

In addition, the app includes child-friendly versions of various policies and laws that directly or indirectly impact children. This enables them to better understand their rights and the legal framework surrounding their well-being. By providing access to simplified versions of these documents, the app empowers children to voice their opinions on matters that affect them, fostering a sense of agency and participation in decision-making processes. This not only promotes awareness and understanding of their rights but also encourages active engagement in shaping policies and initiatives that directly impact their lives. Ultimately, this approach contributes to a more inclusive and child-centred approach to governance and policymaking.

### **New Budgetary Measures**

Notwithstanding this, Government's agenda to compliment and consolidate further its efforts towards children remains. This is being done with a view to provide them with the best possible opportunities to realise their full potential. New budgetary measures aimed towards children were announced in Malta's Budget 2024 and their implementation is underway. These include a number of wide-spread measures under the umbrella of social protection systems, education and health amongst others. By way of example under the social protection system, from 2024, the Children Allowance was increased by a further €250 per child. As part of the Child Guarantee, Government had committed itself to increase the Children's Allowance with €450 per child, with an increase of €90 per year for five years. Whilst this commitment was kick-started in 2022, with an increase of €90, this process was further accelerated to instantly strengthen the financial support provided to families with children.

Child Allowance is given to parents until their children reach the age of sixteen, except in special cases of families with low income, where a special allowance is given until the children reach the age of 18 years. In the Budget 2024, a new measure was introduced to support those parents whose children continue their education after the compulsory age. While the students beyond the sixteen years of age are given a stipend, parents also receive a special allowance of €500 per year, when their children continue full-time education. The In-Work Benefit was also increased by an additional €50 per child, year.

Apart from the children's allowance, another increase is provided to families in their bonus for birth and adoption. This bonus of €300 was introduced in 2020 and was increased to €400 per child in 2022. In 2024, this bonus increased for the second time, from €400 to €500 for the first child and from €400 to €1,000 for the second new child or more in the family. Additionally, a significant measure was the introduction of the Additional Cost of Living (ADCL) benefit designed to support low to medium income households to better cope with inflationary pressures. Upon its launch and till end 2023, 95,579 persons received this benefit. The amount of the benefit is calculated on the equivalised income of the families and the benefit, which was further enhanced for 2024, consists of payments of between €100 and €1,500 per year (for 2024). It is envisaged that this benefit would directly contribute to a decline in the AROP.<sup>89</sup>

Moreover, in a period of global inflation and pressures strong on the international property markets, the Government managed to keep stable the figure of people applying for alternative accommodation because it maintained a good rhythm of allocations of social housing units and more social housing units are expected to be completed during 2024. Further renting incentives were also announced, particularly in relation to the Private Renting Scheme, whereby an increase for families with children started being provided. The maximum rent assistance increased from €4,800 to €5,400 for a family with one child and from €5,000 to €6,000 for a family with two or more children.

Further investment was also announced to continue reinforcing investment in educational infrastructure and quality of education. The extension of the One Tablet per child initiative would continue during 2024, and work has also begun to distribute a new laptop to every student in the seventh year. In 2024, stipends were further increased again in proportion to the cost of living with a yearly increase of €64.

The Budget 2024 also included several measures to improve healthcare services and infrastructure, including mental health and primary healthcare facilities. Moreover, it is envisaged that the GU Clinic's service would also be extended to the community.

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<sup>89</sup> Ministry for Finance. Pre-Budget Document 2025. Access on 14/10/2024 from: <https://finance.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/PRE-BUDGET-2025-DOC.pdf>.







## 7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the progress report on the **National Action Plan for Child Guarantee 2022-2027** reflects Malta's commitment to improving the well-being and opportunities for all children, particularly those in vulnerable situations. The comprehensive consultation process with stakeholders and Ministries has yielded significant progress in the implementation of measures across key areas, as outlined in the report. With 115 ongoing or implemented measures identified, spanning social protection, education, healthy nutrition, healthcare, and adequate housing, there has been a concerted effort to address the needs of children in vulnerable situations. In addition, other planned measures were established out of which it can be concluded that 70% of the plan is already in operation. The updates provided demonstrate substantial advancements in services and benefits over the past two years, reflecting a commitment to leaving no child behind.

The report underscores the importance of a holistic approach to tackling multifaceted challenges affecting child well-being, emphasising early intervention, prevention, and empowerment through participation. By involving children in decision-making processes and providing them with opportunities to advocate for their rights, policymakers can ensure that policies are responsive to their needs and experiences.

Ensuring children reach their full potential remains a top priority for the Maltese Government. Recent policies have aimed to provide a wide range of opportunities for children, particularly those at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Efforts are underway to align strategies and policies with the Child Guarantee, including the ongoing consultation for the **Children's Policy Framework 2023-2030** and many others as already mentioned previously.

Furthermore, the use of digital platforms for awareness and engagement, such as the **Empowering Child-Friendly App**, highlights Malta's efforts to make policy information accessible and engaging for children.

Moving forward, it is essential to build on the progress made and continue to prioritise the well-being and rights of all children, ensuring that no child is left behind. This requires sustained collaboration, targeted interventions, and a commitment to creating inclusive and supportive environments for children and their families. Through ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation of policies, Malta can further advance towards achieving the goals outlined in the National Action Plan for Child Guarantee.

## Notes

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## Notes

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# NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

**FOR A CHILD GUARANTEE  
2022-2030**



**GOVERNMENT OF MALTA**  
MINISTRY FOR SOCIAL POLICY  
AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS