



Malta

National Reform Programme

Annex Table 2

Ministry for Finance
April 2017

Table 2. Reporting table on national Europe 2020 targets

Description of the measures taken and information on their qualitative impact		
Progress on Implementation	List of measures and their state of play that were implemented in response to the commitment	The estimated impacts of the measures (qualitative and/or quantitative)
<i>National 2020 headline targets</i>		
National 2020 employment target (70%)	<p>Free Childcare Centres</p> <p>As at the end of 2016, a total of 98 registered childcare centres were benefitting from the scheme.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>	Since the start-up of the scheme, in April 2014, until December 2016 a total of 9,734 children have applied and benefitted at one point in time.
	<p>Afternoon School Programmes in the Community</p> <p>This measure provides an after-school care service within the school setting and seeks to bridge the gap between day school and the regular working hours of parents in employment.</p> <p>The Klabb 3-16 after-school programmes will be revised to include support in homework and provide additional tuition on languages, drama, sports and IT programmes.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>	Since opening, uptake has continued to increase in all centres. In summer 2016, 11,500 students attended the programme.
	<p>Strengthening Employability Prospects</p> <p>The Jobsplus operates the following programmes aimed at Strengthening Employability Prospects:</p> <p>Employment Aid Programme (EAP): Following a very successful uptake, the EAP was re-opened in 2013, and extended to December 2015. The extension was for Gozo undertakings and Maltese undertakings with a base in Gozo. The EAP has been finalised and in fact all disbursements for both EAP and the extension have been completed. The total allocated budget for the EAP amounted to €14,162,500 but the final disbursement has been that of €14,102,660.60, leaving a total savings of €59,839.40. This was utilised through 2,836 Grant Agreements signed with 814 employers based in Malta and 372 employers based in Gozo.</p> <p>Out of the overall total of 2,836 grant agreements, 870 grants valued at €4.1 million were allocated to Gozo. Out of the 2,836 persons newly recruited into employment, 1,291 were women. 1,435 young persons (15-24 years old) and 214 older persons (55-64 years old) who were unemployed or inactive and found work as a result of the incentives offered through this programme.</p> <p>Training Aid Framework (TAF1 and TAF2): The Training Aid Framework was launched in 2009 and was completed by end 2015. This scheme aimed to promote the training and up-skilling of persons actively participating in the Maltese labour market, with a view to increasing productivity and enhancing adaptability</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>Employment Aid Programme: The effectiveness of the employment generated by the EAP is evidenced by the employment retention rate of 85% of the 2,836 persons whose grant period expired by December 2014 and who were still in employment six months after the subsidy period. Verification following the implementation of the operations showed that 81% of the total persons employed by means of this programme had still remained in employment as at end November 2015.</p> <p>Training Aid Framework (TAF1 and TAF 2): Under TAF1 and TAF2 almost 33,000 trainees received training and over 4,000 grants were paid, for a total value of € 8 million.</p>
	<p>Measures to Curtail Abuse of the Unemployment Register and Informal Work</p> <p>Various initiatives are contributing to curb undeclared work and encourage more people to enter the formal economy. These initiatives are coupled with inspections carried out by the Law Compliance Unit within Jobsplus and the Benefit Fraud and Investigation Department (BFID).</p> <p>The Maltese Public Employment Service is one of the players that strives to ensure that persons registering for primary employment and employers engaging local and foreign nationals abide by their respective legal obligations. Efforts to enhance effectiveness by the Law Compliance system at Jobsplus are continuous through desk investigations and more targeted inspections.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>	<p>Between January 2016 and January 2017, a total of 6,100 inspections were carried out by Jobsplus during which 3,677 law infringements were identified. Most of these cases of law infringement were linked to Maltese workers found working at establishments without Jobsplus having been notified by their employer regarding their employment and hence, they were deemed to be in irregular employment. Between January 2016 and January 2017, the Jobsplus registered 1,432 strike-offs from its Jobseekers Register.</p> <p>During the period January-December 2016, the Benefit Fraud and Investigation Department conducted, through its Inspectorate, 2,072 on-site inspections. As a result of the investigations conducted, 975 social benefits were revised and/or suspended. It is estimated that during this period the investigations resulted in savings of €4,020,309.</p>
<p>Supported and Sheltered Employment Training for Disadvantaged Groups including RDPs</p> <p>The aim of this pilot measure, part financed by EU ESF funds was to further increase the participants' confidence and practical job-specific skills through work exposure opportunities thus enhancing the financial independence of disadvantaged persons and preventing social exclusion and marginalisation. On the other hand, the Sheltered Employment Training activity aimed to provide persons with disability who cannot work in an open labour market environment with employability skills, for them to work in a sheltered one.</p>	<p>This measure helps to enhance the employability of registered disabled persons through a hands-on approach to training. Its two main impacts are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase in the Employment Rate: As at end December 2015, a total of 114 unique participants were placed in employment through various project activities as listed below: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. 21 participants employed through the former ESF3.114 – Employment in the Social Economy Initiative; b. 29 participants provided with Support Worker assistance during their employment with the Me2Co-operative; 	

<p>The Sheltered Employment Training thus offered the possibility for clients to receive a hands-on approach to training in one or more categories, depending on the availability and preferences as indicated by the client and as recommended by the Medical Placement Officer and the Occupational Therapist.</p> <p>Five training categories were made available for the clients include: Back-office, Catering, Assembly, Gardening and Housekeeping. Training took place either at the Msida Training Workshops or at the premises of employers who provided the right training environment for this client group.</p> <p>As from 2016, following the completion of this pilot measure, national funds have been allocated to continue this operation until additional ESF funding will be allocated to carry out this project on a larger scale.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. 23 participants placed in employment while attending the Sheltered Employment Training Initiative; d. 45 participants assisted in finding employment by Support Workers while attending the Job Bridge Centre; e. 2 participants supported during their employment through Personal Assistance Allowance provided to their employer; f. 1 participant provided Support Worker assistance during his employment with IPSL Ltd. <p>2. Increase in the number of adult participation in lifelong learning: As at end of December 2015 a total of 162 unique participants had undergone training through various project activities as listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 158 participants were provided with Sheltered Employment Training of which 34 found employment, 9 embarked into the Lino Spiteri Foundation Headstart Programme, and 48 completed the whole Programme. For various reasons, the remaining participants did not complete the Programme; b. 4 participants were provided with Learning Support Assistance; c. 1 participant was provided with Job Coaching Services whilst taking part in an employment scheme d. 1 participant was provided with the services of a Study Support Worker during his University studies.
<p>Childcare Centres</p> <p>Three childcare centres have been constructed by Malta Industrial Parks Ltd. These are located in Kordin and Mosta Industrial Parks in Malta and at Xewkija Industrial Park in Gozo.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>Following a competitive call for expression of interest, Malta Industrial Parks Ltd. has already leased the childcare centres located at Kordin and Xewkija. Both centres are now operational having an approved maximum child capacity of 135. Meanwhile, the childcare centre located at Mosta has not yet been leased out.</p>
<p>Enhancing Employability through Training (EET)</p> <p>In the final year of implementation two additional components were introduced, namely the Work Exposure Scheme and the Research Study on the concept of internationalisation amongst local firms. The study focused on the different factors that could possibly drive or hinder internationalisation amongst SMEs.</p> <p>In all, 300 companies operating from Malta participated in the telephone survey. The survey indicated that only 30% of the companies interviewed were involved in exporting products and services.</p> <p>Although there are a number of Government entities and authorities that provide SMEs with information and assistance to internationalise, the responses received show that their performance and scope needs to improve.</p> <p>Of interest to Jobsplus is the fact that 35.7% of the companies interviewed believed that they experience a skills gap between the skills that their present staff has and the skills required to internationalise. It is encouraging to note that when respondents (244 that did not exclude to provide internationalisation training to their employees) were provided with five different internationalisation courses, more than 50% of the respondents showed interest to send their staff for each of the specialised training proposed.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>Through training programmes and the provision of assistance, registered unemployed or inactive individuals will be integrated into the labour market while employed persons will secure and advance their position within the labour market.</p> <p>Following further discussions with the Planning and Priorities Co-ordination Division (PPCD), the overall target for the project to train or support 8,080 persons has been revised and increased to 8,505.</p> <p>Between 1st January 2013 and 31st December 2015, Jobsplus trained 12,593 individuals through its short courses, while placing 327 and 502 persons on the Work Exposure Scheme (WES) and Traineeship (TRN) respectively.</p> <p>Through the EET project, there were also 149 and 35 persons who applied for a financial grant under TSS and TSSA respectively. From the number of persons applying under TSS, 130 persons have received financial assistance to fund 75% of their courses through the Training Subsidy Scheme while from the number of persons that applied under TSSA, 26 persons have received funds.</p> <p>Therefore the total number of persons benefiting from the EET Project amounted to 13,699.</p>
<p>National Apprenticeship Scheme</p> <p>MCAST's strategy is to ensure that Work Based Learning is implemented across all program levels offered within VET. The strategy is divided into three modes of Work Based Learning with Work Placements being implemented at Levels 1 to 4; Apprenticeship implemented at Levels 3 to 4 and Internship at Levels 5 to 6.</p> <p>The work placements will provide students with a work experience period wherein they are exposed to the work content in preparation for progression into the technical apprenticeship at levels 3 and 4. The strategy projects that the technical training achieved within the apprenticeship is developed further through the implementation of a compulsory 200 hour internship across all levels 5 and 6.</p> <p>During 2016, MCAST continued to further strengthen and widen the scope of the apprenticeship scheme through the identification of more apprenticeships at level 3 and 4. Furthermore, as from October 2016 MCAST will be piloting new forms of work-based learning at level 2 engineering programs with 100 students benefitting from the pilot.</p> <p>In levels 5 and 6, a pilot internship scheme was implemented in ICT and Applied Sciences. Additional programmes have been identified in levels 5 and 6 for the implementation of Work Based Internship in academic year 2016/2017. It is envisaged that a minimum of 500 students will benefit from the internship.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>Currently there are over 50 courses at MQF levels 3 and 4 that form part of the Apprenticeship Scheme. Reviews on the current legislation and policies were carried out in the Apprenticeship Department within MCAST. Amendments, which are currently being reviewed internally, were drawn up for a new legislation on apprenticeships. Furthermore, meetings with the local industry sectors were held in order to develop work-based Vocational Competences for all apprenticeship programmes. These Vocational Competencies have all been completed and introduced in the current scholastic year, 2016-2017. Concurrently, MCAST is also concentrating on aspects related to quality assurance in order to enhance student support systems related to work-based learning.</p> <p>Additional programmes have been identified in levels 5 and 6 for the implementation of Work Based Internship in academic year 2016/17.</p> <p>In 2017, MCAST will continue to reform the apprenticeship scheme, to ensure that apprenticeship is given high quality training. The number of apprentices and companies involved in the apprenticeship scheme has increased rapidly with over 1,000 apprentices for the year 2016-2017 and over 900 companies interested to offer apprenticeship sponsorship. However the need to continue to invest in the development of a high quality reform is essential in order to meet the requirements of industry and tackle the existing skills gap and skills mismatch.</p>

	<p>Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme</p> <p>The MCAST Entrepreneurship Centre (MEC) was launched in October 2014, in collaboration with Malta Enterprise with the aim of providing students and alumni with the opportunity to transform their creative and innovative ideas into profitable and sustainable business ventures. A number of MCAST students and alumni have already been provided with a space where they can nurture, grow and launch their business ideas.</p> <p>It is also pertinent to note that MCAST is consolidating the entrepreneurship-related tuition that students receive. Indeed, entrepreneurship has been introduced as a key skill at MQF level 4 and will be introduced at various levels across the Foundation, Technical and University Colleges in this academic year (2016/2017).</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>From its inception, the MEC has reviewed 50+ business ideas, of which 26 were endorsed to benefit from the continuous support of the MEC. 8 businesses are currently (as at January 2017) making use of MEC facilities, 7 of which are already trading with 1 operating his business on a full-time basis.</p>
	<p>Breakfast Club</p> <p>The Breakfast Club is intended to provide care for children attending State schools one hour before the schools' official opening hours. This initiative is open to all State primary schools in both Malta and Gozo. The Breakfast Club has a budget of €3.6 million.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>	<p>This incentive is allowing further flexibility to working parents and may also encourage more women to either return or enter into the labour market.</p> <p>During the scholastic year 2015/2016, a total of 3,362 students benefitted from the clubs. As at February 2017, registrations for the club are 4,003 applications covering scholastic year 2016/2017. Registrations remain open during the scholastic year.</p>
	<p>Youth Guarantee / NEET Activation Scheme</p> <p>The second cycle of the NEET Activation Scheme commenced in July 2016. The envisaged target for the NEET Activation Scheme II is approximately 150 NEETS per annum who will undergo training or further training or training and work exposure. Furthermore till 2020, 600 participants will be trained and provided with personalised support till 2020.</p> <p>Until end of 2016, two information meetings in Malta and one information meeting in Gozo were held to invite young people to participate in the NEET Activation Scheme II. During these three information meetings a total of 64 participants applied successfully in order to enrol in the NEET Activation scheme II. Profiling sessions have commenced and a total of 46 participants have been profiled.</p> <p>The first two groups started their training on the 9th January 2017 and another two groups started their training on the 13th and 14th February 2017. Another group started on 16th March, which is to be followed by the sixth group on the 20th March 2017. Up to year 2016, 62 participants have been profiled in Malta and Gozo, and to date, another 25 have been profiled.</p> <p>Outreach activities were launched in February 2017 and so far have included promotion on radio stations, a social media campaign, as well as meetings with Secondary school psycho-social teams and other entities such as LEAP and Agenzija Zghazagh detach youth work.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>NEET Activation Scheme II:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Circa 150 participants will be provided training and personalised support per annum; 2. 600 participants will be provided training and personalised support during the period of validity of the contract; 3. A target of 300 participants will gain a qualification.
	<p>National Skills Survey [Formerly known as "Setting up a Skills Bank"]</p> <p>A national survey was administered among a representative sample of employers to determine their labour and skills needs for the next three years. This survey was conducted jointly by Jobsplus, NCFHE and Malta Enterprise and its objective was to collect solid evidence on skills shortages and demands.</p> <p>The final complete report is expected to be published jointly by Jobsplus, NCFHE and Malta Enterprise in 2017.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>The findings from this survey will feed into the educational system and career guidance.</p>
	<p>Employability Index</p> <p>The Employability Index was launched in October 2015. The findings indicated the level of horizontal and vertical mismatch for graduates. Following the results of this study, a pilot project will be launched to ensure that such mismatch is reduced.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>The index indicates which students are at high risk of experiencing underemployment due to significant job mismatching in relation to education attainment. It is expected to improve the relevance of career guidance.</p> <p>Main Findings of the Study:</p> <p><u>UoM:</u></p> <p>Judging by the 2012 graduates, the faculties that can be broadly categorized under the <i>Physical Health</i> grouping fared best in terms of the qualified/match statistic, while the Institute for Tourism, Travel and Culture and the Faculty of Arts were classified at the other end of the ranking. The greatest change in employment routes seems to have been experienced by the Law graduates, as while in the first year of employment less than one-third found an "ideal" occupation, the corresponding statistic increased to 71.8% after only two years. The fact that this trend is also visible amongst the graduates of the following year seems to confirm this pattern.</p>

		<p>Overall, the progression with time of the perfect match score (i.e. the proportion of graduates fulfilling both the qualified/ match category) for both sets of graduates match a priori expectations, since a movement towards employment that coincides with both economic sector and qualification level is evident following the year of graduation. For instance, whereas the initial 2012 UoM graduates that found ideal employment was 65.2% in their year of graduation, an increase of around 8.2 percentage points can be observed after two years. Similarly the initial perfect match rate for 2013 was 65.5% in the year of graduation but rose to 71.1% in 2014. Besides, a remarkable degree of consistency can also be observed with respect to the initial progression in the success rate: the increase in the proportion of University graduates in the qualified/match category following the first year of employment increased by around 5 percentage points for both 2012 and 2013 classes – reaching 70.0% and 71.1% levels respectively.</p> <p><u>MCAST:</u></p> <p>Out of the 2012 graduates, 41.5% of the sample in question was deemed to be employed in an occupation that fulfilled both economic and skill level. This proportion increased by 6.9 percentage points after two years. Furthermore, after two years of employment (i.e. in 2014) students of the Institute for Applied Sciences reported the highest success rate with almost two-thirds of this cohort in the ideal employment category. It is also worthy to note that this represents a remarkable increase of 19.6 percentage points when compared to the same statistic for 2012 graduates (the year in which they obtained their formal qualification). In fact in 2012 such students ranked third from top, but within two years they leapfrogged their counterpart MCAST graduates. Similar progress was also evident for the Institute of Community Services 2012 graduates where in that same year the qualified/match statistic was 33.5% while two years later it increased to 51.0% – a formidable increase of 17.5 percentage points. While various forces could be at work, it is impossible to ignore the effect that increased labour demand could have exerted.</p>
	<p>Helping single parents to enrol into education</p> <p>With the new amendments to the Student’s Maintenance Grants Legal Notice which came into force from this academic year, single parents on social assistance who choose to enhance their employability prospects will be given a maintenance grant. By opting to follow a full time course at a post-secondary or tertiary institution they will be entitled to an extra annual grant ranging from €200 to €1,000 depending on the MQF level of the course chosen.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>To date, 80 students were identified. An email with detailed information about this measure was sent to all students. Students were requested to send back an email with their details together with a scan of the latest Social Assistance payslip. To date, until 16th March 2017, 22 students have applied. Their details have been processed for payment.</p>
	<p>Reduction in income tax for unemployed women who are over 40 years of age</p> <p>Principal breadwinners whose wives are over forty years of age and have been inactive for more than five years but are going to start employment earning a tax-exempt wage, are benefitting from reductions in income tax as the income of the wives is not being considered when applying the joint tax computation. This measure came into force as of 1st January 2014.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>293 taxpayers benefitted from this measure during 2015.</p>
	<p>Providing training and/or employment to employees who are between 45 and 65 years of age</p> <p>The 2014 Budget introduced a tax deduction of €5,800 given to employers to incentivise them to hire persons within this age group who have been unemployed during the previous three years. The deduction applies for the first two years of employment.</p> <p>Furthermore, companies benefitted from a tax deduction on their income or corporate tax of 50% of the training (up to a maximum of € 400) for training undertaken by a training provider officially accredited by the Malta Qualifications Council upon the provision of a VAT receipt.</p> <p>This measure came into force as of 1st January 2014.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>35 taxpayers benefitted from this measure during 2016.</p>
	<p>Self-employment Transition Scheme</p> <p>The 15% tax rate in respect of part-time income has been extended to apply on the first €10,000 for part-time employment and the first €12,000 for part-time self-employment. This measure came into force in January 2014.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>During 2014, the number of taxpayers in part-time employment with a salary of up to € 10,000 (hence benefitting from this scheme) was 2,405, whereas the number of taxpayers in part-time self-employment with a salary of up to €12,000 was 1,073.</p> <p>During 2015, the number of taxpayers in part-time employment with a salary of up to € 10,000 (hence benefitting from this scheme) was 2,472, whereas the number of taxpayers in part-time self-employment with a salary of up to €12,000 was 1,095.</p>
	<p>Tax deduction for entrepreneurs who offer apprenticeships placements</p> <p>This is an incentive for entrepreneurs in the form of a tax deduction of €1,200 for every apprenticeship placement they accept (capped at 800 placements). This measure came into force as of 1st January 2014.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>As at end December 2016, no entrepreneurs have claimed this tax deduction.</p>
	<p>Tax deduction for entrepreneurs who offer work placements</p> <p>This is an incentive for entrepreneurs in the form of a tax deduction of €600 for every work placement they accept (capped at 400 placements). This measure came into force as of 1st January 2014.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>During 2015 and 2016, there were 89 entrepreneurs and 20 entrepreneurs respectively that claimed this tax deduction.</p>

	<p>Access to Employment (A2E)</p> <p>The A2E Scheme provides employment aid to enterprises in Malta and Gozo to promote the recruitment of disadvantaged, severely disadvantaged and disabled persons who are either registered job seekers, unemployed or inactive. The Aid Programme enhances the participant's prospects to access the labour market; bridges the gap between labour market supply and demand; and increases social cohesion.</p> <p>The wage subsidy for disadvantaged and severely disadvantaged persons is that of €85 per week and the subsidised period may be 26 weeks, 52 weeks or 104 weeks depending under which target group the participant is found to be eligible. The wage subsidy for registered disabled persons (RDP) is of €125 per week for a fixed period of 156 weeks.</p> <p>The measure was announced in Budget 2014, and implementation started in June 2015 for the registered disabled persons. In November 2015, the scheme was launched for the other target groups (i.e. the disadvantaged and severely disadvantaged persons). The scheme is still active.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>From the start of the Scheme until the 28th February 2017, the A2E Unit received applications in respect of 782 participants, of which a total of 504 participants were still on the Scheme. The cumulative total budget commitment to date is of €3,809,943.02.</p>
	<p>In-Work Benefit</p> <p>The In-Work Benefit scheme provides additional income to families who are in employment and are on low income. In addition, this scheme is an integral part of the 'Make Work Pay' principle, which encourages inactive or social benefit beneficiaries to enter into the labour market.</p> <p>In the 2016 Budget, Government announced that this measure will be extended to include low-to-medium income families where only one of the spouses is in gainful occupation (with an income between €6,000 and €13,000) and who have dependent children up to 23 years of age. In the 2017 Budget, Government announced that the income thresholds will increase to widen beneficiary capture, and the applicable rates will also be increased.</p> <p>Status: Completed and Ongoing</p>	<p>This measure is expected to lessen dependency and to attract more social benefit beneficiaries into employment. Together with other measures, it will therefore contribute to further reduce the at-risk-of-poverty rate.</p> <p>The number of beneficiaries paid as at end of December 2016 was of 1,717.</p>
	<p>Tapering of social security benefits for Single Parents</p> <p>Single parents on social assistance used to retain their benefits if earning less than €57.05 a week. This was leading to some abuse and also precarious employment. Therefore, as from 1st January 2015, this system was replaced with tapering of benefits. In this way, single parents who become employed either on a part-time basis but working not less than 10 hours per week, or on a full-time basis paid according to the National Minimum Hourly Rate, will retain 65% of social assistance for the first year, 45% for the second year and 25% for the third year. Their employers will also benefit from 25% of the benefit for the first three years. In cases of part-time employment, the employer's share will be of 12.5%.</p> <p>Status: Completed and Ongoing</p>	<p>This measure encourages more single parents to seek employment in order to substantially improve their income and not become dependent on social benefits. This in turn increases the overall active labour force participation.</p> <p>2,482 persons were awarded with tapering of benefits until the end of December 2016. Out of these, 975 were single unmarried parents.</p>
	<p>National Insurance Contribution Exemption and Fiscal Incentives for employers employing disabled persons</p> <p>Through this measure, employers who employ disabled persons will be exempt from paying their share of social security contributions on behalf of the disabled employees. The employer can also be eligible to claim a fiscal incentive equivalent to 25% of the registered persons with disability basic wage. The maximum credit cannot exceed € 4,500 for each disabled employee.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>National Insurance Contribution Exemptions - between January 2016 and end of January 2017, Jobsplus received 223 applications in respect of 535 individuals. Out of these 98 employers were found eligible and granted the exemption of the payers' share on contributions on behalf of a total of 260 eligible employees.</p> <p>Regarding the number of Registered Disabled Persons (RDP) in employment, until August 2016, there were 1,421 (including both full-time and part-time).</p> <p>Fiscal incentive - Until the end of December 2016, 54 applications were received and all were eligible of which 53 have been paid a total of € 96,682.44. These relate to 9 different employers with employees registered as persons with disability.</p>
	<p>Revision of the law regulating Industrial and Employment Relations</p> <p>Discussions on the Employment and Industrial Relations Act have been concluded and the proposed amendments have been submitted to the Ministry for review.</p> <p>The legal notice on the process of trade union recognition was published in the Government Gazette on the 9th December 2016.</p> <p>The legal notice on adoption leave was published on 10th October 2016.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>It is expected that these measures will have the following impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - better and effective regulations governing the rights of workers; - a target review of the current Act, making it more relevant to today's needs; - Overtime Regulations; - amendment in relation to disciplined forces: to provide more protective rights and representation by Unions in support of collective bargaining for better working conditions; - adoption leave: better quality of life while ensuring a smooth adoption process.

	<p>Implementing the 2% law</p> <p>The aim of this measure is to encourage the employment of persons with disability. The Government will be enforcing the law whereby 2% of employees in a company (employing more than 20 employees) are persons with disability. Companies that do not comply will be asked to make an annual contribution of €2,400 for each disabled person he or she should be employing on a full time basis.</p> <p>A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Jobsplus, MEA, Malta Chamber of Commerce and the Government of Malta was signed on the 28th of April 2016, to establish a viable way forward regarding the management of this sensitive and important issue of the employment of persons with disability.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>It is expected that there will be an increase in the number of persons with a disability in employment due to the fact that in the last months employees came forward to register themselves as persons with disability and employers made more effort to employ and align themselves with the legislative framework.</p> <p>On the 15th of November 2016, Jobsplus issued 660 invoices to different enterprises or group of companies for the total value of about €2.1 million. As at January 2017, 97 companies have been issued with a credit note for the total value of €283,200, whilst 183 companies have paid the amount of €459,600 in contributions. 384 companies have not yet settled the invoices issued (for a total of €1,316,000)</p>
	<p>Virtual Matching Tool</p> <p>Through the use of new IT tools, a Virtual Labour Market has been created whereby employers and those seeking employment will have a virtual meeting place.</p> <p>This system was launched in July 2016.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>Following the implementation of this new system, from the start of July 2016 to end January 2017 Jobsplus registered 18,305 website users (including job changers, employers, the inactive and registered jobseekers).</p>
	<p>Work Programme</p> <p>During the coming months, the Work Programme Unit will continue to work to reach the main objective of this initiative which is that of up-skilling of the long-term unemployed and reintegrate them in the labour market.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>From the beginning of the initiative till January 2017, the number of people who signed the Work Programme Contract was 1,199.</p>
	<p>Employment Contract Templates</p> <p>The objective of this measure is to make employment contract templates available online which would include the workers' basic rights as stipulated by law. An internal consultation was initiated so that the templates could be formulated in such a way as to take into consideration the process of harmonisation of the Wage Regulation Orders, which was taking place at the same time. Once the process of harmonisation of the Wage Regulation Orders was finalised, internal consultations continued so as to ensure all changes were included in the templates. The Employment Contract Templates have been put on line in October 2016.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>This measure will give peace of mind to all workers as it will ensure that their employment contract satisfies the conditions as stipulated by law.</p>
	<p>Engagement of Labour Inspectors and other staff</p> <p>The Department for Industrial and Employment Relations (DIER)'s vision is to have a complement of 12 Employment and Industrial Relations Act (EIRA) Inspectors. During 2016, seven inspectors were engaged bringing the total number to 10 inspectors.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>With the engagement of this additional staff, the DIER will be better equipped to monitor and ensure that workers' rights are being protected.</p>
	<p>Employment and Training Schemes in Gozo</p> <p>SCHEME A: National Insurance Contribution Refund Scheme</p> <p>In order to stimulate employment in the tourism sector, Government will refund the National Insurance contribution (employer's contribution) in full if it does not exceed €1,000 during the agreement period. This will apply for a maximum of 52 weeks (from November 2015 to October 2016) and will be proportional (on a pro-rata basis) if the application is submitted anytime between the start of scheme (2nd November 2015) and the closing date of applications (31st March 2016).</p> <p>Status: Completed</p> <p>SCHEME B: Seasonality Scheme</p> <p>Operators in the tourism sector will be asked to send their full-time and/or part-time employees (whose employment is registered with ETC as their only primary job, and/or part-time employees who are transferred to full-time employment at application stage) for classroom-based training for not more than two days per week for a maximum of 19 weeks.</p> <p>During the training period, the employer would be given €30 for each day of training attended by the employee. Employers will have to release the employee/s during their working timetable and allow them to enjoy their weekly off days. Subsequently employees participating in the scheme are to receive</p>	<p>SCHEME A: National Insurance Contribution Refund Scheme</p> <p>Employers in the tourism sector would be encouraged to recruit additional staff on a full-time basis, offer the same opportunities of full-time employment to their part-time employees, and to retain current employees. For this scheme 46 applications were received.</p> <p>Through this Scheme 28 persons are now in full time employment.</p> <p>SCHEME B: Seasonality Scheme</p> <p>This measure aims to alleviate the employers' wage costs during the winter period as well as to enhance the skills of full-time and part-time (primary job) employees working in the tourism Industry. 39 applicants attended the training.</p> <p>The corporation disbursed €10,110 in funds to those employers whose employees attended for training.</p>

	<p>their normal weekly wages, including the wage for the two days in which they attended training.</p> <p>These schemes are only available to residents living in Gozo.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	
	<p>Labour Market Research</p> <p>Part of Malta's modernisation process in its employment services will involve the strengthening of ETC's role in research and forecasting. Therefore, a unit of labour market analysts will be set up to carry out research in this field.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>The Labour Market Analysis Unit within Jobsplus has been set up. A number of research initiatives are being implemented and/or will initiate in the coming months. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employability Index (Finalised); • Update of Labour Market Policy database (EU initiative); • Monitoring of Council Recommendations (Youth Guarantee and Integration of Long-Term Unemployed) (ongoing). <p>Furthermore, the Labour Market Analysis Unit coordinates and facilitates access to research for private researchers and students, in line with Jobsplus' Research Policy and data protection provisions (ongoing).</p>
	<p>Funds for Training</p> <p>This measure aims to promote the training of persons actively participating in the Maltese labour market so as to increase their productivity and enhance their adaptability.</p> <p>Investing in Skills</p> <p>Following the success of the Training Aid Framework (TAF), further funds for training will be launched through the European Social Fund. This scheme will be known as 'Investing in Skills'.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>Training of persons employed in the Maltese workforce, and thus increasing the number of adults participating in life-long learning.</p> <p>Investing in Skills</p> <p>Investing in Skills will aim to promote the training of persons that are already actively participating within the Maltese labour market, with the objective of increasing productivity and enhancing adaptability.</p>
	<p>Community Work Scheme</p> <p>Following the Social Enterprise Scheme announced in Budget 2015, a call for tenders was issued for private companies to form a social enterprise. The private company chosen was given the responsibility to create this social enterprise called 'The Community Work Scheme Enterprise Foundation', where people who were on the previous scheme are now being employed by this private company.</p> <p>Following examination of the former Community Work Scheme, this has been revised to ensure that eligible participants will be formally employed and active in the labour market rather than remaining on the unemployment register. The partnership with the private sector will ensure that all participants receive a targeted intervention which will enable them to increase their employability prospects.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>The vast majority of participants are expected to take up this employment opportunity. Until the end of January 2017, the number of participants was 589 of which 504 were males and 85 were females.</p>
	<p>Document Management</p> <p>In Gozo, the private sector is being encouraged to employ people with a disability. Now that the operator of this scheme has been selected, a gradual process will be rolled out for the interviewing of persons with a disability to be employed in appropriate jobs.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>This measure should increase the employment of persons with disabilities in Gozo. Till February 2017, there were 37 people with a disability in employment with the selected operator through this scheme and supported by the job coaches from the Lino Spiteri Foundation. Till the end of February 2017, Maltapost sent the amount of €133,965.40 in claims for payment related to document management tasks carried out till end of January 2017 by the persons with disability employed.</p>
National 2020 R&D target (2% of GDP)	<p>Malta's National R&I Fund 2013</p> <p>The National R&I Fund is defined by two programmes under the FUSION branding: the Commercialisation Voucher Programme (CVP) and the Technology Development Programme (TDP).</p> <p>The FUSION programme is offering support to researchers and to micro enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to assess the commercial and market potential through the CVP, and subsequently, providing research aid through the TDP.</p> <p>In 2015, the R&I Programme focused primarily on generation of outputs from the CVP, to enable new project applications for the subsequent TDP. Over 50 applications were received, resulting in more than a four-fold increase in interest over 2014. Consequently, 23 CVP were awarded and selected for funding. These projects are at various stages within the Programme and some will continue into 2016.</p> <p>In 2016, the CVP continued to develop further interest with over 40 applications and 16 beneficiaries through two calls. These projects are at various stages within the Programme and some will continue into 2017.</p> <p>With regards to the TDP, in Call 1 2016, 4 proposals were awarded funding of up to € 195,000 each following successful completion of the Commercialisation Voucher Programme which demonstrated the market potential of these projects, The second 2016 call resulted in 9 applications with 4 being awarded for funding. Grant Agreements for these have been implemented and projects commenced 1st February</p>	<p>The R&I Programme has a direct impact on the national R&I expenditure (GERD) since it funds R&D performed by both the higher education and the business enterprise sector.</p> <p>While the Commercialisation Voucher Programme (CVP) will not contribute directly to Malta's R&D expenditure target, it will seek to make best use of R&D investments by helping to determine the commercialisation potential of proposed innovative solutions, thus ensuring that before actually undertaking any research and development, the applicant would already be aware of the possibility of protecting the idea through intellectual property as well as gaining awareness on the market potential and the economic wealth it can generate for the good of society at large.</p> <p>The impact of the CVP is expected to be twofold:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preparation & better formulation of ideas to be feasible Technology Development Programme (TDP) projects: Throughout 2015 and 2016 there were 14 successful CVP projects that have been accepted into the TDP. For 2017 at least another 6 projects are expected to move from CVP to TDP. 2. Effect on improving commercialisation chances post-TDP: To date there have been no complete projects following implementation of the new system, as the first "exitors" are expected in 2017.

<p>2017.</p> <p>For 2017 a further two CVP and two TDP Calls will be launched and implemented.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>		
<p>Setting-up and development of Esplora, formerly the National Interactive Science Centre</p>	<p>Esplora was opened to the public and has been operating six days a week since 28th October 2016. The Planetarium was opened to the general public on 31st of January 2017.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>Esplora aspires to cultivate a culture of scientific curiosity and creativity by igniting a passion for questioning, investigation and discovery. It will act as a medium to instil an active interest in science, research and innovation in young people.</p>
<p>Centre to Strengthen Research on Business and the Self-employed</p>	<p>Since its recent inception, the programme has been very successful. A number of the Centre's graduates have proceeded in setting up business ventures already, and have attracted significant funding. With regard to the Masters in Entrepreneurship programme, 65 students graduated by the end of 2016.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>This measure is helping to strengthen the concept of entrepreneurship at the University of Malta and is also providing the necessary teaching programmes through which the University infrastructure can support start-up businesses with the intent of then facilitating a move to the "UM TAKEOFF" incubator or the Malta Life Sciences Park.</p>
<p>Set up an ICT Innovation Accelerator</p>	<p>The ICT innovation Accelerator was launched in May 2014.</p> <p>The facility acts as a hub to synergise the effort of various parties aimed towards ICT-themed Research and Technological Development (R&D), idea-generation, incubation and open-innovation. The day-to-day operation of this facility involves marketing activities, networking, mentorship, training and also the provision of logistical and brokerage support.</p> <p>Besides stimulating digital entrepreneurship, the Accelerator also serves as a showcase for locally nurtured innovations and locally developed ICT products and services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since inception a total of 10 proof-of-concept pilot projects carried out by 10 start-ups were assigned €153,000 to develop 7 mobile/web apps and 3 digital serious games. The projects were awarded through public competitive calls for start-ups. • Based on feedback from the pilot projects and new knowledge and insights gained, State Aid clearance was obtained to initiate an accelerator programme that will fund and support up to 45 start-ups with up to €990,000 until 2020 (subject to budgets being made available from year to year). • In tandem or as part of the above mentioned programme, events such as workshops, bootcamps and seminars are organised to raise awareness, promote the programme or provide training or insights on methodologies or good practices such as Design Thinking, starting up an enterprise, and proprietary development frameworks amongst others. The events may involve contributions from multi-national technology providers, local partners, mentors and other stakeholders. To date approximately 200 start-up founders, students and ICT professionals have benefited. • In October 2016 MITA launched the first accelerator programme, branded YouStartIT, assigning €110,000 to be awarded as a pre-seed investment of €22,000 to each of five start-ups. Each pre-seed investment is split into a cash injection of €15,000 and €7,000 worth of pro bono services such as mentoring, legal support, perks, etc. • Two intakes of up to five startups as part of the YouStartIT programme are planned approximately every 7-8 months. • A separate Membership Programme is being planned to incubate startups that want to gain access to the MITA Innovation Hub co-working space and related activities at a nominal monthly fee. No cash grant is contemplated for this programme. <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>The ICT Innovation Accelerator will contribute towards attaining Malta's target of 2% value-added as a percentage of national GDP invested in R&D.</p> <p>It is estimated that 50% of the €22,000 pre-seed investment awarded to start-ups translates to effort invested in research, design, development and testing of prototypes to be deployed to the market.</p> <p>This programme is expected to create the following qualitative impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The creation of a demand for disruptive and innovative ideas based on digital technologies. • The creation of new or innovative business models based on digital technologies. • Contribute in creating a workforce that is more entrepreneurial and open. • Attract foreign talent. • Increase the number of business undertakings targeting specialised areas and niche markets globally. • The creation of new jobs in digital technology. • Increase the demand for specialised skills and competences in digital technologies, entrepreneurship, management and marketing.
<p>Action Plan for R&I</p>	<p>Further to the focus groups and other consultation meetings held together with the proposers of actions and measures, an updated Action Plan was submitted to the European Commission and approved by CION in October 2016.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>This measure has identified the tactical implementation aspects of the National R&I Strategy 2020 over the shorter-term, such as the prioritisation of some smart specialisation sectors over others. The preparation and implementation of the Action plan brings different players together to ensure better coordination and avoidance of overlaps and gaps.</p>

	<p>Evaluation of Malta's participation in the 7th Framework Programme (FP7)</p> <p>The evaluation is completed and the report was approved by the MCST Board. Recommendations have been fed into the R&I Action Plan, which was approved by the European Commission in October 2016.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>This measure has provided information which fed into the R&I Action Plan and aided in the tailoring of MCST's role as Malta's National Contact Organisation. The National R&I Action Plan is now finalised, and incorporates measures stemming from the outcomes and lessons learnt from the FP7 evaluation. Such measures include the launch of an Internationalisation Partnership Award Scheme (IPAS) and the proposal for a fund to support public sector innovation. There is also increased coordination on the way forward for the support provided to the smart specialisation platforms within the PlumTri portal. With regard to MCST's role as the National Contact Point Organisation for Horizon 2020, the National Contact Points will focus on a more targeted and dedicated support offered to local researchers. This includes support on administrative and financial issues as well as follow-up and close collaboration with researchers even after proposal evaluation.</p>																					
	<p>Post-Doctoral Grants</p> <p>A call for applications was issued in mid-2015 called 'Reach High Scholars Programme – Post-Doctoral Grants', for potential post-doctoral projects to be submitted. From these, selected research projects are being provided with a grant to cover a sufficient stipend for the researcher/s throughout the duration of the project as well as other minor ancillary costs. Individual research projects are for the duration of 3 years with a possibility of not more than a one year extension and must not cost more than €200,000.</p> <p>There were 18 selected applications which were awarded these grants, and 16 accepted this grant. These research projects started in Q1 2016. All the beneficiaries have continued their work and have submitted half-year reports in time. 1 beneficiary is due to complete the research by the end of 2017.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>This measure will provide recently graduated doctoral students with the opportunity to propose research projects with higher education institutions in Europe within a varied set of prioritised fields. Therefore, such selected projects can contribute to reaching the R&D target.</p>																					
<p><i>Malta's Targets for Energy Efficiency, Renewable Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A maximum increase of greenhouse gas emissions not falling within the scope of the EU Emissions Trading Scheme of 5% by 2020 (compared to 2005 levels particularly emissions from transport, (mainly road transport), industrial gases, waste, agriculture and fuel combustion in industry and commercial and residential buildings). - A commitment to achieve by 2020 a share of energy from renewable sources in gross final energy consumption of 10%. - A commitment to achieve by 2020 a target of 10% of energy consumed in all forms of transport from renewable sources. 	<p>Energy Efficiency in Transport</p> <p>In July 2015, the new bus card (tallinja card) together with a new fare structure was introduced. The take up of this card is considered to be quite high where up to December 2016 take-up was recorded at over 254,000.</p> <p>During the last two months of 2015, an optimised route network was rolled out in two phases and included the introduction of new routes, additional frequencies in certain locations, revised timetables to better reflect travel patterns and better network coverage. Further tweaking was undertaken on the route network between February and July 2016.</p> <p>During August and September 2015, the new operator introduced to the network 142 Euro VI buses. A further new Euro VI bus was added to the network in December 2015. Some of these buses have replaced part of the older fleet. In June 2016 a further 33, 12 meters, new Euro VI buses were introduced.</p> <p>A number of measures were also taken in an effort to make available a better level of information to passengers. These included an upgraded Journey Planner, information on the route network sent to each household, the upgrading of the public transport website with more information, the provision of information to passengers from all sales offices of the operator and the publication of a number of press adverts informing commuters about network changes and the introduction of the bus card. The new mobile app was introduced in April 2016. This app offers real time tracking of buses with information being refreshed every 30 seconds.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>Passenger figures for 2016 indicate that passengers using scheduled public transport in 2016 increased by 8.3% when compared to 2015.</p>																					
	<p>Implementation of Malta's National Strategy for Policy and Abatement Measures relating to the Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions</p> <p>A Vision Document for the development of Malta's Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) has been prepared and will be shortly launched for public consultation. In parallel, a number of sectors are undertaking studies that will eventually feed into the LCDS. On the basis of the Malta's National Inventory submitted in 2016, Malta has to mobilize flexibility instruments provided for in the Effort Sharing Decision adopted in 2009 (e.g. through the purchasing of annual emission allocations) to meet its interim targets of actual emissions for 2013 and 2014. (Cross reference to Explanatory Memorandum COM 707/2016 and Commission Implementing Decision 2016/2132 on GHG emissions for each Member State for the year 2013 covered by Decision No 406/2009/EC).</p> <p>Work is currently ongoing with the Ministry for Finance, Malta Resource Authority Climate Change Unit (CCU), Malta Resources Authority (MRA) and MSDEC to mobilise flexibility instruments for the years 2013 and 2014, whilst more significant resources will need to be invested into improving the accuracy of past emissions, future emissions and adoption of effective GHG emission reduction measures.</p> <p>Status: The status of such measure depends on whether the mobilization of flexibility instruments is concluded in time as per aforementioned Commission Implementing Decision.</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Malta</th> <th>2013 ESD target compared to 2005</th> <th>2013 ESD emissions data compared to 2005</th> <th>Relative gap 2013 vs ESD 2013 target</th> <th>2014 ESD target compared to 2005</th> <th>2014 ESD emissions data compared to 2005</th> <th>Relative gap 2014 vs ESD 2014 target</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Percentage</td> <td>6.10%</td> <td>13.57%</td> <td></td> <td>5.94%</td> <td>17.25%</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Annual Emission Allocation (tonnes CO₂ equivalent)</td> <td>1,168,514</td> <td>1,250,779</td> <td>-82,265</td> <td>1,166,788</td> <td>1,291,392</td> <td>-124,604</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Malta	2013 ESD target compared to 2005	2013 ESD emissions data compared to 2005	Relative gap 2013 vs ESD 2013 target	2014 ESD target compared to 2005	2014 ESD emissions data compared to 2005	Relative gap 2014 vs ESD 2014 target	Percentage	6.10%	13.57%		5.94%	17.25%		Annual Emission Allocation (tonnes CO ₂ equivalent)	1,168,514	1,250,779	-82,265	1,166,788	1,291,392	-124,604
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	<p>Promotion of uptake of RES and building envelope insulation</p> <p>The Government continued to implement a number of initiatives in order to achieve the target share of energy from renewables. In particular the Government extended schemes on the purchase of solar water heaters (SWHs) and roof insulations and double glazing (maximum €1,000 per dwelling) and re-launched grant schemes and feed-in tariffs (FIT) to promote the purchase of photovoltaic systems (PV's).</p> <p>The total number of grants paid for SWHs has now reached 9,325, whereas the number of applications paid to assist installations of roof insulation and double glazing amount to 1,710.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>	<p>A total of 15.954KWp in applications for the scheme of promoting PVs were received between July 2015 and December 2016.</p>
	<p>Switching of Fuel from Liquid Fuel Oils to Natural Gas</p> <p>Delimara 4 Project: The new 215MW combined-cycle gas turbine (CCGT) power plant is technically completed and is being commissioned. The ancillary infrastructure including the regasification unit and the jetty have been completed. The Floating Storage Unit arrived in Malta in October 2016 and received the first gas in Q1 2017. D4 started operating in open cycle mode by the end of March 2017.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>	<p>Once implemented, the higher plant efficiency together with the lower carbon emission factor of gas is expected to lead to significant cuts in GHG emissions.</p>
	<p>Biofuel Substitution Obligation</p> <p>The biofuel substitution obligation requires that importers and wholesalers of petrol and diesel must place a pre-determined amount of biofuel on the market, which during 2016 had to reach 6.5% (by energy content). This is currently being achieved by using biodiesel produced from waste cooking oil or animal fats and hydro-treated vegetable oil (HVO). This measure ensures that Malta remains on track to meet its 2020 RES-T (Transport) target and contributes towards meeting Malta's RES interim targets.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>Subsidiary Legislation 545.17 has recently been updated by LN427/2016 in order to ensure more effective monitoring and implementation of the substitution obligation. Data for 2016 is still being collated by the Regulator for Energy and Water Services (REWS), which shall be available after Q1 2017. Malta is in line with its indicative trajectory to meet its RES target.</p>
	<p>Autogas conversion scheme</p> <p>This measure aims to incentivise vehicle owners to convert their vehicle to autogas. It was extended for 2015 and had been widened so as to include commercial vehicles.</p> <p>The same scheme has been issued again in 2016 with an allocation of €50,000. By the end of 2016, 250 vehicles benefited from this scheme.</p> <p>The call has been extended during 2017. It is expected that 250 vehicles will be benefit from this scheme by year end.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>	<p>It is expected that this measure will reduce local air pollution. During 2015 and 2016, 500 vehicles were converted to autogas.</p>
	<p>Incentive for use of school transport</p> <p>Parents whose children attend private or church schools will be eligible for a tax rebate of up to a maximum of €150 on the cost of the transport if they make use of school transport. This should encourage more parents to make use of school transport. This measure will remain in force during 2017.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>It is envisaged that with this measure more parents will make use of school transport for their children, thus reducing road-traffic congestions during peak hours.</p> <p>During 2015, 2,264 taxpayers availed themselves of this measure.</p>
	<p>Energy Audits for Enterprises</p> <p>Energy efficiency is one of the three pillars of EU 2020 targets, that is, the achievement of 20% energy savings by 2020. To achieve such target the EU Council and Parliament approved Directive 27/2012 - The Energy Efficiency Directive (EED).</p> <p>In line with the Energy Efficiency Directive, Member States have a number of obligations related to the promotion of energy efficiency in various economic sectors, such as industry as well as final consumers. Measures currently being implemented include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Energy and Water Agency (E&WA) and the Malta Business Bureau (MBB) have launched a scheme where enterprises are encouraged to enter into a voluntary agreement to implement various energy efficient measures. To date, 23 enterprises have entered in a voluntary agreement. This is approximately 35% of the enterprises made to perform an energy audit under Articles 8 (4) of the EED. • A framework for the training and certification of energy auditors and energy managers has been established. The list of certified energy auditors is available from the website of the 	<p>This measure contributed towards the setting up of a framework for Energy Auditor Certification, guidance for the implementation of energy audits by non-SMEs and a quality verification system for energy audits by non-SMEs. It will also contribute towards the promotion of energy audits in SMEs.</p>

	<p>Regulator for Energy and Water Services (REWS). The courses have been running since February 2015. To date as a result of the energy auditor and energy manager courses, there are 72 registered energy auditors and 11 registered energy managers.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	
	<p>Grant on purchases of bicycles and pedelec bicycles</p> <p>This measure is being amalgamated with the measure "Clean means of transport (Bicycle Grant)".</p>	
	<p>Implementation of CCTV cameras along the road network</p> <p>The objective of this measure was to install 27 Intelligent Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras and 5 Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras across critical road sections. The aim was to build a link between the CCTV cameras deployed across the network and the Traffic Control Centre for real time monitoring of passenger vehicles, heavy vehicles and public transportation vehicles.</p> <p>The tender was originally issued on 17th October 2014. A negotiated procedure was initiated with the bidders on 19th May 2015. Subsequently the tender was reissued and 4 separate tenders were awarded.</p> <p>The project was completed.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>In conjunction with other intelligent traffic management systems, the expected outcome is to improve internal mobility across the road network.</p>
	<p>New Feed-in tariff schemes for PVs not supported through other funding</p> <p>This scheme was valid from 1st November 2014 until 30th April 2015 (LN 155 of 2014). The Feed-in Tariff (FiT) scheme for roof-mounted systems equal or above 40KWp but less than 1MWp was further extended by LN 416 of 2014 and was valid for applications received between 1st December 2014 and 30th April 2015, unless the cap was reached earlier. This measure has been completed.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>The 4MWp allocated capacity under LN 155 of 2014 for PV below 40KWp was fully taken up by the 30th April 2015. This FiT scheme is now closed.</p> <p>The 4MWp allocated capacity under LN 155 of 2014 for PV greater or equal to 40kWP was fully taken up before 30th April 2015. This FiT scheme is now closed.</p> <p>The new FiT scheme under LN 416 of 2014 for PV greater or equal to 40KWp but less than 1MWp for a further 6MWp was fully taken up by 30th April 2015. This FiT scheme is now closed.</p>
	<p>Feed-in tariffs for PVs not supported through other funding</p> <p>FiTs for PVs not supported through other funding were made available for any type of mounted systems. Tariffs were valid from 3rd August 2015 until 29th January 2016 (LN 264 of 2015) unless the cap of 2MWp (for PV greater than 1 KWp but less than 40KWp) and 11MWp (for PV equal or greater than 40KWp but less than 1MWp) was reached earlier. This FiT scheme has been complemented by a further 4MWp exclusively for structure-integrated PV under LN 365 of 2015. The former FiT scheme was extended by LN 415 of 2015 as follows: In the case of installations with a capacity of greater or equal to 1KWp and less than 40KWp the cap was extended by 2MWp for the period between 3rd August 2015 until 30th June 2016; in the case of installations greater or equal to 40KWp and less than 1MWp the cap was at 6MWp for the period between 2nd December 2015 until 30th June 2016. The scheme was further extended by LN 237 of 2016 whereby cap for PV equal or, greater than 1kWp and less than 40kWP was extended for a total of 8MWp for the period between 3rd August 2015 until 30th June 2017; in case of installations greater or equal to 40KWp and less than 1MWp, the cap was at 10MWp between 2nd December 2015 and 30th December 2016. On the 21st October 2016 for PV installations greater or equal to 40KWp and less than 1MWp, the cap was further extended by a further 8MWp for a total of 18MWp by LN 346 of 2016, closing on the 30th December 2016.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>Under this scheme, the following applications and allocations were permitted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) A total capacity of 8MWp were allocated for systems between 1KWp up to 40KWp. Applications received amounted to 6.681MWp which were all allocated. (ii) A total capacity of 4MWp were allocated for structure integrated systems. Applications received for this FiT (feed-in-tariff) scheme amounted to 1.732MWp and all were allocated with a remaining balance of 2.267 MWp. (iii) A total of 18MWp were allocated for FiT for systems between 40KWp up to 1MWp. For this FiT applications amounting to 23.297MWp were received. Since these exceeded the allocated 18MWp, the balance from the structure integrated PV were added (2.267MWp) amounting to a total capacity of 20.267MWp. From these a total of 19.841MWp were allocated. (Remaining balance could not be allocated since the next application received demanded a higher capacity than the remaining balance). <p><i>[It is important to note that that each legal notice gives the maximum capacity for each allocation and it does not add up to the previous allocations permitted.]</i></p> <p>This FiT scheme is now closed.</p>
	<p>New Scheme to promote domestic PVs</p> <p>A new scheme to promote domestic PVs was launched in July 2015. This provided grants of up to 50% of the capital cost (capped at € 2,300). The scheme was fully subscribed by the end of August 2015. Another scheme was launched in May 2016. This scheme is still open.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>A total of 15.954KWp in applications for the scheme of promoting PVs were received between July 2015 and December 2016.</p>
	<p>Improvement in the Reverse Osmosis Plants</p> <p>The Water Services Corporation (WSC) intends to continue with its investment, amounting to more than €2 million, in the improvement of the Reverse Osmosis plants with the aim of reducing electricity consumption. It is expected that the implementation of Phase 1 shall be completed by end of 2017. Phase 2 is expected to be completed by end of 2018.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>The aim is to reduce significantly the dependence on electricity which shall consequently contribute to the achievement of the utility's financial and environmental objectives.</p>

	<p>Solar Farm Partnership</p> <p>The Government has started the process to develop a partnership with representative organisations of private enterprises to develop solar farms on property owned by Government or its entities. Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) have been signed with two key stakeholders who will now proceed to establish a joint venture with the Water Services Corporation (WSC) to develop these Solar Farms.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>The objective of this measure is to increase the share of renewable energy and contribute towards Malta's renewable energy target for 2020.</p>
	<p>Clean means of transport (Bicycle Grant)</p> <p>The Government believes that by investing in sport, it would also be investing in the country's economic and social growth. Therefore Government's policy is one of nourishing a sports culture, and of promoting sports participation in the whole of society. This is being done through Sportmalta and also with the implementation of various measures. Two such measures are the bicycle and pedelec bicycle grant and the grant for the installation of bicycle racks by companies and organisations.</p> <p>Eligible applicants may apply for this once only grant of 15.25% on the purchase price of the bicycle subject to a maximum grant of € 85 in the case of non-mechanised bicycle and a maximum grant of €250 in the case of a pedelec bicycle. A total of €235,200 has been allocated to this measure for 2017.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>	<p>During 2016, there were 2,197 applications, out of which 2,103 applications were paid, and 1 is still being processed. 93 applications were rejected because they did not meet the requirements stipulated in the government gazette.</p> <p>Up to 20th March 2017, 447 applications were acknowledged and are being processed.</p>
	<p>The creation of safe public and private parking for bicycles</p> <p>A number of initiatives are being introduced to promote alternative modes of commuting, thus reducing the pollution resulting from the use of private vehicles.</p> <p>During 2015, 2016 and 2017, a capped VAT refund initiative, when individuals purchase a bicycle or a pedelec bicycle, was in place. A second phase is now being contemplated, that of creating more public parking safe spaces for bicycles.</p> <p>A grant of €150,000 has been allocated to the initiative targeting private companies to invest, on a 50:50 co-financing, in having secure parking for their employees who use bicycles as the mode of commuting. A further €30,000 has been allocated on initiatives targeting Local Councils to invest in initiatives to promote secure cycling within the local community. These will be financed through local funds.</p> <p>While initial reaction to such schemes is encouraging, the interested parties are still working on the proposals for them to apply for such grants.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>Since the introduction of the VAT refund on the purchase of bicycles and pedelec bicycles in 2015, a total number of 4,324 such bicycles were purchased. Based on the success of this scheme, it was extended for this current year by Notice Number 38 published in the Government Gazette Number 19,712 of 13th January 2017.</p>
	<p>Tax deduction on hybrid/electric vehicles</p> <p>Businesses that buy hybrid vehicles may avail themselves, in the year in which such vehicle is bought, of a tax deduction amounting to 125% of the cost of the vehicle whilst the deduction previously available for businesses that buy electric vehicles was increased from 125% to 150%.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>During 2014, there was only one company that claimed the tax deduction on electric/ hybrid vehicles. During 2015 there were no claims.</p>
	<p>Electric Car Incentive Scheme 2016</p> <p>This scheme, launched in 2016, once again aimed to reduce the number of old motor vehicles from the road while promoting the use of clean and energy efficient vehicles. Subject to various conditions, the grant was divided in three combinations and was applicable to private individuals, NGOs and private companies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. €7,000 upon registering a new electric category M1 or N1 vehicle when scrapping a used vehicle; b. €4,000 upon registering a new or used electric category M1 or N1 vehicle (without scrapping another vehicle); c. €2,000 upon registering a new or used electric quadricycle (without scrapping another vehicle). <p>Range Extender Electric Vehicles were also being considered for this scheme and had to have a minimum of 80km range on pure electricity to qualify for the grants.</p> <p>This measure had a budgetary allocation of €100,000 which was then extended in June 2016 by another €100,000.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>This measure aims to promote the use of clean and energy efficient vehicles. The first allocation of € 100,000 was fully taken up by May 2016 with 18 applications. The additional allocation was also fully taken up by end of September 2016. A total of 46 EVs were registered on Maltese Roads for 2016.</p>

	<p>Grant Scheme on the Purchase of New Environment-Friendly Vehicles 2016</p> <p>The scheme issued in 2016 with a budgetary allocation of €1,200,000 was fully taken up by the end of 2016.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>In 2016, 1,761 vehicles and 67 Hybrid vehicles have benefited from the scheme.</p>
	<p>Measures related to small motorcycles</p> <p>To incentivise people to opt for motorcycles over motor vehicles the Annual Circulation Tax has been reduced to just €10 for motorcycles of engines up to 125cc. Furthermore, so as to also encourage cleaner modes of transport, the registration tax of electric motorcycles has been removed.</p> <p>These fiscal measures were also coupled with a procedural measure from Transport Malta to allow 125cc automatic motorcycles to be driven without the need of a B license to further encourage citizens to switch their mode of transport. This measure was implemented on 1st January 2016.</p> <p>Status: Completed and Ongoing</p>	<p>In 2016 when compared to 2015, the percentage of motorcycles from the total vehicles in circulation increased from 5.7% to 6.4%. These measures will greatly aid the flow of traffic during rush hours as well as alleviate the parking issues in urban areas. Transport Malta also recognises that a substantial increase of motorcycles on the roads could be prone to risks and accidents. This has been followed up with an awareness programme over a number of months.</p> <p>Till end of year 2016, 1,736 motorcycles were put on the road as a result of this measure.</p>
<p>National early school leaving target (Reducing school drop-out rates to 10% by 2020)</p> <p>National target for tertiary education (Increasing the share of 30-34 years old having completed tertiary or equivalent education to 33% by 2020)</p>	<p>Offering more Opportunities for Participation in Vocational Education</p> <p>Introduction of vocational subjects in secondary schools</p> <p>An expression of interest for prospective teachers has been issued. Initial training of applicants started in Q1 2015. Training sessions for prospective teachers of vocational subjects were held in February and June 2016.</p> <p>A number of meetings were held with Heads of secondary schools who have introduced vocational subjects. These meetings were held with the MATSEC Support Unit and the Department of Curriculum Management (DCM).</p> <p>Resources for vocational subjects were procured through the EU funded Learning Outcomes Project at the end of Q4 2015.</p> <p>After introducing at least two vocational subjects as option subject for state secondary school students at Form 3 during scholastic year 2016-2017, some schools are now offering 3 or even 4 vocational option subjects. A number of non-state schools have also introduced these vocational subjects. Plans are being formulated to introduce more vocational subjects in the coming years, together with applied subjects to reach out to more students.</p> <p>Introducing other Vocational Pathways</p> <p>Some state secondary schools are offering MQF Level 1 & 2 vocational qualifications to Form 4 and 5 students at risk of becoming early school leavers.</p> <p>Introducing other Vocational Pathways – Alternative Learning Programme (ALP)</p> <p>The Alternative Learning Programme at Paola is continuing in its third year with an intake of 284 students for the scholastic year 2015-2016. The intake for this scholastic year (2016-2017) is 154 students.</p> <p>Personal, Social, and Career Development (PSCD)</p> <p>The Personal and Social Development (PSD) programme has been re-written to include Career Education and to be eligible for certification as an MQF Level 3, 2 and 1 qualification. The programme is now called Personal, Social and Career Development (PSCD).</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>Introduction of vocational subjects in secondary schools</p> <p>This measure has been achieved in view that the development of a VET qualification delivery model suitable for our local needs, has been implemented. MEDE intends to further develop subjects in the VET area and to introduce another path of Applied Learning. Applied Learning will complement Vocational Education whilst providing more opportunities for learners to engage with their preferred way of learning.</p> <p>Introducing other Vocational Pathways</p> <p>This measure has provided early school leavers with more options to vocational education. Such options could lead to further education at post-secondary level.</p> <p>Introducing other Vocational Pathways – Alternative Learning Programme</p> <p>This measure provided alternative pedagogy to learners who would have otherwise ended up as early school leavers.</p> <p>Personal, Social, and Career Development (PSCD)</p> <p>This measure has equipped learners with skills and competences related to careers that are currently available on the market.</p>
	<p>Introducing Lifelong Learning in the Community through a Pilot Out-Reach Programme</p> <p>The Directorate for Lifelong Learning offers courses accredited at level 1 and level 2 within the Malta Qualifications Framework as well MATSEC revision courses. To date, 78 courses have been accredited by the National Commission for Higher Education and another 16 applications have been submitted to the Commission for accreditation. In 2016, the Directorate offered a variety of courses for which 11,000 applications were submitted. The Directorate engaged 19 part-time adult educator coordinators and 287 adult educators. The Directorate organised some 500 courses in 100 different subjects including basic skills, digital competences, languages, mathematics, science and technology, civic competences, vocational and educational training. The following programmes all aim to contribute to Lifelong Learning in the Community:</p>	<p>This measure will continue to provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a different experience to previous learning paths in the education of particular adult learners; - the adequate level and type of learning (whether general or vocational); - the appropriate style of learning (tailor-made to the needs and strengths of individual adult learners); - the most convenient place for learning, close to one's place of residence; - an increase in the quality of learning to adults.

	<p>Lifelong Learning into the Community through Out-Reach Programme</p> <p>Following a pilot project, in the scholastic year 2013-2014 this programme has developed into an outreach programme where lifelong learning has become standard practice and occurs regularly at community level through the use of local councils and also NGOs in various localities, both in Malta and in Gozo. In 2016, 30 local councils and 17 NGOs and Community Centres participated in this programme.</p> <p>Adult Basic Literacy and Numeracy and basic IT skills courses</p> <p>The Directorate for Lifelong Learning has decentralised courses leading to MQF Level 1 into the community. These courses include the Adult Basic Literacy (Maltese and English) and Numeracy Skills (Mathematics) courses as well as basic ICT (Computer Awareness).</p> <p>Professional Staff Development, Training and Quality Assurance for Adult Educators in the Community</p> <p>During 2015 the Directorate for Lifelong Learning and Early School Leavers offered new study units as part of the Diploma in Teaching Adults. Currently around 170 students have applied for individual modules of the Diploma and 80 of these students are expected to complete the required 13 modules and to be awarded the National Diploma by 2017.</p> <p>The National Implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning</p> <p>The European Agenda for Adult Learning project 2014-2015 was implemented and it was finalised on the 27th October 2015 with a concluding conference.</p> <p>The work programme for 2016-2017 has been approved by the European Agency for Culture, Education and Audiovisual (EACEA) and is based on the following framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - policy coherence initiative; - baseline research; - essential skills in disadvantaged communities; - targeted awareness raising; - European exchange on adult educator up-skilling. <p>Status: On Track</p>	
	<p>Making VET Education More Relevant and Attractive</p> <p>The aim of this project is that of conducting a substantial upgrading exercise within the context of vocational education between Levels 4 and 5. While these courses have very often fulfilled an important ad hoc role, they are no longer sufficient to meet the increased need for learning.</p> <p>The principal project milestones are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The launching and management of the Training Subsidy Scheme MCAST (TSSM): 60 scholarships have been awarded and 56 students have obtained certification. The scheme is now concluded. • The re-design and re-formulation for accreditation purposes of existing courses: The tender in relation to this milestone has been awarded, implemented and concluded. 50 existing courses were redesigned by a team of VET experts. • The design of new courses and accreditation of the same: The tender in relation to this milestone has been awarded, implemented and concluded. 21 new courses have been created. All redesigned and newly developed courses have been quality checked and accredited accordingly. • The implementation of a new tender for the redesign of more courses: The tender in relation to this milestone has been awarded, implemented and concluded. 94 existing courses were redesigned by a 60 plus team of VET experts. • The implementation of various tenders for the supply of specialised equipment to be used for educational purposes needed to implement the above-mentioned courses and which included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ multimedia equipment for the design oriented areas; ○ marine engineering equipment for the maritime areas; ○ teaching and learning resources; ○ teaching aids. 	<p>The measure has led to the design of new courses and a shift from foreign courses. This made courses more relevant for students. It has also led to the acquisition of new equipment which has made courses more hands-on and educationally relevant for the students. As a result, the project improved the quality of VET to make it more economically relevant and attract more students into further and higher education. MCAST's offerings therefore became more attractive to a larger cohort.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The implementation of various tenders for the supply of reference books, ebooks and ejournals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reference books; e-books and e-journals (service implemented). <p>Status: Completed</p>	
	<p>Get Qualified</p> <p>A new version of this scheme was launched in 2014 and covers the period 2014-2020. 'Get Qualified' is an initiative that supports the personal development of individuals for the achievement of qualifications and certifications required by industry. The incentive is applicable to individuals following a course of studies leading to certification, diploma, degree or post-graduate degree courses. Upon successful completion, the student benefits from a tax credit, thus recovering part of the costs incurred.</p> <p>Students following courses approved by Malta Enterprise are granted tax credits on fees paid by the individual to the university, institution or other entity recognised by Malta Enterprise for the training and educational services leading to the approved qualification and also on fees for sitting for examinations required to achieve the approved qualification.</p> <p>Further details can be found on http://www.maltaenterprise.com/en/support/get-qualified.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>In 2016, the Corporation received 2,617 applications, of which 583 beneficiaries were issued with a tax credit certificate. Total aid awarded for 2016 amounted to € 1,006,895. Additionally, 700 individuals registered their profile under this scheme.</p>
	<p>Tablets in Primary Schools for Teachers and Students</p> <p>The pilot project involved 22 classes in State, Church and Independent schools in Malta and Gozo amounting to a total of around 400 students, including students with special needs.</p> <p>Following this pilot project, a detailed evaluation report was drawn up, the recommendations from which were used in the drafting of the tenders used for the procurement of these tablets, including the classroom management software as well as a variety of other apps. A separate tender to procure additional educational apps was also released. Upgrades to the school's internet network commenced in late 2015.</p> <p>Following these preparations, and the awarding of the tender for the procurement of these tablets and software, the national roll-out of 'One Tablet per Child' commenced in September 2016.</p> <p>Training was given to 26 trainers who in turn trained 473 Year 4 teachers and LSAs during the Inset teacher training. Following the initial training, familiarization of the tablets by the teachers as well as follow up training will continue to be given to the teachers.</p> <p>In December 2016, 6,027 tablets were distributed to all year four students and educators in all state, church and independent schools. For ten weeks prior to the end of the term, teachers were helped to consolidate skills learned during the September in-service training. 35 parents' meetings were held in different localities in the mornings and evenings as to explain to parents how they can help their child make the best use of the tablet.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>Tablets will be used to promote more and better reading, writing, numeracy, literacy and digital literacy skills.</p> <p>In view that the correlation between illiteracy and early school leaving in Malta is high, the project will impact all of these aspects through the provision of electronic tablets and e-content from an early age. Most of the software procured is open ended and promotes the linguistic aspects of teaching and learning but two particular apps were designed specifically to increase the English literacy levels of the students. Another app targeting Maltese literacy levels is also envisaged in the project.</p>
	<p>Alternative Learning Programme</p> <p>The ALP has been designed to offer students who are exiting the compulsory school cycle without formal qualifications with an alternative pathway to access accredited learning pathways in various VET areas.</p> <p>During the scholastic year 2015-2016, the number of students who attended the Alternative Learning Programme amounted to 284 students, of whom 89% completed the whole programme. The intake for this scholastic year (2016-2017) is 154 students.</p> <p>In this scholastic year 'ALP+' was launched, where students continued their learning experience at a post-secondary level whilst receiving a monthly stipend. The students will be following courses in either Hospitality and Customer Care or Welding and Fabrication at MQF Level 3. The intake of students in this particular post-secondary course of 25.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>	<p>It is envisaged that a good number of these students will obtain certification accredited at MQF Level 1 in one or more subjects and will eventually be able to further their education beyond compulsory schooling. This programme will also consolidate and improve their skills thus leading them towards more working opportunities and overall self-empowerment. Thus, in MQF Level 1, 134 students obtained certification in Mathematics, 121 in Maltese, 119 in English, 62 in Vocational 1 and 65 in Vocational 2. In MQF Level 2, 65 students obtained certification in each of their two Vocational subjects.</p>
	<p>Design of Learning Outcomes Framework</p> <p>Work was carried out in providing the learning outcomes of the Learning Areas, the Cross-Curricular Themes and the Learning and Assessment programmes. A total of 48 Learning and Assessment Programmes were developed with the collaboration of 200 local curriculum experts. A cohort of 70</p>	<p>This will help in achieving a paradigm shift away from a prescriptive curriculum towards a framework based on learning outcomes which allows for internal flexibility and attractiveness to lifelong learning. It will also facilitate a move away from standalone subjects to learning areas that form the entitlement for all learners towards inclusivity, citizenship and employability.</p>

	<p>educators was trained to provide professional development to other teachers.</p> <p>The project has been completed and the results emanating from the project are being implemented during the current scholastic year.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	
	<p>Higher Priority to Mathematics, Science and ICT</p> <p>This measure involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a review of primary level learning programmes in Mathematics and Science; - an increase in the frequency of Science lessons in primary schools; - the introduction of Digital Science in the primary sector; - the organisation of science popularisation events at both primary and secondary levels; - the training of primary class teachers in Mathematics, Science and Digital Science teaching and learning; - participation in the Little Scientists Project in collaboration with the Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST) (including the training of a team of peripatetic teachers). <p>MEDE is participating in Scientix 3, started in Q2 2016 and will continue during 2017 together with a number of other EU funded projects related to Science and Mathematics namely Systemic and Teach-Up. This participation is through membership in the European Schoolnet network.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>This measure aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - decrease the percentage of students considered as low ability in the areas of Science and Mathematics; - enhance exposure to Science and Digital Science at primary level; - enhance scientific literacy among the young student generation in secondary level; - increase the number of students studying science subjects at secondary and post-secondary levels.
	<p>Stipends for Repeaters</p> <p>Students are always encouraged to further their education as Government believes that whoever has a problem should be encouraged and not discouraged. For this reason, students who are repeating one year in their course are receiving their stipend. This measure came into effect on 1st January 2014.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>During scholastic year 2014/2015 1,031 students benefitted from this measure with a total cost of € 702,320. In academic year (2015/2016), a total number of 935 students will benefit from this measure with an approximate anticipated total cost of € 738,000. During 2015/2016, 970 students were repeating a year in their course of studies and were considered stipend eligible whilst this academic year (2016/2017) 970 repeating students have confirmed their online application to date and are receiving a stipend. Some of these students are also eligible for the supplementary maintenance grant.</p>
	<p>New Courses on Aviation</p> <p>The two-year course 'MCAST Advanced Diploma in Aviation Operations (MQF Level 4)' was launched in Q3 2014 and is currently ongoing with the second cohort. The short course 'Piston Engines' was first offered during Q2 2014 and was available again in academic year 2015-2016.</p> <p>The composite workshop was completed with financial support from Malta Enterprise, while the first 'Composite Repairs' course has already been delivered to 8 students coming from SR Technik.</p> <p>All the courses, namely 'MCAST Advanced Diploma in Aviation Operations (MQF Level 4)', 'Piston Engines module', and the 'Composite Repairs' course will be offered every year to MCAST students. Ad hoc requests from industry to upgrade their personnel will also be considered.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>It is envisaged that through the implementation of these courses, Malta shall be consolidating further the aviation maintenance industry.</p> <p>The courses that were introduced in the 2015-2016 Scholastic year are once again being offered during college year 2016-2017.</p>
	<p>Providing stipends for students undertaking veterinary courses</p> <p>In order to encourage more students to take up a veterinary career, the Government is providing additional financial support. The new stipend rate for applicants under the Malta Government Undergraduate Scheme (MGUS) now stands at €307.68 after 2017 pro rata COLA increase (this rate was €302.10 during academic year 2015/16). In addition to this, a yearly grant of €698.81 is awarded together with an extra one-time grant of €698.81 for the first year. This rate applies to both new applicants under the MGSS scheme and past awardees who are still in training.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>The VET course is not offered by a local institution as yet. Since such courses include very high tuition fees and are organised abroad, many students find it difficult to cope with the expenses involved. Through this measure, more students are likely to opt to undergo studies in this area and pursue a career in this field.</p> <p>During academic year 2014/2015, 10 students opted for this course and 9 were approved for the students' maintenance grants with a total cost of €39,710.88.</p> <p>During academic year 2015/2016, there were 3 new students following such a course, with an approximate anticipated total cost of €13,255.</p> <p>This academic year (2016/2017) 7 new students have been approved under the Malta Government Undergraduate Scheme. The estimated cost for these new Veterinary course students for academic year 2016/2017 is circa €31,130.</p>
	<p>Further and Higher Education Quality Assurance Framework</p> <p>In line with obligations arising from SL327.433, a Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) has been set up with the remit of reviewing Levels 7 and 8 qualifications prior to accreditation. The QAC acts as an independent review mechanism for quality assurance-related measures arising from accreditation processes.</p> <p>The QA Unit within the NCFHE is currently conducting the first External Quality Assurance (EQA) audits (after those of the UoM, ITS and MCAST). According to SL327.433, providers with a 5-year license need to undergo an NCFHE EQA before the renewal of their license. In the period 2017-2019, the QA Unit shall be conducting 62 of these audits.</p>	<p>Impact has been experienced in terms of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of Quality Assurance (QA) professionals within the education sector through the setting up of Net-QAPE. Some 30 trained Net-QAPE members are now qualified with MQF-pegged QA CPD Award. A manual of External Quality Assurance (EQA) procedures and tools has been produced and dedicated software is in the process of being tested to be launched in the coming weeks. The QA professionals within the three local public higher institutions, as well as staff members within private education providers have received training on various aspects of Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) and EQA. The first three pilot IQA audits and the three pilot EQA audits were undertaken in the first half of 2015 and a closure conference for all documentation was held in July 2015.</p> <p>On a longer term, the QA framework will create a culture of quality within education provision in Malta, leading in turn to more value added in the obtaining and holding of Maltese qualifications.</p>

	<p>In the coming two years, as part of the project 'Consolidating Quality Assurance and Validation in Higher Education in Malta', the QA Unit shall also be updating the:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education to be in line with ESG 2015 and to incorporate provisions for online learning; 2. EQA Manual of procedures to include procedures for overseas provision, online and blended learning, EQAs of programmes, to adapt procedures for all categories of license, an updated description of the role of the NCFHE representative on the EQA review panel, update of the EQA time-lines, follow-up procedures that are congruent with different outcomes of the EQA. <p>The process leading to these updates will include the key contributions of international (Bologna) experts and the re-convening of NET-QAPE consultation seminars and conferences.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	
	<p>Reduction in VAT when buying digital books</p> <p>The Government has introduced a reduced VAT rate on e-books sold on magnetic media.</p> <p>This measure came into force as of 1st January 2015.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>This measure has reduced the costs for the purchaser of e-books on magnetic media, thus making such books more accessible. However, VAT data specifically on e-books is not available as such data is captured globally in VAT returns with other items.</p>
	<p>Construction and Modernisation of Schools</p> <p>In the Budget 2015, Government announced that, through the Foundation for Tomorrow's Schools, work will be starting on the construction of two new schools in Dingli and Kirkop. These schools have been completed and have received their first intake of students in September 2016.</p> <p>Work commenced on the construction of new primary schools in Marsascala, St. Paul's Bay and Rabat, Gozo. Preparatory work in relation to these schools is ongoing with PA and with the Government Property Department.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>With the creation and introduction of the college and co-ed systems, the Education Directorates analysed the current school building stock so as to ensure that all school children are provided with modern, well-equipped and challenging school environments that will facilitate their learning processes and help them develop their full potential.</p>
	<p>The introduction of the provision of Paid Study Leave Scheme</p> <p>The Paid Study Leave Scheme I provides officers in the education grades with the possibility of utilising either a period of up to one scholastic year of paid study leave (sabbatical) or shorter periods. The scheme also makes provision to enable an officer to spread the paid study leave (sabbatical) over a period of four years, provided that the officer concerned does not have classroom teaching duties and is pursuing studies at doctorate level.</p> <p>During 2016 this measure was extended to include educators in non-state schools.</p> <p>A similar provision is in place for officers benefitting from ERASMUS+/Council of Europe grants to attend short (usually three to five days) in-service courses, seminars, workshops or conferences.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>During this first year of implementation 18 officers have been awarded this paid study leave, of which 13 accepted. In the second call for applications under the scheme issued in March 2016, 10 applicants applied for paid study leave, All applicants were considered eligible and offered paid study leave. 9 officers have accepted and are benefiting from paid study leave for one scholastic year.</p> <p>A third Call for applications under the scheme has again been issued in November 2016 to cover Scholastic Year 2017/2018. By the closing date 3rd February 2017 four applications were received. The applications are in the process of being evaluated.</p>
	<p>Stipends exempt from income tax</p> <p>Financial benefits in terms of students' maintenance grants paid to full time post-secondary, vocational and tertiary students as outlined in Subsidiary Legislation 308 of 2016 will have no tax deductions and this irrespective of other income. This is now in force and to date there are 19,055 students who have accessed the online application for Students' Maintenance Grants.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>It is expected that there will be a marginal increase in the amount of students who work on a part-time basis whilst studying. In line with the students' maintenance grants regulations students are allowed to work a maximum of 20 hours weekly without forfeiting their rights for students' maintenance grants.</p>
	<p>Stipends increased yearly with a percentage rate of the established COLA increase</p> <p>The objective of this measure is of increasing the amount of stipends payable to students so as to reflect the established cost of living index on a yearly basis. In February 2017, all stipends were revised upwards by 0.91%.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>The pro-rata COLA adjustment is calculated as the multiple of the share of the weekly stipend to the weekly base wage (used to calculate COLA) and the announced COLA of € 1.75 per week.</p> <p>The method outlined above yields an increase of € 0.79 or 0.91% for a stipend on a general course of € 86.85 every 4 weeks thus students' maintenance grants as from January 2017 (payable in February) are to be revised by 0.91%.</p>
	<p>Youth Village at Umberto Colosso, Santa Venera</p> <p>A new National Youth Policy 'Towards 2020' was published and launched in July 2015 and will be implemented and coordinated by Aġenzija Żgħażaġh (AŻ) over the period 2015-2020. AŻ assumed responsibility for Youth.Inc in 2014 and has relocated to Umberto Colosso where a Youth Village was opened in December 2015.</p>	<p>This measure will give a more focused, coordinated and cost effective approach to meeting the needs and aspirations of young people.</p>

	<p>The second phase of the Youth Village project will provide for a youth residential centre. This residential centre will provide premises and facilities where young people and youth organisations can organise youth exchanges and mobility projects. A sports facility on the site is also being planned by Sports Malta in cooperation with AŽ.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	
	<p>Youth Voluntary Work Scheme</p> <p>The Youth Voluntary Work Scheme, which was managed by the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector (MCVS), was launched in 2015 and in its first year addressed the placement of young people in voluntary organisations to work at a local community level. The target number was reached by September 2016. However, the scheme is ongoing and will continue to support young people even in 2017. In June 2016 the Scheme was extended with an Overseas Specific Priority to support voluntary experience abroad for young people through locally registered voluntary organisations to carry out international volunteer service in Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia and South America.</p> <p>The Priorities of the Scheme being pursued and achieved are those of promoting active citizenship to young people by fostering social inclusion and the active participation of young people in society. With regard to the Overseas Specific Priorities the scheme aims at increasing the various skills of young people through the practical experience of volunteering abroad; encouraging the learning of another language; developing the ability to interact with persons of different language and culture; and spreading tolerance among young people.</p> <p>The first goal is to help young people improve their skills and employment prospects by giving them an opportunity to take up volunteering as part of their non-formal and informal learning process while enabling them to discover the value of voluntary service and helps to foster a sense of community and active citizenship. The second impact of the scheme is the support to Voluntary Organisations in attracting young people to volunteering, enabling them to enhance their capacity with new volunteers and fresh ideas.</p> <p>Status: Completed and Ongoing</p>	<p>To date 102 youths were placed in Voluntary Organisations locally. 10 youths have already benefited from the Overseas Specific Priority Scheme and a further 10 youths shall also benefit.</p>
	<p>Life-long Learning Credits</p> <p>This measure strengthens the concept of lifelong learning. It ensures that people gain new and also upgrade their competencies, skills and knowledge without the impact of not having enough contributions paid which may affect negatively their entitlement to a retirement pension.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>More people will engage in lifelong learning, thus improving their income and their way of living.</p>
	<p>Extension of the allowance given to Gozitan students in Malta [Formerly known as "Increase in the allowance given to Gozitan students studying in Malta"]</p> <p>Students resident in Gozo who are following full-time courses at the University of Malta, the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS), the MCAST or were benefitting from a Malta Government Undergraduate Scheme (MGUS) in Malta were eligible to apply for the allowance. This also applied to Maltese students who study full-time in Gozo. With this measure, Gozitan students who were studying in Malta benefited from a one-time increase in their allowance by € 300 in 2016 that is €100 per quarter in order to cover their rent expenses. The decision to increase this allowance which was announced in the Budget 2016 was based following a study on the costs incurred by students following courses which was commissioned for this purpose.</p> <p>Payment of this allowance was effected in January, April and July 2016 and January 2017. The number of students who benefited from this allowance in each quarter was of 1,027, 1,026, 1,018 and 1,021 respectively. The amounts paid amounted to €512,181, €512,830, €508,598 and €509,880 respectively.</p> <p>As announced in the 2017 Budget, as from January 2017, the annual allowance of €1,500 given to students resident in Gozo who are following full-time courses at the University of Malta, the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS), MCAST in Malta or are benefitting from a Malta Government Undergraduate Scheme (MGUS), has been extended to Gozitan students attending a private institution for higher education in Malta.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>	<p>It is expected that in the year 2017, this allowance will be given to 10 students. The payment of this allowance will be effected in the month following the end of the previous quarter. The quarters are as follows: October to December, January to March and April to June. A payment of € 500 is to be effected every three months in January, April and July.</p>
	<p>Higher Education Regulator</p> <p>The National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) is the official regulator of provision of education in Malta beyond compulsory schooling. In order to be able to function and carry out its roles in entirety as outlined in the Education Act, additional resources need to be made available so that the NCFHE builds up both its human resources capacity as well as its technical capacity.</p> <p>Therefore, the Commission's allocation is being increased in order to better fulfil its regulatory function</p>	<p>The impacts of this measure are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The pluralistic provision of education in Malta, which is a policy priority of Government, is seeing multiple providers, including an increasing number of public and private providers of study programmes which are level rated on the MQF. As at end of 2015, NCFHE had registered 116 training providers in Malta. This number has already increased to 140 by the end of December 2016.

	<p>in education.</p> <p>Status: On Track / Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By end of 2015, NCFHE had approved/accredited 1,181 courses to be delivered in Malta. This increased to 1,458 by the end of December 2016 with another 57 courses currently pending accreditation. • Multiple routes of lifelong learning, including the validation of informal and non-formal learning, are also promoted in order to widen the certification of skills and competence in the workforce. NCFHE's remit is to build a solid administrative structure to implement this provision and also carry out quality assurance audits to ensure reliability of certifications issued through this route. . • A total of 7 Occupational Standards have already been drafted all in the Building and Construction Sector, with another 15 Occupational Standards being drafted and reviewed by the Sector Skills Unit. More than 280 persons have been validated with certificates in the child care sector. Validation assessments for the Building and Construction sector have started but certificates have not been issued yet. • In parallel, NCFHE needs to build a solid Quality Assurance unit which will carry out regular monitoring and external reviews of licence holders as well as monitor the media for any illegal misleading advertising and to take corrective action. Currently, the QA Unit is conducting/launching 27 EQAs, investigating 13 cases of noncompliance, evaluating 37 Internal Quality Assurance policies submitted for application/renewal of license, leading 2 projects and has applied for another EQAVET project. • The regulatory role of the NCFHE aims to equip prospective applicants and higher education providers to prepare the service users to enter the labour market and maintain progress in their career development, in order to continue contributing to the economic growth of the country.
	<p>Stipends for Maturity Clause Students</p> <p>137 students have applied and were approved to follow a course at MCAST under the maturity clause for academic year 2015/2016 (14 of whom eventually resigned). If approved in terms of SL 327.178, these students would benefit from both the initial grant and the stipend (unless they are repeaters) with a total cost of circa €134,500 (subject to attendance at post-secondary level and MCAST).</p> <p>There were 248 University students admitted under the maturity clause for academic year 2015/6. These can be eligible to receive the students' maintenance grants. The total cost for mature University of Malta students reached circa € 193,000. For academic year 2016/17, 913 students have indicated the 'maturity clause' as basis for their acceptance at the relative course of studies. All students who have applied for students maintenance grants had their application processed and to date there are no pending applications.</p> <p>Mature students may also be eligible for the supplementary maintenance grant.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>During the academic year 2015/2016 there were 559 applications for mature or foreign students whilst during 2016/2017, 913 applications were received for mature or foreign students. It is to be noted that applications are still open.</p>
	<p>Arrangement with the Cambridge University</p> <p>The results obtained from international studies including the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), indicate the need to strengthen the use of English in all schools, through the upgrading of the proficiency of the language. Hence, Government will be sustaining the arrangement it has reached with Cambridge University to strengthen the use of English and encourage more children to choose to study languages through more attractive packages as was the case with the Subject Proficiency Assessment (SPA) programme for Italian. Government will also enhance learning of all foreign languages through the application of SPA.</p> <p>Training for teachers in line with the arrangement with Cambridge University commenced during last scholastic year and will be completed in the scholastic year 2016-2017.</p> <p>Subject Proficiency Assessment Programme has been extended to all foreign languages including Italian, Spanish, French and German. A review of the Foreign Language Awareness Programme in the primary years is being undertaken.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>The impacts of this measure will be: a benchmark assessment in Year 5 and Form 4 in all four skills of the English language; a number of train-the-trainers sessions; and the training of a larger number of primary and secondary school teachers through the said train-the-trainers sessions.</p> <p>A programme of Foreign language awareness in the primary years is expected to increase the love for languages at a young age.</p>
	<p>MCAST Transformation</p> <p>MCAST has a wide-ranging and unique remit in the post-secondary sector offering courses ranging from Level 1 to Level 6. Within the Malta Qualifications Framework, MCAST provides Level 1 and 2 Foundation programmes for students who may have left formal schooling without any formal qualifications, with the aim of helping them to at least achieve a Level 3 vocational qualification and possibly even more. MCAST also provides Level 4 courses to students who may wish to enter employment at the technician level or who may aspire to continue their studies at a higher degree level. Finally, MCAST also offers courses at Level 5 and 6 in which students aim to achieve a first degree. Starting from scholastic year 2016-2017, MCAST is also offering two courses at Level 7.</p> <p>All of these different course levels are an important and vital part of MCAST's mission. In order to strengthen each of these different levels, it was felt that MCAST's structure needed to develop further in order to cater in a better manner for the needs of students at different levels.</p>	<p>MCAST has transformed itself into Foundation, Technical and University Colleges under the MCAST umbrella. The transformation process has been concluded and the new structures have been put in place to implement this change.</p>

	<p>Although MCAST will still be one organisation incorporating all these levels and emphasising the possibility of one continuous and strong pathway between the different levels, in order to strengthen its focus on the different needs of students at these different levels, it has introduced three colleges under the MCAST umbrella namely the Foundation College, the Technical College and the University College were introduced during scholastic year 2015-2016.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	
	<p>New Campus at MCAST</p> <p>Work on the second phase of the campus will commence. This shall include a new block for the Institute of Engineering and Transport, MCAST Resource Centre (previously referred to as the Library and the Learning Support Unit) and the new ICT Institute. The second phase has now commenced and excavation works for the IET building have been completed.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>The new buildings are part of the new campus project that will offer tailor-made and purposely-built facilities for MCAST to further enhance the quality of its services to its students. Work on the new Institute of Engineering and Transport commenced during the summer months of 2016 and is nearing completion. The building permits have been approved and construction works will commence in the coming months.</p> <p>The project's objective is to invest in educational infrastructure to provide education and training facilities for vocational education and training to reduce early school leavers as well as improve tertiary education attainment.</p>
	<p>Tools for Teachers</p> <p>This measure involved the purchasing of 3D scanners and printers for Design and Technology laboratories in middle and secondary schools, as well as interactive whiteboards with short-throw projectors and all-in-one computers so as to have one whole set available in each class. Furthermore, all teacher laptops were replaced and laptops were also made available to kindergarten assistants and learning support assistants.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>The 3D scanners and printers are assisting to maximise the use of ICT in school teaching and learning. The interactive whiteboards are creating an easier access to high-quality interactive learning content at school and create the means for uploading learning material for classroom use. Furthermore, students are being exposed to the same educational material and offered the same quality of learning across the board. Laptops are providing teachers, kindergarten assistants and learning support assistants with the opportunity of accessing educational content directly from every classroom and therefore working flexibility has increased. These digital tools have assisted to equip teachers thus enabling them to monitor their students' learning progress effectively and to tailor education around their students' needs.</p>
	<p>Screening Programme</p> <p>A new early screening programme has been soft launched in collaboration between MEDE and MFH with the title of 'Lenti fuq l-Iżvilupp ta' Wliedna'. Through screening for specific learning difficulties, this programme will assist professionals in identifying and addressing the needs of children as from the age of 18 months so as to ensure their holistic health and educational development.</p> <p>This programme was launched in January 2017. Phase 1 consists of offering screening services for Autism to Maltese nationals at 18 months of age. Any children found to be at risk, shall be offered the necessary support/intervention services by the appropriate departments within MFH and MEDE.</p> <p>The second phase shall build upon the first phase and shall open up screening for ADHD and other mental health difficulties. This screening shall be targeted at children who are in the second half of year 3 (7-8 years of age).</p> <p>Finally there shall also be a pilot phase which shall collect data with regards to dyslexia in school children; the findings of which will eventually help lead to a national screening programme for dyslexia.</p> <p>An application for EU co-financing was also presented to PPCD in April 2016. In this regard, a meeting with PPCD was held in January 2017 and currently MEDE is waiting for feedback. The official launch of this programme is expected to take place in April 2017.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>Through this programme, all Maltese children will be screened for any delays in developmental milestones at an early stage, and therefore this may contribute to decreasing the possibility of these children becoming Early School Leavers in the future due to the lack of timely diagnosis of such developmental conditions, eventually reducing overall health and education cost.</p> <p>For the programme's first year of operation (phase 1 - screening for Autism), a minimum screening target of 2,000 children has been set.</p>
	<p>National Skills Council</p> <p>In order to monitor and react to developments in the demand for skills, a National Skills Council has been formally set up to analyse the industry's needs and the role of education.</p> <p>The Council's role is to analyse labour market situation and to study and propose strategies to seek to reduce labour shortages and improve skills to meet market demands within the current market and the local jobs' trend for the foreseeable future. Legal notice for the establishment of the Council has been published in August 2016 and the Council was formally set up in November 2016.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>This measure will identify skill gaps in the current labour market in order to have an updated and fluid training strategy in line with the latest market developments in Malta. This council will also be responsible to provide concrete policy recommendations.</p>
	<p>The introduction of Gużé Ellul Mercer 16+ Learning Centre</p> <p>A new Learning Centre was opened in 2015 in Gżira for post 16-year-old students who have only obtained one SEC certificate at the end of their compulsory schooling. This Learning Centre will offer students another opportunity to complete their education. They will formally follow an intensive revision course in core curricular areas (English, Maths, Maltese and Physics/ECDL) as well as PE and PSCD. These students will be given a stipend. On completion of the yearly course, students will be recognised at level 3 by MCAST, ITS and GRTU. A further certification by Aġenzija Żgħażaġh on Lifeskills and Social Well Being is also given to those students who participate in a number of formal and non-formal activities being organised.</p>	<p>This measure aims at introducing a Learning Centre with the aim of decreasing the number of students with limited qualifications. It is hoped that less students would leave education without formal qualifications. After following this learning programme, students should be better equipped to continue furthering their education as well as be able to respond to the demands of the labour market.</p>

	<p>First intake completed this intensive revision programme last scholastic year. Second intake of 100 students commenced in October 2016.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	
	<p>Transdisciplinary Research and Knowledge Exchange (TRAKE) Complex [Formerly known as “Post-Doc Centre”]</p> <p>A new Trans-disciplinary Research and Knowledge Exchange (TRAKE) Complex will be built on the University of Malta campus. This will consist of four floors to house postgraduate and doctoral students as well as an interim space for business incubation facilities. The structure will also comprise four underground levels, two earmarked for car parking and two levels for library archives.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>The University is feeling the need of additional facilities to accommodate the increasing number of postgraduate and doctoral students. The new complex should incorporate the aforementioned needs and business incubation facilities in one structure.</p>
	<p>Extension of the Mathematics and Physics Building</p> <p>The Maths and Physics building extension will consist of an additional four levels alongside the north-facing part of the existing building that will provide additional offices, teaching facilities and labs.</p> <p>The permit from MEPA has been received and final preparations to issue the tender for the construction of the building is currently underway.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>This extension will offer more room to accommodate the increased demand brought about by the increasing number of students and staff members and to cater for specialised programmes of study.</p>
	<p>Continuous Professional Development for Educators</p> <p>Through the Institute for Education, continuous professional development which is consistent with and in support of the Government policies and educational frameworks is being provided to educators for the professional formation, skills, attitudes and practices that will be utilised in their daily professional lives.</p> <p>Through an Erasmus + programme the Institute for Education is currently engaged in “Creation of Continuous Professional Development Programme for Educators” with partners from the University of Verona and the FORTH Greece research centre. This project aims to provide continuous professional development for college principals, heads and assistant heads of schools and teachers, focusing mainly on one state college.</p> <p>The Institute has also developed the following accredited courses and will be offering them to educators after school hours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 32 Stand Alone Modules at MQF 6 and 7 targeting educators as defined in the Education Act with the aim of upgrading their knowledge, skills and competences. • 1 Leadership programme at MQF 6 targeting Heads of Schools with the aim of equipping them with problem solving skills and conflict management skills through action research. • 2 Post Graduate Certificate at MQF 7 for teachers to upgrade their pedagogical skills, their teaching methodologies and assessment techniques. • 7 Short courses at MQF 6/7 for educators to upgrade the diverse competences required to operate effectively in an inclusive environment. • 48 Phase sessions (non-accredited) for the leadership teams and managers in education aiming to equip them with the necessary knowledge about the processes and procedures, discuss educational issues and create forums. • In Service Courses in July and September for teachers with the aim to equip them with the knowledge, skills and competences to address the needs of the students in the following year. <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>CPD will contribute in assisting educators in upskilling themselves to the dynamic changes that are occurring within the field of education.</p> <p>All the 10 College Principals, 75 Heads of Schools and 200 Assistant Heads are being trained in Leading and Teaching for Equity. Consequently Primary, Middle school and Secondary school teachers from San Gorg Preca College will be trained in this area as well.</p> <p>Variable since educators apply for these courses on a voluntary basis. Courses are open for all employed educators.</p> <p>Open for all heads of schools. 10 applied and accepted.</p> <p>110 teachers in total.</p> <p>250 between LSAs and teachers.</p> <p>Variable since managers and leadership teams can apply voluntarily for the sessions.</p> <p>Around 3,000 educators.</p>
	<p>Improving literacy</p> <p>Falling within the National Literacy Strategy, literacy teams were established for each of the 10 Colleges in the state sector, where the aim of such teams is to assist in reaching the literacy targets.</p> <p>Various programmes also include family literacy programmes and are effective in improving both child literacy and parental support skills. . Examples of such programmes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aqra Miegħi / Read with Me: This programme, which is an early literacy education programme for children from 0 to 3 years and their parents/caregivers was launched in January 2014 and has now been extended to 60 centres across Malta and Gozo. Every month about 2,000 infants 	<p>The overall purpose of this strategy is to promote and enhance lifelong and life wide, high quality literacy practices among children, youths, adults, third country nationals and persons with learning disabilities.</p> <p>It strives also to improve literacy outcomes, resulting in inclusive practices, higher educational qualifications and better job prospects.</p>

	<p>and their parents or caregivers attended these reading sessions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nwar Programme: This family literacy programme, designed for learners who have not acquired the basic skills level by the end of Year 3, continued in 2016 during which the NLA set up two further Nwar centres in Mosta and St. Paul's Bay From September to December 2016, some 337 pupils and their parents benefitted from the Nwar family literacy programme. • Aqra Kemm Tiflaħ!/ Enriching Classroom Libraries: In the scholastic year 2015/2016, the 'Aqra Kemm Tiflaħ!/ Enriching Classroom Libraries' programme, launched in December 2014, distributed 23,773 books to 63 primary schools between September and December 2016. <p>Status: On Track</p>	
	<p>Strengthening the training offered to employees working at the Medicines Authority</p> <p>The Medicines Authority in Malta is the national competent authority for the regulation of medicines for human use and has the mission to protect and enhance public health through the regulation of medicinal products and pharmaceutical activities.</p> <p>The Medicines Authority has launched a traineeship programme which is intended to support in bridging the gap between the theoretical knowledge gained in education and the skills and competences needed. Applicants are required to commit to register in a course leading to the Doctorate of Pharmacy or equivalent at MQF Level 8 or a Doctor of Philosophy with a commitment to carry out the research on the objectives of the Medicines Authority; to follow a Master of Science in Pharmacy, or equivalent at MQF Level 7; or to follow a Bachelor of Science in Pharmaceutical Technology or a Bachelor of Commerce in Accounting. 18 trainees have enrolled in this programme since 2014.</p> <p>The Medicines Authority has also strengthened the training of staff in specialised areas such as sterile manufacturing in order to enhance the competence of its people resulting in the expansion of its services.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>It is expected that with this measure, employees will be fully trained and competent enough to tap into new areas and activities being carried out both in and outside the EU. This will also help in attracting more specialised pharmaceutical companies to Malta.</p>
	<p>Upgrading of the existing Information Systems at the Medicines Authority</p> <p>This measure aims to strengthen the existing information systems at the Authority, thus helping it to deliver a better service to its stakeholders. Various upgrades were performed in the Medicines Authority website.</p> <p>The Irish Medicines Board has visited the Medicines Authority in Q4 2016 in order to initiate the deployment of the new licensing system. . Once this system is implemented, this will also be deployed for the Inspectorate and Enforcement Directorate and Post-Licensing Directorate.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>This measure will ensure an effective and efficient communication between the Medicines Authority and its stakeholders. It is also expected that this upgrading will lead to better revenue-generating opportunities for the Authority.</p>
	<p>New Grant for the Institute of Tourism Studies Students</p> <p>With this measure, ITS students will be given a grant similar to what students in other post-secondary institutions are receiving. A grant of €230 will be offered once yearly, additional to the stipend which students receive monthly. The grant was given for the first time in December 2016 and will be given yearly to all students entitled.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>	<p>It is expected that this new grant will encourage more students to be interested in the tourism and hospitality sectors. It will also assist them in their studies.</p>
	<p>New ITS Campus</p> <p>The objective of this measure is to construct a new campus for the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS). The new campus will provide a better service for the tourism industry and greater opportunities, especially in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and higher education. All the plans are finalised and filed with MEPA for the necessary approvals. Tenders have been prepared and financial workings are ongoing. ITS is currently waiting for updates and a forecasted action plan for 2017 from Projects Malta (OPM).</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>The new campus will be used to upskill the tourism workforce in order to increase and ensure a higher quality in the services offered in the tourism sector and workforce. Additionally, the measure is intended to keep up with the demand and increase in the number of students that enrol in the tourism industry. This will also ensure an increase in the number of courses offered to the students.</p>
<p>National poverty target (To lift around 6,560 people out of risk of poverty and exclusion)</p>	<p>Pensions Reform</p> <p>The Government set up a Pensions Strategy Group (PSG) to continue with the reform of pensions in Malta in order to continue strengthening the sustainability of the system and also to maintain adequacy, especially for future generations. . A report by the Group was submitted to the Minister for the Family and Social Solidarity and later a presentation with the proposals was delivered to Cabinet.</p> <p>The report by the PSG was launched for a six-week consultation in June 2015. Stakeholders submitted</p>	<p>Due to the pensions reform of 2007, the pension age for persons born between 1952 and 1955 went up to 62 for both genders, and the accumulation of contributions for a full pension entitlement increased from 30 to 35 years. As a result, the increase in number of new claims was lower than the year- on-year increases from previous years.</p> <p>Several proposals in the PSG report have been introduced through the Budget speech for 2016, namely;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the gradual introduction of a Guaranteed National Minimum Level of Pension;

<p>recommendations and a final report was finalised. The post-consultation report, including the final recommendations, was submitted by the Group for the attention of Government in September 2015.</p> <p>Many of the recommendations by the Pensions Strategy Group were implemented in the Budget of November 2015 including the provision of €140 pensions on the national minimum pension and increases in pensions for those married couples who did not benefit from the €140.</p> <p>The minimum pension for married persons living on one pension increased by an additional € 4 per week as announced in the 2017 Budget.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. the introduction of contribution credits for persons with contribution gaps due to human capital development and lifelong learning; 3. the increase in the number of weeks awarded as contribution credits to parents taking career breaks for child rearing and family growth purposes; 4. the increase in the contribution record from 40 to 41 years for persons born on or after 1/1/1969; 5. the increase in rate from 5/6 to 6/6 for widows who although eligible for a retirement pension in their own right, receive a widows' pension because it is more beneficial; 6. the initial date of award of pension effective from the following day of retirement or widowhood instead of the first Saturday following retirement or widowhood; 7. Persons deferring their pension entitlement will benefit from a % increase in their pension rate; 8. An increase of €4 per week in the minimum pension to married persons living on one pension.
<p>Supplementary Allowance</p> <p>In Budget 2013, Government proposed that persons over 65 years of age and whose household income falls under the national at-risk-of-poverty level will be given an increase of €100 per annum in their supplementary allowance rate.</p> <p>In Budget 2017, Government reformed the supplementary allowance by increasing the maximum income threshold for married persons to € 13,000 per annum while the threshold for single persons increased with the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). Persons not forming a household but in employment and earning the minimum wage are also eligible. Weekly rates will also be increased for all recipients.</p> <p>Status: Completed and Ongoing</p>	<p>Data for 2016 shows that 23,343 persons have benefited from this allowance.</p>
<p>Strengthening Support Services to Jobless Households</p> <p>Community-based projects continue to target teens and adults to enhance their skills and their integration in the community/society.</p> <p>The Cottonera team is working on a project to reach out to male members of the community, particularly those receiving benefits and/or seeking a job. , The Msida community team is working on targeting mothers who are at high risk of poverty Work is also being carried out with mothers and babies in Cottonera & Qawra. The Mother and Baby Club held in Cottonera is ongoing with 10 mothers and 10 children registered in the project.</p> <p>In Msida, the service is working with a group of mothers on self-development and self-care. This is being held in partnership with Sedqa.</p> <p>Other initiatives are targeting young and older males in Cottonera through the community workshop. An initiative in Msida targeting migrants is in progress.</p> <p>The project plans for 2017(run by community workers within Appoġġ Community Teams) have been discussed. The project provides home-based family therapy services. A number of families were identified by various services within Appoġġ with 16 families being provided with the service.</p> <p>The fostering service continued to be involved in the ongoing media campaigning together with training courses. A Positive Parenting Policy was published in November 2016 by the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity.</p> <p>Following the successful outcome of the ESF 3.234 LEAP Project, officially terminated on the 4th of November 2015, the good practices were embraced and continued through national funds. LEAP is operating from the following 6 regional centres: Cottonera, Valletta, Qawra, Kirkop, Xewkija and Qormi. Furthermore services are also being provided from the LEAP centres in Msida, Gharghur, Marsaskala and Santa Lucija. Another LEAP centre in Mosta is awaiting official launch and opening. As from 1st January 2016.</p> <p>From the 4,000 households (approximately 12,000 persons) benefitting from the FEAD initiative over 3,000 families have already been visited and profiled.</p> <p>As from 2017 further outreach shall be carried out through the implementation of the Food National Scheme whereby over 27,000 families shall be contacted to come to one of LEAP's 17 distribution centres to collect a food hamper. This exercise is complementary to the FEAD as it would reach out to families with one child or where there is a person with a disability registered within the family. It would also reach out to pensioners who are single and benefit from a non-contributory pension. The focus shall be on those families whereby a member of the same family is of employable age yet is unemployed.</p> <p>The LEAP project as from the 1st of January 2017 has been specifically entrusted to incorporate in its operations the Supported Employment service. Thus the LEAP shall focus specifically in the facilitating integration into the labour market of those who need particular assistance and mentoring in reaching</p>	<p>Through these projects, residents are receiving skills training through a friendly and informal environment; this helps them increase their worth, helps them to take control of certain situations in their lives (e.g. intra-familial communication), to be more active in their community, and even have healthy ways of seeing leisure and recreation (strong element of prevention).</p> <p>The various community services target particular individuals who would benefit from the informal and non-formal skills training that is offered through the projects:</p> <p>With regard to the LEAP Project, the three distributions of food packages aimed at assisting families at risk of poverty and social exclusion were carried out in January, April and July 2016. The fourth distribution was held in November 2016, and thus reaching the set target of 4 distributions during 2016. Plans are underway in preparing for further 3 distributions to be held during 2017, the first being end of February. The Department of Social Security database was utilised to extract the eligible households, falling within the following categories:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. households in receipt of non-contributory means-tested benefits and having two or more children below the age of 16 (families with three or more children receive two packages); 2. households with two or more children below the age of 16 and with an income not exceeding 80% of the National Minimum Wage (NMW) are entitled to two food packages; 3. households having two or more children below the age of 16 with an income not exceeding the NMW (families with three or more children receive two packages); 4. non-single households eligible for non-contributory means-tested age pension (families with three or more children receive two packages). <p>The FSWS has coordinated the distribution of food packages to eligible households in the following 17 zones: Xewkija (Gozo), Qawra, Mosta, San Ġwann, Msida, Santa Venera, Qormi, Marsascale, Żejtun, Kirkop, Gharghur, Valletta, Marsa, Santa Lucija, Cottonera, Rabat and Haż-Żebbuġ. During the year 2016, 15,619 families were notified to collect the food package/s in the four distributions throughout the year and 18,601 packages were distributed. 206 food packages have been stores as these were not collected during the last distribution and these have been firstly availed during end of February 2017 distribution. For the forthcoming years, three distributions per year are planned. Families that will no longer fall within the above categories will no longer be eligible, whilst other families may become eligible during the tenure of the programme. Preparations are underway to outreach further families in dire need of material support, and it is envisaged that over 27,000 families will be reached accordingly through a National Funded Scheme.</p>

	<p>such goal.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	
	<p>Subsidised Rental Schemes – Rent Subsidy in Private Rented Residences</p> <p>This is a scheme which provides subsidies to tenants on rents paid for their ordinary residence leased from the private sector. This scheme has been revised and changed from ‘Scheme R’ to ‘Rent Subsidy in Private Rented Residences’ (RSS) in March 2012. This scheme is still means-tested but a few conditions have been altered to support the beneficiaries in a more holistic way.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>The Housing Authority (HA) is still paying subsidies under ‘Scheme R’ since beneficiaries under this scheme are entitled to a five-year subsidy from the date of their application as per agreement signed and the conditions of this scheme</p> <p>In 2016, there were 1,587 beneficiaries and payments until 31st December 2016 amounted to € 125,960.15 under ‘Scheme R’ and € 975,949.69 under ‘RSS’.</p>
	<p>Service Pensions</p> <p>As a result of Budget 2017 and with effect from January 2017, the amount of service pension being ignored from the service pension during the assessment of a social security pension has increased by another €200 from €1,866 to €2,066.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>A total of 4,550 pensioners benefitted during 2016.</p>
	<p>Regeneration and Maintenance of Housing Estates</p> <p>Through this project, embellishment works are carried out in the surrounding areas of Government Housing Estates and maintenance works are carried out in these blocks' common parts.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>These projects are intended to promote community regeneration and the fight against poverty. Consequently, they will continue to improve the environment of families, children and the elderly by providing a safe and clean environment and increasing social inclusion.</p>
	<p>Schemes to support home adaptation works - (A) Schemes for Persons with Disability</p> <p>This scheme provides financial aid and technical assistance to persons with disability to carry out the necessary adaptations to their place of residence.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>This measure aspires to improve the social inclusion prospects of individuals by encouraging independent living for disabled persons.</p> <p>Since January 2016, 215 new applications were submitted and payments amounted to €543,752.90.</p>
	<p>Schemes to support home adaptation works - (B) Schemes for Repairs and Improvements</p> <p>In view of an increase in demand, the maximum amount of grant that an applicant can benefit from in schemes for adaptation works was increased by € 3,000. After October 2013, this grant was made available to a new category of tenants, who previously had not benefitted from the initiative.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>This scheme is designed to help those who cannot afford to pay for repairs and maintenance for their residences. This assistance helps to render premises habitable and up to an acceptable standard.</p> <p>Since January 2016, a further 320 applications were submitted whilst payments amounted to €594,767.96.</p>
	<p>Residential Home for Youth</p> <p>A residential home is currently catering for female young persons, aged between 15 and 18.</p> <p>Discussions on the provision of bed nights at Dar Frate Jacoba are currently underway. An exercise was carried out to indicate the number of bed nights FSWS and Aġenzija Appoġġ used since 2010. A draft agreement was prepared in December which is currently being discussed with the Ministry for Finance.</p> <p>Status (facility for adolescent girls): Completed Status (facility for adolescent boys): On Track</p>	<p>The residents are following a programme with the aim of dealing with their highly challenging behaviour while enhancing their independence and life skills.</p> <p>Liaison with the mental health sector is still on going to help these young people deal with their past and present traumas. Assessment tools are being used continuously to report on the residents' developments with the young persons' psychiatrist. Improvements have been noticed and some of the young persons have been engaged in the education system to further their studies.</p>
	<p>Independent Living</p> <p>The main objective of this measure is to provide for an independent environment which will sustain a person's ability to live as independently as possible, either in their own home or in an accommodation with carers on site.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>In 2016 the amount of €1,677.15 was issued to Caritas.</p>
	<p>Tax-exempt Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) on minimum wage and pensions which are currently not taxed</p> <p>Persons on the minimum wage who receive the COLA will be exempt from paying tax on the increase. This will equally apply to pensioners who at present are not paying tax.</p> <p>This measure came into force as of 1st January 2014.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>During 2015, 1,322 pensioner and 2,985 non-pensioner taxpayers were affected by this measure.</p>
	<p>Grant of €300 to elderly persons over the age of 75 years</p> <p>The €300 grant is given to those people over the age of 75 and who are still living in the community.</p>	<p>This measure encourages elderly people over the age of 75 to continue to live in their homes and in the community. Total number of beneficiaries up to end of December 2016 was 29,623.</p>

	In the 2017 Budget, Government announced that it will extend this measure to 2017. Status: Completed and ongoing	
	Extension of the Home Help Service Scheme The Home Help Service is a domiciliary service which supports older persons or persons with a disability to continue living in the community. Status: On Track	This scheme will continue to meet the demand for this service. The Home Help tender expired on 25th November 2016. The General contracts Committee approved an extension for another 3 months which started from 26th November 2016 till 25th February 2017 under the same rates, terms and conditions. Another 3 months has been requested.
	Increase the number of clients attending Day Centres by 200 The Gozo Learning hub started operating in March 2016 and 5 clients started making use of its services. The capacity building exercise in this regard has been approved and staff will be relocated to Gozo in order to increase the Learning Hub workforce. Status: On Track	During 2016 there were 14 service users.
	Financial support to first time buyers A one-time exemption from the payment of duty on the first € 150,000 of the price of immovable property is being granted to first time buyers acquiring immovable property. This measure started on 1st January 2014 and was expected to run up until December 2014. However during Budgets 2015 and 2016, this measure was extended to the end of 2016. During Budget 2017, this measure was extended again to end 2017. Status: Completed	The number of contracts for first time buyers registered during 2016 was 2,578. The number of contracts for first time buyers registered this year up to 22nd February was 301. Since the measure's implementation in 2014, a total of 8,719 contracts were signed for 11,915 eligible first time buyers.
	Relief from Income Tax on Minimum Wage and for Pensioners The Government is committed to exempt from taxes minimum wage earners. Thus, the present tax ceiling has been raised to take the COLA into consideration. In January 2016, Government has further reduced the income tax so that persons with an income from employment or pension not exceeding the minimum wage will once again not be liable to tax. Furthermore, pensioners whose pension does not exceed the minimum wage will also be exempted from paying income tax. This measure came into force as of 1st January 2014 and has been extended in Budgets 2015 and 2016. Status: Completed	During 2015, 1,322 pensioner and 2,985 non-pensioner taxpayers were affected by this measure.
	Fiscal Incentives for Trusts and Foundations set up to Help Disabled Persons A number of fiscal incentives for Trusts and Foundations have been introduced with the aim of helping disabled persons. Some of these incentives include the exemption of capital gains taxes as well as the elimination of stamp duty on documents and transfer of residential property which is the residence of the parents and is initially transferred to the Trust or Foundation for disabled children, and which is then inherited by siblings or heirs on the decease of the disabled person. This measure came into force as of 1st January 2015. Status: Completed	This measure is supporting, through the tax regime, those Trusts and Foundations set up to help disabled persons. Up till Q3 2016, it was not possible to determine the number of persons with a disability affected by this measure. This was due to the fact that when details of the beneficiaries were captured, there was no indication online if these were disabled persons or otherwise. The software was tweaked in Q4 2016 to capture such data and thus far no one has benefitted from this measure.
	Donations to Malta Community Chest Fund In order to encourage donations to the Malta Community Chest Fund (MCCF) a measure was introduced whereby companies who donated not less than € 2,000 to MCCF between 1st January and 31st December 2015, could claim a full deduction of the amount donated against their chargeable income for the year. Through L.N. 2 of 2016 the allowable deduction was increased from 50% (applicable up to December 2014) to 100% applicable to 2015. Status: Completed	32 companies availed themselves of this measure resulting in € 253,844 being deducted from their 2015 taxable income.
	Setting Up of a Commission for Human Rights and Equality A Commission for Human Rights and Equality will be replacing the existing National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE). The Commission for Human Rights and Equality shall address identified gaps in the field of human rights in a bid to ensure that Malta has an internationally accredited Human Rights and Equality Commission. Status: On Track	Through the Human Rights and Equality Commission, adequate resources will be put in place to implement the measures as expressed in the related legislations, Directives and Regulations. Through the protection and promotion of equal rights, excluded individuals will be empowered to regain control of their lives.

	<p>Tapering of social benefits after marriage</p> <p>As from 1st January 2015, a single parent who is receiving social benefits and gets married, or forms a civil union, with a person in employment, will no longer lose entitlement to social benefits immediately after the union. Instead, the social assistance will be reduced gradually over a period of three years. During the first year, the parent will receive 65% of the social assistance, in the second year 45% and in the third year 25%.</p> <p>Status: Completed and Ongoing</p>	<p>This ongoing measure will encourage more social security beneficiaries to form a family either through marriage or a civil union. Furthermore, since single parents who get married with an employed person will only be entitled to social benefits for three years, this will in turn decrease the amount of paid social benefits.</p> <p>137 persons benefitted from this measure up till the end of December 2016.</p>
	<p>Compensation for Paid National Insurance Contributions</p> <p>The objective behind this measure is to compensate a number of workers, in particular women, who worked for a number of years during which they paid their contributions, but due to various reasons and circumstances, they did not pay enough to qualify for the minimum pension. Therefore, as from 1st January 2015, those persons born between 1941 and 1953 and who do not have a pension will receive a yearly lump sum of money. In fact, an annual fixed amount of €100 will be paid to those who had paid contributions for one year or more but less than five years, and €200 to those who had paid contributions for five years or more.</p> <p>As announced in the 2017 Budget, with effect from 1st January 2017, this bonus will be raised by another €50 per year. Thus, the bonus payable to those who reach retirement age but are less than 75 years old and who have paid more than one year but less than five years of contributions, will go up from €100 to €150, whilst the bonus for those with more than 5 years' worth of contributions will go up from €200 to €250 per annum.</p> <p>Status: Completed and Ongoing</p>	<p>The number of persons who benefited from this measure up to December 2016 amounted to 12,763.</p>
	<p>Housing for Persons with disability</p> <p>Through this project, the first ten residential homes in the community for disabled persons will be developed. This project will be spread over a period of three years, ending in May 2018. Training has also taken place for all staff working with persons with a disability.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>Following the Government commitment to open 10 residential homes for persons with a disability the following refers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Siggiewi: Constructed and operational with 4 clients benefiting; • Dar il-Fjuri: Constructed but still not operational; • NGO Zurrieq Shalom Home: Constructed and operational with 4 clients benefiting; • Dar il-Wens Kalkara Home: Constructed and is nearly operational. The home is awaiting signing of contract; • NGO New House Arka: Constructed and operational with 4 clients benefiting; • Marsa Home: Awaiting MEPA Permits, with the tender already issued; • Zabbar Home: Being constructed with works estimated to end in May 2017; • Pembroke Home: Being Constructed with works estimated to end in June 2017; • Kirkop Home: Awaiting MEPA Permits; • Żurrieq Home: Awaiting MEPA Permits; • Qrendi Home: Awaiting MEPA Permits.
	<p>Appointment of Persons with a Disability on Government Boards/Committees/Commissions</p> <p>Government has adopted the concept of user involvement. Every public institution, and in particular those that provide direct services to persons with a disability, need to have a structure in place that engages the users of the respective services in the design, planning, implementation and evaluation of the programmes provided. Through this measure, the voice of disabled persons in the country's governance will be strengthened while at the same time concrete activism is being promoted among disabled persons. This measure is to be implemented across all Ministries.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>The law regulating persons with a disability to be statutorily seated on a number of boards was endorsed by the Maltese Parliament, and is currently in its implementation phase.</p> <p>Moreover, the following legislative changes have been carried out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Guardianship Law is currently being implemented; - the Social Enterprise Law will be discussed in Parliament; - the Equal Opportunities Law has been amended and is passed through Parliament in April 2016. The Commission was restructured to cater for the changes made in the Equal Opportunities Act (EOA) and be more efficient; - a law on the autonomy of Aġenzija Sapport is being prepared; - the Autism Empowerment Act was passed through Parliament in April 2016; - UNCRPD Act is at Committee stage being discussed in Parliament; - Maltese Sign Language Act was passed through Parliament in March 2016 and the Maltese Sign Language Council was appointed; - Concession for Reserved Parking for Blue Badge Holders Act was passed through Parliament in 2016; - the Ministry for Finance will submit changes in the Trustees and Foundations Law marking another important benchmark in the disability sector. <p>The impact of this measure on persons with a disability are now increasingly more in touch with policies that are continuously being developed in this regard.</p> <p>The Commissioner for the rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) (ex-KNPD) has now a Commissioner for Persons with a Disability which took a more regulatory role. Sign language interpreters have also increased and sub-titling has been introduced as a pilot project in conjunction with Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) and the University of Malta (UoM).</p>

	<p>Repair and Embellishment works on the residences of Aġenzija Sapport</p> <p>Through this measure, Aġenzija Sapport residences for persons with disabilities will be upgraded and improved.</p> <p>To date embellishment works have started on 4 potential residential homes. In the case of Zabbar, Marsa and Pembroke homes the tendering process for structural works has been finalised and construction works are proceeding at a good pace.</p> <p>A new maintenance and special projects department was set up within the Agency in order to address better this measure.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>	<p>These repair and embellishment works aim to decrease the health and safety risks inside the premises; increase the well-being of the residents; bring the residences in conformity with the UNCPRD; and lead to better/practical use of space. These works have improved the quality of life of the 63 clients residing in them. The Siggiewi residence started operating and currently 4 clients are living there. More funds are awaited in order to start operating the Dar il Fjuri residence in Gozo.</p>
	<p>Embellishment Works in three Housing Estates</p> <p>This project involves the upgrade and enhancement of the common parts and surrounding areas of three Government/Housing Authority blocks in St. Paul's Bay, Paola and Senglea. This project has an allocated budget of € 600,000.</p> <p>Tenders were issued in 2014 and 2015 for the upgrading of Corradino Flats in Paola (Blocks A, B, C and D); Dar ir-Risq in Senglea (Blocks A1, A2, B1 and B2) and four blocks in Triq Erba' Mwieżeb in St. Paul's Bay. Works in Paola were finished in May 2016 whilst works in St. Paul's Bay and in Senglea were concluded in September 2016.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>Through this project, 83 units have been embellished. The enhancement of these blocks will have a positive social effect on the communities living in these Housing Estates and will also provide a better standard of living and a healthier environment to the residents.</p>
	<p>Policy on Integration</p> <p>The Government is working on an integration policy which should lead to a reduction in the difficulties posed by social exclusion and to improve the relationship between Maltese and foreign communities. Towards the end of 2015, the Directorate for Human Rights and Integration was set up within the MSDC.</p> <p>MSDC embarked on an EU funded project entitled 'Mind D Gap: Together we can make a difference'. The project led to the formulation of the framework document which is intended to shape the National Integration Strategy for Malta 2015 – 2020.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>The national strategy will promote human rights, equal opportunities and obligations for all, and amongst other things, it will promote diversity as a basic value necessary to achieving greater social cohesion.</p>
	<p>Retirement Home in Gozo</p> <p>Statistical trends (similar to Malta) indicate that Gozo is shifting towards an ageing population. Hence, a need is being felt for caring facilities within the community or long-term residence in order to provide for those instances where family members are not living in the community and/or have other commitments. Therefore, this service will provide residential care consisting of a physically and emotionally safe and secure environment to elderly persons who can no longer cope with living in their own homes. The addition of a special unit for dementia needs is currently being considered.</p> <p>The tender for the construction of the old people's home has been awarded. Construction works at the ground floor level are completed and works at first, second and third floor levels are at a very advanced stage. A call for tenders for mechanical and electrical installation is presently on the market and a tender for finishes is being finalised and will be sent to the Department of Contracts for vettjng in the coming days.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>This measure will improve the quality of life of elderly persons, including those with a disability, and will cater for the demand for residential care facilities. It will have indirect benefits on the economy such as more people being able to work, since they would not be constrained to give up their jobs in order to take care of these persons.</p>
	<p>Cost of Living Increase Allowance</p> <p>With this measure the full Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) will be paid to pensioners every 4 weeks; two-thirds with the weekly pension rate and one-third as a separate payment every week but in same 4-weekly payments.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>Approximately 89,000 beneficiaries will qualify for the full COLA rate.</p>
	<p>Full Widows' Pension</p> <p>A full widows' pension will be paid to those pensioners who were entitled to a retirement pension but had to renounce it on the death of their spouse. This measure will increase pension income and will compensate for contributions paid by the surviving spouse. Amendments to the Social Security Act will be carried out.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>Widow pensioners will be paid the full retirement pension received by their late spouse and not 5/6 of it. Thus, widows will have more income, leading to a better quality of life and a reduction in the possibility that they fall into poverty. Up to September 2016 a total of 2,761 widows have benefitted from this measure.</p>

	<p>Introduction of the Increased Carer's Allowance and Carer's Allowance [Formerly known as "Revision of Carers' Pension and Social Assistance for Carers"]</p> <p>During the months of November and December 2016 the Non-Contributory Directorate together with different stakeholders worked on a framework that was introduced on the 1st of January 2017. In this respect the Increased Carer's Allowance is subjected to the high dependency of the patient by using the Barthel Index or the Mini-Mental State Examination. Moreover, this allowance is not means tested and married persons can also apply. The payment of the Increased Carer's Allowance is €140.00 per week. On the other hand, the Carer's Allowance is subjected to the medium dependency of the patient by using the Barthel Index or the Mini-Mental State Examination. This allowance is means tested and paid at a maximum of €90.00 per week.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>Amalgamation of both benefits will result in an increase in the number of people who will continue to live in the community, thus reducing the possibility of being socially excluded.</p>
	<p>Pension to be awarded from the first day of retirement or death of spouse in the case of a widows' pension</p> <p>With this measure, pension will be awarded from the first day of retirement or death of spouse. This means that payment will be effected immediately and not from the following Saturday after either date of retirement or death of spouse.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>Beneficiaries will gain from 1 to 6 days of pension, since the first pay date will no longer be on a Saturday. This will reduce the possibility that pensioners fall into poverty. A total of circa 2,800 beneficiaries benefitted from this measure.</p>
	<p>Disability Pension</p> <p>The age pension rate will be paid to persons who are in receipt of the Disability Pension as soon as these reach the age of 60 without the need to submit an application. The number of persons who are already over the age of 60 years has been identified, and a letter will be sent to inform them that the pension rate will be changed without the need to apply for it. Beneficiaries who have attained the age of 60 during 2016 have also been identified. These beneficiaries have been informed with a different letter that their rate will be amended without the need to apply. Enhancements will be effected to the computerised system to increase the rate automatically on beneficiaries attaining the age of 60.</p> <p>Status: Completed and Ongoing</p>	<p>Pension will be adjusted automatically, thus reducing paperwork both for the pensioner as well as at the Department of Social Security (DSS). 288 beneficiaries benefitted from this measure during the year 2016.</p>
	<p>Changes in the means testing for Social Assistance purposes and entitlement</p> <p>This measure aims not to decrease the rate of social assistance when children forming part of the household start working, hence encouraging employment. This measure came into effect during January 2016.</p> <p>Status: Completed and Ongoing</p>	<p>Due to no deductions being effected in the social assistance, households will have more spending money and this will reduce the chances that they fall into poverty. This measure shall also encourage more people to get into the labour market. Circa 1,900 beneficiaries had their entitlement increased.</p>
	<p>Extension of Sickness Allowance</p> <p>The 'Sickness Allowance' will be paid to single persons who cannot work due to mental or terminal illness, and who live with their parents who are pensioners. Thus, this measure will increase the income of those sick persons who cannot work .n the definition of mental health and which types of mental health conditions can be assessed to eliminate any kind of abuse. The Social Security Act was successfully updated through the Budget Implementation Act in Parliament during 2016.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>This measure shall contribute to a better quality of life, since people suffering from such conditions will have less medical expenses.</p>
	<p>Creation of a Call Centre for Services</p> <p>With this measure a new call centre to improve the services provided to persons with a disability has been established. This call centre will provide information regarding all the services that the CRPD (ex-KNPD) offers in one place. It will also give access to the Equal Opportunities Act Compliance Unit.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>With this measure there will be an improved ease of access to information regarding services for persons with a disability and their families. There was a surge in the requested information and also in the reporting of abuse and discrimination in the Equal Opportunities Act Compliance Unit (EOCU), accessibility issues and services. An extra 7 employees were added to serve as customer care representatives in the new call centre. 3 employees are working in the accessibility team so to assist the general public with regard to accessible building environment, 2 additional members are now working at the EOCU where they receive reports of discrimination and abuses related to reserved parkings and blue badges and 2 new employees are working at the call centre to guide people re services provided by the commission and other services related to the disability sector. The Call centre is interlinked between 3 core sections of CRPD and operates from the same CRPD building. This measure was completed in April 2016.</p>
	<p>'Għaqal id-Dar, Hajja Aħjar'</p> <p>The programme has been successfully delivered in 12 communities in 2016 these being Dingli, Birgu, Ħamrun, Għarb, Paola, Mosta, Sliema, Birkirkara, Bormla, Zabbar, Xagħra and Kirkop with 225 regularly attending participants who have received a certificate of attendance (excluding the total number of participants still to be awarded a certificate of attendance for the last wave of the programme held in Birkirkara, Zabbar, Bormla and Xagħra). Since the launch of the programme in 2015, Għaqal id-Dar, Hajja Aħjar, has been delivered in 20 communities with 355 participants who attended regularly and received a certificate of attendance.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>Promotion was undertaken on various levels, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Media appearance of the NGO representative on TV and radio stations and coordination of the Facebook page of the programme. - Circulation of posters (email & printed) amongst the local networks and residents of the respective localities. - Promotion within LEAP and the FSWS contact points and networks and subsequent referral of interested participants. - Recipients of Social Security benefits registered as residing in the localities where the programme was to be held, received a letter informing them of the programme and encouraged them to apply.

	<p>Embellishment and Maintenance Works in Housing Estates</p> <p>Embellishment and maintenance works will be carried out in 3 housing estates in Hamrun, Ta' Ġiorni and Pembroke. For this purpose, a tender will be sent to the Department of Contracts for vetting. Once the tender is published, an evaluation report will be drawn up, after which the contract of works will be finalised. Finally, the actual works will start being carried out.</p> <p>Progress until 31st December 2016</p> <p>-Repairs, upgrading and embellishment works at Okella Agius building, Hamrun commenced in September 2016. Progress of works has proceeded at a steady pace and is currently at 65%. Additional works have been found necessary during the course of works and approval of the Department of Contracts (DoC) has been requested.</p> <p>- Tender for embellishment works in Blocks A, B, E and F Ta' Ġiorni has been awarded and contract of works signed in December 2016. Works have commenced and have reached 24% of the total project.</p> <p>- Tender for embellishment works in Blocks A5-A11, Pembroke has been awarded and contract of works signed in December 2016. Works are expected to commence in March 2017.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>Extensive works will be carried out on the roofs and the common parts at Hamrun and Ta' Ġiorni blocks. Works in Pembroke will include painting and plastering of façades, finishes and services in the common areas and renovation works in external areas around the blocks.</p>
	<p>Building New Housing Estates</p> <p>Several meetings have taken place between the Housing Authority, Department of Contracts, Malita Investment plc, European Investment Bank (EIB) and the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB), where a loan of €50 million with low rates of interest has now been approved for this project with an agreement with EIB.</p> <p>In the meantime, a new company with the name Housing Projects Management Unit (HPMU) has been set up to take over the responsibilities of the construction of these units. A tender for a framework agreement for excavation works of the sites involved has been issued and awarded. Excavation works on some of the sites will commence soon.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>This measure will see an increase in the number of HA units that will be used for social housing purposes.</p>
	<p>Increasing the grant of two existing Housing Authority schemes – (A) Subsidy on adaptation works in Residences occupied by owners or tenants</p> <p>The Housing Authority increased the grant of this scheme by €1,000 with the aim of raising the housing standard in Malta. This means that the maximum grant applicants can benefit from is now €11,000. Landlords, owners and tenants can apply under this scheme and the scheme is means-tested. In order to qualify, applicants should not possess more than €30,000 in assets whilst their income for the previous year of the application should not exceed the amount of €20,423. The grant is given upon presentation of fiscal receipts and also upon verification that the works were carried out. In order to qualify for this adaptation works grant, the property should have been built 15 years prior to the date of application.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>The Housing Authority's aim is to raise the housing standard in Malta, particularly in the case of low income earners. This measure came into force on January 2016. During 2016 there were 4 beneficiaries who benefited from this scheme.</p>
	<p>Increasing the grant of two existing Housing Authority schemes – (B) Subsidy on adaptation works related to dangerous structures in private dwellings held on lease or emphyteusis</p> <p>The Housing Authority is increasing the grant of this scheme by €1,000 to cover adaptation works related to dangerous structures in private dwellings held on lease or emphyteusis. Tenants of private properties leased prior to June 1995 can apply for a cash grant to carry out works related to dangerous structures. Under this scheme tenants can benefit from a maximum grant of €8,000. In order to benefit from this grant, tenants should not possess assets exceeding €25,000 and their income for the year preceding the date of application should not be more than €25,302. The applicant has to obtain the necessary permits for the removal of the dangerous structures and the grant is given upon presentation of fiscal receipts and confirmation that works were carried out. After the grant is issued, tenants bind themselves to live in the property for a period of ten years.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>The Housing Authority's aim is to raise the housing standard in Malta, particularly in the case of low income earners. This measure came into force on January 2016. During 2016 there were 3 beneficiaries who benefited from this scheme.</p>
	<p>Guaranteed National Minimum Level Pension</p> <p>This measure will guarantee a minimum level of contributory pension, including the cost of living bonus, of €140 per week to those pensioners who have yearly average contributions of 50. A pro-rata will be paid to those who have less than 50 but over 20. Payment will be effected accordingly.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>This measure will continue to strengthen the annual income of low to medium income contributory pensioners. The total number of beneficiaries is now circa 18,636.</p>
	<p>Child Credits</p> <p>This measure aims to increase the number of credited years' entitlement for pension purposes to those</p>	<p>It is expected that more mothers will return to the labour market after career breaks. This measure will also encourage more mothers to be gainfully</p>

	<p>persons who had to stop working due to children bearing and rearing reasons. This measure aims to reduce as much as possible the impact of career breaks taken for child bearing and rearing purposes. Amendments to the Social Security Act were carried out by April 2016.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	occupied.
	<p>Other Pensions Measure</p> <p>This measure increased the rate of pension of those persons who used to pay a high rate of social security contributions when they were employed, but then became self-employed with a lesser income with the consequence of having a lesser rate of pension. Pension rate are being assessed on the best income of a gainfully occupied person earned from employment rather than that earned from self-occupation, as long as these happen to be in the last 15 years before retirement age.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	This measure will contribute to a better quality of life since pension will be assessed on a higher income. Till the end of December 2016, 15 persons have benefitted from this measure but more are expected to benefit.
	<p>Drug Addicts Allowance</p> <p>An allowance will be given to all drug addicts who opt to undergo a rehabilitation programme irrespective of their or their family's income. This is due to the fact that more often than not, claimants do not have any financial resources of their own since all their money and also that of their families would have been used to buy drugs. This allowance was increased from a payment of €23.29 to €30.00 weekly. All beneficiaries were paid in the first January 2016 payment and the practice is ongoing.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	With this measure, payments effected to eligible claimants will put them in a better financial situation to care for themselves during the rehabilitation programme.
	<p>Carer at Home [Formerly known as "Live-in Carer – Pilot Project"]</p> <p>A pilot fund set up to help families who care for a dependent elderly who needs constant supervision.</p> <p>The scheme was launched in 2016 and implemented in January 2017. It has been renamed 'Carer at Home'. A series of amendments are being performed in response to the outcome of the pilot scheme.</p> <p>A pilot fund set up in 2016 to help families who care for a dependent older person who needs constant supervision. During 2016 the Government paid an annual maximum of €4,500 to pay part of the wages paid to qualified live-in carers employed on a full-time basis. This was increased to a max of €5,200 as from January 2017. This measure has been implemented. Although this pilot-project was initially offered to elderly persons who are already registered in a waiting list to enter elderly homes, a serious of amendments where performed during 2016. The scheme is now a stand-alone community service offered to dependant older persons (60+) who live in the community who employ a qualified carer. Dependency level is confirmed through assessments performed by CommCare.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	It is estimated that around 160 elderly persons will benefit from this fund.
New/updated commitments in relation to the 2020 targets (per target)		
Employment	<p>Card for the Construction Industry</p> <p>The skills card project encourages workers to further their training and have their skills certified and recognised. The process in attaining the skills card is carried out in cooperation with MCAST and Jobplus. In five years time, all trades will be introduced and the skills card will become mandatory for all those workers entering a building industry. Health and safety is pinnacle behind the skills card project and this measure will lead to the elimination of all existing abuse, reduce the exploitation of employees, and regulate the sector in a professional manner.</p>	It is expected that with this measure, all workers in the construction sector will have their skills recognised. This will help to reduce abuse and increase awareness at the place of work.
	<p>Charter on Employees Rights</p> <p>The objective of this measure was to publish a booklet which lists the rights and entitlements of employees when they are in employment. This Charter was published and distributed to all households in Malta and Gozo in April and May 2016.</p>	With the distribution of this Charter to all households in Malta and Gozo, more people have become aware of their rights and entitlements when they are in employment and this could indirectly encourage unemployed persons to enter the labour market. Moreover, the Charter outlines the procedure of redress in cases of breaches of employment rights. Thus the Charter is a useful tool for workers in precarious employment to take steps to redress their situation.
	<p>The Redevelopment of Ta' Qali Crafts Village</p> <p>The main aim of the redevelopment of the Ta' Qali Crafts Village is to assist Entrepreneurs and SMEs operating within the village and others which are expected to set up their new business once the project is complete. As noted above, the craft village operators will be manufacturing traditional Maltese goods and crafts. In order to support their manufacturing activities, the operators require raw materials from various local suppliers. Through such multiplier effect, the latter are expected to be</p>	This measure should result in nurturing the growth potential of SMEs at a regional, national and international level through the provision of infrastructure, access to finance as well as supporting services and capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets, and to engage in innovation processes.

	<p>supported by the proposed project. Moreover, since the number of tourists who visit the crafts village is expected to increase as a result of the project, various sectors of the tourism industry such as tour operators and transport providers will also be supported.</p> <p>Training for Employment</p> <p>It is a known fact that persons with low educational attainments are finding it increasingly harder to find employment, mostly due to a decreasing demand for the lower skilled jobs. According to CEDEFOP reports (2015) forecast for Malta the highest proportion of job opportunities, for the period 2013 to 2025, will accrue to individuals holding high qualifications. This means that new job opportunities for low-skilled jobs will decrease. This decrease partly counteracts the job openings through replacement demand, such that on the net, the total jobs created that require low qualifications are marginal, at an estimated figure of 10,000. According to this study, this contrasts to total (or net) job openings created that require high and medium level qualifications, these being closer to approximately 40,000 and 30,000 respectively. Therefore such schemes are even more relevant for the current and future labour market because they are tailor made for the needs of the lower skilled.</p> <p>This Project aims to facilitate the access to developing the knowledge, skills and competences of the working age population. The scope behind it is to offer training assistance to jobseekers needing to improve their skills to enter the labour market hence enhancing their employability and employment opportunities and to upgrade the existing skills of those individuals who wish to re-enter the labour market, find alternative employment and/or acquire new skills to meet the labour market demands. In the meantime under Training for Employment, from January 2016 until end January 2017, the corporation has placed 589 trainees within the Traineeship Scheme, 384 trainees within the Work Exposure Scheme and 72 within the Work Placement Scheme.</p> <p>The President's Trust Employment Initiative</p> <p>Some young people tend to fall out of the existing safety nets and remain not in training or employment. Very often these young people lack the confidence and motivation to engage into meaningful activities and require extra support until they stand on their own feet. Hence, during May 2015, the President's Trust was set up by the President of Malta in order to support such vulnerable children and young people facing particular challenges who are at risk of poverty and social exclusion. The initiatives and projects of The President's Trust are particularly focused on education, training, employment and psychosocial support and are implemented through a corporate social responsibility dimension.</p>	<p>This measure will provide unemployed persons, inactive persons and possibly job changers with the opportunity to further their existing skills in order to adapt to changing labour market requirements. In fact, the measure's objectives by the end of the project in 2020 are as follow:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To place 1,030 persons on the Work Exposure Scheme. - To place 1,470 persons on the Traineeship Scheme. - To place 150 persons on the Work Placement Scheme. <p>The aim of this measure is to assist, support and mentor vulnerable young people in order to get into employment. This shall be achieved through the assessment of their skills and difficulties, one to one mentoring and establishing individual goals in order to empower these individuals to aim for a brighter future.</p>
	<p>New Childcare Centre</p> <p>Government will open a new childcare centre in St Julian's Primary School to cater for children aged 0-5 living in the area. The centre will have an intake of approximately 40 children.</p>	<p>More women will be ready to enter into the labour market, and therefore increasing the female employment rate.</p>
<p>Research and Development</p>	<p>Set up of a Joint Innovation Centre (JIC)</p> <p>In April 2016, the Government of Malta and Huawei Technologies (Italia) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for strategic cooperation with the focus area being 'Safe City'. The initial term of the MoU is two years.</p> <p>Huawei's term 'Safe City' refers to technologies used for public safety in cities and surveillance management, and includes wired and wireless communications to carry video and video data traffic on Next Generation broadband platforms. Solutions typically include management systems used for dispatching and coordinating resources on the ground such as law enforcement and crime prevention agencies as well as emergency first responders. Such ecosystem can then be integrated with existing information systems used by such entities, and software applications can be developed to enrich functionality or create new innovative concepts within the area of Public Protection and Disaster Relief (PPDR).</p> <p>The MoU stipulated the setting up of a Joint Innovation Centre (JIC) in Malta such that local talent can be used to nurture expertise in this area using Huawei's underlying technology, carry out experimental development of Safe City applications, and conducting research on specific areas under the 'Safe City' umbrella.</p> <p>A Government-owned company is being set up to act as a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) to run JIC. This company will also take the concept of 'Safe City' beyond experimental development by way of coordinating field trials with a number of relevant entities such as the Police Force, the Civil Protection Department and the Armed Forces of Malta while also working with such entities at a later stage and other stakeholders to develop a national strategy for Next Generation Public Safety Communications Infrastructure. Furthermore a MoU will be signed between the SPV and the University of Malta such that the latter will gain access to the JIC platform to carry out research on this type of technology as</p>	<p>This measure aims at contributing to one of the five EU 2020 targets which entails more Research & Development and innovation in the economy combined with more efficient resources which make Malta more competitive and create jobs.</p>

	well.																			
	<p>Horizon 2020 and other schemes</p> <p>Through the Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST), Government will continue to assist local researchers to obtain the support they need in their work through Horizon 2020 and by means of other financial schemes. This measure will be carried out through a number of one-to-one meetings with potential participants, an information session to promote the programme to newcomers and through the organization of 3 Presidency conferences, preparations for which are progressing well.</p> <p>As part of its operations, and in fulfillment of its role as Horizon 2020 National Contact Organization, the Malta Council for Science and Technology (through the Horizon 2020 Unit) provides support to researchers from both public and private entities by giving specialised advice and guidance about the H2020 Programme. The National Contact Points (NCPs) identify opportunities for Maltese researchers in H2020 open calls and raise awareness through circulation of information and through information and promotional events. Support is provided at all stages, from proposal preparation and also during project implementation by providing assistance on financial reporting and any other administrative procedures as required by the researchers/entity. An Information session for newcomers is foreseen for the 2nd half of 2017.</p> <p>Through the support offered by the NCPs as described above, MCST aims to increase the number of researchers / organisations participating in Horizon 2020, increase the number of projects which include Maltese participants and increase the funding received from Horizon 2020. As at October 2016, Maltese entities have participated in a total of 69 projects and received a total of €13.5 million in EU funds as follows:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="492 806 1190 1066"> <thead> <tr> <th>Participants</th> <th>No. of projects</th> <th>Funding received in € million</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Higher education</td> <td>22</td> <td>4.78</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Public</td> <td>21</td> <td>3.27</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Private</td> <td>22</td> <td>5.26</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other</td> <td>4</td> <td>0.22</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>69</td> <td>13.53</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Participants	No. of projects	Funding received in € million	Higher education	22	4.78	Public	21	3.27	Private	22	5.26	Other	4	0.22	Total	69	13.53	<p>This measure is expected to have the following impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase the number of researchers / organisations participating in Horizon 2020. - Increase the number of projects which include Maltese participants. - Increase the funding received from Horizon 2020.
Participants	No. of projects	Funding received in € million																		
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	<p>MCAST Research Framework</p> <p>As a higher educational institution, MCAST is widening its portfolio and building solid grounds in Research and Innovation and is developing further internal research capacity to meet the demands of Government and added value industry. MCAST is therefore aiming to create a dynamic environment that encourages an active knowledge transfer between academics and students. Through this process, academics, students, and very often industrial stakeholders identify real shortcomings and conduct research with the aim of developing tangible solutions.</p> <p>Therefore, to facilitate this process, Government will be introducing a Research Framework to improve the level of teaching through relevant research and co-operation between students and industry as well as between MCAST and industry.</p>	<p>This measure should result in the setting up of a Research Committee and increase in Research related networking both local and foreign. It will also lead to more research publications and hopefully increasing numbers of lecturers and students participating in research-related activities.</p>																		
	<p>Maritime Proof of Concept</p> <p>This measure will help researchers and entrepreneurs to drive forward innovative ideas closer to commercialisation, ultimately leading to the creation of new businesses and commercial opportunities in our country.</p> <p>For such purpose, a fund of no more than € 100,000 will be created in order to encourage such researchers and entrepreneurs, who have creative and innovative ideas, to get the financial support needed to enable them to develop their ideas into new Maritime-related technologies, products, services and/or start-ups.</p> <p>They will work closely with the University of Malta Knowledge Transfer Office on steps to commercialise their technology and become members of the University TAKEOFF business incubator where they will be supported to start-up their company.</p>	<p>It is expected that between 5 and 10 researchers and entrepreneurs receive between € 5,000 and € 20,000 each in order to enable them to take their maritime-related technology or business idea one step further towards commercialisation.</p>																		
<p>Energy and Climate Change</p>	<p>To continue working on the Gas Pipeline Project which will connect Malta to the European Gas Network</p> <p>The Government of Malta will continue with the implementation of the Project of Common Interest PCI 5.19 relating to a connection to the trans-European natural gas Network via a gas pipeline with Sicily to deliver natural gas (NG) for electricity generation and other future market needs.</p>	<p>It is expected that this measure will increase Malta's competitiveness by promoting the further integration of the internal energy market. The project also contributes to have a more reliable and more secure energy supply and contributes to the reduction of emissions from the shipping sector.</p>																		

	<p>The objective of the measure in 2017 is to finalise the detailed studies to identify the route corridor of 1.2km width including basic design of the required infrastructure. The compilation of the required documentation to start the permitting process in both Malta and Italy including the identification of the potential environmental impacts are also being conducted as part of this study. Following completion of the study, the next step of the project is to launch the permit granting procedures in both Malta and Italy.</p>	
	<p>Communal Solar Farms</p> <p>The Government is committed to offer the opportunity for families who do not have access to a roof, to invest in PV Panels. A scheme was launched in October whereby households were able to invest in virtual PV ownership and shall benefit from revenue generated from investment in renewable energy projects by the Government of Malta.</p>	<p>A total of almost 1MWp of virtual PV capacity was made available for households and within few days, the scheme was fully subscribed.</p>
	<p>Transport Links</p> <p>This measure entails the development of maritime transport that will connect the main arteries with Valletta in a sustainable manner via a Public-Private Partnership. This project has been approved by UNESCO, and currently awaiting approval from the Superintendent Cultural Heritage.</p>	<p>This measure will facilitate the achievement of 27% energy efficiency contributing to the achievement of 20% energy savings by 2020 by the EU. This measure will reduce vehicular traffic and provide an alternative means of transport in a more sustainable manner. It will also contribute to Malta's obligation to reach Malta's non-obligatory Energy Efficiency (EE) target in the transport sector.</p>
	<p>Green Public Procurement</p> <p>The objective of this measure is to present and adopt a 2nd National Action Plan on Green Public Procurement (GPP) in Malta to contribute towards moving a greener and more circular economy. This measure will provide the tools for contracting authorities to mainstreaming greening tools into their procurement processes across Government.</p> <p>The Directorate for the Environment and Climate Change, MSDEC, has engaged the services of experts to conduct a series of qualitative and quantitative analysis to this effect. Furthermore, a series of consultation sessions have been organised together with MEUSAC in November 2016. During these sessions stakeholders have been invited to voice their concerns and get accustomed to the new technical specifications, on the implementation of the new GPP criteria for sanitary tapware, toilets and urinals, indoor lighting, electrical and electronic equipment used in the health care sector, computers and monitors as well as office building design, construction and management. A series of consultation sessions have also been held with Contracting Authorities such as Foundation for Tomorrow's Schools, Building Regulations Office, Ministry for Transport and Infrastructure, Central Procurement Supplies Unit, Housing Authority, OPM-Energy, MITA and Transport Malta.</p> <p>The second NAP is set to be more ambitious in terms of targets but still adopts a realistic and incremental approach. However, the NAP is set to go beyond setting higher targets for the forthcoming 3 years, giving a mandatory status to additional product and service groups and introducing GPP criteria for additional sectors within the NAP. The second NAP's prioritisation is to adapt a more comprehensive approach for public procurement procedures. In fact the plan includes 9 new initiatives in order to effectively address this vision; greening other procurement instruments, greening award criteria, pooling of advisory experts, training and constant refresher courses, incentivising local councils through award schemes, greening EU funding, introducing green finance, post procurement auditing and enhancing the role of the GPP coordinator.</p>	<p>The expected outcome of this measure is enhanced mainstreaming of the GPP functions into contracting authorities.</p>
	<p>Tal-Linja Card - 18 Year Olds</p> <p>Anyone who turns 18 in 2017 can travel by bus, for free, for a year. Transport Malta will refund Tal-Linja credit consumed during the previous month, each month for a year. If, for example, a holder uses €20 in Tal-Linja credit in February, in the beginning of March, Transport Malta will have € 20 credit reinstated on his or her Tal-Linja Card. The scheme starts on the client's 18th birthday and ends exactly before his or her 19th. Any individual can benefit up to a maximum of €312 in credit refunds during the year. The Authority will refund credit for all types of routes and trips offered by Malta Public Transport; day trips, night trips and special routes. Ta-Linja Card holders who turn 18 in 2017 do not need to apply. Holders will automatically start benefitting on their birthday. Non-Tal-Linja Card holders need to apply for the Tal-Linja card to benefit.</p>	<p>This measure should encourage youths reaching the age of 18 years to use scheduled public transport as their mode of transport and to continue using this mode of transport post the age of 18 years. It is hoped that these youth continue to use this mode of transport even after obtaining their driving license.</p>
	<p>Promotion of Electro mobility 2017</p> <p>Electric cars remain more expensive than conventional vehicles and therefore the aim is to encourage consumers to consider the purchase of such vehicles.</p> <p>The scheme has the following conditions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> €8,000 upon registering a new electric category M1 or N1 vehicle when scrapping a used vehicle; €5,000 upon registering a new or used electric category M1 or N1 vehicle (without scrapping 	<p>This measure aims to promote the use of clean and energy efficient vehicles and to remove older cars from circulation.</p>

	<p>another vehicle);</p> <p>c. €2,000 upon registering a new or used electric quadricycle (without scrapping another vehicle).</p> <p>The grant above for (a) applies only in conjunction with the de-registration/scrapping of another internal combustion engine-propelled vehicle of category M1 or N1 which is at least 10 years old from the year of manufacture. For (b) and (c), the second-hand vehicle must not be older than 24 months and must not have clocked more than 12,000km.</p> <p>Range Extender Electric Vehicles are also being considered for this scheme and must have a minimum of 80km range on pure electricity to qualify for the grants.</p> <p>Private individuals and NGOs are entitled to purchase one vehicle/quadricycle under this scheme. On the other hand, a registered company, partnership, cooperative society or a registered self-employed, as defined in Government Notice of 15th January 2016, is entitled to a maximum grant of €200,000, which can be in the form of a combination of different types of vehicles.</p>	
	<p>Grant Scheme on the Purchase of New Environment Friendly Vehicles 2017</p> <p>This scheme is aimed at increasing the uptake of more environmentally friendly vehicles while encouraging consumers to scrap their conventional vehicles.</p> <p>The scheme is subject to the following conditions:</p> <p>a) €900 grant when registering a new Category M1 vehicle with CO₂ emission levels up to 100g/km, while at the same time de-registering a vehicle in the same category;</p> <p>b) €700 when registering a new Category M1 vehicle with CO₂ emission levels between 101 and 130g/km, while at the same time de-registering a vehicle in the same category;</p> <p>c) €3,000 when registering a new Category M1 Plug in Hybrid vehicle with CO₂ emissions 1-50g/km, while at the same time de-registering a vehicle in the same category;</p> <p>d) €2,000 when registering a new Category M1 Hybrid Vehicle with CO₂ emissions between 50-65g/km.</p> <p>Each person is only eligible for one grant under this scheme.</p>	<p>It is expected that this measure will lead to an increase in the uptake of more environment friendly new or hybrid vehicles, while scrapping conventional, more polluting vehicles.</p>
	<p>Sustainable transport plan for Government entities</p> <p>Government entities with more than 50 employees will be identified and requested to prepare a sustainable transport plan. This plan will be launched by May 2017.</p>	<p>A number of employees will be making use of more sustainable transport, but cannot be quantified at this stage.</p>
<p>Education</p>	<p>Recognition for prior learning</p> <p>As of 2017, the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) will be collaborating with international entities to launch an initiative which will benefit workers in the tourism and hospitality industry by recognising their skills and knowledge. Workers, whom are willing to further their studies, will be offered a skills and knowledge recognition process which will evaluate the learning obtained through their working years. With the Recognition for Prior Learning (RPL), individuals seeking further education shall obtain an evaluation of their current state of knowledge, which in turn shall identify tuition which would be relevant to the individual to achieve accredited certification.</p>	<p>With this measure employees already engaged in the industry will now be able to have their skills and experience taken into account when applying to further their studies. This will lead to more qualified employees engaged in the tourism and hospitality sector.</p>
	<p>Bachelor degree with honours in collaboration with international entities by September 2017</p> <p>The Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) is currently collaborating with international entities to offer bachelor degrees with honours related to the tourism and hospitality sector. These degrees will be launched within the second quarter of 2017. Furthermore, the Institute is currently discussing further degrees with other institutions to be able to provide more courses with higher levels of education.</p>	<p>It is expected that with this measure there will be an increase in the number of students who reach higher level of education in this sector.</p>
	<p>Infrastructure and WIFI access in schools</p> <p>The majority of the schools networks have introduced on a piecemeal approach. Their use was limited and mostly utilised for internet access. Various sporadic installations were made to accommodate separate needs such as telephony, public address systems, CCTV and other low voltage solutions in order to accommodate the school needs. In most cases, the 'Main Distribution Facility' (computer room) was a discarded area with no security or protection provided. Therefore, Government is committed to improve infrastructure and WIFI access in schools.</p>	<p>A refurbish network which will carry and support all schools ICT requirements including data, voice, video and other management and services which today are being provided sporadically and managed by crises.</p>
	<p>Replace older PCs</p> <p>Government will replace all PCs which have been in use for more than 8 years in primary school classes.</p>	<p>The impact of this measure will be a refreshed environment which enhance the utilization of technology and thus contribute to positive learning outcomes.</p>

	<p>Social Fund for Students in Difficulty</p> <p>Government shall set up a fund in order to improve the quality of life of students experiencing difficulties, not only to assist them in material living but also in the fields of culture and sport. Government will collaborate with college principals and heads of schools to administer this fund in the best interests of students.</p>	<p>This measure intends to ameliorate the life of students coming from low socio- economic backgrounds with a view to addressing basic educational needs and resources to promote the love for reading as required in order to ensure quality education experience. Hence the beneficiaries of this measure are learners from 3 years up to 16+ living in families that are in or on the verge of poverty.</p> <p>Overall the effects of this measure should be to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Provide high quality education to learners from low socio-economic backgrounds; Ameliorate the education experience of learners from low socio-economic backgrounds by adequately addressing their needs; Promote social just and equity measures that help to minimize the effects of social exclusion and poverty; Reduce the number of early school leavers among secondary students; Improve school attendance of such learners; Instill a love for reading through the development of a home-library.
	<p>Primary School Extension in Rabat, Malta</p> <p>The present Primary School at Rabat operates from two different buildings. This project involves the construction of an extension to one of the school buildings, making it possible for the school to operate from one building. This will enable the Education Division to provide better educational facilities to the students. The school will cater for 400 students.</p>	<p>Education resources for primary education in Rabat will be gathered under one roof. This will result in more efficiency and better service to children attending the school.</p>
	<p>Educational Facilities for Children with Disabilities Who Cannot Attend Mainstream Educational Facilities</p> <p>The present educational facilities for students with multiple disabilities at the Guardian Angel Resource Centre at Hamrun and the San Miguel Primary Education Resource Centre at Pembroke are inadequate for today's needs. Investment will be made to extend and refurbish the educational facilities at the Guardian Angel Resource Centre and replace the San Miguel Primary Education Resource Centre.</p>	<p>This measure will result in new and modern facilities for students with disabilities.</p>
	<p>Partnership with other foreign Universities for training in the pedagogy of vocational subjects</p> <p>Government will enter into agreements with local and foreign universities to provide training for teachers on the pedagogy of vocational subjects. This will enable educators to teach vocational subjects at secondary level.</p>	<p>This measure will have the following impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educators participate in relevant professional development. Collaboration with educational institutions to develop professional development that address the needs of the educators in the implementation of the Education Act and the aims as set by education strategy. <p>The very long-term benefits of this measure should be the reduction of Early School Leaving and addressing of the Skills Gap as advised by the Commission.</p>
	<p>Investment in Maritime Courses</p> <p>Government shall invest in courses and services in the maritime sector in collaboration with strategic partners as well as in new resources for the Institute of Creative Arts.</p>	<p>This measure will have the following impacts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Up-skilling of Participants who are already in related or unrelated maritime employment by providing them with further possibilities to further their study. Participants gaining a qualification /certification in the maritime sector. Equipped participants with new skills as to empower them to move from one sector to another.
	<p>High Quality Industry-based Apprenticeship</p> <p>The apprenticeship reform is now well underway and the number of apprentices and companies involved in the apprenticeship scheme has increased rapidly with over 1,000 apprentices for the year 2016-2017 and over 900 companies interested to offer apprenticeship sponsorship.</p> <p>However the need to continue to invest within the development of a high quality reform is essential in order to meet the requirements of industry and tackle the existing skills gap and skills mismatch. Therefore, Government will develop vocational work-based competences and implement new apprenticeship and work-based learning legislation.</p>	<p>This measure should result in a further increase on the number of companies offering high-quality apprenticeships in an industry-based environment.</p>
	<p>Strengthening services offered by the National Libraries and the National Literacy Agency</p> <p>Government shall continue to work in favour of literacy through the enhancement of services offered by public libraries and the National Literacy Agency. At the same time, two new centres will be opened</p>	<p>The overall purpose of this measure is to promote and enhance lifelong and life wide, high quality literacy practices among children, youths, adults, third country nationals and persons with learning disabilities as stipulated in the National Literacy Strategy for All (2014).</p>

	offering the Nwar Family Literacy Programme.	
	<p>National Curriculum Centre in Gozo</p> <p>Government shall open another National Curriculum Centre in Sannat, Gozo. This centre will offer a number of high quality literacy/educational resources for Gozitan literacy educators and the general public. This centre will be equipped with around 1,700 books and resources. In the same year, the centre will start offering reading for fun sessions.</p>	Through the opening of this new centre, Gozitan literacy educators and families of pupils in need of literacy support programmes will have greater access to literacy/educational books and resources.
	<p>Eligibility for supplementary assistance</p> <p>Government is revising upwards the stipulated thresholds of student income with respect to their eligibility for supplementary assistance in order to better assist families with low income and students facing social and other problems.</p> <p>The previous thresholds being used for Supplementary Grants were: €11,900 - Family Rate €8,900 - Single Rate €9,100 - Single Parent Rate</p> <p>The following are the revised thresholds for the granting of Supplementary Grants, as per Budget 2017 and applicable as from January 2017: €12,700 - Family Rate €9,100 - Single Rate €10,500 - Single Parent Rate</p>	This measure should serve as a further incentive to students from low-income families or students facing certain hardship cases, including disability to further their studies to post-secondary and tertiary level.
	<p>Stipends for students following the ALP+ course</p> <p>As from this academic year, students who turn sixteen and continue their studies or training at the Alternative Learning Programme (ALP) in Paola at Level 3 of the Malta Qualifications Framework in Hospitality and Customer Care and/or Welding and Fabrication, which is being offered in the ALP+ Programme will also become eligible for the award of Stipends and Grant.</p>	<p>This measure will put the said students in par with other students attending similar courses and which are already deemed eligible to receive the Students' Maintenance Grants.</p> <p>To date, 26 students have applied for Students' Maintenance Grants under this institution. These students' applications were processed and approved from the beginning of the academic year as a further incentive to these students who are following these applied courses.</p>
	<p>University of Malta Capital Projects</p> <p>Works will continue on capital projects undertaken by the University of Malta including the extension of the Material Engineering Lab and the Mathematics and Physics buildings, a building for Post Doc centre, a multi-religion building, and the renovation of the campuses in Valletta and the Junior College.</p>	<p>This measure is expected to have the following impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mathematics and Physics - Aims to provide further learning spaces and offices for staff to cater for the increased demand within the sciences sector • Materials Engineering Lab extension - This is part of the whole Engineering Labs and Postdoc complex project which is envisaged to be partly funded through ERDF. The aim is to transfer the current labs to this facility and modernising the equipment. • Post-doc building - This building and facilities is targeted towards providing facilities for Postdoc research and its support. • Renovation of the Junior College – The Junior College is in dire need of refurbishment. Therefore, Government is committed itself to such refurbishment.
POVERTY	<p>Reform of the methodology outlined in Chapter 368 of the laws of Malta regarding the transfer of a vehicle where an exemption of registration tax pertaining to persons with disability was awarded</p> <p>The measure seeks to change the methodology used in calculating the residual tax to be settled in cases where a vehicle that was exempt from registration tax (disability exemptions) is transferred to a person not eligible for such exemption. The change will see a move from utilizing fluctuating market values to establish tax due to an equal yearly apportionment of the tax.</p>	The change was sought after a number of anomalies were observed where due to changing factors in market values, certain vehicles appreciated in value causing an unfair distortion in the tax payable upon transfer to a new owner. It is expected that no further anomalies or unfair situations arising in the case of transfer of vehicles that were exempted from registration tax will be reported.
	<p>Incentives for employers to set up private pensions</p> <p>Government will give fiscal benefits for employers linked to voluntary private pension plans at the work place.</p>	This measure will result in an increase in the number of pension schemes.
	<p>Incentives for the purchase of property in Gozo</p> <p>Persons who buy residences in Gozo will benefit from a reduction in stamp duty, from 5% to 2%. This applies to those entering into a promise of sale agreement during 2017, registered with the Inland</p>	This measure will result in an increase in the number of residences sold in Gozo.

	Revenue Department till the 31st December 2017, and where the final contract is concluded during the course of 2018.	
	<p>Elimination of gender discrimination in pension rates</p> <p>Amendments to the computerised system have been carried so that the same rates are paid to male and female pensioners.</p>	The re-assessment to award female pensioners the same rates as males is still ongoing and latest estimates show that a total of 1,800 female pensioners will benefit from this measure.
	<p>Disability Pension Reform</p> <p>This reform seeks to introduce a three tier payment system according to the degree of disability. The aim is to issue payments to those who cannot work and thus fall in the first tier and to those persons who have a missing lower or upper limb falling into the third tier. At the moment, payments are effected to those persons falling in the second tier and whose disability falls within the Social Security Act and who are working or are able to work. As a result of this measure and following Parliament approval, amendments to the Social Security Act will be carried out to include persons falling into the first and third tier. It is imperative to point out that payment of the Increased Severe Disability Assistance (first tier) is of €120 per week whilst the payment for the Disability Assistance (third tier) is means tested and can be up to € 76.60 per week.</p>	It is expected that with this measure there will be an improvement in the way of living of persons with a severe disability (first tier) that prevents them from working. Thus this will reduce the risk of such persons falling into poverty.
	<p>Free Medical Aid for Disabled Pensioners</p> <p>This measure aims to extend the renewal period of free medical aid to one year instead of the current three months period to persons with a disability who qualify for such a benefit. A person who is the head of household shall be entitled to such free medical aid when he satisfies the conditions set out in the Social Security Act. As specified in the Act, free medical aid is the supply of such drugs, spectacles, dentures and other prosthetic aids as in the opinion of the Chief Government Medical Officer are indicated in his case according to protocols which may be issued by him from time to time and are available.</p>	It is expected that this measure will lessen the hardship and distress caused by the fact that disabled pensioners are currently renewing their application every 3 months.
	<p>Streamline of the means test for free medical aid</p> <p>This measure aims to streamline the capital threshold means test to be the same as the non-contributory benefits means test. This measure will increase the capital threshold for married and single beneficiaries, thus more persons will qualify for such a benefit.</p>	More persons will be entitled for free medical aid. This measure shall improve the lives of persons with low income who are in need of regular medicines.
	<p>Domiciliary respite service for carers</p> <p>This scheme will be offered with the aim to aid those carers who, in an informal way, take care of a dependent person at home. With the introduction of this service, these carers shall receive a week of rest every six weeks with a maximum of 3 weeks of rest in a period of one year. Furthermore, a variety of modalities for service provision shall be offered to meet the needs of diverse service users, therefore, enhance uptake for this new service. It is expected that this service will be launched during Q1 2017. Data collected for services provision between March and July 2017 will be analysed and a report will be compiled accordingly. The procurement process for the first phase of the new service is at an advanced stage. Standard of Procedures and back office administration are complete. This service will be maintained during the remaining months of the year after the tender is awarded with the specifications based on the outcome of the first six months of the year. Any adjustments to the scheme will be made accordingly.</p>	<p>It is expected that this measure will have the following benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give respite to the carer of a dependent person. • Reduce informal carer stress. • Aid the informal carer in the provision of care of the older person in the circumstances when the informal carer is passing through health difficulties. • Replace the informal carer in cases when the carer requires urgent or elective admission to hospital. • Ensure these carers are not socially excluded and receive the adequate respite. • 5,500 hours of service given to the community.
	<p>Co-Parenting Skills Programme</p> <p>Scientific evidence and professional experience show that if not managed well, parents' marital separation leaves negative effects on their children especially those who are still developing their personal identity.</p> <p>A pilot project will be undertaken to help these children go through the experience of their parents' marital separation in a way that it does not affect negatively their psychosocial development.</p> <p>In Q1 2017, meetings will be held with the Judiciary and Mediation Services to discuss related procedures including that regarding referrals. Persons involved in the project will be trained accordingly. A draft programme will be drawn up based on the outcome of the discussions and training. This programme will be continuously improved during the duration of the pilot project. It is expected that the project will be implemented in April 2017. The first potential beneficiaries will be identified and contacted the following month. The implementation of this project will continue till September 2017, after which an evaluation of the project will be conducted.</p>	<p>The expected outcomes of this project are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Fewer traumas in children who are going through their parents' marital separation. (ii) Less anxiety levels in separating parents while performing their co-parenting responsibilities during and after marital separation.

	<p>A new Day Centre for persons with disability in Sliema</p> <p>In March 2017, a new Day Centre was opened in Sliema and officially inaugurated by the Government. The objective of this Day Centre is to meet the needs and offer service to a bigger number of persons with disability. This centre will offer training to persons with a disability to better their prospects of entering the labour market.</p>	<p>Thus far, 10 services users are making use of the centre on a weekly basis. It is expected that at full capacity, 50 persons with a disability will be trained at the day centre together with another 150 individuals who care for those persons and other persons with a disability who are not attending the centres. At the moment, Government is still working on the recruitment of the remaining support workers and professionals and on the transport component. Furthermore, training has also started but only in relation with clients. In the coming weeks, the disabled persons' parents and guardians will be also be rolled in.</p>
	<p>Increase in the Rent Subsidy and widen the criteria on eligibility on Rent Payable by Tenants to Private Landlords</p> <p>The Housing Authority (HA) intends to increase the rent subsidy given to its clients who are renting a property from the private sector. In order to be able to reach a wider spectrum of beneficiaries, the HA will be extending the criteria by which families would be eligible for such a subsidy.</p> <p>The maximum rent subsidy given by the Authority is to be increased from €1,000 to €2,000 per annum. Whilst the maximum income earned by an applicant to qualify for this subsidy was of €18,514.80, under this new scheme the maximum income was increased to € 23,000 per annum. The maximum assets applicants should possess were also increased from €10,000 to €23,300. Applicants have to be the recognised tenants of the property being rented as their ordinary residence.</p> <p>This will help these clients with low income to finance the payment of the rent being paid to private landlords.</p>	<p>The Authority is aware of the financial burden the Maltese families are facing in paying rent from the private sector following the increase in rents across the island.</p> <p>This increase in subsidy will help these tenants financially in managing their rent. It is also envisaged that this measure will decrease the demand for social accommodation. It is also envisaged that an additional 1,400 households will benefit from this initiative.</p>
	<p>Revision of Minimum Rent on Government/Housing Authority rented Housing</p> <p>With this measure the social housing minimum rent for the renewal contracts will not continue to increase automatically every 3 years as per the Rent Civil Code established in 2009. Furthermore, eligible beneficiaries will be refunded the 'overpaid' rent from 2013 till 2016. Social housing residential units will no longer be treated as privately rented apartments due to the social environment that such tenants live in.</p>	<p>It is expected that with this measure all tenants will be in conformity with the rent amounts established in 2013.</p>
	<p>Consultations with the social partners on the introduction of paid special medical leave to employees diagnosed with cancer</p> <p>Consultations with the social partners are being proposed on the proposal of introducing paid special medical leave, in addition to the statutory sick leave, to employees who are diagnosed with cancer and who are undergoing treatment or some form of cancer therapy. Consultations with all relevant stakeholders are necessary so that the full implications of such a measure could be established and evaluated.</p> <p>Between January and February 2017 internal consultations have initiated both with the Department of Health and relevant associations. During March 2017, concrete proposals would be drafted based on the internal consultations. During April 2017, these proposals would be presented to the Employment Relations Board (ERB) for further discussions. During May 2017, a Cabinet memo would be prepared encompassing the results and proposals following the consultations.</p>	<p>After the consultations and study would have been concluded, recommendations would be formulated and presented to Cabinet.</p>
	<p>Automatic access to maintenance grants including supplementary grants for students with disabilities and those living in Homes</p> <p>Students with disabilities as well as students residing in Church homes and conservatories, among others, will henceforth be automatically eligible for maintenance grants, including the supplementary assistance. Therefore, such persons would benefit from increased financial aid if they decide to further their education.</p>	<p>Students with disabilities and those residing in Church homes and conservatories would also be encouraged to further their studies and find increased financial support hence improving their future living standards. Currently, Aġenzija Żgħażaġh has 143 students eligible for stipend, 135 being also eligible for the Supplementary Maintenance Grant. 26 application of students with a disability and 5 students residing at Church homes and conservatories have already been approved.</p>
	<p>Government Savings Bonds for Pensioners</p> <p>As a result of the accommodative policies implemented by the European Central Bank over the past years, sovereign bond yields and the interest rates offered by banks on their financial products declined considerably. This meant that pensioners who typically invest their past savings in government stocks and financial product to supplement their pension experienced a sharp decline in their disposable income.</p>	<p>The objective of this measure is to offer a five-year fixed rate non-marketable financial product for persons turning 62 years old this year or older that offers a higher interest rate than that being offered by the private sector/market in the current low interest environment.</p>

The following measures have been completed. However, given that they are still ongoing they are not being included along with the other measures which are still being implemented but are being listed below for reference purposes:

- Increasing the maternity leave benefit rate.
- Increasing the maternity benefit rate for self-occupied women.
- Extending maternity leave benefit in cases of adoption of children.

- Measure to assist the spouses of residents in State-Financed Residential Services.
- Full pension for employed widows.
- Pensioners whose pension does not exceed the national minimum wage will not be taxable.
- Paying of missing social security contributions.
- Full disability pension.
- Eliminating Tax on transfer "causa mortis" for disabled persons