

Table 2: Reporting table on national Europe 2020 targets<sup>1</sup>

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	Estimated impacts of the measures (qualitative and/or quantitative)
<b>National Europe 2020 headline targets</b>		
National employment target (70%)	<p><b>The Free Childcare Scheme</b></p> <p>The Free Childcare Scheme in Malta is for children between the ages 3 months to 3 years. Children attending childcare have the opportunity to interact through play and other activities. To help achieve a more successful childcare scheme, staff members are supported with ongoing professional development to enhance their skills.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>	<p>The Free Childcare Scheme is offered as an active labour market measure as it targets parents/guardians who are in employment or pursuing further education.</p> <p>As at end December 2018, a significant increase was recorded and a total of 131 registered childcare centres were benefitting from the scheme. Since the start-up of the scheme in April 2014 until December 2018, a total of 15,834 children have benefitted from this service.</p>
	<p><b>Programmes outside School Hours</b></p> <p><b>Klabb 3-16</b></p> <p>This after-school care service within the school setting is provided in 28 localities. It runs throughout the academic year from Monday to Friday between 2.30pm and 6.00pm and during school holidays from 7.30am to 5.30pm. This service is provided to children attending State, Church or Independent schools. Working parents can take advantage of a lower rate charged for after-school services of Klabb 3-16.</p> <p>The service is provided by a team of professional staff. Children benefit from a planned programme of activities where they do their homework and take part in, amongst others, the preparation of healthy food, arts and physical activities.</p> <p><b>Skolasajf</b></p> <p>Skolasajf, is organised by the FES, offers non-compulsory education during the summer months for children between 3 and 16 years of age. The service is provided at 34 centres between 8.30am to 12.30pm. Students can benefit from a healthy student-teacher personalised relationship as Skolasajf provides a break from more structured school-year learning. Skolasajf can also improve school attendance as students will not find it difficult to attend school when the academic year restarts.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>	<p><b>Klabb 3-16</b></p> <p>At the beginning of academic year 2018/2019, registrations for Klabb 3-16 amounted to 2,483, an increase in demand of 715 compared to the same period in the previous year. Following a market research exercise launched by the FES, in September 2018, the service was extended to Mqabba and Gzira. As at December 2018, the number of registered children was 3,144, of which 2,126 students attend regularly.</p> <p><b>Skolasajf</b></p> <p>During summer 2018, the Skolasajf service catered for over 12,201 users and out of these, 941 used the Klabb 3-16 service in the morning and 1,181 used the Klabb 3-16 service in the afternoon. 201 children attended the bridge holidays between 10<sup>th</sup> September and 20<sup>th</sup> September 2018.</p>
	<p><b>Revision of the Law regulating Industrial and Employment Relations</b></p> <p>The Legal Notice on the process of trade union recognition was published in the Government Gazette of 9th December 2016 while the Legal Notice on adoption leave was published on 10 October 2016.</p> <p>The Legal Notice for paid leave to employees who undergo the process of medically assisted procreation was published in the Government Gazette of 30th May 2017.</p> <p>Further proposals to amend Chapter 452 of the Laws of Malta and its subsidiary instruments are in the latter stages of adoption – In August 2018, four new regulations were announced, regarding itemised payslips, annual leave, transfer of business and temporary work. In December 2018, two of these, namely the itemised payslip and the annual leave regulations, were amended subsequent to further consultations with the social partners. Additional consultations are currently underway with regard to the temporary agency work amendment, as well as on the amendments being proposed for the Employment and Industrial Relations Act.</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"> <li>- better and effective regulations governing the rights of workers;</li> <li>- a target review of the current Act, making it more relevant to today's needs;</li> <li>- Overtime Regulations;</li> <li>- amendment in relation to disciplined forces: to provide more protective rights and representation by Unions in support of collective bargaining for better working conditions;</li> <li>- with regard to adoption leave, it is expected that this will lead to a better quality of life while ensuring a smooth adoption process.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Engagement of Labour Inspectors and other Staff</b></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.</p> <p>Status: Completed</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>

<sup>1</sup> Measures which were marked as 'Completed' or 'Completed and ongoing' in previous NRPs do not feature in the 2019 NRP.

	<p><b>Card for the Construction Industry</b></p> <p>The purpose of the Skill Card is to have the skills of construction workers certified and recognised, to encourage workers to further their training and also to enhance the public perception of the building industry.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>Until the end of December 2018, a total of 1,747 students have attended a health and safety awareness course in the construction industry and have been issued a certificate. Furthermore, a total of 795 Skill Cards have been issued.</p> <p>The first trades in which Skill Cards have been issued are tile layers, assistant electricians, plumbers and plasterers and painters. Brick Laying has now also been added. Skill Cards for Professionals – Architects, Mechanical and Electrical Engineers, Draughtsmen and drivers of heavy equipment have also been issued.</p>
	<p><b>The Redevelopment of Ta' Qali Crafts Village</b></p> <p>The construction and finishing of an Incubation Centre will host the offices of the Ta' Qali Artisan Village Foundation and will provide lecturing (workshops) and conference facilities. The construction of a MakerLab will also provide lecturing (workshops) facilities for innovation in the traditional crafts.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>Both Centres will directly contribute to Government's commitment, as documented in the Partnership Agreement, to "invest in the provision of facilities in Malta and Gozo for SMEs and support the development of incubation spaces, creative services hubs as well as units to encourage the development of the traditional crafts and artisan sectors" (p.102).</p>
	<p><b>New Childcare Centres</b></p> <p>The Government is continuing to invest in a number of new childcare centres. In October 2018, a new childcare centre in Żebbuġ was opened. In 2019 Government will be investing in another four new childcare centres in Marsacscala, St. Julian's, Qawra and Floriana.</p> <p>All children are offered a personalised service of quality care. Working in partnership with primary caregivers, each child is empowered to develop a lifetime of learning in a fun, caring and stimulating environment.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>Children coming from disadvantaged backgrounds whose parents are not eligible for free childcare are still provided access to childcare through childcare centres administered by the government through the Foundation for Education Service.</p> <p>The Żebbuġ Childcare Centre caters for 40 children.</p>
	<p><b>Enhancing the 'Get Into Programme'</b></p> <p>The 'Get Into Programme' provides opportunities to vulnerable young persons to gain work experience in order to strengthen their employability prospects.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>Following this programme, young people should reliably demonstrate increased employability skills, hence increasing the proportion of school leavers gaining paid employment within 1 year. 50 young people have benefitted from this Programme.</p>
	<p><b>Extension of the In-Work Benefit Scheme</b></p> <p>As a result of Budget 2019, benefit rates were increased between €50 and €100 per child, depending on the income of the family.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>The extension of this scheme is encouraging more persons to enter the labour force, hence gradually phasing out the dependence on social benefits and also reducing their chances of falling into poverty.</p> <p>During 2018, the number of couples benefitting from this measure amounted to 1,046.</p>
<p>National R&amp;D target (2% of GDP)</p>	<p><b>Malta's National R&amp;I Fund 2013</b></p> <p>The National R&amp;I Fund is defined by 2 programmes under the FUSION branding: the Commercialisation Voucher Programme (CVP) and the Technology Development Programme (TDP). 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 2018, 2 FUSION CVP Calls and 2 FUSION TDP Call were successfully launched. A total of 46 FUSION CVP applications were received in 2018, of which 24 beneficiaries were funded. A total of 23 FUSION TDP applications were received, of which 13 FUSION TDP consortia were funded. Between 2015 and 2018, over €6 million were funded in FUSION projects.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p> <p><b>Set up an ICT Innovation Accelerator</b></p> <p>The ICT Innovation Accelerator acts as a hub to synergise the effort of various parties aimed towards ICT-themed Research and Technological Development (R&amp;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. Besides stimulating digital entrepreneurship, the Accelerator also serves as a showcase for locally nurtured innovations and locally developed ICT products and services.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>The R&amp;I Programme has a direct impact on the national R&amp;I expenditure (GERD) since it funds R&amp;D performed by both the higher education and the business enterprise sector. While the CVP will not contribute directly to Malta's R&amp;D expenditure target, it will seek to make best use of R&amp;D investments by helping to determine the commercialisation potential of proposed innovative solutions, thus ensuring that before actually undertaking any R&amp;D, 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"> <li>1. Preparation and better formulation of ideas to feasible TDP projects: Between 2015 and 2018, 32 successful FUSION CVP projects have been accepted into FUSION TDP.</li> <li>2. Effect on improving commercialisation chances post-TDP: To date, the R&amp;I Programme has additionally supported beneficiaries of TDP through optional CVP vouchers. There have been 5 awards for Initial Patent Application, 1 Trademark Application, 1 award for Business Plan and 1 Investors' Meeting. These awards are examples of further commercialisation-preparedness support to the beneficiaries.</li> </ol> <p>The ICT Innovation Ecosystem Accelerator will contribute towards attaining Malta's target of 2% value-added as a percentage of national GDP invested in R&amp;D.</p> <p>It is estimated that 50% of the €22,000 (now increased to € 30,000) pre-seed investment awarded to start-ups translates to effort invested in design, experimental 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"> <li>- the creation of a demand for disruptive and innovative ideas based on digital technologies;</li> <li>- the creation of new or innovative business models based on digital technologies;</li> <li>- contribute in creating a workforce that is more entrepreneurial and open;</li> <li>- attract foreign talent;</li> <li>- increase the number of business undertakings targeting specialised areas and niche markets globally;</li> <li>- the creation of new jobs in digital technology;</li> </ul>

		- increase the demand for specialised skills and competences in digital technologies, entrepreneurship, management and marketing.																														
	<p><b>Post-Doctoral Grants</b></p> <p>Selected post-doctoral research projects are being provided with a grant up to a total of €200,000 per research project under the 'Reach High Scholars Programme – Post-Doctoral Grants'. Individual research projects are for the duration of up to 3 years with a possibility of an extension of not more than 1 year.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>All the 16 beneficiaries are progressing well and in line with the Post-Doctoral Grant Agreement.</p> <p>1 beneficiary completed the research project by the end of Q2 of 2017, while another project was completed in September 2018. All the other post-doctoral projects will be concluded in 2019.</p>																														
	<p><b>Set up of a Joint Innovation Centre (JIC)</b></p> <p>The acceptance testing phase has been implemented. An operational handover from the Huawei experts to the Safe City Engineers has been completed and hence the Joint Innovation Centre has been set up.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>This measure aims at contributing to one of the five EU 2020 targets which entails more R&amp;D and innovation in the economy combined with more efficient resources, which make Malta more competitive and create jobs.</p>																														
	<p><b>Horizon 2020 (H2020) and other Schemes</b></p> <p>Through the Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST), the Government is assisting local researchers to obtain the support they need in their work through H2020 and by means of other financial schemes.</p> <p>As part of its operations, and in fulfilment of its role as H2020 National Contact Organisation, the MCST (through the H2020 Unit) provides support to researchers from both public and private entities by giving specialised advice and guidance about the Horizon 2020 Programme.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>By the end of 2018, 135 Maltese entities had participated/are participating in a total of 104 projects and received over €20 million in EU funds as follows:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Participants</th> <th>No. of participations</th> <th>EU Financial Contribution in € million</th> <th>NET EU Financial Contribution in € million</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Higher education</td> <td>43</td> <td>8.27</td> <td>8.33</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Public</td> <td>39</td> <td>4.39</td> <td>4.42</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Private</td> <td>41</td> <td>7.74</td> <td>6.25</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Non-research organisations</td> <td>3</td> <td>0.73</td> <td>0.73</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other</td> <td>9</td> <td>0.54</td> <td>0.54</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Total</b></td> <td><b>135</b></td> <td><b>21.67</b></td> <td><b>20.27</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Participants	No. of participations	EU Financial Contribution in € million	NET EU Financial Contribution in € million	Higher education	43	8.27	8.33	Public	39	4.39	4.42	Private	41	7.74	6.25	Non-research organisations	3	0.73	0.73	Other	9	0.54	0.54	<b>Total</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>21.67</b>	<b>20.27</b>		
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<p>National targets for energy efficiency, renewable energy and GHG emission reduction:</p> <p>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).</p> <p>A commitment to achieve by 2020 a share of energy from renewable sources in</p>	<p><b>Energy Efficiency in Transport</b></p> <p>The take-up of the tallinja card is considered to be quite high. Up to end of December 2018 take-up increased to 317,626.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p> <p><b>Implementation of Malta's National Strategy for Policy and Abatement Measures relating to the Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions</b></p> <p>The Ministry continued working to develop its Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) and has engaged a private consultancy firm (through the public procurement process) to assist it in this formulation. Meanwhile, consultations were held with different stakeholders to obtain more information on the current strategies and to obtain in-depth insights on any additional long-term measures which can feature in the LCDS.</p> <p>Significant resources are being invested into improving the accuracy of the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emission Inventory data and adoption of effective GHG emission reduction measures. This assistance includes tailor-made training and updating of the emissions modelling through the EU Commission and Structural Reform Support Service (SRSS) financing.</p> <p>Status: On Track<sup>2</sup></p>	<p>Passengers between January and December 2018 amounted to 53,467,404. This represents an 11% increase on the previous year.</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> <th>2015 ESD target compared to 2005</th> <th>2015 ESD emissions data compared to 2005</th> <th>Relative gap 2015 vs ESD 2015 target</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><b>Percentage</b></td> <td>6.10%</td> <td>13.57%</td> <td></td> <td>5.94%</td> <td>17.25%</td> <td></td> <td>5.79%</td> <td>18.11%</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Annual Emission Allocation (tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent)</b></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> <td>1,165,061</td> <td>1,300,741</td> <td>-135,680</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	2015 ESD target compared to 2005	2015 ESD emissions data compared to 2005	Relative gap 2015 vs ESD 2015 target	<b>Percentage</b>	6.10%	13.57%		5.94%	17.25%		5.79%	18.11%		<b>Annual Emission Allocation (tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent)</b>	1,168,514	1,250,779	-82,265	1,166,788	1,291,392	-124,604	1,165,061	1,300,741	-135,680
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<sup>2</sup> The status of such measure depends on whether the mobilisation of flexibility instruments is concluded in time as per Commission Implementing Decision 2016/2132. For 2013 and 2014 the flexibility instruments were used on time.

<p>gross final energy consumption of 10%.</p> <p>A commitment to achieve by 2020 a target of 10% of energy consumed in all forms of transport from renewable sources.</p>			<p><b>Malta</b></p>	<p><b>2016 Effort-Sharing Decision (ESD) target compared to 2005</b></p>	<p><b>2016 ESD emission data compared to 2005</b></p>	<p><b>Relative gap 2016 vs ESD 2016 target</b></p>	<p><b>2017 Effort-Sharing Decision (ESD) target compared to 2005</b></p>	<p><b>2017 ESD emission data compared to 2005*</b></p>	<p><b>Relative gap 2017 vs ESD 2017 target*</b></p>		
			<p><b>Percentage</b></p>	<p>4.22%</p>	<p>19.11%</p>		<p>5.23%</p>	<p>28.30%</p>			
			<p><b>Annual Emission Allocation (tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent)</b></p>	<p>1,163,334</p>	<p>1,329,995</p>	<p>166,661</p>	<p>1,174,524</p>	<p>1,432,557</p>	<p>258,033</p>		
<p>* Estimates only for 2017</p>											
<p><b>Promotion of Uptake of Renewable Energy Sources (RES) and Building Envelope Insulation</b></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 insulation and double glazing (maximum €1,000 per dwelling) and extended the Feed-in Tariffs (FITs) to promote the purchase of photovoltaic systems (PVs). Moreover, a heat pump water heater scheme is now included (maximum €700 per applicant).</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>			<p>A total of 9,738 families have benefitted from the scheme of solar water heaters by end of 2018. A total of 2,203 families have benefitted from roof insulation and double-glazing schemes by end of 2018. A total of 3 families have benefitted from the heat pump water heater scheme by end of 2018.</p>								
<p><b>Biofuel Substitution Obligation</b></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 2018 reached 8.5% (by energy content). This measure ensures that Malta remains on track to meet its 2020 RES-T (transport) target.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>			<p>The Regulator for Energy and Water Services (REWS) continued to monitor the compliance by operators with respect to obligations emanating from national legislation with the aim of reaching the 2020 target. The target substitution obligation for 2019 is of 9.5%.</p>								
<p><b>Autogas Conversion Scheme</b></p> <p>The scheme has been extended for 2019; the grant amounts to €200 which is given upon the conversion to autogas/LPG of a Category M1 vehicle (passenger car) or a Category N1 vehicle (commercial). €50,000 have been allocated for this scheme.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>			<p>It is expected that this measure will reduce local air pollution.</p> <p>During 2018, 142 vehicles benefitted from this scheme, thus bringing the total of LPG conversions to 861 since 2015. Out of the 861 applications, 5 were for N1 commercial vehicles.</p>								
<p><b>New Scheme to promote Domestic PVs</b></p> <p>Following the July 2015 scheme, a new scheme was launched in May 2016 and extended to 31 March 2017 by the publication of Government Notice 1425 of 2016. This was further extended to the end of December 2017 by the publication of Government Notice 340 of 2017. The scheme was extended again till 29 June 2018 by means of SL545.27 and further extended till end of December 2018. A new Government Notice has been published in order to extend the scheme to year 2019.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>			<p>Beneficiaries for the 2015 PV scheme amount to 2,238. Beneficiaries for the 2016 PV scheme amount to 4,922. Total beneficiaries for both schemes 2015 and 2016 amount to 7,160.</p>								
<p><b>Improvement in the Reverse Osmosis (RO) Plants</b></p> <p>Water Services Corporation (WSC) is currently upgrading some of the RO trains to ensure that all RO plants have the industry best practice efficiency, with the aim of increasing the capacity of the ROs to cater for the projected increase in demand. In addition, WSC continued to prepare and publish the construction of the new RO and related works.</p> <p>In the meantime, the Planning Authority approved the construction of a new reverse osmosis at Ffondoq ir-Rummien in Gozo. In December 2018, the selected contractor signed the contract for civil works. During January 2019, the permits required for the approval of the respective authorities were submitted in order to start the works.</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><b>Clean means of transport (Bicycle Grant)</b></p> <p>In order to encourage the use of bicycles and pedelec bicycles as means of transport that reduce both pollution and traffic and at the same time encourage physical activity, the Government launched this scheme for a once-only grant on the purchase price of a bicycle/pedelec bicycle.</p>			<p>During 2018, there were 1,768 applications, out of which 1,766 applications were paid and 2 applications were rejected because they did not meet the requirements stipulated in the Government Gazette.</p> <p>During 2019, until end of January, 209 applications were submitted, and all have been processed and paid.</p>								

	<p>This scheme was renewed for 2019 by means of a Government Notice published on 4 January 2019 (Government Notice No 8).</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	
	<p><b>The Creation of Safe Public and Private Parking for Bicycles</b></p> <p>In order to incentivise the use of alternative green means of transport while, at the same time, encouraging physical exercise and a healthier lifestyle, Government has set up a fund to cover the expenditure incurred by local councils and enterprises to install bicycle racks and ancillary facilities.</p> <p>This scheme was renewed for 2019 by means of a Government Notice published on 8 January 2019 (Government Notice No 30).</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>In 2017, 4 applications were submitted: 3 from local councils and 1 from a company. In this regard, 4 commitment letters were issued. As regards payments, all 4 applicants from 2017 were paid in 2018.</p> <p>In 2018, 5 applications were submitted: 3 applications from local councils, 1 from a company and 1 from a non-profit organisation. In this regard, 4 commitment letters were issued, whilst the commitment letter for the last application should be issued imminently. 2 claims from 2018 (2 local councils) were settled. A further claim from 2018 is currently being processed and another one is still pending claim submission.</p>
	<p><b>To continue working on the Gas Pipeline Project which will connect Malta to the European Gas Network</b></p> <p>In January 2018, an EU grant of €3.68 million under the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) was awarded for the financing of the detailed studies required to be undertaken up to 2020 for obtaining the permits from the Italian and Maltese Authorities and enable the project to proceed to the construction phase. For this scope, a number of tenders were published and awarded in 2018 for conducting these studies which include the Environmental Impact Assessment; a preliminary marine route survey; the front-end engineering design and the preparation of the tender for the engineering, procurement and construction of the pipeline and the required infrastructure. All of these studies kicked off in the last quarter of 2018. The financial engineering of the project also commenced during this year and a non-binding market test was conducted in the second quarter of 2018. The Investment Request is planned to be submitted to the Maltese and Italian Regulatory Authorities in April 2019 in order to obtain a Cross-Border Cost Allocation Decision, which is a prerequisite for submitting a CEF application for works.</p> <p>Status: On Track</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><b>Communal Solar Farms</b></p> <p>Work on the Government's first communal solar farm has been completed. All PV panels have been installed on the Fiddien Reservoir, the electricity substation has been built and switchgear and other equipment have been installed.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>A total of almost 1MWp of virtual PV capacity was made available for households and within a few days, the scheme was fully subscribed. Following one complete year of operation ending 21 March 2019, the Fiddien Farm registered a monthly RES generation mean of 134.3MWh.</p>
	<p><b>Transport Links</b></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 (PPP). Concurrently, the Ministry for Transport, Infrastructure and Capital Projects (MTIP) is currently working on a Regeneration Study for the Valletta Grand Harbour.</p> <p>Status: Delayed</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. It will reduce vehicular traffic and provide an alternative means of transport in a more sustainable manner.</p>
	<p><b>Green Public Procurement (GPP)</b></p> <p>The 2nd National Action Plan (NAP) on GPP 2019-2025 sets out targets for 16 product and service groups.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>Since 2017, Government has organised 38 training sessions and trained 706 public procurers. The 2<sup>nd</sup> NAP was approved by Cabinet in September 2018 and underwent public consultation which was extended till 18 January 2019. In all, four public consultation sessions were held: one with the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association (MHRA), another one with the General Retailers and Traders Union (GRTU) and two sessions with the Malta-EU Steering and Action Committee (MEUSAC). Government is currently analysing the comments received and updating the plan, after which it will come into force.</p>
	<p><b>Tallinja Card</b></p> <p>The measure introduced during 2017 whereby persons who turned 18 during the year could travel for free on scheduled public transport was extended in 2018 to include persons between the ages of 16 to 20 years.</p> <p>As announced in Budget 2019, as from 2019 this measure will be extended and expanded to include 14 and 15-year olds and full-time students over the age of 20.</p> <p>Discussions are underway with the relevant agencies in order to see how free scheduled public transport can also be extended to persons with disability.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>Around 28,000 persons aged between 16 and 20 years were eligible to benefit from the scheme in 2018. Up till the end of December 2018 there were just over 24,000 persons who benefitted from this scheme, that is, under 86% of eligible persons took up the scheme.</p>
	<p><b>Grant Scheme on the Purchase of New Environment Friendly Vehicles 2017</b></p> <p>The scheme was subject to the following conditions:</p> <p>€ 900 grant when registering a new category M1 vehicle with CO<sub>2</sub> emission levels up to 100g/km, while at the same time de-registering a vehicle in the same category;</p>	<p>This scheme had a successful outcome with the total of 1,676 beneficiaries. The grant composition for 2018 was as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- there were no applications for the grant of €3,000;</li> <li>- 126 vehicles with a grant of €2,000;</li> <li>- 919 vehicles with a grant of €700;</li> <li>- 631 vehicles with a grant of €900.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• € 700 when registering a new category M1 vehicle with CO<sub>2</sub> emission levels between 101 and 130g/km, while at the same time de-registering a vehicle in the same category;</li> <li>• € 3,000 when registering a new category M1 plug-in hybrid vehicle with CO<sub>2</sub> emissions 1-50g/km, while at the same time de-registering a vehicle in the same category;</li> <li>• € 2,000 when registering a new category M1 hybrid vehicle with CO<sub>2</sub> emissions between 50-65g/km.</li> </ul> <p>Each person was only eligible for 1 grant under this scheme.</p> <p>During Budget 2019, Government extended the scrappage scheme for another year.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>Due to successful take-up, during 2018 the scheme was extended twice.</p>
	<p><b>Sustainable Transport Plan for Government Entities</b></p> <p>Following collation of feedback, a 2019 Action Plan for the Green Travel Plan is being put together. The idea is for the Ministry for Infrastructure, Transport and Capital Projects (MTIP) to pilot the Green Travel Plan with a vision that its reach can be widened if the pilot is successful.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>With regard to the pilot project, the ultimate aim would be to use the pilot project <i>per se</i>, and its resultant experience, as a way to design a toolkit for other Ministries to implement similar initiatives in their Ministries.</p> <p>Finally, the aim of the whole process is to analyse the commuting trends of the employees and launch voluntary schemes intended to encourage the use of alternative transportation other than the private car.</p> <p>It is planned that the Green Travel Plan will be rolled out in 2019.</p>
	<p><b>Free Transport for Church and Independent Schools</b></p> <p>As from scholastic year 2018/2019, the implementation of the free transport scheme for students attending State, Church and Independent schools. Some 28,000 students are benefiting from the incentive, while also making a positive contribution to the environment by reducing the number of cars and congestion on the road.</p> <p>The system will be enhanced by offering a digital device to be attached with each student's schoolbag. With this device, the parents will know if their children have boarded the school bus or not.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>As from this scholastic year 2018/2019, a total of 28,000 students attending State, Church and Independent Schools started benefiting from the free transport scheme. At present, supervision is being offered on transport used by pre-primary children attending State schools. This initiative has reduced approximately 15,000 vehicles from the roads in peak hours.</p>
	<p><b>National Energy and Climate Plan for 2021-2030</b></p> <p>The Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee (IMSC) met seven times throughout 2018.</p> <p>During 2018, existing energy and climate models were assessed.</p> <p>In November 2018, the European Commission selected the contractors, financed through the SRSP programme, that will assist Malta in the development of the final plan.</p> <p>The draft plan was approved by Cabinet in December 2018 and it was presented to the European Commission during the same month.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>The Plan will map out how Malta intends to achieve the national binding target of -19% level of greenhouse gas emission reductions in 2030 below 2005 levels and Malta's national contribution towards the EU-level targets for 2030 in relation to renewable energy and energy efficiency.</p>
	<p><b>Energy Audits for Enterprises</b></p> <p>The collaboration between the Agency and the Malta Business Bureau continued during 2018 through the promotion of energy awareness and energy efficiency both with SMEs and non-SMEs.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<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. To date, as a result of the energy auditor and energy manager courses, there are 93 registered energy auditors and 11 registered energy managers.</p> <p>By end of 2018, 25 enterprises signed the Voluntary Agreement. This is approximately 35% of the enterprises that are obliged to perform an energy audit under Article 8 (4) of the Energy Efficiency Directive (EED).</p>
	<p><b>Energy efficient Support: Home Visits</b></p> <p>The aim of this measure is to provide standard home visits to any household interested in advice on energy and water efficiency.</p> <p>A publicity campaign was launched to promote this initiative. The initiative was found to be very fruitful, and a number of testimonials have been gathered and used to disseminate further the initiative. It has now become part of the Energy and Water Agency's activities and is meant to continue to be provided to all those who wish to benefit from it.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>This scheme allows families to reduce consumption costs and generate savings which count towards Malta's energy efficiency targets. From its inception till end of 2018, a total of 2,121 household visits have been carried out. The scheme will continue in 2019.</p>
	<p><b>Grant Scheme to promote Energy efficient Appliances targeting vulnerable Families</b></p> <p>This measure seeks to replace old inefficient appliances in vulnerable households by new, more energy efficient ones. The appliances considered are fridge freezers, washing machines and air conditioners.</p> <p>The appliances were distributed during September 2018. Following the success of the scheme, a new tender has been published to assist other vulnerable families during 2019.</p>	<p>This scheme allows vulnerable families to reduce consumption costs and generate savings which count towards Malta's energy efficiency targets.</p> <p>A total of 472 visits to vulnerable households were carried out in 2017, of which 242 households have had one of their appliances replaced during 2018.</p>

	<p>Tentatively an exercise comparing consumption before and after the change of appliances will also be carried out.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	
	<p><b>Solar Farms on Reservoirs of the Water Services Corporation (WSC)</b></p> <p>The measure is expected to be completed in Q2 2019. The tenders for these solar farms are being finalised and are expected to be complete by November 2019.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>Through this measure, WSC together with its partners, is expecting to generate about 3,100,000 kWh/year of alternative energy through maximisation of its assets. This will help to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and increase generation from RES.</p>
	<p><b>Promotion of Electromobility 2018</b></p> <p>The 2018 scheme had the following conditions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€7,000 upon registering a new electric category M1 or N1 vehicle when scrapping a used vehicle;</li> <li>€6,000 upon registering a new electric category M1 or N1 vehicle (without scrapping another vehicle);</li> <li>€4,000 upon registering an imported second hand electric M1 or N1 vehicle;</li> <li>€2,500 upon registering a new or used electric quadricycle (without scrapping another vehicle);</li> <li>€400 when purchasing a new pedelec;</li> <li>€400 upon registering a new electric motorcycle/moped/tricycle falling under categories L1e, L2e, L3e or L5e.</li> </ol> <p>The following schemes are being extended to 2019:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>€7,000 upon registering a new electric category M1 or N1 vehicle when scrapping a used vehicle;</li> <li>€6,000 upon registering a new electric category M1 or N1 vehicle (without scrapping another vehicle);</li> <li>€400 when purchasing a new pedelec.</li> </ol> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>This scheme was successful in reaching its aims with the increase of 267 electric vehicles to our national electric vehicle fleet and 185 pedelecs. The grant composition was as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>51 vehicles registered with a grant of €7,000;</li> <li>77 vehicles registered with a grant of €6,000;</li> <li>73 vehicles registered with a grant of €4,000;</li> <li>27 vehicles registered with a grant of €2,500;</li> <li>39 motorcycles/mopeds registered with a grant of €400;</li> <li>185 pedelecs were given a €400 grant.</li> </ul> <p>This scheme had the original budget of €500,000 which was consumed by the end of May 2018. The scheme was extended for the second time with a further €500,000 which was all exhausted by the end of September 2018. Another extension request was made and the total of €1,434,100 was disbursed in grants by the end of 2018.</p>
	<p><b>Grant for the upgrading of Electric Vehicles and new Plug-In Electric Service Garages of Vehicle Importers and Vehicle Leasing Operators and Staff Training 2018</b></p> <p>The scheme is for a grant intended for established importers of new vehicles and their current service garages, as well as operators of vehicle leasing companies and their currently licenced public service garages, to cater for the maintenance of new or leased electric vehicles, plug-in electric, plug-in hybrid, range extender vehicle models currently on the Maltese car market and new vehicles intended to be introduced on the Maltese new car market.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>The scheme aims to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>assist market entry of the new plug-in electric vehicles in the Maltese Islands which are not yet available on the national market;</li> <li>assist car importers and operators of vehicle leasing companies to start offering support servicing on their sold or leased EVs – this will prompt private persons, undertakings and NGOs to switch to cleaner vehicle technology, especially since with such a scheme, vehicle servicing can be done locally;</li> <li>increase the national electric vehicle fleet so as to contribute to Malta's national targets with respect to energy efficiency, climate change and air quality.</li> </ol> <p>The grant was open till the end of 2018 and a new one for 2019 has been published. As at end December 2018, one application has been received, which will be paid from the 2019 budget once the necessary verifications are completed.</p>
	<p><b>Feasibility Study on the availability of Financial Instruments to transition towards a Green Economy</b></p> <p>Following consultations carried out as a review to the Green Economy Action Plan, one of the major lacunas resulted in the area of greening financial instruments for green investments. In this regard, a feasibility study was carried out and the contractors provided a structured set of recommendations for financial mechanisms/policy tools that could be effectively introduced in the Maltese islands in order to enhance the contribution of the green economy as part of the national economic setup.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>Following the conclusion of the feasibility study, the Ministry has undertaken a number of internal consultations with potential partners who could assist in launching one of the recommended financial instruments as proposed by the study. In this respect, current consultations are focusing on the best approach to take to make sure that the financial instrument put together provides the right flexibility both for the private sector that will be offer this financial facility as well as for the beneficiary of which will be companies willing to invest in green and sustainable investments to promote its widespread use for the benefit of transiting towards a more resource efficient economy.</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 year olds having completed tertiary or equivalent education to 33% by 2020)</p>	<p>Overview on the national early school leaving target and on the national target for tertiary education: Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Early School Leaving and Higher Education</p> <p>The Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Early School Leaving in Malta aims at facilitating focused action that will support students to make the best out of their school years, from early childhood to the end of compulsory school and beyond. The aim is to enable students to develop their potential as human beings, as citizens and as stakeholders in the economy. The actions outlined in this strategic plan are in line with the Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024 which centres around 4 measurable targets that both individually and collectively contribute directly towards the reduction of the number of early school leavers in Malta.</p> <p>In addition, the higher education strategy for Malta is embedded within the overall strategic direction of the proposed Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta for 2014-2024 and aims to deliver specific targets with regard to higher education.</p> <p>Malta has witnessed a considerable expansion of its higher education sector and reduction in early school leavers. Firstly, it resulted in an increase in tertiary education attainment from 28.6% of 30-34 year olds in 2014 to 33.5% in 2017. Secondly, it resulted in a decrease in early school leaving. That means the share of 18-24 year olds with at most lower secondary education, and who are not in education or training has decreased from 20.9% in 2014 to 17.7% in 2017.</p>	
	<p><b>My Journey: Achieving through different Paths – Equitable Quality Education for All</b></p> <p>Through this initiative, secondary school students will be able to choose between academic, vocational, applied subjects or a combination of the three elements during the senior cycle of secondary education. This will involve moving from a 'one size fits all' system to a more inclusive and equitable programme which can specifically cater to each learner's individual talents.</p>	<p>The reform is intended to promote inclusion and to reduce the number of early school leavers by making education relevant to more students and to an evolving labour market.</p>

'My Journey' introduces applied subjects, thus changing the secondary education system (beyond core curriculum) into three main streams: general, which reflects current subjects offered; vocational subjects which build on existing ones; and applied subjects (*Secondary Education Applied Certificates*). Once the new system is in place, students will be able to choose either an individual pathway or a mixed one.

#### **Introduction of vocational subjects in Secondary schools**

The uptake of VET subjects in scholastic year 2018/2019 continued to increase and reached 2,759 with an overall increase of 16% in comparison to scholastic year 2017/2018.

As from academic year 2019/2020, the VET subjects to be taught in schools are Retail, Media Literacy, Hairdressing & Beauty, Textiles and Fashion, Agribusiness, Engineering Technology, Health and Social care, Hospitality and Information Technology.

The scholastic year 2019/2020 will also see the completion of the majority of planned labs spread among the selected secondary schools, aimed to offer facilities for the teaching of vocational and applied subjects. The supplies for these labs are being co-financed by a European Social Fund Project.

Teachers from related subjects will also be re-trained and these vocational and applied subjects will be included in the Masters (MTL) programme within the Faculty of Education. A new qualification by the MATSEC Board – the Secondary Education Applied Certificate (SEAC) – will be introduced at MQF Levels 1, 2 and 3.

#### **The Alternative Learning Programme (ALP)**

The Alternative Learning Programme (ALP) is aimed at students who are reaching the end of compulsory schooling, but who clearly demonstrate that they will not attain the desired qualification. This second chance programme has a strong vocational component and students are expected to continue their education or training in a full-time higher education institution or in other lifelong learning institutions on a part-time basis.

Besides the ALP programme, two other programmes are offered to students who at the end of compulsory education manage to acquire no or minimum qualifications, giving the opportunity of a 'second chance education'. 'Youth Inc.' is an inclusive education programme based on applied learning offered by Malta's National Youth Agency to people between 16 and 21 years of age. =The second programme offered is 'GEM16+', which is aimed at students who lack the necessary qualifications to continue their studies and focuses on preparing students in Maltese, English, mathematics and physics at SEC level.

#### **Personal, Social and Career Development (PSCD)**

The programme aims at helping learners manage their learning and career paths beyond school. The PSCD has been increased from one to two hours per week. 15-year-olds take part in transition programmes offering one-week hands-on experience in industry. Together with final year schoolmates, they also benefit from orientation visits to workplaces and VET Colleges.

#### **Programmes for Talented Learners**

Talented learners can easily turn into Early School Leavers unless they engage with learning programmes which are aligned to their need. The gifted and talented programme being developed by the Directorate for Learning and Assessment Programmes within the Ministry for Education and Employment is based upon teamwork, whilst providing learners with skills and competences to be active members of the community. .

Each and every child and young person has potential and schools such as The Malta Visual and Performing Arts School, and similarly the National Sports School, open the door for many to balance an academic education with their passion. The school was officially inaugurated by the Prime Minister on 16 March 2018.

Status: On Track

#### **Introduction of vocational subjects in Secondary schools**

Applied Learning will complement vocational education whilst providing more opportunities for learners to engage with their preferred way of learning.

#### **Alternative Learning Programme**

In the current scholastic year 2018/2019, there are 191 ALP students, 80 ALP+ students and 5 ALP+ second year apprenticeships.

#### **Personal, Social and Career Development (PSCD)**

This measure has equipped learners with skills and competences related to careers that are currently available on the market. The third phase of My Journey: Achieving through different paths ensures that students can choose from learning programmes more relevant for their ability and their future. This reform aims at inclusivity, social justice, equity and diversity.

#### **Programmes for Talented Learners**

The Directorate has embarked on a range of initiatives, targeting gifted and talented students in both primary and secondary cycles. Some of these initiatives – The Junior Science Olympiad, the Mathematics Olympiad, the Robotics Olympiad, the Mathematics sessions for Gifted and Talented Students and the High 5 - Junior Mathematics Challenge, have become annual calendar events for primary and secondary schools.

In addition, a programme aimed at training teachers on how to identify, educate and counsel gifted students in primary, secondary and higher education was launched in Q4 2018 on a national level by the Education Ministry's Directorate for Learning and Assessment Programmes (DLAP).

The RadboudCSW International Training on High Ability (RITHA) programme is an interdisciplinary and blended 18-month programme focused on psychology, pedagogy and education. Based on the latest evidence-based scientific insights about giftedness, the programme aims to improve participants' ability to educate all students, including those who are most talented.

Each academic year, the Malta Visual and Performing Arts School will take in up to 48 students.



<p><b>Adult Learning Initiatives</b></p> <p>The development of Malta's Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 has been an opportunity to take stock of the state of adult learning in Malta. The Lifelong Learning Strategy is underpinned by a commitment to a set of basic common principles that cut across the entire Lifelong Learning framework. They encompass all relevant institutions and individual areas of responsibility and develop programmes aimed at stimulating a demand for learning that is associated with skills sets that are relevant to the labour market.</p> <p><b>Adult Learning Provision</b></p> <p>The Government is responsible for the provision of training and education to adult learners above 24, together with learners from 16 to 24, giving a chance to early school leavers to acquire a Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) Level 3 certification in subjects covered at secondary school level, or training in basic skills, that cover Maltese and English, Mathematics and ICT. Government also provides for VET subjects; the teaching of languages, including the provision of Maltese and English as foreign languages for non-nationals to accelerate and enhance cultural integration; ICT; health and general wellbeing; and crafts courses to provide an alternative to creative enterprise. Quality Assurance measures are being implemented.</p> <p>The Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability will also introduce the First Adult Learning Awards to raise the profile of adult education in Malta and to recognise best practices.</p> <p>The Government is also supporting all women who are taking the role of parent, spouse or caregiver to aging parents or others who joined the workforce by providing courses to acquire knowledge and skills necessary in the workforce, to advance a degree or to learn basic skills or to enrich their lives.</p> <p>MCAST has launched the Skills Kits programme at MQF/EQF Level 1 covering various vocational areas as well as personal and employability skills intended for students who prefer to study at their own pace. The programme provides the possibility of choosing individual combinations of Skills Kits study programmes.</p> <p><b>Schools as Community Learning Spaces Project</b></p> <p>This project is a second chance route for young people who have their SEC examinations and for adults, including women, who would want to improve their job prospects. Programmes were also developed at MQF levels 1 and 2. Learners start off at MQF 1 and 2 (obtaining accredited certification from Directorate) and go on to sit for SEC and MATSEC. These courses are held in the different adult learning centres targeting low-skilled adults.</p> <p>In addition, the University of Malta Cottonera Resource Centre was set up to act as a bridge between the communities in the inner harbour area and University.</p> <p><b>Upskilling of Adult Educators</b></p> <p>The National Diploma in Teaching Adults is a comprehensive course that teaches the theory, skills and practice of adult education, including assessment, delivery, design and development and evaluation.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p><b>Adult Learning Provision</b></p> <p>As at February 2019, the total number of registrations for the 400 courses in 80 subjects amounted to 7,330 registrations.</p> <p><b>Schools as Community Learning Spaces Project</b></p> <p>Apart from widening access to higher education as a means of decreasing gender differences especially with regard to early school leaving and higher education attainment, the project is also important in view of Malta's commitment to the social dimension ingrained in the Bologna Process. This refers to the aspiration that the population in higher education should reflect the diversity of Malta's entire population.</p> <p><b>Upskilling of Adult Educators</b></p> <p>This part of the measure is fully completed.</p>
<p><b>Tablets in Primary Schools for Teachers and Students</b></p> <p>In the third phase of the project, at the start of scholastic year 2018/2019, 4,515 new tablets were distributed to the new intake of Year 4, 5 and 6 students. So that at end of December 2018, 13,187 new tablets were distributed to Year 4, 5 and 6 students. Tablets will be given annually to students reaching Year 4.</p> <p>During January-April 2018, parents were invited to schools to either observe lessons with the use of tablets and/or to attend parental meetings outlining the benefits and challenges of using tablets in today's education system. This process is repeated annually to cater for new Year 4 students.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>The last cohort of teachers and LSAs were trained during July 2018. They consisted mainly of Year 6 teachers/LSAs. All student-teachers following pre-service teacher training who have been assigned to teach at primary level received training in using tablets. Student-teachers who had teaching training with children in Years 4 and 5 were provided with a tablet.</p> <p>A number of Church and Independent schools opted to give the same training to their teachers. In July 2018, 481 teachers/LSAs were given the initial training.</p>
<p><b>Further and Higher Education Quality Assurance Framework</b></p> <p>The QA Unit within the NCFHE is currently conducting the first External Quality Assurance (EQA) audits (after those of the UoM, the Institute of Tourism Studies (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. The QA Unit is also tasked with the review of Internal Quality Assurance policies which are submitted by providers as part of their accreditation process and/or updated later on during operations by provider, and with the investigation of claims of non-compliance behaviour and / or activity by providers operating in or from Malta.</p> <p>As part of the EQAVET NRP project 'The Strengthening of Quality Culture through Training and Accountability', the QA Unit has triggered a series of stages of preparations for an ENQA review of the NCFHE.</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 period 2017-2019, the QA Unit shall be conducting 62 EQA audits.</p> <p>The deliverables of the EQAVET NRP project include an assessment of the organisational and operational structure of the NCFHE by international QA experts –a full mock audit of the NCFHE conducted by a panel of senior international reviewers, which has been completed. The audit will produce a report upon which the NCFHE Board will decide when to kick-start the actual ENQA audit and what would still need to be accomplished before that. Other project deliverables include training sessions for prospective peers and student reviewers to act as members of review panels conducting NCFHE audit of Maltese licensed providers; and other training sessions for providers to aid them in the writing of their Internal Quality Assurance policies.</p>

	<p>As part of the Erasmus+ project 'Consolidating Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Malta', the QA Unit is also updating the National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education to incorporate, for instance, audit procedures for programmes, provisions of online learning and learning overseas, adapted audit processes for different categories of license and an audit follow-up structure, an updated description of the role of the NCFHE representative on the EQA review panel, and an update of the EQA timelines.</p> <p>The Malta Qualifications Recognition and Information Centre (MQRIC) is responsible for providing recognition statements for qualifications. The MQRIC has launched a new online system, whereby the recognition statement can be downloaded directly from the website. The system was funded through the ESF Project 1.227 'Making Quality Visible'.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	
	<p><b>Construction and Modernisation of Schools</b></p> <p>The Ministry for Education and Employment is investing heavily in education infrastructure and resources to provide students, educators and local communities with modern and better educational facilities.</p> <p>Marsascala primary school is now complete. Structural works on the construction of the St. Paul's Bay (Qawra) Primary School commenced in 2018 while works on the Victoria Primary School and Msida Primary School are set to start in late 2019.</p> <p>The present primary school in Rabat (Malta) operates from 2 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 1 building. Since this project is being considered as a major project within the village core by the Planning Authority, the processing of the permit is estimated to take up to 12 months. The school will cater for 400 students.</p> <p>The modernisation of Qormi Primary School will commence in 2019.</p> <p>In addition, laboratories and workshops for various vocational subjects are being set up in all senior schools. In most schools, existing spaces will be converted into these laboratories and workshops, however at the senior schools in Mrieħel and Żejtun, the construction of extensions to the schools are needed. Around €10 million euros will be invested in these project.</p> <p>Also taking place is the enhancement of various sports facilities for the benefit of students and local communities.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>During scholastic year 2018-2019, the new school in Marsacala opened its doors to over 400 students. The €5.5million Marsascala project also includes a new childcare centre and a kindergarten. A 400-individual multi-purpose hall has been built in the school. The area of the school covers 600 m<sup>2</sup> and it also includes an underground public parking with an area of 2,000 m<sup>2</sup>.</p> <p>A new primary school for 500 students is being constructed to meet the ever-increasing demand in St. Paul's Bay. The new school will also house a kindergarten and a childcare centre. The school will have 39 classrooms and a multipurpose hall.. This project commenced during the 2017-2018 scholastic year and will welcome its first group of students in September 2019.</p> <p>A new primary school in Victoria (Gozo) is being built to replace the present one. The new primary school will cater for approximately 400 students and will also house a kindergarten and a childcare centre. The school will open its doors in 2021.</p> <p>A number of schools are undergoing substantial refurbishment while others are being extended to provide the right environment for present and future student generations.</p> <p>Scholastic year 2019/2020 will also see the completion of a number of labs spread among the selected schools aimed to offer the best facilities for the teaching of vocational and applied subjects. The supplies for the labs are being co-financed by a European Social Fund Project.</p>
	<p><b>Youth Village at Umberto Colosso, Santa Venera</b></p> <p>The plans for the Youth Residential Centre have been designed and plans were finalised in the first quarter of 2018. Works should be completed by the end of 2019.</p> <p>Status: On Track</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><b>Higher Education Regulator</b></p> <p>The 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>With the increasing number of providers applying for accreditation at NCFHE, the licensing and accreditation unit at the NCFHE ensures continuous support and guidance for all applicants. Upon request, NCFHE officers meet regularly with applicants individually and provide the needed support. The NCFHE has also developed leaflets and manuals, such as the ECVET manual, to further support applicants in their accreditation process.</p> <p>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. As a means to explain validation of informal and non-formal learning to individuals, the NCFHE also developed information leaflets to explain and answer the main questions related to the validation of informal and non-formal learning. These were printed in both English and Maltese versions and were disseminated.</p> <p>There are currently 8 Sector Skills Units (SSUs) up and running and the NCFHE is in the process of setting up additional new SSUs. As at January 2019, the NCFHE published 40 National Occupational Standards (NOS). These NOSs have been drafted by the different SSUs external experts from various sectors and MQF levels up to level 5. A new format was adopted for all the NOSs and a manual to guide external experts in the drafting of NOSs was developed and used in 2018.</p> <p>In 2018, the NCFHE signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) to carry out the validation assessment procedures for the Hospitality and Tourism NOSs and discussions were underway between NCFHE, MTA and ITS to develop a pilot project to start issuing skills cards in the Hospitality and</p>	<p>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. 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. During 2018, the NCFHE organised several training sessions with the aim to support all providers in using ECVET and learning outcomes to draft their education programmes.</p> <p>4 ECVET cafés took place with a total of 50 participants. The objective of these ECVET cafés was to meet with all stakeholders involved in the validation of informal and non-formal learning; SSU members, external experts, ministry representatives to present the developments in ECVET and VINFL in Malta.</p> <p>A national seminar was organised and attended by more than 100 persons to promote validation and Recognition of Prior Learning as an alternative route to access formal higher and further education or to obtain certifications that allow access to employment. Local speakers explained how these are already in place in Malta, and experts from abroad presented their projects.</p> <p>Throughout 2018, validation assessment was expanded to new areas such as hairdressing, block laying and beauty which gave the chance to individuals from a wider range of occupations to apply for validation. All individuals who passed their validation assessment were given an award for their occupation and MQF level. These individuals were also given the opportunity to access their award on the Blockchain should they wish to obtain a digital copy of their award.</p> <p>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.</p>

	<p>Tourism sector. Further discussions are still taking place between these three entities to specify and agree on the roles of each of the participating entities and to finalise this project.</p> <p>Therefore, the Commission's allocation is being increased in order to better fulfil its regulatory function in education.</p> <p>Status: On Track/Ongoing</p>	
	<p><b>New Campus at MCAST</b></p> <p>The construction and finishing works at the Institute of Engineering and Transport (IET) are projected to be completed by Q2 2019. Demolition works on the Media Resource Centre (MRC) have been concluded and construction is underway. Projected completion is set for Q2 2020. Construction works have also started at the Institute of Information and Communication Technology (IICT) and completion is projected for Q4 2020.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>VET is an instrumental factor to both the social and economic needs. Through VET, a vast range of opportunities have been opened to individuals to further their education and skills through different paths. In this regard, VET is featuring as a central theme in Malta's education policy, registering development and achievement. The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) offers an inspiring portfolio of higher and further education vocational study options designed to meet the needs of a diverse community of learners. 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. 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><b>Screening Programme</b></p> <p>In 2018, CONVERGE funds were secured for the Lenti screening programme to develop a comprehensive Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. A tender has been awarded and development is ongoing. Initial deployment of the system is planned for end 2018, with complete system deployment envisioned for mid-2019.</p> <p>Norwegian Funds were also awarded to a project being implemented jointly by the Ministry for Health (MFH) and the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE). Through this project, the Lenti administration will re-locate its head office to Marsa Primary school. The school Psychological Services will also have new assessment &amp; interview rooms in the same building together with on-site office space for the psychologists providing their services through the Lenti programme.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>Statistics for January to December 2018 are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- total number of children screened using M-CHAT-R questionnaire: 2,534;</li> <li>- number of children who scored low risk: 2,200;</li> <li>- number of children who scored moderate risk: 263;</li> <li>- number of children who scored high risk: 71.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Transdisciplinary Research and Knowledge Exchange (TRAKE) Complex</b></p> <p>In August 2018, the University of Malta (UoM) received the conditional approval of the project. The tender for construction work has been awarded and work has started. The tender for M&amp;E services and finishes has to be reissued as none of the bidders were compliant.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>The UoM has felt the need for additional facilities to accommodate the increasing number of post-graduate and doctoral students. This involves the construction, finishes, furnishing and equipment of a state of the art 8-floor building on the Msida Campus composed primarily of laboratory facilities, seminar and conference rooms, researchers' study space and all the additional amenities required.</p>
	<p><b>Extension of the Mathematics and Physics Building</b></p> <p>The tender for construction was reissued, evaluated and awarded. The ensuing administrative tasks are currently being performed and construction works commenced in December 2018.</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><b>Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for Educators</b></p> <p>The Institute of Education has developed a number of accredited courses and is offering them to educators after school hours. All educators from all sectors have the opportunity to access all the courses and enrol to upskill themselves to the changes that are occurring within the field of education.</p> <p>The following courses are being developed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a Bachelor and Masters degree in education to give the opportunity to supply teachers at different levels to gain the required qualifications to become eligible for the post of regular teachers as well as a Masters in Applied Educational Leadership for educators who are at managerial level or aspiring to be at that level;</li> <li>- a 4-ECTS accredited online course explaining the psychosocial services which all staff in all State schools will be able to access to understand how to access these services and their benefits for students.</li> </ul> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>	<p>A new prospectus 2018/2019 offered by the Institute of Education has been launched and it exposes all the Institute's 126 courses. The Institute offers full qualification courses, master courses in different streams, Initial Teacher Training and the Continuous Professional Development Courses.</p> <p>The Institute of Education has launched an online portal to facilitate the process for educators seeking professional growth through current available programmes and courses. Through this online portal, educators can obtain information on EU projects opportunities and familiarise themselves with the available resources, policies and circulars.</p>
	<p><b>Improving Literacy</b></p> <p><b>Home Libraries scheme/Librerija f'Kull Dar:</b> The National Literacy Agency (NLA) is setting up home libraries for children at-risk who may have little or no exposure to books.</p> <p><b>L-Ghodda f'Idejk:</b> This is a scheme run by the NLA and it was set up to provide and distribute reading books and other literacy resources in Maltese and English to primary State schools. Through 'L-Ghodda f'Idejk', the Agency supports primary schools that invest in banded reading books to promote guided reading, shared reading, guided writing and other literacy practices.</p>	<p><b>Home Libraries scheme/Librerija f'Kull Dar:</b> This book-gifting scheme entails families receiving 24 highly-appealing books, 12 in Maltese and 12 in English, in 3 instalments. From January to June 2018, 622 families enrolled with the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) benefitted from the scheme. From October to December 2018, through the same scheme, 2,232 books were distributed to 93 vulnerable families beneficiaries of Children in Social Difficulties, Scheme 9.</p> <p><b>L-Ghodda f'Idejk:</b> From January to June 2018, the Agency distributed 14,310 reading books and 4,036 educational resources to primary and middle state schools. From October 2018 to December 2018, the NLA distributed over 3,336 books and 1,434 educational resources to all primary State schools to support, facilitate and encourage learning. In the same period, the Agency supported 14 primary schools to invest in 2,968 reading books through the scheme <i>L-Ghodda f'Idejk</i>.</p>

	<p><b>Nwar Family Literacy Programme:</b> This is an after-school, family literacy programme supported by Book Distributors Limited, for children experiencing difficulty with reading and writing. The rationale of the <i>Nwar</i> programme is to support students with literacy difficulties to achieve the basic literacy skills by the end of Year 6. Dedicated literacy tutors, who have followed a professional development course in literacy, provide systematic literacy intervention whilst supporting and empowering parents/caregivers to help their children at home.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p><b>Nwar Family Literacy Programme:</b> The <i>Nwar</i> service is national in scope and currently operational in 16 regional centres within the 10 college-based system. From January to May 2018, a total of 289 pupils and their parents/guardians benefitted from this programme while from October to December 2018, 377 pupils and their parents/guardians benefitted from the <i>Nwar</i> Family literacy programme.</p>
	<p><b>Strengthening the Training offered to Employees working at the Medicines Authority</b></p> <p>The Medicines Authority has launched the fellowship programme which is intended to support bridging the gap between the theoretical knowledge gained in education and the skills and competences needed.</p> <p>The Medicines Authority has also strengthened the training of staff in specialised areas such as sterile manufacturing, quality management systems, assessment procedures and governance in order to enhance the competence of its people resulting in the expansion of its services.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>50 fellows have enrolled in this programme since 2014. Applicants may register to one of the following streams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Doctorate in Pharmacy course or a comparable, equivalent and pertinent qualification at Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) Level 8, or a Doctor of Philosophy with a commitment to carry out the research on the objectives of the Malta Medicines Authority;</li> <li>- Master of Science in Pharmacy, or a comparable, equivalent and pertinent qualification at MQF Level 7;</li> <li>- a course leading to a certificate or degree in leadership and/or management and/or administration and/or finance and/or pharmacy related subject, or a comparable, equivalent and pertinent qualification at MQF Level 6;</li> <li>- a course leading to a certificate or diploma in leadership and/or management and/or administration and/or finance and/or pharmacy related subject, or a comparable, equivalent and pertinent qualification at MQF Level 5.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Upgrading of the existing Information Systems at the Medicines Authority</b></p> <p>The processes of the Inspectorate Directorate were documented. The Licensing Management System was finalised in May 2018 and currently the Licensing Directorate is configuring the business processes in the system.</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><b>New ITS Campus</b></p> <p>Discussions are ongoing between Smart City and Government regarding the process of land transfer. The legal document has been finalised and is being internally revised. When this process is ready a Parliamentary Resolution will be prepared for the approval of the land transfer.</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><b>Recognition for Prior Learning</b></p> <p>This scheme offers a skills and knowledge recognition process which will evaluate the learning obtained through one's working years. As from January 2018, any person interested in this scheme can apply with the Institute of Tourism Studies.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>Employees already engaged in the industry are now having their skills and experience taken into account when applying to further their studies. Hence, this measure is leading to more qualified employees being engaged in the tourism and hospitality sector.</p>
	<p><b>Infrastructure and WiFi Access in Schools</b></p> <p>As at December 2018, WiFi was installed in all State Primary Schools, inclusive of staff rooms. WiFi was also installed in all Resource Centres. As at end of 2018, WiFi was installed in staff rooms of State Secondary and Middle schools.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>WiFi infrastructure has been installed in the predetermined Primary Schools, Resources Centres and the MEDE Head Office. Furthermore, network services such as voice, video and data are providing the administration with a better work experience and such services are consolidated and managed centrally for a better return on investment.</p>
	<p><b>Replace older PCs</b></p> <p>All workstation computers were replaced in primary schools, Information Communication Technology and Design and Technology labs.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>The impact of this measure is a better working environment contributing to positive learning outcomes.</p>
	<p><b>Primary School Extension in Rabat, Malta</b></p> <p>This measure has been amalgamated with the measure entitled "Construction and Modernisation of Schools".</p>	
	<p><b>Educational Facilities for Children with Disabilities who cannot attend Mainstream Educational Facilities</b></p> <p>The design for the reconstruction of two resource centres will ensure that the premises are presented and equipped for the wellbeing of the students attending both San Miguel Resource Centre, Żejtun and Guardian Angel Resource Centre, Ħamrun. San Miguel Resource Centre will cater for students with multiple disabilities and will replace the existing Resource Centre in Pembroke. The extension and refurbishment of the educational facilities at the Guardian Angel Resource Centre for children with intellectual disabilities is at the planning stage. Both projects are expected to be completed in 2021.</p> <p>The Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) is implementing social inclusion measures through different measures inclusive of setting up and equipping new multi-sensory rooms so that students on the autism spectrum and students with severe disabilities can use them in their mainstream school.</p>	<p>Investment in the infrastructure of Resource Centres and the services offered form an integral part of the strategy to cater for students with different abilities, to have access to the learning that matches their technical skills and therefore ensuring that all students are engaged. In addition, the physical environment in mainstream education is undergoing further improvement to ensure the wellbeing of students with special needs through the introduction of multi-sensory rooms and other environment upgrades.</p> <p>San Miguel Resource Centre in Pembroke and Guardian Angel Secondary Education Resource Centre are for children with severe learning difficulties aged between 11 to 16. These centres are now utilising a secondary type learning programme. Lessons are intended to ensure that students develop both cognitive, physical and social skills leading to independent learning. This is achieved in lessons that include Literacy, Numeracy, Religion, Science, Design &amp; Technology, Information Technology, Home Economics, Physical Education and Music.</p>

	<p>In addition, the Ministry for Education and Employment entered in an agreement with the private sector to provide a programme designed for the needs of learners in autism spectrum disorder.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>In mainstream schools, 3 multi-sensory rooms were set up as from scholastic year 2016/2017, with one school having also a sensory garden as from 2017/2018. Another 6 multi-sensory rooms for six different primary schools started operating in January 2019.</p> <p>The 12 learners who joined the pilot project programme during scholastic year 2017/2018 are on the autism spectrum and also exhibited challenging behaviour which affected their learning and their inclusion in class. The learners' needs were addressed with the aim of re-integrating them back in mainstream classes.</p>
	<p><b>Partnership with other foreign Universities for Training in the Pedagogy of Vocational Subjects</b></p> <p>Following the MoU signed between the Institute Haaga Helia University of Finland, the UoM, MCAST and ITS, an MoU was also signed with ITS and MCAST and courses were developed. Courses commenced in October 2018 with 96 participants.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>By means of this measure, educators are participating in relevant professional development. Through collaboration with educational institutions, professional development that addresses the needs of the educators in the implementation of the Education Act and the aims as set by the Education Strategy is also being developed. The very long-term benefits of this measure should be the reduction of early school leaving and addressing of the skills gap.</p>
	<p><b>Investment in Maritime Courses</b></p> <p>Government is investing 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>Furthermore, after consultation with the maritime sector, courses related to deck and engineering were developed.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>A number of courses related to Deck Operations and Engineering will be offered by MCAST during 2019, starting from April (training courses for seafarers wishing to work on super yachts). Furthermore, a number of courses related to both Deck Operations and Engineering are also offered by MCAST through its part-time courses. Starting from academic year 2018/2019, new courses related to both Deck Operations and Engineering are also being offered. These include the Basic Safety Training Bundle, the Mariner STCW course pack and the Refresher courses. Applications are also open for the Electrical Principles for Marine Engineering course.</p>
	<p><b>High Quality Industry-based Apprenticeship</b></p> <p>Following a consultation process, the Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship Act came into force in March 2018. The Act provides a framework for the development of effective work-placements, apprenticeships and internships and is based on research conducted by CEDEFOP. Through the Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship Act, Malta has now introduced a system where apprentices get first-hand knowledge of how the industry works; and are able to see whether it's really what they want to pursue as a career. All apprentices have the opportunity to obtain the qualifications they need in the specific field chosen, while being able to put the skills they learn into practice at the same time, with the assistance of experts who will always be on-hand to show them how things are done.</p> <p>As part of a national drive to reform apprenticeships, a quality assurance framework specifically for work-based learning (WBL) will be designed and implemented. This framework will be based on the 20 guiding principles for high quality apprenticeships issues as part of the ET2020 group on VET. This will ensure that a regulatory framework for WBL is implemented together with industry stakeholders and at the same time, bridge the gap between skills required in the world of work and education and training.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>There were 890 students on apprenticeships, 1,522 on work-placements and 1,099 on internships during 2017/2018. Furthermore, during the same year, MCAST had 709 active industry partners from various sectors, namely the creative arts, engineering and transport, Information and Communication Technology, business and commerce, community services and the applied sciences.</p>
	<p><b>University of Malta Capital Projects</b></p> <p>The University of Malta is in the process of implementing a capital project aimed at providing modern infrastructure for a number of faculties.</p> <p>The construction of the extension of the Material Engineering Lab has been completed and the tender for the Mechanical and Electrical services and Finishes was issued, evaluated and awarded. Works on site should commence shortly.</p> <p>The Mathematics and Physics building is still in the process of being built.</p> <p>The TRAKE building is still in the process of being built using ERDF.</p> <p>Renovations of the Valletta Campus have been completed.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>This measure is expected to have the following impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Material Engineering Lab extension - This is part of the whole Engineering Labs and TRAKE complex project which is partly funded through ERDF. The aim is to transfer the current labs to this facility and modernising the equipment.</li> <li>• Mathematics and Physics - Aims to provide further learning spaces and offices for staff to cater for the increased demand within the sciences sector.</li> <li>• TRAKE - This building and its facilities are targeted towards providing facilities for post-doctoral research and its support.</li> <li>• Renovation of the Junior College – The Junior College is in dire need of refurbishment. Therefore, Government has committed itself to such refurbishment.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Encouraging more Individuals to pursue a Post-Graduate Course</b></p> <p>Students graduating from 2018 onwards who have pursued a post-graduate course equivalent to MQF Levels 7 and 8 are benefitting from tax credits on the income earned up to a maximum of €60,000 for one year and two years in case of MQF Level 7 and MQF Level 8 graduates respectively, starting from when they graduate and enter into employment. Those following such a course on a part-time basis are benefitting pro-rata from this tax deduction.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>The measure's impacts can only be gauged by end 2020 as the first applicants claim the credit during the same year.</p>

	<p><b>Waiver of the MATSEC and SEC Examination Fees</b></p> <p>The MATSEC and SEC examination fees were completely removed for 2019 sessions. In November 2018, the students applying for the MATSEC and SEC examinations started to benefit from this measure.</p> <p>Since 2018, the past papers of O-Level and A-Level and MATSEC are accessible to the public free of charge.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>Thanks to this measure, many obstacles were removed as students now have the opportunity to sit for as many exams as they see fit without putting a financial burden on their families. SEC subject registration for the 2019 sessions was 3.0% higher than that of the 2017 sessions. Besides the measure's financial benefits, it is being envisaged that the number of early school leavers will continue to decrease. This should come about by facilitating the educational assessment for students, hence further encouraging them to continue their studies beyond compulsory education.</p>
	<p><b>Enhancing the Teaching Staff Grades</b></p> <p>Government is committed to improve the working conditions and offer more opportunities to all teaching grades. Therefore, Government has agreed to a new sectorial agreement to the benefit of all teaching grades.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>As at academic year 2017-2018, around 7,000 teaching grades were impacted by this measure.</p>
	<p><b>Stipends for Students who downgrade the MQF Level Studies</b></p> <p>Through this measure, unsuccessful students with no pending dues are now being considered eligible to stipends from the beginning of the new course, even at a lower MQF level, subject to the provisions of LN 308 of 2016.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>The total number of students who are benefitting from the implementation of this measure is 445. This number comprises University of Malta, MCAST and students studying in Post- Secondary institutions.</p>
	<p><b>Setting Up of the National Board for Compulsory Education</b></p> <p>The National Board for Compulsory Education was established in the second quarter of 2018 and since its establishment, the Board has held a number of regular meetings</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>The setting up of this Board is supporting the implementation of the national reform.</p>
	<p><b>Connecting Education with Industry</b></p> <p>One of the initiatives of the National Skills Council at the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) during 2018 was the Education-Business Encounters. Educational professionals and representatives from industry were brought together to identify ways and means of working closer together towards addressing the needs of both sectors; to promote employability; and to create a smooth transition from one phase of a student's life to another.</p> <p>Recently, an agreement between MEDE and hotel establishments was finalised whereby all the State and non-State students studying SEC Hospitality (MQF/EQF levels 2 and 3) are invited to carry out the practical tasks of the subject syllabus at the hotel premises as part of their assessment. A similar agreement between the farming industry and MEDE on behalf of the students studying SEC Agribusiness (MQF/EQF levels 2 and 3) has been signed in February 2019. Analogous agreements are planned to be signed with entities on behalf of students studying other vocational and applied subjects.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>9 business breakfasts were held on areas of focus including tourism, digital skills needed for industry, employability skills, requirements and pathways in the manufacturing, transport and aviation sectors.</p> <p>The generation of such information from these successful initiatives will inform the drafting of requirements.</p> <p>These encounters also serve as a means to bring stakeholders together to identify possible collaborative actions between education and industry. Hence, these sectoral meetings generate policymaking recommendations that would eventually be channelled to the policymakers.</p> <p>Outcomes so far include partnership agreements between industry and education; support by industry to schools by offering teacher training at the workplace and VET student placements in industry; and more collaboration in apprenticeships.</p>
<p>National poverty target (to lift around 6,560 people out of risk of poverty and exclusion)</p>	<p><b>Pensions Reform</b></p> <p>For 2019, the following measures were introduced for pensioners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An additional increase of € 2.17 per week was awarded to all pensioners over and above the COLA increase of € 2.33.</li> <li>Increasing the tax exemption cap on the maximum income for pensions, so that the increase in pensions, including the COLA increase, will not be taxed. The cap will be increased to €13,434.</li> <li>As has been done in previous years, about 4,500 service pensioners will once again receive another €200 raise to their service pension amount, which is deducted from the social security pension, so that the total exempted will go up to €2,466.</li> <li>Pensioners who receive a service pension and who are 72 years old or older will have their social security pensions revised. This way, instead of exempting half the amount of the service pension that had been commuted, as of 2019, 75 per cent of the amount commuted will be exempted.</li> <li>Further incentives for people to remain in the workforce: increasing the pension they would receive when they turn 65 years old. This incentive is now available to the public sector.</li> </ul> <p>The Social Security Act mandates that the Maltese pensions system is reviewed every five years vis-à-vis adequacy, sustainability, and solidarity. The next review has to be presented to the Social Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives not later than 31 December 2020. A number of working groups are underway addressing matters such as pension entitlement and divorce/separation, current pensioners, atypical employment, and pension adequacy for persons born on and after 1961, amongst others.</p> <p>The Pension Strategy Group is expected to present its report to Government in late 2019/early 2020.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>	<p>The Government has introduced over recent years a number of measures intended to lengthen the duration of working lives. Indeed, some of these measures have started to have an impact whilst in the case of other measures, the impact will work out over the short to medium term. The pension age has been increasing gradually from 61 to reach 65 years by 2027. The contributory period was also lengthened from 30 to 41 years. The Government also introduced stricter rules to access the early exit option by capping the number of credited contributions for persons born on or after 1969. Individuals beyond the retirement age who chose to continue working could do so without forfeiting their pension whilst in employment. Incentives to defer early retirement and lengthening working career were also implemented, whereby persons who are eligible for retirement at the age of 61 years, are awarded a financial incentive for each additional year they choose to continue working up to the age of 65 years. This incentive mechanism was initially intended for private sector employees. Government is adopting provisions to extend this incentive also to public sector employees.</p> <p>The impact of these reforms is evident from a review of labour market statistics. Indeed, the duration of working life in Malta has increased by 4.8 years over the period 2008-2017, the second largest increase in the EU. This effectively closed the gap between duration of working life for Malta and the EU average to just 1.8 years, from 5 years in 2008. In addition, Malta also made progress in terms of the employment rate of older workers (55-64 years). Over the period 2008-2017, the employment rate for this group increased by 17.1 percentage points, the third largest increase in Europe.</p> <p>According to the S2 indicator, Malta has improved its long-term sustainability from a gap of 5.8 pps of GDP in the structural primary balance in 2012 to 3.3 pps of GDP in 2018.</p> <p>The robust economic and employment growth recorded over the recent years resulted in pension expenditure to GDP ratio to decline by 1.8 pps since 2012 and stood at 7.4 per cent in 2016. Public pension expenditure remains below the EU average with a gap of approximately 5.2 pps.</p>

	<p><b>Independent Living</b></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: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>In 2017 the amount of €5,031.45 was issued to Caritas, covering rents from 4 January 2017 to 3 January 2018. No further payments were issued during 2018.</p>
	<p><b>Grant of €300 to Elderly Persons over the age of 75 years</b></p> <p>The €300 grant is given to those people over the age of 75 who are still living in the community. In the 2019 Budget, the Government announced that it will extend this measure to 2019.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>This measure encourages elderly people over the age of 75 to continue living in their homes and in the community. The total number of beneficiaries during 2018 was 30,963.</p>
	<p><b>Increase the number of Clients attending Day Centres by 200</b></p> <p>The following measures were implemented by Aġenzija SAPPOR, the Parliamentary Secretary for Persons with Disability and Active Ageing and MFCS to increase the number of clients availing themselves of Day Centres:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The first measure that was implemented was an over-booking policy of 10 to 15% according to the Centre. This made up for the daily unattended clients slots due to, for example, sickness. A total of 45 places were created.</li> <li>b) Centre Gwardjola with a capacity of 40 clients was opened.</li> <li>c) Star 25 was opened in conjunction with Inspire for profound multiple learning disabilities clients. Capacity was initially 10 but has now been stepped up to 25.</li> <li>d) SPERO Day Centre for the visually impaired was also opened, with a capacity of 25.</li> <li>e) Learning Hub in Gozo: A total space for 50 clients was created to be used between Aġenzija SAPPOR and Jobsplus. Clients may benefit from both entities.</li> <li>f) SKILLS SPACE was opened in Sliema with a capacity of 50 (please refer to measure below "A new Day Centre for Persons with a Disability in Sliema" for more details).</li> <li>g) A new centre was launched as from October 2018 in Baħar iċ-Ċagħaq, taking a capacity of 18.</li> <li>h) The Mtarfa Day Centre will be extended for an additional capacity of 100 individuals – the project is scheduled to commence in 2019 (please refer to measure below "Mtarfa Day Centre" for more details).</li> </ul> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>Currently most of the places created have been filled up. The strategies adopted, together with the fact that the centres have been refurbished and modernised, has resulted in a great influx both in the popularity and demand of the service.</p> <p>The aims of the service are simply to provide a safe and improved environment where persons with a disability can learn, communicate and integrate in the community surrounding them. The aim of the programmes is to enhance independent living skills through an individualised programme.</p>
	<p><b>Financial Support to First-Time Buyers</b></p> <p>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 such property. This measure started on 1 January 2014 and was expected to run up until December 2014. It was extended annually during Budgets 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>The number of contracts for first-time buyers registered during 2018 and the first month of 2019 was 2,666.</p> <p>Since its implementation in 2014, a total of 13,949 contracts were signed for 18,757 eligible first-time buyers.</p>
	<p><b>Relief from Income Tax on Minimum Wage and for Pensioners</b></p> <p>Government is committed to exempt minimum wage earners from taxes. Thus, the present tax ceiling has been adjusted to take the COLA into consideration. Therefore, persons with an income from employment not exceeding the minimum wage, remain not liable to tax.</p> <p>As regards pensioners, benefits are as per separate heading hereunder.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>During 2017, 45,260 taxpayers were affected by this measure.</p>
	<p><b>Setting Up of a Commission for Human Rights and Equality</b></p> <p>A Commission for Human Rights and Equality will be replacing the existing National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE).</p> <p>The setting up of the Commission on Human Rights and Equality is currently at pre-parliamentary legislative stage and is expected to reach Parliament by mid-2019.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>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>
	<p><b>Housing for Persons with a Disability</b></p> <p>Through this project, the first 10 residential homes in the community for disabled persons have been developed. Training has also taken place for all staff working with persons with disability.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>This is expected to reduce the number of disabled persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion.</p> <p>All 10 residential homes have been developed and are operational.</p>
	<p><b>Retirement Home in Gozo</b></p> <p>The alterations to the existing complex and building of the Dementia Unit were completed and currently restoration works on the listed façade and chapel are in their final stages.</p>	<p>This measure will address the needs of service beneficiaries and will provide family support to enable participation of family members in the labour market. The project will also create an extensive range of new jobs within the private sectors, especially for women.</p>

	<p>The draft tender for the Finishing Works, Mechanical and Electrical works, Equipment and Furniture together with the Operations of the Retirement Home is being finalised. Once this process is completed, it will be reviewed by the Department of Contracts before the call for tender is initiated.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	
	<p><b>Embellishment and Maintenance Works in Housing Estates</b></p> <p>Embellishment and maintenance works are being carried out in various housing estates: Hamrun, Pembroke, Mellieħa, Ħal-Lija, Santa Luċija and Ta' Ġiorni.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>	<p>Hamrun: Repairs, upgrading and embellishment works at Okella Agius Building in Hamrun commenced in September 2016 and have been completed.</p> <p>Pembroke: In January 2019, the Department of Contracts approved the evaluation committee's recommendation for award. The tender contract was prepared, and paving works are expected to commence in April 2019.</p> <p>7 blocks in Mellieħa: Works on the façades and roofs of the first block are at an advanced stage while works started on the second block. The works reached a progress of 10%.</p> <p>2 blocks in Ħal-Lija: The embellishment works have been completed.</p> <p>4 blocks in Santa Luċija: Maintenance and embellishment works on the roofs, façades and common parts of 4 blocks and 11 entrances are at an advanced stage. Additional maintenance works also started on 2 blocks. The works reached a progress of 81%.</p> <p>2 blocks in Ta' Ġiorni: The embellishment works have been completed.</p>
	<p><b>Building New Housing Estates</b></p> <p>Malita Investment plc is still working to finalise the loan agreement with the European Investment Bank and the Council of Europe Development Bank. In the meantime, the Social Projects Management Limited (SPML) has been set to take over the responsibilities of the project management for these units.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>This measure will see an increase in the number of Housing Authority units that will be used for social housing purposes.</p>
	<p><b>Incentives for Employers to set up Private Pensions</b></p> <p>The Government is giving fiscal benefits to employers linked to voluntary private pension plans at the workplace. This measure was implemented through Legal Notice 228 of 2017. The incentives were improved further in the 2019 Budget.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>For 2018 two new schemes were registered, bringing the total up to three registered schemes.</p>
	<p><b>Incentives for the Purchase of Property in Gozo</b></p> <p>Persons who buy residences in Gozo are benefitting from a reduction in stamp duty, from 5% to 2%. This applies to those entering into a promise of sale agreement and registering with the Inland Revenue Department after 18 October 2016 and where the final contract is concluded during the course of 2019.</p> <p>In Budget 2019, this measure was extended till the end of 2019.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>The number of persons that were affected by this measure up to December 2018 was 6,482, relating to 2,935 contracts.</p>
	<p><b>Consultations with the Social Partners on the Introduction of Paid Special Medical Leave to Employees diagnosed with Cancer</b></p> <p>Concrete proposals were drafted based on the internal consultations carried out with the Department of Health and with relevant associations. These have been presented to the Employment Relations Board (ERB) and subsequently they have been presented for political consideration.</p> <p>In April 2018, an Economic Impact Assessment on the proposal was finalised and is being discussed and analysed by the social partners at the ERB.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>After the consultations and study are concluded, recommendations will be formulated and presented to Cabinet.</p>
	<p><b>National Agreement on the Minimum Wage</b></p> <p>In 2017, an agreement was reached between the Government and social partners, unions, as well as employers, on how the National Minimum Wage should be supplemented. This agreement stipulated that employees on the minimum wage should receive a raise after a year of employment with the same employer. The employee is entitled to an increase of €3 a week during the second year of employment and an additional €3 per week in the third year of employment. Employees earning more than the basic minimum wage will be entitled to a part of the raise in the second and third year of employment.</p> <p>For the years 2018 and 2019, the weekly cost of living allowance is being supplemented by an additional €1 increase each year. The Legal Notices giving effect to the increases mentioned above entered into force on 17 May 2017 and on 1 January 2019.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>It is expected that this measure will reduce the number of persons on the current minimum wage and will minimise the period a person in employment may spend on the minimum wage. By virtue of this measure, between 2018 and 2019, the minimum wage will be increased by € 8.</p>



	<p><b>Increase in the Pension Tax Exempt Capping</b></p> <p>The threshold was increased to €13,434 in the 2019 Budget.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>Data on the number of pensioners benefitting from this measure will be available next year because this relates to income earned in 2019.</p>
	<p><b>Stamp Duty Reduction for Second-Time Buyers</b></p> <p>Persons selling their home to buy another residential home are benefitting from a stamp duty refund of up to €3,000 upon meeting set conditions and criteria.</p> <p>In the case of a buyer with a disability, this refund is being paid by cheque up to the value of €5,000. Parents who purchase a property suitable for a disabled person can also benefit from this scheme under certain criteria. This was extended up to end 2019.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>During 2018, 260 second-time buyers and 10 buyers with a disability have benefitted from this measure.</p>
	<p><b>Launching of the National Strategy for Voluntary Organisations</b></p> <p>It is envisaged that in Q2 2019, Malta will publish a national strategy on the voluntary sector by way of streamlining its operations, thereby increasing work efficiency. Prior to publication, a conference was held in December 2018.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>By means of this measure, an improvement in the relationship between stakeholders, namely the voluntary organisations, the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector (MCVS) and Government is expected. Clear working procedures between the same stakeholders and promotion of more transparent and accountable operations with the general public are also envisaged.</p>
	<p><b>Training Course for Administrators of Voluntary Organisations</b></p> <p>Training will be provided to the administrative staff and volunteers of voluntary organisations. Following necessary discussions with UoM, a pilot project will be launched in Q3 2019.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>This measure is expected to provide support to voluntary organisations in the management of the same organisations; professional improvement in the capacity of voluntary organisations; formal recognition of the work carried out by the administrators of voluntary organisations; and promotion of good governance across the voluntary organisation sector.</p>
	<p><b>Contributions paid by gainfully occupied Pensioners</b></p> <p>Prior to 2018, pensioners who were still gainfully employed (and were thus paying NI contributions) but did not have enough contributions paid prior to their pensionable age, received a reduced rate of pension. By means of this measure, when a gainfully employed pensioner reaches the age of 65, his/her pension is being re-estimated, taking into consideration also the number of contributions paid subsequent to his/her pension age, and thus increasing their pension rate according to the number of NI contributions paid up to 65 years.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>This measure is resulting in an increase in the income of pensioners who are still gainfully occupied.</p> <p>During 2018, a total of 1,667 pensioners benefitted from this measure.</p>
	<p><b>Demolition and Reconstruction of the Vajrita Building in Marsascula</b></p> <p>The current building will be reconstructed in order to decently accommodate persons with disability. By August 2018, the staff, clients and residents were re-allocated into alternative posts. Tender documents are in the process and the Planning Authority application has been submitted. The architectural design and the initial plans have been drawn up whilst demolition shall commence shortly. Following the tendering process for the initial excavations, construction will start.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>The reconstruction will provide a state-of-the-art building which is suitable to all persons with disability.</p>
	<p><b>Mtarfa Day Centre</b></p> <p>The Mtarfa Day Centre will be expanded and refurbished in order to improve the delivery of services offered to persons with disability</p> <p>The tender document was issued and excavation works were awarded. Given that the contract fell through as the excavator did not keep to the established timeframe, there was a re-issuing of the tender, and the development of the Bill of Quantities (BoQs) which will be forwarded to the Department of Contracts. Works are to commence in the coming months.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>This measure will result in the provision of a more decent place for persons with disability.</p> <p>The centre will increase its available infrastructure to fall in line with all the guidelines and universal design, whilst offering new services to persons with disability through the centre.</p>
	<p><b>Increase in the Drug Addicts Allowance</b></p> <p>The weekly rate of this benefit has increased from €30 to €40.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>This measure helps and encourages drug/alcohol addicts to enter a rehabilitation programme by increasing their income. During 2018, there were 67 beneficiaries.</p>
	<p><b>Increase in the Foster Care Allowance</b></p> <p>This measure has increased the income of persons who opt to foster children.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>The measure encourages more persons to opt for child fostering, thus giving these children a chance of having a better way of living. During 2018, a total of 175 benefitted from such increase.</p>
	<p><b>Increase in the Orphans' Allowance to those Orphans who are in the Labour Market</b></p>	

	<p>Prior to this measure, orphans who were employed got a reduced allowance than those who did not work. Now, through this measure, all orphans who reach working age benefit equally from the higher rate.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>This measure eliminates discrimination and encourages these persons to work, hence earning a higher income. During 2018, 12 persons benefitted from such measure.</p>
	<p><b>Increase in the Rate of Increased Severe Disability Assistance</b></p> <p>This measure has increased the rate of severe disability assistance for persons who cannot be in a gainful occupation due to their disability. This has been done in a gradual manner from a weekly rate of €120 to a weekly rate of €140.</p> <p>In Budget 2019, Government announced that this will increase further from a weekly rate of €140 to a weekly rate of €150.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>This measure increases income for severely disabled persons, hence improving their way of living and decreasing their risk of falling into poverty. During 2018 there were 538 beneficiaries who benefitted from last year's increase.</p>
	<p><b>A Just Society Project</b></p> <p>This project aims to construct a further 3 residential homes for adults with a disability, one in Żabbar, one in Żurrieq and another in Qrendi.</p> <p>The Żabbar residential home was opened in March 2018, the Qrendi home is in its final phase whilst the Żurrieq home is currently under construction and expected to be completed in 2019.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>It is expected that this measure will provide residential places for 22 persons with a disability (8 in Żabbar, 6 in Qrendi and 8 in Żurrieq). In addition, these projects will generate around 55 places of employment over a period of 1½ years.</p>
	<p><b>Nikru biex Nassistu</b></p> <p>By means of this scheme, the Housing Authority is leasing a number of residential units from private owners for a period of 10 years which are then rented at subsidised rates for social housing purposes. This scheme is a quick way of increasing housing stock in view that it takes a number of years to build new apartments.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>This measure further releases more property for social housing whilst utilising readily-available vacant property from the private sector, hence reducing the waiting list for alternative accommodation. It is expected that this will address the impact of the increase in prices of privately-rented residential properties. As of January 2019, 36 availability agreements and 30 lease agreements have been signed.</p>
	<p><b>Personal Assistance for Persons with a Disability</b></p> <p>This scheme assists adult persons with a disability (from 18 to 60 years) when they employ a personal assistant to meet their needs. It is modelled on a similar scheme offered by the Independent Living Institute in Sweden. The law will be amended accordingly to reflect the new changes and the HR headcount will be improved. The costs are co-financed by the Government.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>Currently 34 people are directly benefitting from this measure.</p>
	<p><b>Free Medical Aid (Pink Form)</b></p> <p>As from 2018, the amount received/forwarded as maintenance from/to one's ex-spouse is not being considered for means-testing purposes, therefore more persons are benefitting from this measure.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>As a result of this measure, more persons are entitled to Free Medical Aid. Currently, around 200 people are benefitting from Free Medical Aid (only statistics on the total number of persons in receipt of the Pink Form are kept).</p>
	<p><b>Strengthening of the REACH Project through the Inclusion of more Services and greater Collaboration between Entities</b></p> <p>This project incorporates semi-independent living arrangements and is designed with a special social benefit in mind, intended for improved quality of life. The project will be entirely accessible to all users.</p> <p>More specifically, the project will support the integration of vulnerable persons within the community through public infrastructure by providing them residential and employment opportunities. Vulnerable persons will be brought closer to the labour market through support and training offered at the community centre and workshops, further promoting social inclusion and reducing the risk of their exposure to poverty. Apart from equipping persons with a disability with independent living and employability skills, the project will provide improved social services including respite, therapeutic treatments, physiotherapy area, gym, pool and other amenities.</p> <p>This project is envisaged to be terminated in 2023.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>This measure will result in an infrastructural investment to integrate vulnerable groups (including persons with disability) within communities through employment. It is also expected to reduce poverty through addressing social needs in communities.</p>
	<p><b>Rehabilitate to Lease</b></p> <p>Government has launched a scheme whereby owners of vacant residential properties are given a grant of up to €25,000 in order to rehabilitate their property within 6 months.</p> <p>The rehabilitated property is then leased to the Housing Authority at a reduced rent for 10 years for the purposes of social accommodation.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>Since the launching of the scheme 29 applications have been received out of which 9 applications were fully processed, 5 applications were withdrawn, 1 application was cancelled, 5 applications were invalid, 4 applications are still pending due to missing documents and 5 applications are pending for inspection.</p>

	<p><b>Service Pensioners</b></p> <p>This measure increases the amount of service pensions, whereby as announced in Budget 2019, another €200 shall not be taken into consideration in the computation of the social security pension.</p> <p>As announced in Budget 2019, through this measure, DSS pensioners who are also in receipt of a service pension may benefit from an increase in their DSS pension by ignoring 75% of the commuted part of their original service pension when a reassessment is carried out to pensioners reaching the age of 72.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>This is resulting in an increase in the income of service pensioners, which in turn improves their way of living and lowers their risk of falling into poverty. Around 4,200 pensioners benefitted from this measure.</p> <p>The reassessments for the second part of this measure are in progress and the number of beneficiaries cannot be quantified as yet.</p>
	<p><b>Sickness Benefit to Widows Pensioners</b></p> <p>Previously, widow pensioners who received the contributory pension and were in gainful employment were not granted sickness benefit. By means of this measure, sickness benefits are being granted to those who have dependent children aged below 23.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>Widow pensioners who are in a gainful occupation are paid sickness benefit, so as to improve their standard of living.</p>
	<p><b>Tapering of Benefits</b></p> <p>This measure encourages more beneficiaries to enter the labour force by decreasing the qualification period for social assistance from 2 years to 1 year.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>This measure encourages more persons to enter the labour market, hence reducing their chances of falling into poverty. During 2018 the number of beneficiaries was 3,479.</p>
	<p><b>Launch of Enforcement Unit to safeguard the Rights of Persons with a Disability and their Families</b></p> <p>The Enforcement Unit shall work alongside the Equal Opportunities Compliance Unit and the Accessibility Team to tackle complaints made by persons with a disability and their families in areas of discrimination on the grounds of disability, thus ensuring that their rights are protected.</p> <p>Work continued on two pieces of legislation. The first is the Access for All Design legal notice which is about to be discussed in Cabinet and the second is an amendment to the Equal Opportunities Act to include enforcement powers to the Commission, which will include power of handing fees.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>This measure will result in an improvement in the efficiency of complaints-handling and the resolution of older claims already in process.</p> <p>Around 18,000 persons will benefit from this measure.</p>
	<p><b>Enhancing the Increased Carers' Allowance</b></p> <p>An additional increase of €8.15 per week is being awarded for any additional person in the family composition, besides the beneficiary, if the married person loses his or her right to another social benefit when entitled to the Increased Carers' Allowance.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>This measure may encourage more people to take on the role of carer by increasing the carers' income. Furthermore, it should encourage elderly people to continue living in the community.</p> <p>12 beneficiaries became eligible for this increase in benefit.</p>
	<p><b>Regeneration of Social Housing Estates</b></p> <p>The Housing Authority, with the financial assistance of funding from the EU, commenced works forming part of an important project towards the last quarter of 2017. The first works commenced on 20 March 2018 and the last project is estimated to be completed by mid-2022.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>By end of January 2019, works had commenced on 28 blocks. The implementation of this project shall comprise the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- installation of lifts in a minimum of 109 social housing blocks to help residents with limited mobility, to the benefit of approximately 2,350 residents, including 660 elderly individuals, and 101 persons with a registered disability;</li> <li>- refurbishment and embellishment of common parts of these blocks to encourage the residents to take care of the common parts and also to reduce crime;</li> <li>- embellishment and landscaping works in 4-6 social housing estates where blocks are participating in the project which will thus reduce crime and significantly improve the areas surrounding the blocks for a better living environment.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Social Loans</b></p> <p>The Housing Authority, in conjunction with the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS), has entered into an agreement with Bank of Valletta (BoV) whereby the Government guarantees 10% of the loan value to the bank. In return, BoV funds the full 100% loan whilst the Housing Authority commits itself to make a monthly part-payment of the applicants' instalments.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>It is expected that the number of applications for social accommodation and those benefiting from rent subsidy will decrease. Also, more persons will become home owners. Currently, there are around 450 applicants.</p>
	<p><b>White Paper: Towards a Fair and Sensible Private-Rented Sector</b></p> <p>The White Paper was presented to Cabinet and then published for public consultation. Following the public consultation phase, the policy and research team analysed the feedback received and the new Bill will be presented in Parliament accordingly.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>A housing solution is needed in view of new economic and social realities. The recent years have seen a fundamental change in the role of the private-rented sector (PRS) in Maltese society. Renting is no longer a necessarily short-term tenure nor a tenure exclusive to the lower-income categories. The robust year-on-year growth of the Maltese economy has shifted the traditional housing structure abruptly, therefore, challenging the established beliefs about the management of the housing market, particularly the PRS.</p>
	<p><b>Dialogue between the Pharmaceutical Industry and Government to decrease the Prices of Medicinal Products</b></p>	

	<p>Government is in continuous dialogue with the industry sector to decrease the prices of medicinal products in favour of the consumer. For such purpose, the Office for Consumer Affairs engages with the respective importer whenever a local recommended retail price exceeds the calculated reference value.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>Since 2013, the price of 230 medicines on the Maltese market was reduced, with consumer savings reaching up to 70%. During the same period, 180 generic medicines were introduced on the local market which contributed to savings of up to 60% when compared to prices of alternative medicines.</p>
	<p><b>Reduction in Income Tax of Employees earning less than €60,000</b></p> <p>All those individuals who are in employment, whether in full- or part-time work, and who earn less than €60,000, are receiving a cheque varying between €40 and €68. This applies also to those who do not pay tax on employment income.</p> <p>The same cheque amounts will be received in 2019.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>During 2018, around 200,000 persons have benefitted from this measure.</p>
<p><b>New/updated commitments in relation to the Europe 2020 targets (per target)</b></p>		
National employment target (70%)	<p><b>Percentage increase in the pension of public sector employees who do not opt to retire at the age of 61</b></p> <p>Public sector employees who opt to remain employed beyond retirement age will have the opportunity to avail themselves of an increase in pension when they retire. This incentive was only available to the private sector.</p>	<p>This measure will encourage more public sector employees to remain longer in employment and retire at a later age.</p>
	<p><b>Improving the apprenticeship experience</b></p> <p>The Government is committed to improve apprenticeship through clear linkages of courses to apprenticeships and occupational standards.</p>	<p>A good apprenticeship experience will shorten the effectiveness time of new graduates and hence will have a direct impact on the skills gap.</p>
	<p><b>Investing in the private sector in Gozo</b></p> <p>This measure will incentivise the creation of new job opportunities within the private sector in Gozo by offering a 30% refund on the average median wage, up to a maximum of €6,000, for every employee that is offered a contract of at least 3 years.</p> <p>Furthermore, employers shall be assisted to formulate a long-term vision and in employing the right persons to assist them in the implementation of such vision.</p>	<p>This measure aims to generate long-term employment in Gozo and sustain the growth of the private sector.</p>
National R&D target (2% of GDP)	<p><b>Investing in infrastructure at the Viticulture Centre at Buskett</b></p> <p>The Viticulture Centre at Buskett is the only research facility that is dedicated to the research of viticulture and oenology. Currently it lacks the investment needed to achieve its full potential, and therefore the Government has allocated €50,000 to establish the laboratory set-up required to carry out research.</p>	<p>Agricultural research is important and has been identified as a priority area under the National Agricultural Policy. Once the laboratories are set-up as proposed, research can be carried out on wine samples and vine plant material, possibly through research cooperation with the University of Malta.</p>
	<p><b>National Space Fund</b></p> <p>The Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST) signed an Implementing Agreement with the European Space Agency (ESA) in March 2018 following the confirmation of a €2 million nationally-funded programme over 5 years, i.e. €400,000 per annum, entitled the National Space Fund. This National Space Fund, with guidance from ESA, provides focus on a Space Education Programme and a Space Research Fund.</p> <p>To date, under the Space Education Programme, major events and educational activities such as AstroPi and CanSat competitions were implemented. The Space Research Fund programme has supported two significant projects of an 18-month duration which are currently ongoing.</p>	<p>The Space Education Programme provides for initiatives on the popularisation of the sector locally, as well as providing educational activities and training for the younger students. The Space Research Fund is a research programme focussing on the exploitation of downstream satellite applications to help overcome societal challenges through the acquisition, manipulation and interpretation of satellite data for the creation of innovative products or services.</p>
	<p><b>The National AI Strategy</b></p> <p>On 1 November 2018, the Government launched the Malta.AI Task Force entrusted to develop a National AI Strategy, lay the foundations to position Malta as a centre of excellence for AI and develop AI Ethics Guidelines and AI specific enhancements to the Innovative Technology Regulatory Framework. During the past months the Task Force worked hand in hand with industry and key stakeholders to develop an AI Strategy. The policy document launched in March 2019 lays the foundations and sharpens the national focus as a cornerstone to Malta's National AI Strategy which will be developed over the next 6 months. The main aims of the document are to set out the focus of national resources across both the public and private sectors to ensure that the Maltese economy and citizens fully participate in, benefit from and where necessary are protected from a new global economic landscape and social landscape influenced if not reshaped by AI.</p> <p>The Policy is built on 3 Strategic Pillars: a) Investment, Start-ups &amp; Innovation b) Public Sector Adoption and c) Private Sector Adoption. Underpinning these pillars are three enablers that cut-across all aspects of the National AI Strategy, which are a) Education and Workforce, b) Legal and Ethical Framework and c) Infrastructure.</p> <p>The policy document is undergoing public consultation until 22 April. The National AI Strategy is due to be launched in Q3/4 this year. More information can be found on <a href="https://malta.ai/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Towards-an-AI-Strategy.pdf">https://malta.ai/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Towards-an-AI-Strategy.pdf</a>.</p>	<p>The main objectives of the Investment, Start-ups and Innovation pillar are to put Malta as a centre of excellence and technological hub in the field of AI by attracting leading AI companies to set-up operation in Malta, stimulate local start-up activity and raise awareness and visibility of the Malta AI sector. The main goal for the Public Sector Adoption pillar is for Government to take a lead in showcasing the benefits that can be brought about by AI by using the technology to provide better services to citizen/ businesses, improving the economic and social wellbeing of Malta and enhancing the internal operations of the Public Service Sector. Private Sector Adoption is the third pillar and it aims to encourage SMEs to embrace and adopt AI, help local businesses to use AI and build trust in how AI works in terms of transparency and accountability.</p> <p>The Education and Workforce Enabler will look at policy measures designed to equip, reskill and upskill workers in every sector of society and lay the foundations for Malta's education system to evolve and adapt to the requirements of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. This will include fostering and embracing the adoption of Artificial Intelligence in Education (AIEd); positioning Malta as a home for AI researchers and graduates; addressing the societal aspects to promote AI as an enabler rather than something to fear; facilitating collaboration between industry and educational/research institutes on AI related initiatives; and encouraging and enabling the workforce to prepare for the AI revolution. The second enabler is a Legal and Ethical Framework, focused on the development of a National Ethics Framework that will mandate trusted, ethical, transparent and unbiased use of AI and the adaptation of existing legislation to embrace AI applications, amongst others. The third enabler, Ecosystem Infrastructure, is aimed at designing a future-proofed technology roadmap and data infrastructure that will allow AI to flourish.</p>

National targets for energy efficiency, renewable energy and GHG emission reduction:	<p><b>Government Grant on the Purchase of Bicycles and Pedelec Bicycles for bike-hiring companies</b></p> <p>In January 2018, via Government Notice No 123, Government launched a scheme whereby companies who purchased bicycles or pedelec bicycles and offered such bicycles for hire may apply for a grant of 15.25% on the purchase price of bicycles subject to a maximum grant of €85 per non-mechanised bicycle and a maximum grant of €250 for a pedelec bicycle. This up to a capping of €7,500 per applicant.</p> <p>The scheme was renewed in 2019 through Government Notice No 9, published on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2019. An indicative budget of €150,000 has been allocated for the grant scheme.</p>	This scheme aims to encourage the use of clean means of transport while, at the same time, encouraging physical exercise. It also encourages more companies to enter into the bike-hiring business and assists those already in this sector. This scheme also promotes sustainable mobility, other than the use of private car, to assist Government efforts to reduce road traffic congestion.
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).	<p><b>Installation of Bus Shelters</b></p> <p>The bus shelter installation programme was initiated in 2018. This entailed the installation of new shelters where previously there were none and the replacement of old bus shelters which required replacement. The programme will continue during 2019.</p>	This measure should result in improved accessibility, comfort and shelter to Scheduled Public Transport passengers. This would make the use of such transport more attractive to existing and potential new passengers, hence increasing its usage and reducing traffic congestion and pollution. In total 22 bus shelters were installed in different localities in Malta.
A commitment to achieve by 2020 a target of 10% of energy consumed in all forms of transport from renewable sources.	<p><b>Encouraging a modal shift from private to collective and sustainable transport</b></p> <p>This project shall be introducing the concept of Sustainable Multi Intermodal Transport Hubs to smaller local urban centres. The local transport hubs shall be strategically located in urban areas in Malta and Gozo and offer a choice of modes designed to suit different transport needs and user profiles. The basis of the local transport hubs is the current bus transport network. Therefore, each local transport hub will offer access to scheduled bus services. Certain local transport hubs shall also be connected through safe cycling routes. Ferry services shall also be offered from local transport hubs where these coincide with ferry landing sites.</p> <p>Each hub will be supplied with Intelligent Transport System (ITS) services and infrastructure such as real time information on all modes and real time journey planners to integrate into one platform all modes of transport.</p> <p>In addition, the project is expected to develop a network of Safe Cycling Routes, based on the Sharing the Road Concept. These safe cycling routes will have inbuilt traffic calming measures, reduced vehicular speed limits, ITS infrastructure and enforcement mechanisms to provide more peace of mind to cyclists and users.</p> <p>Finally, an information campaign will be launched to promote a behavioural shift to sustainable transport practices.</p>	<p>In view of providing a viable alternative to private car use, modal shift policies have to be developed especially with the implementation of a more efficient public transport system and with the introduction of alternative green and more flexible modes such as pedestrian and cycling transfers, car and bicycle sharing and more. These systems can converge in local hubs permitting the realisation of a more accessible and intermodal model.</p> <p>This measure aims to encourage a modal shift from private car use to collective, sustainable and alternative low-carbon transport modes through the introduction of various intermodal choices to reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality and reduce GHG emissions.</p>
A commitment to achieve by 2020 a share of energy from renewable sources in gross final energy consumption of 10%.	<p><b>Extension of payment of subsidy to Gozitan residents working in Malta</b></p> <p>The Gozitan Workers Subsidy is now being extended to Gozo residents working in the private sector. Furthermore, in addition to the tax credit given to companies that organise collective transport for their employees in the private sector, Government will give a daily (working days only) partial compensation of €1.50c to Gozitan Government employees who organise collective transport.</p>	Transport expenses incurred by Gozo workers working in Malta are subsidised and the use of collective transport is further encouraged. Indirectly, this should result in less private cars on the roads.
National early school leaving target (Reducing school drop-out rates to 10% by 2020)  National target for tertiary education (Increasing the share of 30-34 year olds having completed tertiary or equivalent education to 33% by 2020)	<p><b>Retention of Social Assistance while studying and receiving a Student Stipend</b></p> <p>Persons over the age of 23 who are entitled to and receive Social Assistance will continue to receive such Assistance even if they opt to study. They are also entitled to a stipend, as long as the aggregated income does not exceed the National Minimum Wage.</p>	This measure will encourage more Social Assistance beneficiaries to continue their studies, therefore enhancing their prospects to engage in gainful employment and minimising their chances of falling into poverty.
	<p><b>San Ġorġ Primary School Refurbishment</b></p> <p>The ever-increasing population in San Ġorġ Primary School of Hal Qormi requires a modernisation of the infrastructure. Furthermore, classrooms require additional volume for standardisation purposes.</p> <p><b>Classification of Courses Review</b></p> <p>Courses offered by licensed institutions in Malta will be categorised as prescribed and as high priority courses. Hence students whose courses lead to important market niches will be receiving higher stipend and grant rates.</p> <p><b>Learning of Different Languages</b></p> <p>This measure will lead to the introduction of a foreign language awareness and learning programme in 3 to 4 Colleges in Primary Years 3 and 4. It will also lead to the implementation of a foreign language learning programme in all Colleges in Primary Years 5 or 6 for Italian, French and German.</p> <p><b>Development of Regional Youth Services</b></p> <p>This measure will offer youth services in additional areas such as in colleges and other community areas with the aim of bringing up youths as responsible democratic citizens.</p>	<p>This measure will result in the modernisation of infrastructure and facilities to accommodate increases in the population capacity and quality of service provision.</p> <p>This measure will ensure a fairer and real-time classification of courses designed to reflect current job market needs. This will, in turn, lead students to choose courses that the industry requires.</p> <p>Students will be able to manage different languages hence contributing to one of the EU's multilingual goals in helping citizens to communicate in two languages other than their mother tongue.</p> <p>Young people will be provided with learning opportunities that enable them to build their self-confidence and advocate on their own behalf outside the classroom setup in order to be able to gain independent living skills.</p>

	<p><b>Fostering STEM Uptake and enhancing the Transition from Secondary to Post-Secondary Education</b></p> <p>This measure aims to encourage more students to choose subjects from the fields of science, technology and mathematics (STEM) and encourages young people to continue educational programmes after the age of 16 years.</p>	<p>This measure shall encourage students to pursue STEM courses (at Further &amp; Higher Education) and STEM careers by increasing their scientific and digital literacies hence equipping them with the necessary knowledge, skills and competences.</p>
	<p><b>Provision of Higher Quality Pedagogy</b></p> <p>This measure involves the creation of new courses that equip and update teachers with new methods of teaching.</p>	<p>The new courses shall result in upskilled educators that can operate successfully in the school setting and are capable of reaching out to all students enabling more inclusivity.</p>
	<p><b>Enhancing Professional Development for Supply Teachers</b></p> <p>This measure will provide supply teachers with the possibility to become regular teachers whether they are already in the profession or wanting a career change.</p>	<p>Government will continue to train supply teachers and invest in them in order to provide the best teaching to students.</p>
	<p><b>Reduction of Stress and more Learning Opportunities</b></p> <p>This measure emanates from another measure entitled “My Journey and Learning Outcomes Framework Reforms” which involves the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- introduction of vocational and applied subjects requiring laboratories, resources and human resources to be able to function as from September 2019;</li> <li>- introduction of the new assessment system which will require increased HR capacity for schools.</li> </ul>	<p>This measure will result in the reduction of the absenteeism rate and in higher levels of educational achievement measured through the national assessment system.</p> <p>In the long run, it is hoped that more students proceed to further and higher education resulting in the reduction of the early school leaving rate.</p>
National poverty target (to lift around 6,560 people out of risk of poverty and exclusion)	<p><b>Increase in the rate of Children’s Allowance for Families with an Income of less than €20,000</b></p> <p>While the current rates are assessed at 6% of the difference between the maximum threshold and the income of the parent/s, the new rate will be assessed at 6.5%. This will increase the rate of Children’s Allowance for a maximum rate of €96 per year.</p>	<p>This will result in an increase in the income of families which will better their children’s way of living and decrease their risk of falling into poverty.</p>
	<p><b>Extension of Unemployment Benefits to Persons seeking Employment who were previously Self-Employed</b></p> <p>Persons who were self-employed and who are now unemployed and registering under the Part I register of Jobsplus will be entitled to unemployment benefits.</p>	<p>This measure will eliminate the current discrimination in unemployment benefit entitlement between self-employed and employed persons when the former are unemployed and start to register for work.</p>
	<p><b>Increase in Medical Assistance</b></p> <p>As of 2019, the non-contributory Medical Assistance is being increased by €5.14 per week for any additional eligible person living in one household who is suffering from chronic illness and receiving this Assistance.</p> <p>Moreover, with regard to Medical Assistance given to single persons suffering from bipolar disorder or psychotic depression, Government is this year also extending this benefit to the head of household, and therefore applicants are no longer limited to single persons only.</p>	<p>During 2018, this benefit amounted to €25.98 per week while another patient in the same household was paid €20.84. This measure will eliminate this discrimination since both persons will be paid the same amount, which for 2019 is €26.45.</p> <p>Extension of the Medical Assistance to the head of household will also eliminate discrimination between the latter and single persons who suffer from the mentioned conditions and who live in the same house.</p>
	<p><b>Increase in bonus paid to those persons who did not pay enough social security contributions to be entitled to a contributory pension</b></p> <p>This annual bonus currently being given to such persons will be increased by €50. This means that those who had paid more than a year but less than 5 years of contributions will receive a bonus of €200, while those who had paid more than 5 years of contributions will receive €300.</p>	<p>About 12,500 persons will benefit from this measure.</p>
	<p><b>Increase in the Disabled Child Allowance</b></p> <p>In order to offer more financial support to families with disabled children, as from 2019, this allowance will increase by €5 to €25 per week, thus amounting to €25 to €45 per week.</p>	<p>Around 1,400 children with disabilities and their families will benefit from this increase.</p>
	<p><b>Enhancing the Increased Carers’ Allowance</b></p> <p>The financial support which is being given to persons who are taking care of a family member still living in their own home will be increased to €144.08 per week in the case of Increased Carers’ Allowance and to €92.72 per week in the case of Carers’ Allowance.</p> <p>The means test will be eliminated for both allowances and married persons will be eligible for the allowance (until they reach pensionable age) if they live with an elderly person in his/her home.</p> <p>Moreover, when an applicant is looking after an elderly person over the age of 85, the allowance will be paid automatically without the need to undergo a medical evaluation.</p>	<p>Apart from increasing the financial benefit of persons who are taking care of a family member who still lives in their own residence, this measure may also encourage more elderly persons to continue living in their own home, thus reducing social exclusion.</p>
	<p><b>Affordable Housing Benefit</b></p> <p>As of 2019, there will be a radical change in how financial aid will be given to make rent more affordable. First of all, the means test on the assets that the applicant holds will be eliminated. Instead, there will be two eligibility criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the gross family income must not exceed the established benchmark (the family income will be equivalised therefore taking into consideration the individual needs of all members in each household); and</li> </ol>	<p>The aim of this measure is to make rent more affordable and provide financial assistance through the Housing Benefit to the eligible families, thus lowering their risk of falling into poverty.</p>

<p>2. the existing rent paid exceeds the benchmark for that family.</p> <p>The applicants will be eligible if they satisfy both criteria. The Social Housing Benefit will for the first time take into consideration the amount a family spends on rent vis-à-vis their gross income.</p>	
<p><b>Equity Sharing</b></p> <p>People who have turned 40 are finding it very difficult to purchase a home, since it is hard for them to get a bank loan considering their age. Throughout this year, discussions with banks will take place to find a solution to this problem. In this regard, a scheme is being proposed whereby this category of clients will be given the opportunity to purchase not less than half the equity of a property while being given the opportunity to purchase the rest of the equity after 20 years.</p>	<p>People over 40 years of age who currently cannot afford to purchase a home will benefit from this scheme and will become homeowners.</p>
<p><b>Specialised Housing Projects</b></p> <p>The Housing Authority will be evaluating two pilot projects which will be carried out in conjunction with non-governmental entities. While the Authority will be funding part of the expense for property to be refurbished, it will be entering into an arrangement with the non-governmental entity so that the property may be used for social housing with lower rent prices than one would find on the market.</p>	<p>Apart from regenerating currently unutilised buildings for social housing purposes, this measure also aims to create sustainable communities which bring together social needs in relation to the built environment. It is also expected that through such partnerships, following these two pilot projects, the Housing Authority will embark on more Specialised Housing Projects.</p>
<p><b>Implementation of the National Strategy for Voluntary Organisations</b></p> <p>This measure will involve the implementation of the first National Strategy on Volunteering in Malta. The strategy will focus on the working relation between the Sector and Government entities. Its contents shall be disseminated through social media and by information meetings with the sector.</p>	<p>The implementation of this strategy should result in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- better operating procedures in place between the two parties;</li> <li>- clear deliverables from both parties as a result of their cooperation;</li> <li>- more tangible results resulting from mutual cooperation;</li> <li>- more awareness of the sector amongst the general public;</li> <li>- funding opportunities;</li> <li>- deliverables through service agreements;</li> <li>- feedback from both VOs and Government entities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Equity Release</b></p> <p>More than 80% of Maltese households are home-owners. This scenario makes Malta's senior citizens, asset rich but cash short. Within this context, the Government has announced a voluntary scheme whereby persons who reach their retirement age, will be able to come into an agreement with financial institutions, to release part of their property asset value, in exchange of a yearly annuity.</p> <p>This scheme is regulated by an Equity Release legal framework. The said legal framework also takes into consideration the fact that these schemes are targeted to pensioners who might not be economically active and/or might not be technical on the matter, and in this regard, provides adequate consumer protection.</p>	<p>It is expected that such schemes will improve the disposable income of pensioners, thereby improving their quality of life while they will continue to reside in their homes.</p>
<p><b>Financial Assistance Extension to Gozitan Patients undergoing Treatment in a State Hospital in Malta and vice-versa</b></p> <p>This assistance is being extended to patients undergoing not only cancer treatment but also renal dialysis and surgery intervention. Financial assistance is not only given to the patient but also to one person accompanying him/her in respect of the ferry and accommodation costs.</p>	<p>This measure will tackle poverty by reducing transport and accommodation related costs both for the patient and accompanying adult.</p>