



Malta

National Reform Programme

Annex Table 2

Ministry for Finance
April 2016

Table 2: Reporting table on national Europe 2020 targets		
Description of the measures taken and information on their qualitative impact		
Progress on Implementation	List of measures and their state of play that were implemented in response to the commitment	The estimated impacts of the measures (qualitative and/or quantitative)
National 2020 headline targets		
National 2020 employment target (70%)	<p>Free Childcare Centres</p> <p>As from 2014, families who are in work or in employment started to benefit from free childcare centres. 95% of private childcare centres have entered into a public-private partnership with the Government to provide childcare services. As at the beginning of March 2016, a total of 92 registered childcare centres benefitted from the scheme. Meanwhile, parents will continue to benefit from the successful childcare centre initiative since the Government is committed to maintain this service by continuing the initiative of free childcare.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>	<p>Since the start up of the scheme, from April 2014 until December 2015, a total of 6,693 children have benefitted at one point in time. Currently, there are 3,600 children making active use of this scheme.</p>
	<p>Afternoon School Programmes in the Community</p> <p>This measure provides an after-school care service within the school setting and seeks to bridge the gap between day school and the regular working hours of parents in employment.</p> <p>The Klabb 3-16 after-school programmes will be revised to include support in homework and provide additional tuition on languages, drama, sports and IT programmes.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>	<p>Since opening, uptake has continued to increase in all centres. In summer 2015, 12,388 students attended the programme. The number of students currently registered for Klabb 3-16 is 1,745 with 1,122 students actively attending this service.</p>
	<p>Strengthening Employability Prospects</p> <p>The Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) operates the following programmes aimed at Strengthening Employability Prospects:</p> <p>Employment Aid Programme (EAP): Following a very successful uptake, the EAP was extended to December 2015. In October 2013, EAP applications re-opened for Gozo undertakings and Maltese undertakings with a base in Gozo. The EAP has been finalised and in fact all disbursements for both EAP and the extension have been completed. The total allocated budget for the EAP amounted to € 14,162,500 but the final disbursement has been that of € 14,108,915.50, leaving a total savings of € 53,584.50. This was utilised through 2,841 Grant Agreements signed with 815 employers based in Malta and 372 employers based in Gozo.</p> <p>Out of the overall total of 2,841 grant agreements, 871 grants valued at € 4.1 million were allocated to Gozo. Out of the 2,841 persons newly recruited into employment, 1,291 were women. 1,439 young persons (15-24 years old) and 216 older persons (55-64 years old) who were unemployed or inactive found work as a result of the incentives offered through this programme.</p> <p>Training Aid Framework (TAF): The initiative is being called TAF2. Applications were received as from 24th November 2014 and closed on 16th January 2015. TAF2 aimed to promote the training of persons actively participating in the Maltese labour market, with a view to increasing productivity and enhancing adaptability.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>Employment Aid Programme: The effectiveness of the employment generated by the EAP is evidenced by the employment retention rate of 85% of the 2,841 persons whose grant period expired by December 2014 and who were still in employment six months after the subsidy period. A later check showed that 81% of the total persons employed by means of this programme had still remained in employment as at end November 2015.</p> <p>Training Aid Framework: A total of 2,389 applications were received and just under 1,000 were rejected or withdrawn. The scheme paid all valid grant agreements with a value of €1.3 million. 9,000 trainees have received training.</p>
	<p>Measures to Curtail Abuse of the Unemployment Register and Informal Work</p> <p>Various initiatives are contributing to curb undeclared work and encourage more people to enter the formal economy. These initiatives are coupled by inspections carried out by the Law Compliance Unit within ETC and the Benefit Fraud and Investigation Department (BFID).</p> <p>The Maltese Public Employment Service is one of the players that strives to ensure that persons registering for primary employment and employers engaging local and foreign employees abide by their respective legal obligations. Efforts to enhance effectiveness by the Law Compliance system at ETC are continuous through desk investigations and more targeted inspections. The Law Compliance Unit (LCU) works hand in hand with the Department of Social Security, the Tax Compliance Unit, the VAT Department as well as the Police Force in order to ensure better law enforcement.</p> <p>The public is also encouraged to report cases of abuse through an online reporting system as well as through a Freephone number. Discussions are being held at a higher level regarding the status of the campaign for the promotion of these services.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>	<p>Between January 2015 and November 2015, a total of 6,582 inspections were carried out by ETC during which 2,594 law infringements were identified. Between January and September 2015, the Corporation registered 913 strike-offs from its employment register. Most of these cases of law infringement were linked to Maltese workers found working at establishments without ETC having been notified by their employer regarding their employment and hence, they were deemed as illegal employees. Since most of the inspections are targeted inspections, the success rate is high.</p> <p>During the period January-December 2015, the Benefit Fraud and Investigation Department conducted, through its Inspectorate, 2,046 on-site inspections. As a result of the investigations conducted, 972 social benefits were revised and/or suspended. It is estimated that during this period the investigations resulted in savings of € 4,228,230.</p>
	<p>Supported and Sheltered Employment Training for Disadvantaged Groups including RDPs</p> <p>The aim of this measure is to further increase the participants' confidence and practical job-specific skills through work exposure opportunities thus enhancing the financial independence of disadvantaged persons and preventing social exclusion and marginalisation. On the other hand, the Sheltered Employment Training activity aims to provide persons with disability who cannot work in an open labour market environment with employability skills in a sheltered one.</p>	<p>This measure helps to enhance the employability of registered disabled persons through a hands-on approach to training. Its two main impacts are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase in the Employment Rate: As at end December 2015, a total of 114 participants were placed in employment through various project activities as listed below:

<p>The Sheltered Employment Training offers the possibility for clients to receive a hands-on approach to training in one or more categories, depending on the availability and preferences as indicated by the client.</p> <p>At present the five training categories made available for the clients include: Back-office, Catering, Assembly, Gardening and Housekeeping. Currently training may take place either at the Msida Training Workshops or at the premises of employers who submit work to be used in the hands-on training of the clients.</p> <p>As from 1st December 2015 the Sheltered Employment Training activities started to be financed through national funds.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 21 participants employed through the former ESF3.114 – Employment in the Social Economy Initiative; b. 29 participants provided Support Worker assistance during their employment with the Me2Co-operative; c. 19 participants placed in employment while attending the Sheltered Employment Training Initiative; d. 42 participants assisted in finding employment by Support Workers while attending the Job Bridge Centre; e. 2 participants supported during their employment through Personal Assistance Allowance provided to their employer; f. 1 participant provided Support Worker assistance during his employment with IPSL Ltd. <p>2. Increase in the number of adult participation in lifelong learning: As at end of December 2015 a total of 162 participants had undergone training through various project activities as listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 156 participants provided Sheltered Employment Training; b. 4 participants provided Learning Support Assistance; c. 1 participant provided Job Coaching Services while taking part in an employment scheme; d. 1 participant provided the services of a Study Support Worker during his University studies.
<p>Childcare Centres</p> <p>Three childcare centres have been constructed by Malta Industrial Parks Ltd. These are located in Kordin, Mosta and Xewkija industrial estates.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>Following a competitive call for expression of interest, Malta Industrial Parks Ltd. is now in the process of negotiating lease agreements with the winning bidders. The childcare centres will be operational once lease agreements are signed and the necessary certifications and permits are issued by the relevant authorities. These childcare centres will accommodate approximately 100 children in total.</p>
<p>Enhancing Employability through Training (EET)</p> <p>This programme was made available to all actively employed, inactive, early school leavers, and registered unemployed individuals who are eligible to work. It was sub-divided into four main components: Training Design, Short Courses, Traineeships, and a Training Subsidy Scheme. The programme sought to provide the opportunity for men and women who had been absent from the formal economy to regain their confidence and develop their skills through a series of training programmes. Four traineeship programmes in Cleaning Attendance, Sales Techniques, Office Procedures, and Handymen were completed.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>Through training programmes and the provision of assistance, registered unemployed or inactive individuals will be integrated into the labour market while employed persons will secure and advance their position within the labour market.</p> <p>Following further discussions with the Planning and Priorities Co-ordination Division (PPCD), the overall target for the project to train or support 8,080 persons has been revised and increased to 8,505.</p> <p>Between 1st January 2013 and 31st December 2015, the Corporation trained 12,948 trainees through its short courses, while placing 346 and 562 persons on the Work Exposure Scheme (WES) and Traineeship (TRN) respectively. Out of those persons attending these schemes, 259 persons placed on WES have completed the scheme, while 289 persons have completed TRN. Another group of 129 trainees were placed on a 6-week traineeship through a private contractor.</p> <p>Through the EET project, there were also 158 persons who have received financial assistance to fund 75% of their courses through the Training Subsidy Scheme and the Training Subsidy Scheme Academic.</p> <p>Therefore the total number of persons benefitting from the EET Project amounted to 14,143.</p>
<p>Development of a new Child and Youth Services Centre</p> <p>The centre is now complete.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>Child and youth services centres create a continuum of early intervention and educational services and help towards the employability of the parents, in particular, by encouraging Maltese women to enter the labour market or to continue working while their children are being taken care of.</p>
<p>National Apprenticeship Scheme</p> <p>Since 2014, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) has been responsible for the implementation of the National Apprenticeship Scheme. In addition, MCAST has been working to enhance this scheme by offering it across a broad range of courses and subject areas. Furthermore, the scheme is being redesigned to be more flexible and adaptable to the exigencies of the different sectors. Courses that include an apprenticeship scheme are now more compact in nature since the summer period is being considered as an active period.</p> <p>During 2016, MCAST will continue to further strengthen and widen the scope of the apprenticeship scheme and has started to pilot new forms of work-based learning at different levels.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>Currently there are over 40 courses at MQF levels 3 and 4 that form part of the Apprenticeship Scheme and by June 2016 there will be around 900 apprentices. Reviews on the current legislation and policies were carried out in the Apprenticeship Department within MCAST. Amendments, which are currently being reviewed internally, were drawn up for a new legislation on apprenticeships. Furthermore, meetings with the local industry sectors are being held in order to develop apprenticeship standards. Concurrently, MCAST is also concentrating on aspects related to quality assurance in order to enhance student support systems related to work-based learning.</p>
<p>Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme</p> <p>The MCAST Entrepreneurship Centre (MEC) was launched last year with the aim of providing students and alumni with the opportunity to transform their creative and innovative ideas into profitable and sustainable business ventures. A number of alumni have been provided with a space where they can develop their start-up business ideas and can also be mentored.</p> <p>It is also pertinent to note that MCAST is consolidating the entrepreneurship-related tuition that students receive. Indeed, Entrepreneurship has been introduced as a key skill at MQF level 4 and shall also be gradually introduced at various levels across the Foundation, Technical and University Colleges. Students are not only receiving knowledge in relation to the typical operations of an enterprise but they are also being trained to think like an entrepreneur. Students are encouraged to turn their ideas to business proposals which are subsequently evaluated.</p>	<p>It is envisaged that through the consolidation of this activity young people will be empowered with the optimal skills to work within existing organisations (intrapreneurship) or operate a successful commercial endeavour (entrepreneurship), thus generating positive social and economic spill-over effects.</p>

<p>Promising ideas are nurtured and developed further within the MEC.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	
<p>Embark for Life Programme</p> <p>During 2015, around 50 young people found employment whilst others were receiving support in various areas such as 'O' Levels, basic education, hairdressing, ECDL, food handling, first aid and nail technicians. Other courses are planned for the future together with an assessment to determine the young people's level of education and plan the training according to their needs. A call for tutors was issued and the tutors were contracted to carry out courses for young people who required one-to-one and/or small group tuition. Embark for Life received a total of 92 referrals between January and December 2015. The current waiting list as at end January 2016 is 6. The team continues to support young people who are already in employment. Internal discussions are currently being held regarding the introduction of job shadowing for young people.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>During 2015, the service provided a number of courses to young people – these included ECDL, food handling and hairdressing. Courses currently taking place are namely, a security course, 'O' level lessons and care worker courses, while the First Aid course started in January and ended in February 2016. Workers continued to build on networking with other entities and even hosted MCAST students, whilst two workers attended a training workshop in the UK that targeted direct work with young people.</p> <p>The adolescent Day Programme, as a separate service, caters for young people with challenging behaviour and also those who started experimenting with drugs and alcohol. Young people can also be referred to the programme through the First Arrest Scheme. The programme is in line with Government policy to fight drug traffickers and help victims. It encourages a youth work approach and includes job skills and leisure education whilst addressing anti-social behaviour, offending behaviour and substance abuse. It strives at directing young vulnerable people to embrace sustainable employability as they would normally find it difficult to enter the labour market due to their troubled background, stigma and lack of employability skills which all create a disadvantage when seeking employment. Through the Arrest Referral Scheme, youngsters with challenging behaviour will also be able to be referred and possibly benefit from this programme. In fact, the programme was divided into three phases: Bronze, Silver and Gold. The first programme which ran for 12 weeks was conducted with 7 participants. The second programme was initiated and is now finished. On 12th February, a certificate awarding ceremony was held at the Armed Forces of Malta (AFM) grounds whereby 11 young people were presented with certificates following their attendance at the programme. 8 youths attended for all three phases, 2 youths managed to attend until the Silver phase and 1 young person attended only for the Bronze phase. It was a very interesting programme especially the experience with the AFM. There was a lot of co-operation from the AFM staff who prepared a very interesting programme for the participants covering the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - drill training; - team building sessions like mine field and crossing bridge; - training on obstacle course self defence; - wheel changing of a van; - basic first aid; - healthy eating; - CPR; - round the helicopter; - training and assault course; - tour round patrol boats; - winch a dinghy; - cleaning of dinghy inside out. <p>In the coming days, an internal evaluation will be held in order to plan another programme for another group of 8 young people.</p>
<p>Development of a Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy including an Action Plan for Malta 2013-2018</p> <p>The current actions towards entrepreneurship are of a horizontal approach targeting a wide spectrum of society starting with young people. Entrepreneurial education is given more importance and specific programmes such as the Entrepreneurship through Education scheme are run annually. In February 2014, the Ministry for Education unveiled a new 2014–2024 Framework for Education Strategy for Malta, one objective of which is to encourage entrepreneurship and innovation at all levels. A far-reaching exercise is under way to design a new curriculum based on learning outcomes, with entrepreneurship being addressed as one component. MCAST and University students are encouraged to set up their entrepreneurial ideas into businesses and are assisted by incubators. Other incubators, such as Microsoft and the Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA), assist in this role.</p> <p>The aim is to strengthen an ecosystem conducive to entrepreneurship by making available different tools that would facilitate entrepreneurship in Malta. The Malta Entrepreneurship & Start-Up Forum, which is composed of Government agencies and private industry, brings together various players who operate incubation spaces and/or offer mechanisms for start-up support. Currently, it is composed of Government agencies (Malta Enterprise, MITA, the Valletta Design Cluster Working Group, Malta Communications Authority and the Ministry for the Economy, Investment and Small Business), academic institutions (the University, through the TAKEOFF Facility, and MCAST, through the MCAST Entrepreneurship Centre) and the private sector (Microsoft and PWC). Representatives from the collaborating stakeholders meet on a quarterly basis, coordinate the agenda and follow up on the initiatives discussed and agreed upon.</p> <p>Malta Enterprise is engaged in a pilot project (Business Start, B.Start) which is still in its initial cycle. This incentive assists start-ups proposing innovative products or services with seed funding of up to €25,000. Furthermore, a collaborative effort between Malta Enterprise and MCAST is leading to new student start-ups. The Kordin Business Incubation Centre, managed by the SME Support and Development Unit of Malta Enterprise, is nearing its full capacity and experiencing start-ups involved in various industrial sectors.</p> <p>Status: Withdrawn</p>	<p>Considering all these efforts, entrepreneurship in Malta is considered to be doing well and the results are within the EU averages as detailed by the 2015 SBA Malta Fact Sheet. Therefore, Malta does not feel that a formal strategy, action plan or else are needed.</p>
<p>Breakfast Club</p>	

	<p>The Breakfast Club is intended to provide care for children attending State schools before the schools' official opening hours, from 07:30am till 08:30am. This initiative is open to all State primary schools in both Malta and Gozo. The Breakfast Club has a budget of €3.6 million. At the start of scholastic year 2015/2016, over 2,500 students were benefitting from the scheme.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>	<p>Parents have the possibility to drop off their children at school before they go to work, having the peace of mind that their children are being taken care of. This incentive allows further flexibility to working parents and may also encourage more women to either return or enter into the labour market.</p>
	<p>Youth Guarantee</p> <p>This initiative was launched in March 2014 and it is aimed at young persons who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs). Malta's Youth Guarantee will primarily focus on individual empowerment.</p> <p>Through the initiatives listed in the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan, the Government is committed to provide a second chance in education to individuals with a low level of education and to help them enter the labour market.</p> <p>Moreover, the 2015 Budget introduced a measure whereby, claimants for social assistance benefits under the age of 23 are placed on Youth Guarantee. Single parents are exempted until their youngest child is one year old. Those who fail to enrol in the Youth Guarantee Programme will lose their social assistance entitlement. Furthermore, the Youth Guarantee will be supplemented with additional resources aimed to finance traineeships and more work trials.</p> <p>Through the NEET Activation Scheme, NEETs were individually profiled and received forty hours of direct contact with a youth worker and another eighty hours of training intervention covering the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - motivational and behavioural training; - guidance on employment; - communication skills; - CV writing skills. <p>Following the training phase, these young people were offered the opportunity to benefit from twelve weeks of work exposure, and up to six months traineeship leading to a qualification from one of Malta's leading educational institutions. Other NEETs were encouraged to read for vocational education.</p> <p>The second cycle of the Youth Guarantee is to commence in April 2016, and the number of clients to be addressed by 2020 is 5,250, out of which 600 are NEETs. The envisaged target for the NEET Activation Scheme II is circa 150 NEETs per annum who will undergo training and further training or training and work exposure.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>It is recognised that the most effective measure to activate these young people is to offer them a combination of off-the-job and on-the-job training so that trainees gain practical training either in a simulated workshop or in a real working environment. Work experience provides many benefits such as providing individuals with skills and experience that allow them to better understand the demands requested by industry and potential employers. The scheme also provides young people with the possibility to choose the sector which is more compatible with their skills, competences and interests. In addition, work practice equips individuals with soft skills such as working in a team and communication skills.</p> <p>At the end of the Youth Guarantee process, 235 NEETs resident in Malta and 10 NEETs resident in Gozo had improved their skills and competences listed in the Europass CV. After six months from start of the scheme, 44% of youths that did not continue with further study are either registering for unemployment or in employment, while after twelve months from completion of the scheme, 72 young people are in employment or further study and 45 are registering for unemployment.</p>
	<p>Setting up a Skills Bank</p> <p>There has been a re-think on how to implement this measure. In a meeting held between the ETC and the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE), the Skills Bank proposal was discussed. Both entities agreed that it is not possible to compile a Skills Bank for all young persons with updated and valid information at any point in time and in real-time. This is due to the fact that compiling such information is time consuming and it is not guaranteed that the young people who will be interviewed will participate and cooperate to provide this information. Furthermore, in view of the fact that Malta still does not have a comprehensive system for validating skills and competences acquired through informal and non-formal learning, the information given by young persons may be highly subjective. Moreover, when such information is collected it will become obsolete as many of these young people would have obtained other skills. Thus, it was decided to put this measure on hold as a number of analytical studies capturing information about the qualifications and skills possessed by young people are already being undertaken. Very recently, a national survey was administered among a representative sample of employers to determine their labour and skills needs for the next three years. This survey is being conducted jointly by ETC, NCFHE and Malta Enterprise. The findings from this survey will then feed into the educational system and guide the design of educational programmes and career guidance so as to meet labour market needs.</p> <p>Status: On hold</p>	<p>Through the Skills Bank initiative, it is expected that the ETC will have a comprehensive picture of the future needs of the employers and the skills of young people. The ultimate aim should be to guide young people to areas which are of labour market relevance.</p>
	<p>Employability Index</p> <p>The Employability Index was launched in October 2015. The findings indicated the level of horizontal and vertical mismatch for graduates. Following the results of this study, a pilot project will be launched to ensure that such mismatch is reduced.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>The index indicates which students are at high risk of experiencing underemployment due to significant job mismatching in relation to education attainment. It is expected to improve the relevance of career guidance.</p>
	<p>Helping single parents to enrol into education</p> <p>Through this measure, single parents on social assistance who choose to enhance their employability prospects by opting to follow a full time course at a post-secondary or tertiary institution will be given an extra annual grant ranging from €200 to €1,000 depending on the MQF level of the course chosen. 30 single parents have already benefitted from such credit.</p> <p>In view of upcoming amendments to the existing legislation, this measure is currently on hold.</p> <p>Status: Delayed</p>	<p>This measure will continue to encourage single parents to further their education.</p>
	<p>Reduction in income tax for unemployed women who are over 40 years of age</p> <p>Principal breadwinners whose wives are over forty years of age and have been inactive for more than five years but are going to start</p>	<p>180 taxpayers benefitted from this measure during the year 2015.</p>

	<p>employment earning a tax-exempt wage, are benefitting from reductions in income tax as the income of the wives is not being considered when applying the joint tax computation. This measure came into force as of 1st January 2014.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	
	<p>Providing training and/or employment to employees who are between 45 and 65 years of age</p> <p>The 2014 Budget introduced a tax deduction of €5,800 given to employers to incentivise them to hire persons within this age group who have been unemployed during the previous three years. The deduction applies for the first two years of employment.</p> <p>Furthermore, companies benefitting from a tax deduction on their income or corporate tax of 50% of the training (up to a maximum of €400) for training undertaken by a training provider officially accredited by the Malta Qualifications Council upon the provision of a VAT receipt.</p> <p>This measure came into force as of 1st January 2014.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>10 taxpayers benefitting from this measure during 2015.</p>
	<p>Self-employment Transition Scheme</p> <p>The 15% tax rate in respect of part-time income has been extended to apply on the first €10,000 for part-time employment and the first €12,000 for part-time self-employment. This measure came into force in January 2014.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>The number of taxpayers in part-time employment with a salary of up to €10,000 (hence benefitting from this scheme) was 1,956, whereas the number of taxpayers in part-time self-employment with a salary of up to €12,000 was 860.</p>
	<p>Tax deduction for entrepreneurs who offer apprenticeships placements</p> <p>This is an incentive for entrepreneurs in the form of a tax deduction of €1,200 for every apprenticeship placement they accept (capped at 800 placements). This measure came into force as of 1st January 2014.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>As at 2014, no entrepreneurs have claimed this tax deduction.</p>
	<p>Tax deduction for entrepreneurs who offer work placements</p> <p>This is an incentive for entrepreneurs in the form of a tax deduction of €600 for every work placement they accept (capped at 400 placements). This measure came into force as of 1st January 2014.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>As at 2014, no entrepreneurs have claimed this tax deduction.</p>
	<p>Access to Employment (A2E)</p> <p>Persons who are at a distance from the labour market, namely the long-term unemployed, inactive persons, unskilled youths and persons with a disability, tend to be regarded by employers as having serious productive shortcomings that do not justify the full wage linked to the job. Older workers looking for work tend to experience the same fate. In order to compensate for any productivity shortcomings, employers will receive wage subsidies which make up for the lost productivity.</p> <p>The wage subsidy is that of €85 for disadvantaged and severely disadvantaged persons for as many as 104 weeks and €125 for registered disabled persons for as many as 156 weeks.</p> <p>The measure was announced in Budget 2014, and implementation started in June 2015 for the registered disabled persons. In November 2015, the scheme was launched for the other target groups (i.e. the disadvantaged and severely disadvantaged persons).</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>This programme will facilitate the integration of disadvantaged, severely disadvantaged and disabled persons in the labour market.</p> <p>Until March 2016, the number of active participants in this Scheme was 206. Further applications for such participants are currently being received.</p>
	<p>In-Work Benefit</p> <p>The In-Work Benefit scheme provides additional income to families who are in employment and are on low income. In addition, this scheme is an integral part of the 'Make Work Pay' principle, which encourages inactive or social benefit beneficiaries to enter into the labour market.</p> <p>In the 2016 Budget, Government announced that this measure will be extended to include low-to-medium income families where only one of the spouses is in gainful occupation (with an income between €6,000 and €13,000) and who have dependent children up to 23 years of age.</p> <p>Status: Completed and Ongoing</p>	<p>This measure will lessen dependency and will attract more social benefit beneficiaries into employment, thus reducing the at-risk-of-poverty rate by 0.9 percentage points. The number of beneficiaries up to December 2015 amounted to 1,336 families.</p>
	<p>Tapering of social security benefits for Single Parents</p> <p>Single parents on social assistance used to retain their benefits if earning less than €57.05 a week. This was leading to some abuse and also precarious employment. Therefore, as from 1st January 2015, this system was replaced with tapering of benefits. In this way, single parents who become employed either on a part-time basis but working not less than 10 hours per week, or on a full-time basis paid according to the National Minimum Hourly Rate, will retain 65% of social assistance for the first year, 45% for the second year and 25% for the third year. Their employers will also benefit from 25% of the benefit for the first three years. In cases of part-time employment, the employer's share will be of 12.5%.</p> <p>Status: Completed and Ongoing</p>	<p>This measure encourages more single parents to seek employment in order to substantially improve their income and not become dependent on social benefits. This in turn increases the overall active labour force participation.</p> <p>1,731 persons were awarded with tapering of benefits until the end of December 2015. Out of these, 616 were single unmarried mothers.</p>
	<p>Increasing the maternity leave benefit rate</p> <p>As from 1st January 2015, women in employment are benefitting from an increase in the rate of the maternity leave benefit for the four weeks of</p>	<p>This measure provides a further incentive for women to enter and stay in the labour market. The number of beneficiaries</p>

	<p>maternity leave covering from the 15th to the 18th week. This has increased from €160 a week to a rate equivalent to the National Minimum Wage.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>who received a higher rate of maternity leave benefit amounted to 1,496 in 2015.</p>
	<p>Increasing the maternity benefit rate for self-occupied women</p> <p>Women who are self-employed used to receive the same maternity benefit as women who are not employed. This is no longer the case as from 1st January 2015, women who are self-employed will have their maternity benefit rate for their 14 weeks of maternity leave increased to the National Minimum Wage.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>This measure encourages more women to engage in the labour market as self-employed. The number of self-occupied women who received a higher rate of maternity benefits amounted to 100 in 2015.</p>
	<p>Extending Maternity Leave Benefit in cases of Adoption of Children</p> <p>As part of the family-friendly policies, the leave benefit given in cases of adoption of children will be extended to be of the same length as that granted to cases of maternity.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>Parents who adopt children will enjoy the same family-friendly measures as those who utilise maternity leave. This will provide a further incentive for women adopting children to enter the labour market. During 2015 a total of 4 persons benefitted from this measure.</p>
	<p>Fiscal Incentives for employers employing disabled persons</p> <p>Through this measure, employers who employ disabled persons will be exempt from paying social security contributions on behalf of the disabled employees. The employer can also be eligible to claim a tax deduction on profits equivalent to the disabled person's wage. The maximum credit cannot exceed €4,500 for each disabled employee.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>As at December 2015, 95 employers were exempted from paying the employer's share of the National Income Contribution and there were 1,187 (including both full-time and part-time) Registered Disabled Persons (RDP) in employment as at end of July 2015. This figure only includes records of persons with disability in employment that have registered and found employment through the ETC. It is noteworthy that it may also be the case that the employer does not declare or consider his employee (that is, the RDP) to be eligible for the fiscal incentive.</p>
	<p>Revision of the law regulating Industrial and Employment Relations</p> <p>Additions and amendments are being proposed to the Employment and Industrial Relations Act (EIRA) to improve the rights of workers. This process will be carried out in conjunction with social partners and the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development (MCESD). The reviewing of EIRA has been placed on the agenda of the Employment Relations Board (ERB) and discussions commenced in January 2016 and are still in progress.</p> <p>In addition, during February 2015, the EIRA was amended so that members of the disciplined forces could join a trade union. Discussions within the Employment Relations Board (ERB) regarding the verification process of trade union representation at work places have been concluded and the proposals are being submitted to the Minister for her consideration. In March 2015, a Legal Notice amending Overtime Regulations was also published.</p> <p>It should also be noted that the draft legal notice regulating adoption leave has been drafted with some technical amendments being reviewed before this is forwarded to Cabinet for its consideration.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>It is expected that this measure will have the following impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - better and effective regulations governing the rights of workers; - a target review of the current Act, making it more relevant to today's needs; - Overtime Regulations; - amendment in relation to disciplined forces: to provide more protective rights and representation by Unions in support of collective bargaining for better working conditions; - adoption leave: better quality of life while ensuring a smooth adoption process.
	<p>Implementing the 2% law</p> <p>The aim of this measure is to encourage the employment of persons with disability. The Government will be enforcing the law whereby 2% of employees in a company (employing more than 20 employees) are persons with disability. Companies that do not comply will be asked to make an annual contribution of €2,400 for each disabled person he or she should be employing.</p> <p>Until now, the total contribution obtained from those companies that failed to reach the quota is €100,000. Discussions are still ongoing between the ETC and employers/ company stakeholders as to how to better enforce the quota by giving access to employers on the number of persons with disability that they employ.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>It is expected that there will be an increase in the number of persons with a disability in employment.</p>
	<p>Virtual Matching Tool</p> <p>Through the use of new IT tools, a Virtual Labour Market is being created whereby employers and those seeking employment will have a virtual meeting place. Matching will no longer be done solely on the basis of individual preferences but will take into consideration individual skills and aptitudes. This measure will contribute towards having a more efficient public employment service and a more effective system of matching. It will also assist in policy development.</p> <p>A foreign company was chosen for the configuration of such a tool. Work was carried out on the structure and the format of such system, which has to be tailored-made to the local needs. In view of such a specific system, the piloting of this system has been carried out and amendments are currently being made according to the pilot's results.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>Job seekers and employers can fulfil their requirements online without the need for ETC's intervention (except when it comes to the vetting of job seekers profiles and employer vacancies). Through this tool, ETC will be providing a platform where the jobseeker and employer can meet through the use of technology, thus refocusing the capacities of the public employment service on activities such as assisting persons requiring more targeted intervention and persons who for some reason do not manage to access this system.</p>
	<p>Work Programme</p> <p>During the coming months, the Work Programme Unit will continue to work to reach the main objective of this initiative which is that of up-skilling long-term unemployed and reintegrate them in the labour market.</p>	<p>By February 2016, the number of people placed into the labour market through the 3 private companies was 291.</p>

	<p>The three private service providers will continue to carry out individual assessments with the participants, where each participant will be profiled and his/her training needs will be identified. Training courses will be delivered by the service providers. The major concern of this project will be the placement of these participants into employment.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	
<p>National 2020 R&D target (2% of GDP)</p>	<p>The Setting Up of a Life Sciences Centre/Park</p> <p>The Malta Life Sciences Park will seek to attract foreign direct investment into Research, Technological Development and Innovation (RTDI) in the bio-technology and life sciences sectors. The centre will also support the development of the local industrial community, helping them to grow and internationalise. The project was completed in Q4 2015.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>The Campus is expected to build upon Malta's long-standing tradition in the pharmaceutical industry which has high growth potential.</p> <p>The impact indicators of the project show a 0.44% increase in RTDI expenditure as a percentage of GDP with 138 direct jobs created by the end of 2016. Over a 20-year period total employment should reach 688.</p>
	<p>Malta's National R&I Fund 2013</p> <p>The National R&I Fund is defined by two programmes under the FUSION branding: the Commercialisation Voucher Programme and the Technology Development Programme.</p> <p>The FUSION programme is offering support to researchers and to micro enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to assess the commercial and market potential.</p> <p>In 2015, the R&I Programme focused primarily on generation of outputs from the Commercialisation Voucher Programme, to enable new project applications for the subsequent Technology Development Programme. Over 50 applications were received, resulting in more than a four-fold increase in interest over 2014. Consequently, 23 Commercialisation Voucher projects were awarded and selected for funding. These projects are at various stages within the Programme and some will continue into 2016.</p> <p>For 2016, the Commercialisation Voucher Programme will be executed through two calls; one closed in February while the second one will be launched in mid-2016. With regard to the Technology Development Programme, two calls will also be announced; the first opened in March 2016, while the second will be available in Q4 2016.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>The R&I Programme has a direct impact on the national R&I expenditure (GERD) since it funds R&D performed by both the higher education and the business enterprise sector.</p> <p>While the Commercialisation Voucher Programme will not contribute directly to Malta's R&D expenditure target, it will seek to make best use of R&D investments by helping to determine the commercialisation potential of proposed innovative solutions, thus ensuring that before actually undertaking any research and development, the applicant would already be aware of the possibility of protecting the idea through intellectual property as well as gaining awareness on the market potential and the economic wealth it can generate for the good of society at large.</p> <p>The impact of the Commercialisation Voucher Programme (CVP) is expected to be twofold:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preparation & better formulation of ideas to be feasible Technology Development Programme (TDP) projects: Up to December 2015 there were 6 successful CVP projects that have been accepted into the TDP. In the meantime Call 1 for TDP was launched at the beginning of 2016 and 10 participants are expected to apply, with 4 being awarded. 2. Effect on improving commercialisation chances post-TDP: To date there have been no complete projects following implementation of the new system, as the first "exitors" are expected in 2017.
	<p>Setting-up and development of Esplora, formerly the National Interactive Science Centre</p> <p>The civil, restoration and finishing work associated with Esplora is ongoing and will be completed by 2016. During the coming weeks the assembly and installation of the planetarium structure together with the monumental staircase will commence on site. Most of the finishing works and mechanical and engineering works (M&Es) are progressing at a steady pace within most of the buildings. External landscaping works are also progressing well. The first interactive exhibits have arrived on site and were installed within the main exhibition halls spread on two floors. A number of lifts were also installed within the different buildings on the site. At present, the educational and programme development team are undergoing intensive training together with the development of workshops and science shows. A number of meetings with different stakeholders are being held in order to facilitate future collaborations.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>Esplora aspires to cultivate a culture of scientific curiosity and creativity by igniting a passion for questioning, investigation and discovery through encouraging the staff and visitors to explore, think, imagine and appreciate. It will act as a medium to instil an active interest in science, research and innovation in youth and encourage them to pursue a career in science and technology.</p>
	<p>Centre to Strengthen Research on Business and the Self-employed</p> <p>Since its recent inception, the programme has been very successful. A number of the Centre's graduates have proceeded in setting up business ventures already, and have attracted significant funding. With regard to the Masters in Entrepreneurship programme, 50 students graduated by the end of 2015.</p> <p>The programme focused on educating prospective entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs. Plans are currently underway to launch a doctorate programme which may also extend research to cover "Business and the Self-employed" where it overlaps with entrepreneurship, intrapreneurship and enterprise.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>This measure is helping to strengthen the concept of entrepreneurship at the University of Malta and is also providing the necessary teaching programmes through which the University infrastructure can support start-up businesses with the intent of then facilitating a move to the Science Park.</p>
	<p>Set up an ICT Innovation Accelerator</p> <p>The ICT innovation Accelerator was launched in May 2014.</p> <p>The facility acts as a hub to synergise the effort of various parties aimed towards ICT-themed Research and Technological Development (R&D), idea-generation, incubation and open-innovation. The day-to-day operation of this facility involves marketing activities, networking, mentorship, training and also the provision of logistical and brokerage support.</p> <p>The Accelerator also serves as a showcase for locally nurtured innovations and locally developed ICT products and services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A total of seven pilot innovation projects carried out by six start-ups were allocated €65,000 to develop three mobile apps and three digital serious games (one start-up aborted its assigned project). The projects were awarded through public competitive calls. • Two conferences and two training boot-camps have been organised jointly with two technology partners of the Innovation Centre, and training was provided for up to 50 start-up founders, students and ICT professionals in the use of proprietary technology. • Based on lessons learned from previous calls, a new bottom-up call was launched in November 2015 using accelerator methodologies 	<p>The ICT Innovation Accelerator will contribute towards attaining Malta's target of 2% value-added as a percentage of national GDP invested in R&D.</p> <p>35 teams self-organised into tech start-ups to apply and compete for four pilot calls organised by the MITA Innovation Hub between May 2014 and February 2016. Six teams were selected for funding, and these delivered six innovative products (apps and digital games) that were prototyped, tested and deployed successfully in the local market. Two of these teams formalised their tech start-up into a business undertaking, with a further 2-4 expected to do so by April 2016 under a current call (startAPP 2.0).</p> <p>Based on these results, the MITA Innovation Hub will be launching an acceleration programme that will run from 2016 to 2020. The programme will provide a seed investment of €22,000 to the best start-ups that apply to be accepted during the course of two yearly intakes. The accelerator is planning a total intake of 45 start-ups from 2016 to 2020, disbursing a total of €990,000, pending state aid clearance under the de minimis regime. Each cohort of selected digital start-ups will be</p>

	<p>incorporating Design Thinking and just-in-time training. The call will finance at least two start-ups to provide a solution using satellite-based data sourced from the European Space Agency and local data sources. The projects are planned to kick-off in April 2016. Each start-up will be awarded a seed investment of €22,000 each of which €15,000 is a cash injection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least another four to six start-ups will be funded in 2016 as part of the accelerator programme. Thematic areas will be identified. Seed investment of €22,000 will be awarded to each start-up. The proposal submitted jointly with the University of Malta and Fraunhofer Institute at Bonn University in 2014 under the teaming objective of Horizon 2020 will be resubmitted in September 2016. The funding being requested is for the preparation of a business plan for the establishment of a Centre of Excellence (CoE) focusing on Linked, Open and Big Data. It is planned that the CoE will be an extension of the Innovation Centre at SmartCity. If the business plan is selected for implementation, the project will translate into a multi-million Euro co-funded CoE. <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>mentored and given an opportunity to adopt a learning-by-doing approach towards digital tech entrepreneurship. During the process they will focus on developing their products for prototyping, testing, deployment and demonstration in the local market, and then learn and better understand how they can use these products as a launch pad for furthering their business internationally.</p>
	<p>Action Plan for R&I</p> <p>The first draft of the Action Plan was presented to the Commission and following meetings with DG REGIO, it was identified that Malta still needs to further specialise and identify pilot areas and actions under Pillar 3 of the National R&I Strategy, developing smart specialisation. Therefore several focus groups were held together with the proposers of actions and measures, to further strengthen the measures under Pillar 3. MCST is also working on developing the indicators and targets for the National R&I Action Plan, with the help of the European Commission's Policy Support Facility.</p> <p>MCST submitted the R&I Action Plan to the Commission and currently is awaiting feedback. Once approval is obtained from the Commission and once the monitoring mechanism is finalised, the document will be formally adopted.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>This measure will identify the tactical implementation aspects of the National R&I Strategy 2020 over the shorter-term. In so doing, it will seek to bring different players together to ensure better coordination and avoidance of overlaps and gaps.</p>
	<p>Evaluation of Malta's participation in the 7th Framework Programme (FP7)</p> <p>The evaluation is completed and the report was approved by the MCST Board. Recommendations have been fed into the R&I Action Plan, which will be adopted by the end of the year.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>This measure has provided information which fed into the R&I Action Plan and aided in the tailoring of MCST's role as Malta's National Contact Organisation. The National R&I Action Plan is still in its drafting stage, and more concrete information regarding the link between the FP7 evaluation and specific measures in the Action Plan will be provided in 2016. With regard to MCST's role as the National Contact Point Organisation for Horizon 2020, the National Contact Points will focus on a more targeted and dedicated support offered to local researchers. This includes support on administrative and financial issues as well as follow-up and close collaboration with researchers even after proposal evaluation.</p>
<p><i>Malta's Targets for Energy Efficiency, Renewable Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A maximum increase of greenhouse gas emissions not falling within the scope of the EU Emissions Trading Scheme of 5% by 2020 (compared to 2005 levels particularly emissions from transport, (mainly road transport), industrial gases, waste, agriculture and fuel combustion in industry and commercial and residential buildings). A commitment to achieve by 2020 a share of energy from renewable sources in gross final energy consumption of 10%. 	<p>Energy Efficiency in Transport</p> <p>In July 2015, the new bus card (tallinja card) together with a new fare structure was introduced. During the first months since the card was introduced the take-up was very high with 232,503 cards issued as at 1st March 2016.</p> <p>In September 2015, an incentive was launched whereby passengers were given an additional €10 worth of travel. The additional credit was given provided that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the card was topped up with € 10 worth of credit; and following top-up the card was used for travel. <p>The scheme was valid between 18th September and 31st October and was part-financed through ERDF funds.</p> <p>Another scheme, also part-financed through ERDF funds, was launched in November 2015. The scheme required passengers to use the bus card ten times during the month of November following which an additional credit of €10 was added to their account.</p> <p>During the last two months of 2015, an optimised route network was rolled out in two phases and included the introduction of new routes, additional frequencies in certain locations, revised timetables to better reflect travel patterns and better network coverage.</p> <p>During August and September 2015, the new operator introduced to the network 142 Euro VI buses. A further new Euro VI bus was added to the network in December 2015. Some of these buses have replaced part of the older fleet.</p> <p>A number of measures were also taken in an effort to make available a better level of information to passengers. These included an upgraded Journey Planner, information on the route network sent to each household, the upgrading of the public transport website with more information, the provision of information to passengers from all sales offices of the operator and the publication of a number of press adverts informing commuters about network changes and the introduction of the bus card. Furthermore, a new mobile app is being introduced by the operator between the end of Q1 and Q2 of 2016 with scheduled public transport real-time information.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>The optimised transport network and the additional rolling stock to be deployed on the network along with the implementation of the various public transport infrastructure measures are expected to increase utilisation of public transport even further.</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>Implementation of Malta's National Strategy for Policy and Abatement Measures relating to the Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions</p> <p>Work has started on the development of Malta's Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS). In parallel, a number of sectors are undertaking studies that will eventually feed into the LCDS, specifically with the aim of proposing plans and scenarios that would enable the determination of the most cost-effective manner to reach the country's current and future renewable energy, energy efficiency and greenhouse gas emission objectives for the energy sector and the better formulation and assessment of policy.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>The various initiatives under this measure will result in a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Savings in Gg CO₂-eq. estimate for 2020 for a number of measures are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - plant loading, improvement in generation efficiency, switch to natural gas and Interconnector: 1447 Gg; - promotion of the use of biodiesel and bio-ethanol: 54 Gg; - transport reform: 44 Gg; - modernisation of agriculture holdings + Nitrates Action Programme: 1.57 Gg; - gas management at non-hazardous landfills: 45 Gg.
	<p>Promotion of uptake of RES and building envelope insulation</p> <p>This measure aims to promote the uptake of solar water heaters (SWH) and roof insulation and double glazing by issuing financial grants to households to encourage the purchase of new solar water heaters (maximum €400 per system installed) and the purchase of roof insulation and double glazing (maximum €1,000 per dwelling).</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>	<p>The total number of grants paid for SWHs has now reached 9,064, whereas the number of applications paid to assist installations of roof insulation and double glazing amount to 1,503.</p>
	<p>Switching of Fuel from Liquid Fuel Oils to Natural Gas</p> <p>Delimara 4 Project: In October 2013, ElectroGas Malta Consortium was chosen as the preferred bidder, shortlisted in the competitive process for this PPA and GSA.</p> <p>Turbines manufactured by SIEMENS arrived from Sweden and installation is being carried out according to plans.</p> <p>Conversion of Delimara 3: Conversion works likely to commence in Q2 of 2016 following delivery of gas.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>	<p>Once implemented, the higher plant efficiency together with the lower carbon emission factor of methane is expected to lead to significant cuts in GHG emissions and lower utility bills.</p>
	<p>Feed-in Tariffs for Photovoltaic Systems (PVs) not supported through other funding</p> <p>Feed-in tariffs for PVs not supported through other funding were available for roof mounted systems.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>The 8MWp allocated capacity under LN155/2014 was fully taken up by 31st October 2014.</p>
	<p>New Scheme for PV Panel Installations in Households</p> <p>A new scheme to promote domestic PVs was launched in May 2013. This provided grants of up to 50% of the capital cost (capped at € 2,500). The scheme was fully subscribed by the end of Q1 2014.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>Between 1st January 2013 and 1st March 2015, 8,441 households received a grant offer and installed a domestic PV system with an estimated total capacity of 23.412MWp.</p>
	<p>Biofuel Substitution Obligation</p> <p>The biofuel substitution obligation requires that importers and wholesalers of petrol and diesel must place a pre-determined amount of biofuel on the market, which during 2014 had to reach 4.5% (by energy content). This is currently being achieved by using biodiesel produced from waste cooking oil or animal fats. This measure ensures that Malta remains on track to meet its 2020 RES-T target and contributes towards meeting Malta's RES interim targets.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>The local substitution obligation target set for 2014 has been exceeded. Exact figures for mineral fuels for 2015 are yet to be consolidated by the Regulator for Energy and Water Services (REWS). Malta is in line with its indicative trajectory to meet its RES target.</p>
	<p>Electric Car Incentive Scheme</p> <p>This measure was designed to encourage the replacement of internal combustion engine vehicles with battery electric vehicles.</p> <p>It was extended for 2015 and was open to registered NGOs and private business. The maximum grant for private individuals and NGOs was as follows: €5,000 including scrappage scheme, €4,000 excluding scrappage scheme and €1,500 for an electric quadricycle.</p> <p>The same applies for a combination of vehicles not exceeding €10,000 in total for private companies.</p> <p>This measure had an allocation of €100,000.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>26 electric cars, including 9 all-terrain vehicles, benefitted from this scheme.</p>
	<p>Autogas conversion scheme</p> <p>This measure aims to incentivise vehicle owners to convert their vehicle to autogas. It was extended for 2015 and had been widened so as to include commercial vehicles.</p> <p>The same scheme has been issued again in 2016 with an allocation of €50,000. It is expected that 250 vehicles will benefit from this scheme.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>It is expected that this measure will reduce local air pollution. During 2015, 250 vehicles were converted to autogas and until end February 2016, a further 65 vehicles benefitted from this scheme.</p>

	<p>Renovating Public Buildings to Increase Energy Efficiency and Reduce GHG (Phase I)</p> <p>Energy efficiency interventions at St Vincent de Paule Elderly Residence include the decentralisation of the inefficient hot water boiler system that was operated with steam and the introduction of a hot water system that utilises highly efficient Liquified Petroleum Gas (LPG) condensing boilers. These boilers provide this residence with hot water for important needs, particularly for the provision of hot water in bathrooms.</p> <p>Interventions at Siggiewi Primary School include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the introduction of renewable energy systems (photovoltaics); - energy efficient measures such as a solar pool heating system, an automated pool cover, instantaneous water heaters for bathrooms, external shading of apertures (solar shading louvers), wall insulation, intelligent lighting, energy efficient heating and ventilation systems and a Building Management System (BMS); and - water saving measures such as the introduction of water efficient taps and toilets. <p>These projects were completed in December 2015.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>The measure entailed a number of energy and water saving retrofitting interventions at St Vincent de Paule Residence (SVPR) and at Siggiewi Primary School. In these two Government buildings where the mentioned retrofitting interventions were being carried out, GHG emissions are estimated to have been reduced by 865 tonnes. In addition, there were also total energy savings of 1308 MWh.</p>
	<p>Retrofitting Road and Street Lighting by Smart Lighting</p> <p>The project involved the retrofitting of street lighting to energy efficient LED lighting and the adoption of Smart Lighting technology (dimming and lighting network management).</p> <p>The project included Gozo and 13km of roads in Malta.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>The project is expected to lead to 1,888MWh in energy savings, representing a total of 50.8% in energy savings from the current consumption and a reduction of 1,663 tonnes of CO₂ annually.</p>
	<p>New Legal Framework for the grid integration of Combined Heat and Power (CHP) Units</p> <p>A New Legal Notice establishing a tariff for the grid integration of CHP Unit has been enacted. This will not have any budget impact and electricity sold to the grid shall be paid at the marginal cost of electricity (for Enemalta).</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>This measure is expected to incentivise the deployment of CHP units, in line with Malta's National Energy Efficiency Action Plan.</p>
	<p>Updating of Current Feed-In Tariff legislation to allow for installations of different RES/CHP technologies within the same site</p> <p>Current feed-in tariff legislation has been updated to allow for multiple RES/CHP installations at the same site and covered by different support contracts.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>Consumers are now to be paid a feed-in tariff for the different RES/CHP technologies, thus making investment in such technologies more attractive.</p>
	<p>Grant Scheme on the Purchase of New Environment-Friendly Vehicles</p> <p>The objective of this measure was to reduce the number of old M1 motor vehicles aged ten years or over from the road, thus reducing pollution. This measure had a budgetary allocation of €900,000.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>A total of 1,146 vehicles were approved.</p>
	<p>Incentive for use of school transport</p> <p>Parents whose children attend private or church schools will be eligible for a tax rebate of up to a maximum of €150 on the cost of the transport if they make use of school transport. This should encourage more parents to make use of school transport. This measure will remain in force during 2016.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>It is envisaged that with this measure more parents will make use of school transport for their children, thus reducing road-traffic congestions during peak hours.</p> <p>Data regarding this measure will be available by the end of November 2016.</p>
	<p>Energy Audits for Enterprises</p> <p>Energy efficiency is one of the three pillars of EU 2020 targets, that is, the achievement of 20% energy savings by 2020. To achieve such target the EU Council and Parliament approved Directive 27/2012 - The Energy Efficiency Directive (EED). Energy Audits are tools specifically mentioned in Article 8 of this Directive. The EED is transposed through LN 196 of 2014. The main elements to this legislation related to Article 8 are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obligation for non-SMEs to carry out energy audits by the end of 2015 – Meetings with the organisations and constituted bodies representing non-SMEs including the Malta Business Bureau (MBB), the EU relations office of the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association and the Malta Chamber of Commerce and Industry are ongoing. In this regard, the Sustainable Energy and Water Conservation Unit (SEWCU) and the MBB have launched a scheme where enterprises are encouraged to enter into a voluntary agreement to implement various energy efficient measures. 27 energy audits were submitted by non-SMEs. Another 20 audits by non-SMEs are in the process of being submitted. • Encouragement for SMEs to carry out energy audits - Discussions between SEWCU, SME representatives and Malta Enterprise for the facilitation of energy audits have started. It is expected that by the end of Q2 2016 a scheme for energy audits within the SMEs will be launched. • Obligation for the country to bring to the attention of SMEs, including through their respective representative intermediary 	<p>This measure contributed towards the setting up of a framework for Energy Auditor Certification, guidance for the implementation of energy audits by non-SMEs and a quality verification system for energy audits by non-SMEs. It will also contribute towards the promotion of energy audits in SMEs. Thus, it is expected that all enterprises will carry out quality energy audits.</p>

	<p>organisations, concrete examples of how energy management systems could help their businesses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obligation for the country to promote certified energy auditors - A framework for the training and certification of energy auditors and energy managers has been established. The list of certified energy auditors is available from the website of the Regulator for Energy and Water Services (REWS). The courses have been running since February 2015. <p>Status: On Track</p>	
	<p>Grant on purchases of bicycles and pedelec bicycles</p> <p>The aim of this measure is to encourage the use of bicycles as these are a healthier option and are a means of transport that reduces both pollution and traffic. Eligible applicants may apply for this once-only grant of 15.25% on the purchase price of the bicycle subject to a maximum grant of €70 in the case of a non- mechanised bicycle and a maximum grant of €150 in the case of a pedelec bicycle.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>It is expected that this measure will contribute towards the reduction of road traffic, a decrease in pollution and an increase in physical exercise.</p> <p>As at end February 2016, 2,344 bicycle/pedelec applications were submitted.</p>
	<p>Implementation of CCTV cameras along the road network</p> <p>The objective of this measure is to install 27 Intelligent Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras and 5 Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras across critical road sections. The aim is to build a link between the CCTV cameras deployed across the network and the Traffic Control Centre for real time monitoring of passenger vehicles, heavy vehicles and public transportation vehicles.</p> <p>The tender was originally issued on 17th October 2014, however none of the bids were deemed to fulfil its requirements. A negotiated procedure was initiated with the bidders on 19th May 2015. Subsequently the tender was reissued and 4 separate tenders have now all been awarded. Contracts have been signed; implementation is underway and should be completed by Q2 2016.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>In conjunction with other intelligent traffic management systems, the expected outcome is to improve internal mobility across the road network.</p>
<p>National early school leaving target (Reducing school drop-out rates to 10% by 2020)</p> <p>National target for tertiary education (Increasing the share of 30-34 years old having completed tertiary or equivalent education to 33% by 2020)</p>	<p>Offering more Opportunities for Participation in Vocational Education</p> <p>Introduction of vocational subjects in secondary schools</p> <p>An expression of interest for prospective teachers has been issued. Initial training of applicants has taken place in Q1 2015. Training sessions for prospective teachers of vocational subjects will be held in February and June 2016, after an expression of interest amongst teachers of other subjects.</p> <p>A number of meetings were held with Heads of secondary schools who have introduced vocational subjects. These meetings were held with the MATSEC Support Unit and the Department of Curriculum Management (DCM). The scope of these meetings was to inform the Heads of Schools of their responsibilities vis-à-vis the ongoing and summative assessments of the vocational subjects.</p> <p>Resources for vocational subjects are being procured through the EU funded Learning Outcomes Project. These resources will help to support schools in the pedagogy required, particularly for the teaching and learning of vocational subjects.</p> <p>As from scholastic year 2015-2016, all State secondary schools have introduced at least two vocational subjects as option subjects for students at Form 3. A number of non-State schools have also introduced these vocational subjects.</p> <p>Introducing other Vocational Pathways</p> <p>Some State secondary schools are offering MQF Level 1 & 2 vocational qualifications to Form 4 and 5 students at risk of becoming early school leavers.</p> <p>Introducing other Vocational Pathways – Alternative Learning Programme (ALP)</p> <p>The Alternative Learning Programme at Paola is continuing in its third year with an intake of 282 students for the scholastic year 2015-2016. Collaboration between the programme and the secondary schools is being further enhanced to ensure the smooth transition of students to the ALP programme.</p> <p>Personal, Social, and Career Development (PSCD)</p> <p>The Personal and Social Development (PSD) programme has been re-written to include Career Education and to be eligible for certification as an MQF Level 3, 2 and 1 qualification. The programme is now called Personal, Social and Career Development (PSCD).</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>Introduction of vocational subjects in secondary schools</p> <p>This measure has been achieved in view that the development of a VET qualification delivery model suitable for our local needs, has been implemented. MEDE intends to further develop subjects in VET area.</p> <p>Introducing other Vocational Pathways</p> <p>This measure has provided early school leavers with more options to vocational education. Such options could lead to further education at post-secondary level.</p> <p>Introducing other Vocational Pathways – Alternative Learning Programme</p> <p>This measure provided alternative pedagogy to learners who would have otherwise ended up as early school leavers.</p> <p>Personal, Social, and Career Development (PSCD)</p> <p>This measure has equipped learners with skills and competences related to careers that are currently available on the market.</p>
	<p>Introducing Lifelong Learning into the Community through a Pilot Out-Reach Programme</p> <p>In the learning year 2015-2016 the Directorate for Lifelong Learning is working with 29 Local Councils, offering a variety of courses in the community. There were 1,123 applicants for these courses. The Directorate also offered courses to NGOs, some of whom work with vulnerable people. There were more than 500 learners benefitting from these courses.</p> <p>Professional Staff Development, Training and Quality Assurance for Adult Educators in the Community</p> <p>During 2015 the Directorate for Lifelong Learning and Early School Leavers offered new study units as part of the Diploma in Teaching Adults.</p>	<p>This measure will continue to provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a different experience to previous learning paths in the education of particular adult learners; the adequate level and type of learning (whether general or vocational); the appropriate style of learning (tailor-made to the needs and strengths of individual adult learners); the most convenient place for learning, close to one's place of residence;

<p>Currently around 170 students have applied for individual modules of the Diploma and 80 of these students are expected to complete the required 13 modules and to be awarded the National Diploma by 2017. In 2016, the learners will be having a practicum that will bring the first cycle of the diploma to an end.</p> <p>The National Implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning</p> <p>The European Agenda for Adult Learning project 2014-2015 was implemented and it was finalised on the 27th October 2015 with a concluding conference. The conference was filmed and footage will be used for dissemination purposes.</p> <p>The work programme for 2016-2017 has been approved by the European Agency for Culture, Education and Audiovisual (EACEA) and is based on the following framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - policy coherence initiative; - baseline research; - essential skills in disadvantaged communities; - targeted awareness raising. <p>A complementary project to the European Agenda for Adult Learning, the European Platform for Adult Learning (EPALE) is also being carried out. The Directorate for Lifelong Learning receives funds from EACEA to promote this platform among adult educators and adult education and training providers. A new budget for 2016 has been approved by EACEA.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - an increase in the quality of learning to adults.
<p>Making VET Education More Relevant and Attractive</p> <p>The aim of this project is that of conducting a substantial upgrading exercise within the context of vocational education between Levels 4 and 5. While these courses have very often fulfilled an important ad hoc role, they are no longer sufficient to meet the increased need for learning.</p> <p>The principal project milestones are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The launching and management of the Training Subsidy Scheme MCAST (TSSM): 60 scholarships have been awarded and 56 students have obtained certification. The scheme is now concluded. • The re-design and re-formulation for accreditation purposes of existing courses: The tender in relation to this milestone has been awarded, implemented and concluded. 50 existing courses were redesigned by a team of VET experts. • The design of new courses and accreditation of the same: The tender in relation to this milestone has been awarded, implemented and concluded. 21 new courses have been created. All redesigned and newly developed courses have been quality checked and accredited accordingly. • The implementation of a new tender for the redesign of more courses: The tender in relation to this milestone has been awarded, implemented and concluded. 94 existing courses were redesigned by a 60 plus team of VET experts. • The implementation of various tenders for the supply of specialised equipment to be used for educational purposes needed to implement the above-mentioned courses and which included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o multimedia equipment for the design oriented areas; o marine engineering equipment for the maritime area; o teaching and learning resources; o teaching aids. • The implementation of various tenders for the supply of reference books, ebooks and ejournals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o reference books o e-books and e-journals (service implemented). <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>MCAST's offerings will become more attractive to a larger cohort. As a result, the project will improve the quality of VET to make it more economically relevant and attract more students into further and higher education.</p>
<p>Get Qualified</p> <p>A new version of this scheme was launched in 2014 and covers the period 2014-2018. 'Get Qualified' is an initiative that supports the personal development of individuals for the achievement of qualifications and certifications required by industry. The incentive is applicable to individuals following a course of studies leading to certification, diploma, degree or post-graduate degree courses. Upon successful completion, the student benefits from a tax credit, thus recovering part of the costs incurred.</p> <p>Students following courses approved by Malta Enterprise are granted tax credits on fees paid by the individual to the university, institution or other entity recognised by Malta Enterprise for the training and educational services leading to the approved qualification and also on fees for sitting for examinations required to achieve the approved qualification.</p> <p>Further details can be found on http://www.maltaenterprise.com/en/support/get-qualified.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p> <p>Pilot project for Tablets in Primary Schools for Teachers and Students</p>	<p>In 2015, nearly 1,000 applications were received and €2.5 million worth of tax credits were granted.</p>

	<p>The pilot project involved 22 classes in State, Church and Independent schools in Malta and Gozo amounting to a total of around 400 students, including students with special needs. Following its conclusion in March 2015, a report was drawn up and the recommendations are being taken into consideration in the overall preparations to introduce such innovative technology on a national scale in the Maltese education system. These include the procurement of the tablet solution, the upgrade of the schools' Internet network and the training of teachers. The present task force for the national roll-out, which replaced the steering committee for the pilot project, is working on the pedagogical, infrastructure and tender document writing and is made up of a number of stakeholders, including the MEDE, MITA, the University of Malta (UOM), the Malta Union of Teachers (MUT), parents and non-State school representatives.</p> <p>During the coming months the MEDE will be procuring the tablets, upgrading schools with the necessary Internet access infrastructure and providing the tablet to teachers in order to give them enough time to get trained with new teaching methods and get acquainted with the new hardware and software. The first teacher training (all year four teachers) took place during the September 2015 in-service training.</p> <p>It is envisaged that by October 2016 every child in Year 4 will be provided with a tablet.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>Tablets will be used to promote more and better reading, writing, numeracy and digital literacy skills.</p>
	<p>Alternative Learning Programme</p> <p>The ALP has been designed to offer students who are exiting the compulsory school cycle without formal qualifications with an alternative pathway to access accredited learning pathways in various VET areas.</p> <p>150 students completed the October 2014 course and were certified at MQF Level 2, 1 or at certificate level.</p> <p>In October 2015, a further 282 students were participating. As at end December 2015, 261 students were still attending the ALP. Participants in the ALP are expected to obtain one or more partial qualifications at MQF Levels 1 and 2, while a number of participants may also obtain a full MQF Level 1 qualification. Participating students would be expected to continue with their education after the summer recess in a full-time higher education institution or in other lifelong learning institutions on a part-time basis. Furthermore, the ALP is implementing the following short courses: Civil protection, Motherwell bridge (welding), Malta Communications Authority (IT), Food Handling Course and Community work.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>	<p>It is envisaged that a good number of these students will obtain certification accredited at MQF Level 1 in one or more subjects and will eventually be able to further their education beyond compulsory schooling. This programme will also consolidate and improve their skills thus leading them towards more working opportunities and overall self-empowerment.</p>
	<p>Design of Learning Outcomes Framework</p> <p>Work was carried out in providing the learning outcomes of the Learning Areas, the Cross-Curricular Themes and the Learning and Assessment programmes. A total of 48 Learning and Assessment Programmes were developed with the collaboration of 200 local curriculum experts. A cohort of 70 educators was trained to provide professional development to other teachers.</p> <p>The project has been completed and the results emanating from the project are being implemented during the current scholastic year.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>This will help in achieving a paradigm shift away from a prescriptive curriculum towards a framework based on learning outcomes which allows for internal flexibility and attractiveness to lifelong learning. It will also facilitate a move away from standalone subjects to learning areas that form the entitlement for all learners towards inclusivity, citizenship and employability.</p>
	<p>Higher Priority to Mathematics, Science and ICT</p> <p>This measure involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a review of primary level learning programmes in Mathematics and Science; - an increase in the frequency of Science lessons in primary schools; - the introduction of Digital Science in the primary sector; - the organisation of science popularisation events at both primary and secondary levels; - the training of primary class teachers in Mathematics, Science and Digital Science teaching and learning; - participation in the Little Scientists Project in collaboration with the Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST) (including the training of a team of peripatetic teachers). <p>The MEDE will be participating in the next edition of Scientix 3, starting in Q2 2016.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>This measure aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - decrease the percentage of students considered as low ability in the areas of Science and Mathematics; - enhance exposure to Science and Digital Science at primary level; - enhance scientific literacy among the young student generation in secondary level; - increase the number of students studying science subjects at secondary and post-secondary levels.
	<p>Stipends for Repeaters</p> <p>Students are always encouraged to further their education as Government believes that whoever has a problem should be encouraged and not discouraged. For this reason, students who are repeating one year in their course are receiving their stipend. This measure came into effect on 1st January 2014.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>During scholastic year 2014/2015 1,031 students benefitted from this measure with a total cost of €702,320. In the current scholastic year (2015/2016), a total number of 935 students will benefit from this measure with an approximate anticipated total cost of €738,000.</p>
	<p>New Courses on Aviation</p> <p>The two-year course 'MCAST Advanced Diploma in Aviation Operations (MQF Level 4)' was launched in Q3 2014 and is currently ongoing with the second cohort. The short course 'Piston Engines' was first offered during Q2 2014 and is available again in academic year 2015-2016.</p> <p>The composite workshop was completed with financial support from Malta Enterprise, while the first 'Composite Repairs' course has already been delivered to 8 students coming from SR Technik.</p>	<p>It is envisaged that through the implementation of these courses, Malta shall be consolidating further the aviation maintenance industry.</p>

	<p>All the courses, namely 'MCAST Advanced Diploma in Aviation Operations (MQF Level 4)', 'Piston Engines module', and the 'Composite Repairs' course will be offered every year to MCAST students. Ad hoc requests from industry to upgrade their personnel will also be considered.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	
	<p>Providing stipends for students undertaking veterinary courses</p> <p>In order to encourage more students to undertake a veterinary career, Government is providing additional financial support. The new rate for applicants under the Malta Government Undergraduate Scholarship Scheme (MGSS-UG) now stands at €3,698.81 per annum (plus a one-time grant of €698.81). This rate applies to both new applicants under the MGSS-UG scheme and past awardees who are still in training. Since the VET course is not offered by a local institution, all these students are benefitting from this measure through the MGSS-UG. As from October 2014, the MGSS-UG has been renamed to Malta Government Undergraduate Scheme (MGUS) which is now managed by the Students' Maintenance Grants Board.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>The VET course is not offered by a local institution as yet. Since such courses include very high tuition fees and are organised abroad, many students find it difficult to cope with the expenses involved. Through this measure, more students are likely to opt to undergo studies in this area and pursue a career in this field.</p> <p>During scholastic year 2014/2015, 10 students opted for this course and 9 were approved for the students' maintenance grants with a total cost of €39,710.88.</p> <p>During scholastic year 2015/2016, there are 3 new students following such a course, with an approximate anticipated total cost of €13,255.</p>
	<p>Further and Higher Education Quality Assurance Framework</p> <p>In line with obligations arising from SL327.433, a Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) has been set up with the remit of reviewing Levels 7 and 8 qualifications prior to accreditation. The QAC acts as an independent review mechanism for quality assurance-related measures arising from accreditation processes.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>Impact has been experienced in terms of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of Quality Assurance (QA) professionals within the education sector through the setting up of Net-QAPE. Some 30 trained Net-QAPE members are now qualified with MQF-pegged QA CPD Award. A manual of External Quality Assurance (EQA) procedures and tools has been produced and dedicated software is in the process of being tested to be launched in the coming weeks. Contracting during the Q2 and Q3 2015 took longer than anticipated.</p> <p>The QA professionals within the three local public higher institutions, as well as staff members within private education providers have received training on various aspects of Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) and EQA. The first three pilot IQA audits and the three pilot EQA audits were undertaken in the first half of 2015 and a closure conference for all documentation was held in July 2015.</p> <p>On a longer term, the QA framework will create a culture of quality within education provision in Malta, leading in turn to more value added in the obtaining and holding of Maltese qualifications.</p>
	<p>Reduction in VAT when buying digital books</p> <p>The Government has introduced a reduced VAT rate on e-books sold on magnetic media.</p> <p>This measure came into force on 1st January 2015.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>This measure has reduced the costs for the purchaser of e-books on magnetic media, thus making such books more accessible. However, VAT data specifically on e-books is not available as such data is captured globally in VAT returns with other items.</p>
	<p>Malta Book Fund</p> <p>The measure was launched in May 2015. Out of the 35 projects accepted, 11 were selected by an appointed adjudication committee that examined all the projects. Approximately €40,000 were distributed among the successful applicants to complete their projects which consisted mostly in book publishing.</p> <p>Furthermore, the National Book Council will be raising the quality of the National Book Prize by giving more prestige and acknowledgement to Maltese authors and publishers. This will be carried out by rewarding authors and making their winning books as popular as possible.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>By means of this measure, more people will be encouraged to read by promoting the best books published locally during the year and encouraging more participation through the flexibility and hospitality of various categories of readers.</p>
	<p>Construction and Modernisation of Schools</p> <p>From an educational and social perspective it is imperative that all colleges have educational buildings that respond to today's needs. In this regard, during Budget 2015, Government announced that, through the Foundation for Tomorrow's Schools, work will be starting on the construction of two new schools in Dingli and Kirkop. During the course of 2015 the construction tenders pertinent to both schools were published and awarded. Works are ongoing in line with the respective MEPA permits. These schools are expected to receive their intake of secondary school students in September 2016.</p> <p>There are various other projects planned and these include new primary schools in Marsascula, St. Paul's Bay and Rabat, Gozo, amongst others. Preparatory work in relation to these schools is ongoing with MEPA and with the Government Property Department.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>With the creation and introduction of the college and co-ed systems, the Education Directorates analysed the current school building stock so as to ensure that all school children are provided with modern, well-equipped and challenging school environments that will facilitate their learning processes and help them develop their full potential.</p>
	<p>The introduction of the provision of Paid Study Leave Scheme</p> <p>Officers within the teaching class regularly request leave of absence to further their studies in the field of education. The Paid Study Leave Scheme will provide officers with up to one scholastic year of paid study leave. The scheme also makes provision to stagger the one year paid study leave over a number of years if the officer considered is pursuing studies at doctorate level.</p> <p>A high number of officers benefitted from short periods of paid study leave (two to six days) in a scholastic year to be able to attend study weekends in connection with part-time distance courses they were reading. A similar provision is in place for officers benefitting from ERASMUS+/Council of Europe grants to attend short (usually three to five days) in-service courses, seminars, workshops or conferences.</p>	<p>During this first year of implementation 18 officers have been awarded this paid study leave.</p>

	<p>During the Budget 2016, it was explained that this scheme will also be extended. Discussions are being held with this regard.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	
	<p>Stipends exempt from income tax</p> <p>Financial benefits in terms of students' maintenance grants paid to full time post-secondary, vocational and tertiary students as outlined in Subsidiary Legislation 327.178 will have no tax deductions, irrespective of other income.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	It is expected that there will be a marginal increase in the amount of students who work on a part-time basis whilst studying.
	<p>Stipends increased yearly with a percentage rate of the established COLA increase</p> <p>The objective of this measure is of increasing the amount of stipends payable to students so as to reflect the established cost of living index on a yearly basis.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	Students benefit from a pro-rata percentage of the cost of living increase.
	<p>Youth Village at Umberto Colosso, Santa Venera</p> <p>A new National Youth Policy 'Towards 2020' was published and launched in July 2015 and will be implemented and coordinated by Aġenzija Żgħażaġh (AŻ) over the period 2015-2020. AŻ assumed responsibility for Youth.Inc in 2014 and has relocated to Umberto Colosso where a Youth Village was opened in December 2015. The aim and purpose of the youth village is to create a physical, administrative and learning environment and culture that will attract both young people and voluntary youth organisations.</p> <p>During 2016, the second phase of the Youth Village project which will provide for a youth residential centre will commence. This residential centre will provide the premises where youths may organise youth exchanges and mobility projects. It will also include a sports facility.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	This measure will give a more focused, coordinated and cost effective approach to meeting the needs and aspirations of young people.
National poverty target (To lift around 6,560 people out of risk of poverty and exclusion)	<p>Pensions Reform</p> <p>The Government set up a Pensions Strategy Group (PSG) to continue with the reform of pensions in Malta in order to continue strengthening the sustainability of the system and also to maintain adequacy, especially for future generations. To this effect, the mentioned Group has been meeting and discussing ways to improve on the current system primarily by a continued strengthening of the first pillar and also by the introduction of incentives pertaining to third pillar pensions. A report by the Group has been delivered to the Minister for the Family and Social Solidarity and later a presentation with the proposals was delivered to Cabinet.</p> <p>The report by the PSG was launched for a six-week consultation in June 2015. Stakeholders submitted recommendations and a final report was finalised. The post-consultation report, including the final recommendations, was submitted by the Group for the attention of Government in September 2015.</p> <p>Many of the recommendations by the Pensions Strategy Group were implemented in the Budget of November 2015 including the provision of €140 pensions on the national minimum pension and increases in pensions for those married couples who did not benefit from the €140.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>Due to the pensions reform of 2007, the pension age for persons born between 1952 and 1955 went up to 62 for both genders, and the accumulation of contributions for a full pension entitlement increased from 30 to 35 years. As a result, the increase in number of new claims was lower than the year- on- year increases from previous years. Several proposals in the PSG report have been introduced through the Budget speech for 2016, namely;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the gradual introduction of a Guaranteed National Minimum Level of Pension; 2. the introduction of contribution credits for persons with contribution gaps due to human capital development and lifelong learning; 3. the increase in the number of weeks awarded as contribution credits to parents taking career breaks for child rearing and family growth purposes; 4. the increase in the contribution record from 40 to 41 years for persons born on or after 1/1/1969; 5. the increase in rate from 5/6 to 6/6 for widows who although eligible for a retirement pension in their own right, receive a widows' pension because it is more beneficial; 6. the initial date of award of pension effective from the following day of retirement or widowhood instead of the first Saturday following retirement or widowhood.
	<p>Supplementary Allowance</p> <p>In Budget 2013, Government proposed that persons over 65 years of age and whose household income falls under the national at-risk-of-poverty level will be given an increase of €100 per annum in their supplementary allowance rate.</p> <p>Status: Completed and Ongoing</p>	<p>22% of the 65+ cohort of the population is considered at risk of poverty. Providing for additional financial assistance should contribute in reducing this percentage.</p> <p>Data for 2015 shows that 4,117 single persons and 3,846 married couples benefitted from this measure.</p>
	<p>Strengthening Support Services to Jobless Households</p> <p>Community-based projects continue to target teens and adults to enhance their skills and their integration in the community/society. Particular attention (though not exclusive) is given to single mothers.</p> <p>The Cottonera team is working on a project to reach out to male members of the community, particularly those receiving benefits and/or seeking a job. Following the pilot project in Cottonera (Proġett Familja), the Msida and Valletta community teams will be working on targeting mothers who are at high risk of poverty. Work is being planned with mothers and babies (in Cottonera & Qawra), and with persons with disabilities (in collaboration with the National Commission Persons with Disability (KNPD) and Aġenzija Sapport) in Valletta.</p> <p>Other initiatives are targeting young and older males in Cottonera through the community workshop, migrants in Msida, and families at risk through the budgeting programme. The budgeting project was created in partnership with the Birkirkara parishes and is being implemented in Birkirkara. Hence it targets Birkirkara residents.</p> <p>At present project plans are being discussed for 2016. They are focused on skills training (formal and non-formal) and mentoring – targeting mainly adults and young people to increase confidence, take more control of their situation, and, when possible, enter the labour market. A pilot project targeting families with relationship difficulties was launched in Qawra. The project provided home-based family therapy services. A number of families were identified by various services within Appoġġ. So far, the service has made contact with 21 families and currently is</p>	<p>Through these projects, residents are receiving skills training through a friendly and informal environment; this helps them increase their worth, helps them to take control of certain situations in their lives (e.g. intra-familial communication), to be more active in their community, and even have healthy ways of seeing leisure and recreation (strong element of prevention).</p> <p>The various community services target particular individuals who would benefit from the informal and non-formal skills training that is offered through the projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cottonera: Community workshop for young males who are either school drop outs or at risk of dropping out of school. • Proġett Familja (young single mothers from Cottonera). • Also in Cottonera, the service has formed a partnership with the College and the University of Malta for the Three Cities to enhance academic and social skills for adults who are at risk of poverty. • Project for young mothers with their babies or toddlers, to enhance bonding and parental skills and childcare. • Qawra: The team is partnering with the Qawra parish to strengthen the Mums and Tots' Club to enhance the input of skills for stronger bonding and care between parent and child.

<p>providing a service to 16 families.</p> <p>The fostering service continued to be involved in the ongoing media campaigning together with training courses. A Positive Parenting Policy was drafted and launched for public consultation by the Ministry through the Family Studies Department of the University of Malta and in collaboration with the Foundation for Social Welfare Standards (FSWS). The consultation phase has been concluded and the policy is being finalised for publication in March 2016.</p> <p>Following the successful outcome of the ESF 3.234 LEAP Project, officially terminated on the 4th of November 2015, the good practices were embraced and continued through national funds. The 6 regional LEAP centres (5 in Malta in 1 in Gozo) continued to function by LEAP personnel engaged accordingly. As from 1st January 2016, personnel were engaged in employment contracts and were assigned specific tasks prioritising interventions carried out to support the mostly deprived. FSWS has been entrusted in managing such work, focusing mainly on the following two initiatives: periodically distributing food packages through the Fund for the European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), and through such medium coming into contact with jobless households. LEAP personnel shall be carrying out house visits to encourage such cohort to partake in activities/sessions to support their cause and receive assistance to elevate their state. Furthermore, during the same visits, a survey shall be carried out to delineate the cause of deprivation and encourage family members, where possible, to integrate into the labour market. It is envisaged that over 4,000 households (approximately 12,000 persons) will be reached through such measure.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qawra: Outreach to persons suffering from mental health difficulties – this is being done with the support of Richmond Foundation and the Mental Health Community Team (Mtarfa). • Msida/Birkirkara: Work with children through an after-school project, outreach to a number of young people, work with women to provide training so that they participate more actively in their community – either by seeking employment or supporting households with persons with disabilities or elderly. • Budgeting projects in Birkirkara and Msida. • Valletta: Work with women to enhance skills and knowledge, to help them become more active in their community. Outreach to women who are at high risk of poverty (similar to Proġett Familja in Cottonera). • Valletta: Outreach to persons with disabilities in collaboration with KNPD and Aġenzija Sapport. • Providing an after-school programme for vulnerable children from Valletta and Floriana, in collaboration with the respective primary schools. • Work with teens: Through youth empowerment, the group is being strengthened and is seeking strategies to reach out to more young people in Valletta. • Youth Forum: A group of young people who are in the process of identifying issues that are affecting their community negatively and seeking ways of addressing them. <p>With regard to the LEAP Project, the first distribution of food packages aimed at assisting families at risk of poverty and social exclusion was carried out during the month of January through the FEAD. The Department of Social Security database was utilised to extract the eligible households, falling within the following categories:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. households in receipt of non-contributory means-tested benefits and having two or more children below the age of 16 (families with three or more children receive two packages); 2. households with two or more children below the age of 16 and with an income not exceeding 80% of the National Minimum Wage (NMW) are entitled to two food packages; 3. households having two or more children below the age of 16 with an income not exceeding the NMW (families with three or more children receive two packages); 4. non-single households eligible for non-contributory means-tested age pension (families with three or more children receive two packages). <p>The FSWS has coordinated the distribution of food packages to eligible households in the following 17 zones: Xewkija (Gozo), Qawra, Mosta, San Gwann, Msida, Santa Venera, Qormi, Marsascalea, Żejtun, Żurrieq, Kirkop, Valletta, Marsa, Santa Luċija, Cottonera, Rabat and Ғaż-Żebbuġ. Close to 4,000 families were notified to collect the food package/s and over 3,500 packages were distributed. The rest of the packages have been securely stored and shall be disseminated during the next distribution, which is due to be held in April 2016. Another two distributions are due in July and November 2016. For the forthcoming years, three distributions per year are planned. Families that will no longer fall within the above categories will no longer be eligible, whilst other families may become eligible during the tenure of the programme.</p>
<p>Subsidised Rental Schemes – Rent Subsidy in Private Rented Residences</p> <p>This is a scheme which provides subsidies to tenants on rents paid for their ordinary residence leased from the private sector. This scheme has been revised and changed from ‘Scheme R’ to ‘Rent Subsidy in Private Rented Residences’ (RSS) in March 2012. This scheme is still means-tested but a few conditions have been altered to support the beneficiaries in a more holistic way.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>The Housing Authority (HA) is still paying subsidies under ‘Scheme R’ since beneficiaries under this scheme are entitled to a five-year subsidy from the date of their application as per agreement signed and the conditions of this scheme. Therefore, those who applied in 2011 will be paid until 2016. Once the five years elapse, tenants will have to reapply under the new scheme ‘RSS’.</p> <p>In addition, there were 1,663 applicants that benefitted from this measure between 1st January 2015 and 31st December 2015.</p> <p>The amount disbursed until December 2015 was of €253,902 under ‘Scheme R’ and of €793,444 under ‘RSS’.</p> <p>During January 2016, there were 983 beneficiaries and payments until 31st January 2016 amounted to € 17,288.48 under ‘Scheme R’ and €86,852.41 under ‘RSS’.</p>
<p>Service Pensions</p> <p>As a result of Budget 2015 and with effect from January 2015, the amount of service pension being ignored from the service pension during the assessment of a social security pension has increased by another €200 from €1,466 to €1,666.</p> <p>With effect from January 2016, a further €200 shall be deducted from the original service pension, thus bringing the total amount to €1,866.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>A total of 4,830 pensioners benefitted from an increase in their pension during 2015.</p>
<p>Measure to assist the Spouses of Residents in State-Financed Residential Services</p> <p>During 2013, work started so that the apportionment of pension between a pensioner who is resident in a State-financed institution and his/her spouse who still resides at home is amended from 40/60 to 30/70 so that the amount paid to the spouse is not less than the single rate of the Old-Age Non-Contributory Pension.</p> <p>Status: Completed and Ongoing</p>	<p>Spouses of residents in State-financed residential services will have more income at their disposal given that due to the measure, such spouses who remain at home will at least have an additional 10% of the pension of their spouse who is in residential care. During 2015 a total of 48 spouses who remained at home benefitted from an increase in the share of pension paid directly to them.</p>
<p>Regeneration and Maintenance of Housing Estates</p> <p>Through this project, embellishment works are carried out in the surrounding areas of Government Housing Estates and maintenance works are carried out in these blocks’ common parts. The HA worked with a number of Local Councils for maintenance works of the common parts in a</p>	<p>These projects are intended to promote community regeneration and the fight against poverty. Consequently, they will continue to improve the environment of families, children and the elderly by providing a safe and clean environment and</p>

	<p>project which was spread over a period of six years.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>increasing social inclusion.</p> <p><i>Scheme 1 – Embellishment and upgrading of Housing Estate:</i> The Hamrun, Pembroke and Mtarfa projects were completed and payment was settled. During 2015, two part-projects in the localities of Ta' Xbiex and Floriana as well as another project in Santa Venera were started. The Ta' Xbiex project was completed and payment was also settled whilst the embellishment project by the Floriana Local Council is underway and an interim payment of €17,982 was issued by the HA in January 2016. Feedback is still awaited from the Santa Venera Local Council. The total amount reimbursed by HA under Scheme 1 by end of December 2015 was of €89,528.</p> <p><i>Scheme 2 – Upgrading of Common Parts of Government Residential Blocks:</i> The scheme was reactivated during the second semester of 2014 following which, agreements were drawn up with six Local Councils for the upgrading of 50 blocks. 44 out of these 50 blocks formed a Residents' Association and agreed to participate in the scheme. Estimates of works were drawn up and referred to the Local Council/Block Administrator to proceed with the works. 26 blocks have completed works and payments amounting to €160,764 were reimbursed by HA.</p> <p>In 2015, another 115 blocks in fifteen different localities were approved for upgrades to be carried out and agreements were signed following feedback from the respective Local Council. Up to December 2015, agreements were drawn up with 11 Local Councils and 70 blocks within these 11 localities formed a Resident's Association and agreed to participate in the scheme. Estimates of works were drawn up for 54 blocks and referred to the Local Council/Block Administrator to proceed with the works. 17 of these blocks have completed works and payments amounting to €86,890 were reimbursed by HA.</p> <p>In January 2016, another 6 blocks formed a Residents' Association and signed agreements to participate in the scheme. HA is still awaiting feedback from the other Local Councils regarding which blocks are to participate.</p>
	<p>Schemes to support home adaptation works - (A) Schemes for Persons with Disability</p> <p>This scheme provides financial aid and technical assistance to persons with disability to carry out the necessary adaptations to their place of residence. In March 2012, this scheme changed the name from 'Scheme L' to 'Scheme for Persons with Disability'. The conditions were also revised and grants were raised to reflect applicants' demands.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>This measure aspires to improve the social inclusion prospects of individuals by encouraging independent living for disabled persons.</p> <p>In 2015, 154 new applications were received and payments made until December 2015 amounted to €311,579.</p> <p>In January 2016, 12 new applications were submitted and payments amounted to €34,833.50.</p>
	<p>Schemes to support home adaptation works - (B) Schemes for Repairs and Improvements</p> <p>The HA is continuously seeking ways how to mitigate the effects of several bureaucratic procedures which hinder the progress of this service in order to be more efficient.</p> <p>In view of an increase in demand, the maximum amount of grant that an applicant can benefit from in schemes for adaptation works was increased by €3,000. After October 2013, this grant was made available to a new category of tenants, who previously had not benefitted from the initiative.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>This scheme is designed to help those who cannot afford to pay for repairs and maintenance for their residences. This assistance helps to render premises habitable and up to an acceptable standard.</p> <p>In 2015, 249 applications were received and payments made till December 2015 amounted to €526,609.</p> <p>In January 2016, a further 26 applications were submitted.</p>
	<p>Residential Home for Youth</p> <p>A residential home is currently catering for four young female residents, aged between 15 and 18. A 13-year old has been re-admitted at the residence and is now 14 years old. Discussions on the provision of bed nights at Dar Frate Jacoba are currently underway.</p> <p>A day programme for both adolescent boys and girls is being offered with the aim of introducing vulnerable adolescents to the work force as well as to work on anti-social behaviour and with addictive personalities.</p> <p>Status (facility for adolescent girls): Completed Status (facility for adolescent boys): On Track</p>	<p>The residents are following a programme with the aim of dealing with their highly challenging behaviour while enhancing their independence and life skills. Each resident has an individualised care plan to cater for their individual needs. The residence's programme is made up of multi-disciplinary teams.</p> <p>The FSWS is actively seeking professional and technical advice and assistance from abroad on how to improve this service. To this end, the CEO and Director of Appogg met in London with the provider which has been giving this service to the NHS for the last 13 years. A follow-up meeting was held in Malta and arrangements are being made to visit these facilities in the UK with a view to see how such best practices can best be replicated in the Maltese context. Discussions are currently being held with the UK agency regarding the appropriate training to be applied in Malta.</p> <p>Meetings with the mental health sector were held in order to strengthen the working relationship between the different professionals and also to identify ways of working together in order to contain the very challenging behaviour of some of the minors.</p>
	<p>Independent Living</p> <p>The main objective of this measure is to provide for an independent environment which will sustain a person's ability to live as independently as possible, either in their own home or in an accommodation with carers on site.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>In 2015, the HA effected payments that amounted to €137,632.13 to YMCA and Caritas.</p>
	<p>Eliminating Tax on transfer "causa mortis" for disabled persons</p> <p>This measure is related to the elimination of tax on transfer "causa mortis" for property inherited by disabled persons. This measure only applies if the disabled person/s live/s in the same property and it only applies to the first residence.</p> <p>This measure came into force as of 1st January 2014.</p>	<p>The number of persons with a disability affected by this measure cannot be ascertained. This is due to the fact that when details of the beneficiaries are captured, there is no indication online if these are disabled persons or otherwise. A change in the software to cater for such reporting is scheduled for Q2 2016.</p>

	Status: Completed	
	<p>Full pension for employed widows</p> <p>Widows are continuing to receive their full pension, irrespective if they have children (including those aged 16 to 21) or not, and the amount of salary/wage earned from their employment.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>More widows will be encouraged to seek employment with higher wages and salaries.</p> <p>Provisional data shows that not less than 150 widows benefitted from this measure during 2015.</p>
	<p>Pensioners whose pension does not exceed the national minimum wage will not be taxable</p> <p>Pensioners are receiving their pension in full without any tax deductions if it does not exceed the National Minimum Wage.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>This will lead to an increase in the net amount of pension. Circa 15,000 pensioners will benefit from this measure.</p>
	<p>Tax-exempt Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) on minimum wage and pensions which are currently not taxed</p> <p>Persons on the minimum wage who receive the COLA will be exempt from paying tax on the increase. This will equally apply to pensioners who at present are not paying tax.</p> <p>This measure came into force as of 1st January 2014.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>1,130 pensioner and 2,375 non-pensioner taxpayers were affected by this measure.</p>
	<p>Grant of €300 to elderly persons over the age of 75 years</p> <p>The €300 grant is given to those people over the age of 75 and who are still living in the community.</p> <p>In the 2016 Budget, Government announced that it will extend this measure to 2016.</p> <p>Status: Completed and ongoing</p>	<p>This measure encourages elderly people over the age of 75 to continue to live in their homes and in the community. More than 29,403 persons received this grant in 2015.</p>
	<p>Extension of the Home Help Service Scheme</p> <p>The Home Help Service is a domiciliary service which supports older persons or persons with a disability to continue living in the community.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>This scheme will address the current waiting lists due to the high demand for this service.</p> <p>The tender for the provision of the Home Help Service was awarded and it has started operating on 1st January 2016.</p>
	<p>Increase the number of clients attending Day Centres by 200</p> <p>During 2015, extensive works were carried out in the premises of the learning hub in Gozo and these were completed in November 2015. Also, during 2015, various embellishment projects were carried out in the centres, mainly in Fleur-de-Lys and Hal Far. By the end of December 2015, the waiting list was reduced to 55.</p> <p>With the exception of the learning hub in Gozo, all Day Centres have now reached full capacity and cannot take in more service users.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>The embellishment projects have increased the capacity of the said centres and improved the quality of service provision.</p> <p>During 2015, 49 new clients started making use of day services. The learning hub will initially house a further 30 clients.</p>
	<p>Financial support to first time buyers</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 immovable property. This measure started on 1st January 2014 and was expected to run up until December 2014. However during Budget 2015 and Budget 2016, this measure was extended to the end of 2016.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>The number of contracts for first time buyers registered during 2014 was 2,935, while during 2015 2,905 contracts were registered.</p> <p>These add up to 5,840 contracts for 7,953 eligible first time buyers.</p>
	<p>CURE Programme to upgrade housing estates</p> <p>The Catch-Up Repairs and Embellishment (CURE) Programme was aimed at upgrading a number of older housing blocks and their surrounding areas in various localities. A decision was taken to merge the CURE Programme with the measure 'Embellishment works in three housing estates' given that both measures have the same objectives.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>This measure has enhanced the current reactive maintenance and repairs programme and has resulted in the upgrading of whole blocks and their surrounding areas.</p>
	<p>Relief from Income Tax on Minimum Wage and for Pensioners</p> <p>The Government is committed not to tax minimum wage earners. Thus, the present tax ceiling has been raised to take the COLA into consideration. In January 2016, Government has further reduced the income tax so that persons with an income from employment or pension not exceeding the minimum wage will once again not be liable to tax. Furthermore, pensioners whose pension does not exceed the minimum wage will also be exempted from paying income tax.</p> <p>This measure came into force as of 1st January 2014 and has been extended in Budgets 2015 and 2016.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>During 2014, 1,130 pensioner and 2,375 non-pensioner taxpayers were affected by this measure.</p>

	<p>Fiscal Incentives for Trusts and Foundations set up to Help Disabled Persons</p> <p>A number of fiscal incentives for Trusts and Foundations have been introduced with the aim of helping disabled persons. Some of these incentives include the exemption of capital gains taxes as well as the elimination of stamp duty on documents and transfer of residential property which is the residence of the parents and is initially transferred to the Trust or Foundation for disabled children, and which is then inherited by siblings or heirs on the decease of the disabled person.</p> <p>This measure came into force as of 1st January 2015.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>This measure is supporting, through the tax regime, those Trusts and Foundations set up to help disabled persons.</p> <p>The number of persons with a disability affected by this measure cannot be stated. This is due to the fact that when details of the beneficiaries are captured, there is no indication online if these are disabled persons or otherwise. A change in the software to cater for such reporting is scheduled for Q2 2016.</p>
	<p>Donations to Malta Community Chest Fund</p> <p>In order to encourage donations to the Malta Community Chest Fund (MCCF) a measure was introduced whereby companies who donated not less than €2,000 to MCCF between 1st January and 31st December 2015, could claim a full deduction of the amount donated against their chargeable income for the year. Through L.N. 2 of 2016 the allowable deduction was increased from 50% (applicable up to December 2014) to 100% applicable to 2015.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>This measure aims to increase the amounts collected by the MCCF.</p> <p>15 companies availed themselves of this measure resulting in €79,794 being deducted from their 2015 taxable income.</p>
	<p>Setting Up of a Commission for Human Rights and Equality</p> <p>A Commission for Human Rights and Equality will be replacing the existing National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE). The Government launched a White Paper on 10th December 2014 on www.socialdialogue.gov.mt/humanrights and received a total of 12 submissions. Subsequently work was carried out on the drafting of the bills: (i) the first to substitute the Equality for Men and Women Act with a fully fledged Equality Act; and (ii) the second to introduce a new law entitled Human Rights and Equality Commission Act.</p> <p>As planned, on 10th December 2015, International Human Rights Day, the Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties (MSDC) presented the two Bills during a public conference, where the aforementioned documents were thoroughly explained to the audience and put online for a final round of public consultation prior to their presentation in Parliament for their first reading. The public consultation ended on 31st of January 2016.</p> <p>The Commission for Human Rights and Equality shall address identified gaps in the field of human rights in a bid to ensure that Malta has an internationally accredited Human Rights and Equality Commission.</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>NGO North Hub</p> <p>The NGO North Hub was inaugurated on 24th January 2015. The Hub is fully operative and consists of a combined committee room and informal meeting room as well as a small office. The Hub forms part of the LEAP Centre complex in Qawra and through collaboration, voluntary organisations (VOs) may also use the training hall which belongs to the LEAP Centre, thus complimenting the facilities available.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	<p>The Hub is currently being used once a week by the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector (MCVS) to meet with VOs and organise events in the community in collaboration with the Qawra LEAP Centre. The MCVS also carries out regular training for VO administrators as part of its national programme from this centre. This Hub is also being used on a regular basis by 5 VOs as their base of operation, and by various other VOs for occasional meetings or training.</p>
	<p>Tapering of social benefits after marriage</p> <p>As from 1st January 2015, a single parent who is receiving social benefits and gets married, or forms a civil union, with a person in employment, will no longer lose entitlement to social benefits immediately after the union. Instead, the social assistance will be reduced gradually over a period of three years. During the first year, the parent will receive 65% of the social assistance, in the second year 45% and in the third year 25%.</p> <p>Status: Completed and Ongoing</p>	<p>This ongoing measure will encourage more social security beneficiaries to form a family either through marriage or a civil union. Furthermore, since single parents who get married with an employed person will only be entitled to social benefits for three years, this will in turn decrease the amount of paid social benefits.</p> <p>72 persons benefitted from this measure up till the end of 2015.</p>
	<p>Paying of missing social security contributions</p> <p>As from 1st January 2015, persons born between 1950 and 1956 and who are still in employment but by the time they reach their retirement age would not have made enough contributions to reach the National Minimum Pension, will be given the opportunity to pay back a maximum of five years' contributions so that they will qualify for a minimum pension once they retire. These years do not need to be the five years preceding the claim.</p> <p>Status: Completed and Ongoing</p>	<p>It is expected that with this measure there will be better pension rates on retirement that will lead to a better living. 1,076 persons applied to pay social security contribution arrears during 2015.</p>
	<p>Compensation for Paid National Insurance Contributions</p> <p>The objective behind this measure is to compensate a number of workers, in particular women, who worked for a number of years during which they paid their contributions, but due to various reasons and circumstances, did not pay enough to qualify for the minimum pension. Therefore, as from 1st January 2015, those persons born between 1941 and 1953 and who do not have a pension will receive a yearly lump sum of money. In fact, an annual fixed amount of €100 will be paid to those who had paid contributions for one year or more but less than five years, and €200 to those who had paid contributions for five years or more.</p> <p>Status: Completed and Ongoing</p>	<p>The number of persons who benefitted from this measure during 2015 amounted to 12,379.</p>
	<p>Child Supplement</p> <p>This pilot project provided an income supplement to families whose household income was below €11,000 per annum. €400 was paid for every child up to the third child and €200 from the fourth child onwards. The award of this child supplement was paid against the condition that</p>	<p>The number of families who benefitted from this measure during 2015 amounted to 14,049.</p>

	<p>children attend at least 95% of school days, had regular medical check-ups and participated in sport and cultural activities.</p> <p>The initiative was completed in December 2015.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>	
	<p>Full disability pension</p> <p>As from 1st January 2015, disabled persons in employment who earn more than the National Minimum Wage are still receiving a full disability pension. This was not the case before, whereby for a disabled person to continue earning the full pension, his/her wage did not have to exceed the minimum wage. This restriction was removed because one's disability does not vanish according to the wage.</p> <p>Status: Completed and Ongoing</p>	<p>This measure has upgraded the social benefits of disabled persons. Furthermore, it is expected that there will be an increase in the number of disabled persons entering the labour market.</p> <p>In fact, the amount of beneficiaries increased from 2,720 in December 2014 to 3,081 by end December 2015. The number of persons who are in receipt of a disability pension and are employed increased to 587.</p>
	<p>Housing for Persons with disability</p> <p>The primary aim of this project is to provide peace of mind to the parents of persons with disability by ensuring that after their decease, the State and society will care for their children should they be unable to lead an independent life. Through this project, the first ten residential homes in the community for disabled persons will be developed. This project will be spread over a period of three years, ending in May 2018. Training has also taken place for all staff working with persons with disability.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>The residential community home in Siggiewi has started operating and the one in Gozo will be launched very soon. Two other residences were identified. These are situated in Żabbar and Pembroke. MEPA permits related to the required works at Żabbar were issued and the pertinent tenders related to the necessary works will soon be published. Pembroke MEPA permits are still pending at the moment.</p> <p>Partnerships with NGOs on opening more residential units are also being negotiated.</p> <p>A Learning Hub was also set up in Gozo where persons with a disability are trained in various skills so as to become more independent.</p>
	<p>Appointment of Persons with a Disability on Government Boards/Committees/Commissions</p> <p>Government has adopted the concept of user involvement. Every public institution, and in particular those that provide direct services to persons with a disability, need to have a structure in place that engages the users of the respective services in the design, planning, implementation and evaluation of the programmes provided. Through this measure, the voice of disabled persons in the country's governance will be strengthened while at the same time concrete activism is being promoted among disabled persons. This measure is to be implemented across all Ministries.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	<p>This measure will ensure that persons with a disability contribute to the policy direction of these Government structures and that the best interests of persons with a disability and their families are safeguarded in the development of policy and organisational direction. This measure will also guarantee that, following Malta's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD), the implementation phase is being adhered to, while at the same time providing a satellite of information to the Focal Point Committee. Lastly, this measure will put forward a clear message within these Government structures that development in the respective sectors needs to ensure social inclusion and bring about change and transformation.</p> <p>The law regulating persons with a disability to be statutorily seated on a number of boards was endorsed by the Maltese Parliament, and is currently in its implementation phase.</p> <p>Moreover, the following work has been carried out with regard to legislative changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Guardianship Law is currently being implemented; - the Social Enterprise Law will be discussed in Parliament; - the Equal Opportunities Law has been amended and is currently being discussed in Parliament; - a law on the autonomy of Aġenzija Sapport is being prepared; - a law on autism will be presented shortly; - Malta is also in the process of enacting a law that will include the UNCPRD; - a law on sign language is currently being discussed at third reading stage; - very shortly the Ministry for Finance will submit changes in the Trustees and Foundations Law marking another important benchmark in the disability sector. <p>The KNPD will be upgraded and will have a Commissioner for Persons with Disability and it will be taking a more regulatory role. Sign language interpreters have also increased and sub-titling has been introduced as a pilot project in conjunction with Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) and the University of Malta (UoM).</p>
	<p>Repair and Embellishment works on the residences of Aġenzija Sapport</p> <p>Through this measure, Aġenzija Sapport residences for persons with disabilities will be upgraded and improved.</p> <p>Between January 2015 and December 2015 the following projects were completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - at Vajrita Residence, a number of 2-bedded bedrooms have been converted to single bedrooms. - refurbishment of the new Siggiewi Residence; - refurbishment of two bathrooms at Villino Maria Residence; - works started on the façade of Vajrita Residence were completed; - a fire alarm system was installed at Bormla Residence; - a multi-sensory room was installed at Bormla Residence to provide basic therapy to clients with autism; - a large number of minor maintenance issues related to health and safety were tackled; - works on the Gozo Residence were completed. <p>During 2016, works will be carried out at Vajrita Residence and these will include changes in bedrooms, kitchens and doors.</p>	<p>These repair and embellishment works aim to decrease the health and safety risks inside the premises; increase the well-being of the residents; bring the residences in conformity with the UNCPRD; and lead to better/practical use of space. These works have improved the quality of life of the 63 clients residing in them. In addition, with the opening of the Siggiewi Residence, 4 new clients will start benefitting from permanent residential services.</p>

	Status: Ongoing	
	<p>Embellishment Works in three Housing Estates</p> <p>This project involves the upgrade and enhancement of the common parts and surrounding areas of three Government/Housing Authority blocks in St. Paul's Bay, Paola and Senglea. This project has an allocated budget of €600,000.</p> <p>Tenders were issued in 2014 and 2015 for the upgrading of Corradino Flats in Paola (Blocks A, B, C and D); Dar ir-Risq in Senglea (Blocks A1, A2, B1 and B2) and four blocks in Triq Erba' Mwieżeb in St. Paul's Bay. Progress until February 2016 for the 3 projects is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corradino Flats, Paola – Tender was awarded in May 2015 and works commenced in June. Additional works on this project due to replacement of dangerous roofs were included and thus extent of works increased by another 25%. The project was practically completed by mid-February 2016, however the contractor is currently carrying out final snags and remedial works. • St. Paul's Bay Embellishment – Tender was awarded in April 2015 but works were suspended due to required changes in the project for which variations had to be approved. Additional items were approved by the Department of Contracts in September 2015 and work resumed during the last week of the same month. Extent of works increased by approximately 20%. 45% of the approved contract work was completed by mid-February 2016. • Senglea Embellishment – Tender was awarded in September 2015 and works commenced in October. 20% of the approved contract work was completed but works were suspended in December due to a variation claim. Works were recommenced on the 29th February 2016. <p>In view of changes in the extent of projects and delays in the award of tenders, the target completion of these projects has been extended accordingly. Works will continue in projects at St. Paul's Bay and Senglea and are expected to be completed by the end of Q2 2016.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	Through this project, 83 units will be embellished. The enhancement of these blocks will have a positive social effect on the communities living in these Housing Estates and will also provide a better standard of living and a healthier environment to the residents.
	<p>Policy on Integration</p> <p>The Government is working on an integration policy which should lead to a reduction in the difficulties posed by social exclusion and to improve the relationship between Maltese and foreign communities. Towards the end of 2015, the Directorate for Human Rights and Integration was set up within the MSDC, thus addressing the commitment towards the formulation of an Integration Policy.</p> <p>MSDC embarked on an EU funded project entitled 'Mind D Gap: Together we can make a difference'. The project led to the formulation of the framework document which is intended to shape the National Integration Strategy for Malta 2015 – 2020. This is expected to be launched soon. Originally the target date was the beginning of 2016, but in-depth research is determining new policy areas which can be incorporated effectively in this strategy.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	The national strategy will promote human rights, equal opportunities and obligations for all, and amongst other things, it will promote diversity as a basic value necessary to achieving greater social cohesion.
	<p>Retirement Home in Gozo</p> <p>Statistical trends (similar to Malta) indicate that Gozo is shifting towards an ageing population. Hence, a need is being felt for caring facilities within the community or long-term residence in order to provide for those instances where family members are not living in the community and/or have other commitments. Therefore, this service will provide residential care consisting of a physically and emotionally safe and secure environment to elderly persons who can no longer cope with living in their own homes. The addition of a special unit for dementia needs is currently being considered.</p> <p>Demolition and excavation works are already underway. The tender for the construction of the old people's home is at adjudication stage.</p> <p>Status: On Track</p>	This measure will improve the quality of life of elderly persons, including those with a disability, and will cater for the demand for residential care facilities. It will have indirect benefits on the economy such as more people being able to work, since they would not be constrained to give up their jobs in order to take care of these persons.
New/updated commitments in relation to the 2020 targets (per target)		
Employment	<p>Employment Contract Templates</p> <p>The objective of this measure is to make employment contract templates available online which would include the workers' basic rights as stipulated by law. An internal consultation will be initiated so that the templates would be formulated in such a way as to take into consideration the process of harmonisation of the Wage Regulation Orders, which will be taking place at the same time. Once the process of harmonisation of the Wage Regulation Orders is finalised, internal consultations will continue so as to ensure all changes are included in the templates. It is expected that the final templates will be put online by the end of September 2016.</p>	This measure will give peace of mind to all workers as it will ensure that their employment contract satisfies the conditions as stipulated by law.
	<p>Engagement of Labour Inspectors and other staff</p> <p>The scope of this measure is to engage seven labour inspectors and other staff with the Department of Industrial and Employment Relations (DIER). This will continue to strengthen the measure introduced in 2015 which accorded the basic wage payable to Government employees to workers employed by contractors for identical work, upon renewal of contract. This measure will continue to be applied for those Government</p>	With the engagement of this additional staff, the DIER will be better equipped to monitor and ensure that workers' rights are being protected.

	contracts which will expire in 2016.	
	<p>Employment and Training Schemes in Gozo</p> <p>SCHEME A: National Insurance Contribution Refund Scheme</p> <p>In order to stimulate employment in the tourism sector, Government will refund the National Insurance contribution (employer's contribution) in full if it does not exceed €1,000 during the agreement period. This will apply for a maximum of 52 weeks (from November 2015 to October 2016) and will be proportional (on a pro-rata basis) if the application is submitted anytime between the start of scheme (2nd November 2015) and the closing date of applications (31st March 2016).</p> <p>SCHEME B: Seasonality Scheme</p> <p>Operators in the tourism sector will be asked to send their full-time and/or part-time employees (whose employment is registered with ETC as their only primary job, and/or part-time employees who are transferred to full-time employment at application stage) for classroom-based training for not more than two days per week for a maximum of 19 weeks.</p> <p>During the training period, the employer would be given €30 for each day of training attended by the employee. Employers will have to release the employee/s during their working timetable and allow them to enjoy their weekly off days. Subsequently employees participating in the scheme are to receive their normal weekly wages, including the wage for the two days in which they attended training.</p> <p>These schemes are only available to residents living in Gozo.</p>	<p>SCHEME A: National Insurance Contribution Refund Scheme</p> <p>Employers in the tourism sector would be encouraged to recruit additional staff on a full-time basis, offer the same opportunities of full-time employment to their part-time employees, and to retain current employees.</p> <p>SCHEME B: Seasonality Scheme</p> <p>This measure aims to alleviate the employers' wage costs during the winter period as well as to enhance the skills of full-time and part-time (primary job) employees working in the tourism Industry through related training.</p>
	<p>Labour Market Research</p> <p>Part of Malta's modernisation process in its employment services will involve the strengthening of ETC's role in research and forecasting. Therefore, a unit of labour market analysts will be set up to carry out research in this field.</p>	<p>The impact of this measure is to have a continuing analysis of the labour market so that trends and shortcomings can be identified in a timely manner and then be scientifically addressed. Furthermore, this research will ensure that policies are evidence-based and that the necessary ex-ante and post-ante assessments are conducted.</p>
	<p>Funds for Training</p> <p>This measure aims to promote the training of persons actively participating in the Maltese labour market so as to increase their productivity and enhance their adaptability.</p> <p>Investing in Skills</p> <p>Following the success of the Training Aid Framework (TAF), further funds for training will be launched through the European Social Fund. This scheme will be known as 'Investing in Skills'.</p> <p>Training Pays</p> <p>This scheme will encourage more individuals to train or retrain and take part in lifelong learning activities as part of the training costs will be subsidised. Only those who successfully complete the course will be eligible to claim the training grant.</p>	<p>Training of persons employed in the Maltese workforce, and thus increasing the number of adults participating in life-long learning.</p> <p>Investing in Skills</p> <p>Investing in Skills will aim to promote the training of persons that are already actively participating within the Maltese labour market, with the objective of increasing productivity and enhancing adaptability.</p> <p>Training Pays</p> <p>This scheme should increase the number of adults participating in lifelong learning.</p>
	<p>Community Work Scheme</p> <p>Following the Social Enterprise Scheme announced in Budget 2015, a call for tenders was issued last year for a private company to form a social enterprise. The private company chosen was given the responsibility to create this social enterprise called 'The Community Work Scheme Enterprise Foundation', where people who were on the previous scheme are now being employed by this private company.</p> <p>Following examination of the former Community Work Scheme, this has been revised to ensure that eligible participants will be formally employed and active in the labour market rather than remaining on the unemployment register. The partnership with the private sector will ensure that all participants receive a targeted intervention which will enable them to increase their employability prospects.</p>	<p>The vast majority of participants are expected to take up this employment opportunity.</p>
	<p>Document Management</p> <p>In Gozo, the private sector is being encouraged to employ people with a disability. Now that the operator of this scheme has been selected, a gradual process will be rolled out for the interviewing of persons with a disability to be employed in appropriate jobs.</p>	<p>This measure should increase the employment of persons with disabilities in Gozo.</p>
Research and Development	<p>Post-Doctoral Grants</p> <p>A call for applications was issued in mid-2015 called 'Reach High Scholars Programme – Post-Doctoral Grants', for potential post-doctoral projects to be submitted. From these, selected research projects will be provided with a grant to cover a sufficient stipend for the researcher/s throughout the duration of the project as well as other minor ancillary costs. Individual research projects may not last more than four years in total and must cost less than €200,000.</p> <p>There were 18 selected applications which were awarded these grants. Such research projects will commence by end Q1 2016.</p>	<p>This measure will provide recently graduated doctoral students with the opportunity to propose research projects with higher education institutions in Europe within a varied set of prioritised fields. Therefore, such selected projects can contribute to reaching the R & D target.</p>
Energy	<p>New Feed-in tariff schemes for PVs not supported through other funding</p> <p>This scheme was valid from 1st November 2014 until 30th April 2015 (LN 155 of 2014). The Feed-in Tariff (FiT) scheme for roof-mounted systems equal or above 40KWp but less than 1MWp was further extended by LN 416 of 2014 and was valid for applications received between 1st December 2014 and 30th April 2015, unless the cap was reached earlier. This measure has been completed.</p>	<p>The 4MWp allocated capacity under LN 155 of 2014 for PV below 40KWp was fully taken up by the 30th April 2015.</p> <p>The 4MWp allocated capacity under LN 155 of 2014 for PV greater or equal to 40kWp was fully taken up before 30th April 2015.</p>

		The new FIT scheme under LN 416 of 2014 for PV greater or equal to 40KWp but less than 1MWp for a further 6MWp was fully taken up by 30th April 2015.
Feed-in tariffs for PVs not supported through other funding	<p>FiTs for PVs not supported through other funding were made available for any type of mounted systems. Tariffs were valid from 3rd August 2015 until 29th January 2016 (LN 264 of 2015) unless the cap of 2MWp (for PV greater than 1 KWp but less than 40KWp) and 11MWp (for PV equal or greater than 40KWp but less than 1MWp) was reached earlier. This FIT scheme has been complemented by a further 4MWp exclusively for structure-integrated PV under LN 416 of 2015 and further extended till 30th June 2016. The extended scheme includes a further cap of 2MWp (for PV greater than 1 KWp but less than 40KWp) and 6MWp (for PV equal or greater than 40KWp but less than 1MWp).</p>	<p>Until the end of 2015, REWS received applications for 1,787.59KWp for PV greater than 1KWp but less than 40KWp, of which 1,531.38KWp have been approved while the rest are being processed.</p> <p>In addition, REWS received applications for a total capacity of 10,872KWp for PV equal or greater than 40KWp but less than 1MWp, of which 6,056KWp have been approved while the rest of the applications are being processed.</p> <p>For structure-integrated PV, REWS received and already approved 900KWp.</p>
New Scheme to promote domestic PVs	A new scheme to promote domestic PVs was launched in July 2015. This provided grants of up to 50% of the capital cost (capped at € 2,300). The scheme was fully subscribed by the end of August 2015.	Between July 2015 and December 2015, 2,230 households have received a grant offer to install a domestic PV system with an estimated total capacity of 7.14MWp.
Improvement in the Reverse Osmosis Plants	During 2016, the Water Services Corporation (WSC) intends to continue with its investment, amounting to more than €2 million, in the improvement of the Reverse Osmosis plants. It is expected that the implementation of Phase I shall be completed by Q2 2016 while it is planned that by Q4 2016, all necessary contracts shall be signed and the new equipment delivered. Finally, it is envisaged that the installation of pressure pumps shall be completed in Q1 2017.	Thanks to this investment, WSC is aiming to reduce significantly its dependence on electricity and shall consequently aim to achieve its financial and environmental objectives.
Solar Farm Partnership	Through the WSC, Government intends to start a partnership with a private enterprise to develop solar farms on property owned by Government or its entities.	The objective of this measure is to increase the share of renewable energy and contribute towards Malta's renewable energy target for 2020.
Clean means of transport (Bicycle Grant)	<p>The Government believes that by investing in sport, it would also be investing in the country's economic and social growth. Therefore Government's policy is one of nourishing a sports culture, and of promoting sports participation in the whole of society. This is being done through Sportmalta and also with the implementation of various measures. Two such measures are the bicycle and pedelec bicycle grant and the grant for the installation of bicycle racks by companies and organisations.</p> <p>The aim of this measure is to further encourage the use of clean means of transport and, at the same time, encourage physical exercise. Assistance will be offered for the purchase of environment-friendly modes of transport such as bicycles and pedelec bicycles.</p> <p>Eligible applicants may apply for this grant of 15.25% of the eligible expenditure subject to a maximum grant of €250. A total grant of €250,000 has been allocated to this measure.</p>	The expected outcome is to have around up to 1,000 applicants benefit from such scheme.
The creation of safe public and private parking for bicycles	<p>A number of initiatives are being introduced to promote alternative modes of commuting, thus reducing the pollution resulting from the use of private vehicles.</p> <p>During 2015 and 2016, a capped VAT refund initiative, when individuals purchase a bicycle or a pedelec bicycle, will be in place. A second phase is now being contemplated, that of creating more public parking safe spaces for bicycles.</p> <p>A grant of €150,000 has been allocated to the initiative targeting private companies to invest, on a 50:50 co-financing, in having secure parking for their employees who use bicycles as the mode of commuting. A further €30,000 has been allocated on initiatives targeting Local Councils to invest in initiatives to promote secure cycling within the local community. These will be financed through local funds.</p>	It is expected that more individuals will use the bicycle as a means of commuting to their workplace or to go on errands within their town.
Tax deduction on hybrid/electric vehicles	Businesses that buy hybrid vehicles may avail themselves, in the year in which such vehicle is bought, of a tax deduction amounting to 125% of the cost of the vehicle whilst the deduction previously available for businesses that buy electric vehicles was increased from 125% to 150%.	This measure will result in an increase in the number of hybrid/electric vehicles and increased environmental benefits.
Electric Car Incentive Scheme 2016	<p>This scheme, launched in 2016, once again aims to reduce the number of old motor vehicles from the road while promoting the use of clean and energy efficient vehicles as a way to contribute towards the reduction of traffic-generated pollution and improvement of air quality levels. Subject to various conditions, the grant is divided in three combinations and is applicable to private individuals, NGOs and private companies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> €7,000 upon registering a new electric category M1 or N1 vehicle; €4,000 upon registering a new or used electric category M1 or N1 vehicle (without scrapping another vehicle); €2,000 upon registering a new or used electric quadricycle (without scrapping another vehicle). <p>The grant above for (a) applies only in conjunction with the de-registration/scrapping of another internal combustion engine-propelled vehicle of category M1 or N1 which is at least 10 years old from the year of manufacture. For (b) and (c), the second-hand vehicle must not be older than 24 months and must not have clocked more than 12,000km.</p>	This measure aims to promote the use of clean and energy efficient vehicles.

	<p>Range Extender Electric Vehicles are also being considered for this scheme and must have a minimum of 80km range on pure electricity to qualify for the grants.</p> <p>Private individuals and NGOs are entitled to purchase one vehicle/quadracycle under this scheme. On the other hand, a registered company, partnership, cooperative society or a registered self-employed, as defined in Government Notice of 15th January 2016, is entitled to a maximum grant of €14,000, which can be in the form of a combination of different types of vehicles.</p> <p>This measure has a budgetary allocation of €100,000.</p>	
	<p>Grant Scheme on the Purchase of New Environment-Friendly Vehicles 2016</p> <p>A new scheme was issued in 2016 with a budgetary allocation of €900,000.</p>	<p>Until the end of February 2016, 506 vehicles have benefited from the scheme.</p>
	<p>Measures related to small motorcycles</p> <p>The Ministry for Finance, in conjunction with Transport Malta, is introducing a number of measures to address the traffic, parking and congestion problems being experienced in Malta. Part of the plan to reduce such issues is to effectively incentivise citizens to switch their preferred mode of transport.</p> <p>To incentivise people to opt for motorcycles over motor vehicles the Annual Circulation Tax has been reduced to just €10 for motorcycles of engines up to 125cc. Furthermore, so as to also encourage cleaner modes of transport, the registration tax of electric motorcycles has been removed.</p> <p>These fiscal measures were also coupled with a procedural measure from Transport Malta to allow 125cc automatic motorcycles to be driven without the need of a B license to further encourage citizens to switch their mode of transport. This measure was implemented on 1st January 2016 and citizens are already benefitting from it.</p>	<p>The successful take-up of these measures will greatly aid the flow of traffic during rush hours as well as alleviate the parking issues in urban areas. Transport Malta also recognises that a substantial increase of motorcycles on the roads could be prone to risks and accidents. It will be following this up with an awareness programme over a number of months.</p>
<p>Education</p>	<p>Youth Voluntary Work Scheme</p> <p>This scheme is intended to achieve two main goals. The first goal is to help young people improve their skills and employment prospects by giving them an opportunity to take up volunteering as part of their non-formal and informal learning process. It will also enable them to discover the value of voluntary service and will help to foster a sense of community and active citizenship. The second goal of the scheme is to support VOs in attracting young people to volunteering, enabling them to enhance their capacity with new volunteers and fresh ideas.</p>	<p>It is expected that a minimum of 120 youths will be placed in VOs locally. Moreover, a minimum of 20 youths will be placed with local VOs to benefit from experience abroad.</p>
	<p>Life-long Learning Credits</p> <p>This measure strengthens the concept of lifelong learning. It ensures that people gain new and also upgrade their competencies, skills and knowledge without the impact of not having enough contributions paid which may affect negatively their entitlement to a retirement pension.</p>	<p>More people will engage in lifelong learning, thus improving their income and their way of living.</p>
	<p>Increase in the allowance given to Gozitan students studying in Malta</p> <p>Students resident in Gozo who are following full-time courses at the University of Malta, the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS), the MCAST or are benefitting from a Malta Government Undergraduate Scheme (MGUS) in Malta can apply for the allowance. This also applies to Maltese students who study full-time in Gozo. With this measure, Gozitan students who are studying in Malta will benefit from an increase in their allowance by €300 in 2016 in order to cover their rent expenses. A study on the costs incurred by students following courses was commissioned for this purpose.</p>	<p>It is expected that this allowance will help with the expenses incurred by 1,027 students. The payment of this allowance will be effected in the month following the end of the previous quarter. The quarters are as follows: October to December, January to March and April to June. Therefore, a payment of €500 is to be effected every three months in January, April and July.</p>
	<p>Higher Education Regulator</p> <p>The National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) is the regulator of provision of education in Malta beyond compulsory schooling. In order to be able to function and carry out its roles in entirety as outlined in the Education Act, additional resources need to be made available so that the NCFHE builds up both its human resources capacity as well as its technical capacity.</p> <p>Therefore, the Commission's allocation is being increased in order to better fulfil its regulatory function in education.</p>	<p>The impacts of this measure are expected to be as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pluralistic provision of education in Malta, which is a policy priority of Government, is seeing multiple providers, including an increasing number of public and private providers of study programmes which are level rated on the MQF. In order to safeguard the quality provision and to safeguard the interest of the students seeking to further their studies, the regulatory role of NCFHE is brought to the forefront. • NCFHE will be building a more robust and efficient licensing and accreditation system which further encourages public and private training providers to seek official recognition and offer accredited courses. • 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. • Multiple routes of lifelong learning, including the validation of informal and non-formal learning, are also promoted in order to widen the certification of skills and competence in the workforce. NCFHE's remit is to build a solid administrative structure to implement this provision and also carry out quality assurance audits to ensure reliability of certifications issued through this route. <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.</p>
	<p>Stipends for Maturity Clause Students</p> <p>Students admitted to read courses under the maturity clause will be deemed to be students with full requirements when applying for a stipend. This will apply to mature students of MCAST, the University of Malta and post-secondary institutions. Mature students at any year of the course will only need to apply online and there would be no need for these students to submit the extra hard copy documentation and income document.</p>	<p>This measure should increase the number of mature students who continue with their studies by providing them with a financial incentive, irrespective of their family income.</p>

	<p>137 students have applied and were approved to follow a course at MCAST under the maturity clause for academic year 2015/2016 (14 of whom have resigned to date). If approved in terms of SL 327.178, these students would benefit from both the initial grant and the stipend (unless they are repeaters) with a total cost of circa €134,500 (subject to attendance).</p> <p>There were 248 University students admitted under the maturity clause for this academic year. These can be eligible to receive the students' maintenance grants. The total cost for mature University of Malta students may reach €193,000.</p> <p>Mature students may also be eligible for the supplementary maintenance grant.</p>	
	<p>Arrangement with the Cambridge University</p> <p>The results obtained from international studies including the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), indicate the need to strengthen the use of English in all schools, through the upgrading of the proficiency of the language. Hence, Government will be sustaining the arrangement it has reached with Cambridge University to strengthen the use of English and encourage more children to choose to study languages through more attractive packages as was the case with the Subject Proficiency Assessment (SPA) programme for Italian. Government will also enhance learning of all foreign languages through the application of SPA.</p>	<p>The impacts of this measure will be: a benchmark assessment in Year 5 and Form 4 in all four skills of the English language; a number of train-the-trainers sessions; and the training of a larger number of primary and secondary school teachers through the said train-the-trainers sessions.</p>
	<p>MCAST Transformation</p> <p>MCAST has a wide-ranging and unique remit in the post-secondary sector offering courses ranging from Level 1 to Level 6. Within the Malta Qualifications Framework, MCAST provides Level 1 and 2 Foundation programmes for students who may have left formal schooling without any formal qualifications, with the aim of helping them to at least achieve a Level 3 vocational qualification and possibly even more. MCAST also provides Level 4 courses to students who may wish to enter employment at the technician level or who may aspire to continue their studies at a higher degree level. Finally, MCAST also offers courses at Level 5 and 6 in which students aim to achieve a first degree.</p> <p>All of these different course levels are an important and vital part of MCAST's mission. In order to strengthen each of these different levels, it was felt that MCAST's structure needs to develop further in order to cater in a better manner for the needs of students at different levels.</p> <p>Although MCAST will still be one organisation incorporating all these levels and emphasising the possibility of one continuous and strong pathway between the different levels, in order to strengthen its focus on the different needs of students at these different levels, it will be introducing three colleges under the MCAST umbrella namely the Foundation College, the Technical College and the University College.</p>	<p>MCAST will transform itself into Foundation, Technical and University Colleges under the MCAST umbrella. The aim of such transformation is to achieve MCAST's envisaged role in education.</p>
	<p>New Campus at MCAST</p> <p>Work on the second phase of the campus will commence. This shall include a new block for the Institute of Engineering and Transport, an MCAST Resource Centre (previously referred to as the Library and the Learning Support Unit) and the new ICT Institute.</p>	<p>The new buildings are part of the new campus project that will offer tailor-made and purposely-built facilities for MCAST to further enhance the quality of its services to its students.</p>
	<p>Tools for Teachers</p> <p>This measure involved the purchasing of 3D scanners and printers for Design and Technology laboratories in middle and secondary schools, as well as interactive whiteboards with short-throw projectors and all-in-one computers so as to have one whole set available in each class. Furthermore, all teacher laptops were replaced and laptops were also made available to kindergarten assistants and learning support assistants. This measure is completed.</p>	<p>The 3D scanners and printers will maximise the use of ICT in school teaching and learning. The interactive whiteboards will create an easier access to high-quality interactive learning content at school and create the means for uploading learning material for classroom use. Furthermore, students would be exposed to the same educational material and offered the same quality of learning across the board. Laptops will provide teachers, kindergarten assistants and learning support assistants with the opportunity of accessing educational content directly from every classroom and increase their working flexibility. For further details, kindly refer to CSR 2.</p>
	<p>Screening Programme</p> <p>A new screening programme will be launched with the title of 'Lenti fuq l-Iżvilupp ta' Uliedna'. This programme will assist professionals to identify and address the needs of children from birth so as to ensure their holistic health and educational development.</p>	<p>This project shall ensure that most of the developmental issues are identified at an early age, thus reducing the need for more intensive types of intervention later on in the child's life, eventually reducing overall health and education cost. For further details, kindly refer to CSR 2.</p>
	<p>National Skills Council</p> <p>In order to monitor and react to developments in the demand for skills, a National Skills Council will be set up to analyse the industry's needs and the role of education.</p> <p>The Council's role would be to identify the type of jobs available in the current market and the local jobs' trend for the foreseeable future. It would then identify the suitable courses accordingly and also the institutions that would deliver such courses. These courses would then be delivered and revised as necessary.</p>	<p>This measure will identify skill gaps in the current labour market in order to have an updated and fluid training strategy in line with the latest market developments in Malta.</p>
	<p>The introduction of Gużé Ellul Mercer 16+ Extended Secondary School</p> <p>A new school shall open in Gżira for 16-year-old students who have only obtained one SEC certificate at the end of their regular schooling. This school will offer a second chance for such students to complete their education. They would have to formally follow an intensive revision course in core curricular areas. These students will be given a stipend.</p>	<p>This measure aims to increase the number of students with lack of qualifications that attend this school with the hope that these students would no longer leave education without formal qualifications. After following this revision course, students should be better equipped to respond to the demands of the labour market or to receive more training.</p>
	<p>Post-Doc Centre</p> <p>A new Post-Doc Centre will be built on the University of Malta campus. This will consist of four floors above ground to house postgraduate and doctoral students as well as an interim space for business incubation facilities. The structure will also comprise four underground levels, two earmarked for car parking and two levels for library archives.</p>	<p>The University is feeling the need of additional facilities to accommodate the increasing number of postgraduate and doctoral students. The new Centre should incorporate the aforementioned needs and business incubation facilities in one structure.</p>
	<p>Extension of the Mathematics and Physics Building</p> <p>The Maths and Physics building extension will consist of an additional four levels alongside the north-facing part of the existing building that will provide additional offices, teaching facilities and labs.</p>	<p>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>Strengthening the training offered to employees working at the Medicines Authority</p> <p>The Medicines Authority in Malta is the national competent authority for the regulation of medicines for human use and has the mission to protect and enhance public health through the regulation of medicinal products and pharmaceutical activities.</p> <p>The Authority is initiating discussions on ways how to strengthen the training programmes as well as support study opportunities and extend the traineeship programme. This is being done to develop further the training currently offered by the Authority and to continue to build up on the good results achieved in the last two years. This measure will also increase the support given to study opportunities which can be shown in the increase in the number of employees who continued their studies from 10% in 2013 to 70% in 2015.</p>	<p>It is expected that with this measure, employees will be fully trained and competent enough to tap into new areas and activities being carried out both in and outside the EU. This will also help in attracting more specialised pharmaceutical companies to Malta.</p>
	<p>Upgrading of the existing Information Systems at the Medicines Authority</p> <p>This measure aims to strengthen the existing information systems at the Authority, thus helping it to deliver a better service to its stakeholders. A large part of the current information systems requires a significant manual input. It is expected that the upgrading of the information systems will lead to a more efficient and effective execution of the tasks. With this measure, the Authority will be updating its website together with the Licensing Management Solution which is the existing Malta Drug Information System.</p>	<p>This measure will ensure an effective and efficient communication between the Medicines Authority and its stakeholders. It is also expected that this upgrading will lead to better revenue-generating opportunities for the Authority.</p>
	<p>New Grant for the Institute of Tourism Studies Students</p> <p>With this measure, ITS students will be given a grant similar to what students in other post-secondary institutions are receiving. A grant of €230 will be offered once yearly, payable in November, additional to the stipend which students receive monthly.</p>	<p>It is expected that this new grant will encourage more students to be interested in the tourism and hospitality sectors. It will also assist them in their studies.</p>
	<p>New ITS Campus</p> <p>The objective of this measure is to construct a new campus for the ITS. The new campus will be providing a better service for the tourism industry as well as greater opportunities, especially in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and higher education.</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>
POVERTY	<p>Cost of Living Increase Allowance</p> <p>With this measure the full COLA will be paid to pensioners every 4 weeks; two-thirds with the weekly pension rate and one-third as a separate payment every week but in same 4-weekly payments.</p>	<p>Approximately 89,000 beneficiaries will qualify for the full COLA rate.</p>
	<p>Full Widows' Pension</p> <p>A full widows' pension will be paid to those pensioners who were entitled to a retirement pension but had to renounce it on the death of their spouse. This measure will increase pension income and will compensate for contributions paid by the surviving spouse. Amendments to the Social Security Act will be carried out. Moreover, with the introduction of this measure, cases of widows who may have been entitled to a pension on their own merits will be identified and their pension entitlement will be re-assessed.</p>	<p>Widow pensioners will be paid the full retirement pension received by their late spouse and not 5/6 of it. Thus, widows will have more income, leading to a better quality of life and a reduction in the possibility that they fall into poverty.</p>
	<p>Revision of Carers' Pension and Social Assistance for Carers</p> <p>The Carers' Pension and the Social Assistance for Carers will be revised and amalgamated within one framework. Eligibility will be revised and widened, allowing more people to care for the elderly and thus helping more elderly persons to continue living in their own homes. An initial and internal meeting will be held to establish the criteria on how the amalgamation of both pension and assistance can be done using the Barthel Scale and the Mini-Mental Scale as indicators. Further internal meetings will be held to improve assessments. Eventually changes to the Social Security Act will be carried out.</p>	<p>Amalgamation of both benefits will result in an increase in the number of people who will continue to live in the community, thus reducing the possibility of being socially excluded.</p>
	<p>Pension to be awarded from the first day of retirement or death of spouse in the case of a widows' pension</p> <p>With this measure, pension will be awarded from the first day of retirement or death of spouse. This means that payment will be effected immediately and not from the following Saturday after either date of retirement or death of spouse.</p>	<p>Beneficiaries will gain from 1 to 6 days of pension, since the first pay date will no longer be on a Saturday. This will reduce the possibility that pensioners fall into poverty.</p>
	<p>Disability Pension</p> <p>The age pension rate will be paid to persons who are in receipt of the Disability Pension as soon as these reach the age of 60 without the need to submit an application. The number of persons who are already over the age of 60 years has been identified, and a letter will be sent to inform them that the pension rate will be changed without the need to apply for it. Beneficiaries who will attain the age of 60 during 2016 have also been identified. These beneficiaries will be informed with a different letter that their rate will be amended without the need to apply. Enhancements will be effected to the computerised system to increase the rate automatically on beneficiaries attaining the age of 60.</p>	<p>Pension will be adjusted automatically, thus reducing paperwork both for the pensioner as well as at the Department of Social Security (DSS).</p>
	<p>Changes in the means testing for Social Assistance purposes and entitlement</p> <p>This measure aims not to decrease the rate of social assistance when children forming part of the household start working, hence encouraging employment.</p>	<p>Due to no deductions being effected in the social assistance, households will have more spending money and this will reduce the chances that they fall into poverty. This measure shall also encourage more people to get into the labour market.</p>
	<p>Extension of Sickness Allowance</p> <p>The Sickness Allowance will be paid to single persons who cannot work due to mental or terminal illness, and who live with their parents who are pensioners. Thus, this measure will increase the income of those sick persons who cannot work and in turn these will be more able to meet the expenses of the treatment/s needed. In order to eliminate any kind of abuse, an initial meeting was held with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Mount Carmel Hospital to guide the DSS on the definition of mental health and which types of mental health conditions can be assessed. Further meetings will be held to decide on how to amend the Social Security Act.</p>	<p>This measure shall contribute to a better quality of life, since people suffering from such conditions will have less medical expenses.</p>
	<p>Creation of a Call Centre for Services</p> <p>This measure will provide a call centre to improve the services provided to persons with a disability. A call centre will be able to provide information regarding all the services that the KNPD provides in one place. It will also give access to the Equal Opportunities Unit.</p>	<p>With this measure there will be an improved ease of access to information regarding services for persons with a disability and their families.</p>

	<p>'Ghaqal id-Dar, Hajja Ahjar'</p> <p>This will be a Public Social Partnership which will consist in the delivery of an empowerment programme led by Home Economists in Action in collaboration with Local Councils. The programme will be delivered over 10 sessions free of charge to empower adults in various dimensions of well-being to adopt a healthy lifestyle and mitigate poverty. Twelve different communities in Malta and Gozo will be targeted each year.</p>	<p>The target is to deliver the 'Ghaqal id-Dar' programme in 12 localities by the end of 2016. Promotion is planned on various levels, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - media appearance of the NGO representative on TV and radio stations and coordination of the Facebook page of the programme; - circulation of posters amongst networks of the respective Local Councils; - circulation of material and promotion within LEAP and the FSWS contact points and networks.
	<p>Embellishment and Maintenance Works in Housing Estates</p> <p>Embellishment and maintenance works will be carried out in 3 housing estates in Hamrun, Ta' Ġiorni and Pembroke. For this purpose, a tender will be sent to the Department of Contracts for vetting. Once the tender is published, an evaluation report will be drawn up, after which the contract of works will be finalised. Finally, the actual works will start being carried out.</p>	<p>Extensive works will be carried out on the roofs and the common parts at Hamrun and Ta' Ġiorni blocks. Works in Pembroke will include painting and plastering of façades, finishes and services in the common areas and renovation works in external areas around the blocks.</p> <p>Progress until February 2016 for the 3 projects is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Okella Agius, Hamrun – Estimates, drawings and tender document were completed and referred to the Department of Contracts for publication of tender; - Blocks A, B, E and F, Ta' Ġiorni – Estimates, drawings and tender document were completed and are to be referred for approvals and vetting. - Blocks A5-A11, Pembroke – Estimates were completed while drawings and compilation of tender document are at an advanced stage.
	<p>Building New Housing Estates</p> <p>The HA is building a plan to address the most vulnerable applicants for social accommodation as presently it has 2,900 pending applications. This project, which will cost €50 million, will increase the HA's stock of social accommodation. It involves construction on land that is covered by permits issued by MEPA as well as the purchase of dilapidated private property. A new company, Housing Projects Management Unit (HPMU) Limited, will be set up and will be responsible for this project. Several contracts will be signed between the HA, HPMU and Malita Investments p.l.c.</p>	<p>This measure will see an increase in the number of HA units that will be used for social housing purposes.</p>
	<p>Increasing the grant of two existing Housing Authority schemes – (A) Subsidy on adaptation works in Residences occupied by owners or tenants</p> <p>The HA is increasing the grant of this scheme by €1,000 with the aim of raising the housing standard in Malta. This means that the maximum grant applicants can benefit from is now €11,000. Landlords, owners and tenants can apply under this scheme and the scheme is means-tested. In order to qualify, applicants should not possess more than €30,000 in assets whilst their income for the previous year of the application should not exceed the amount of €20,423. The grant is given upon presentation of fiscal receipts and also upon verification that the works were carried out. In order to qualify for this adaptation works grant, the property should have been built 15 years prior to the date of application.</p>	<p>The HA's aim is to raise the housing standard in Malta, particularly in the case of low income earners.</p>
	<p>Increasing the grant of two existing Housing Authority schemes – (B) Subsidy on adaptation works related to dangerous structures in private dwellings held on lease or emphyteusis</p> <p>The HA is increasing the grant of this scheme by €1,000 to cover adaptation works related to dangerous structures in private dwellings held on lease or emphyteusis. Tenants of private properties leased prior to June 1995 can apply for a cash grant to carry out works related to dangerous structures. Under this scheme tenants can benefit from a maximum grant of €8,000. In order to benefit from this grant, tenants should not possess assets exceeding €25,000 and their income for the year preceding the date of application should not be more than €25,302. The applicant has to obtain the necessary permits for the removal of the dangerous structures and the grant is given upon presentation of fiscal receipts and confirmation that works were carried out. After the grant is issued, tenants bind themselves to live in the property for a period of ten years.</p>	<p>The HA's aim is to raise the housing standard in Malta, particularly in the case of low income earners.</p>
	<p>Guaranteed National Minimum Level Pension</p> <p>This measure will guarantee a minimum level of contributory pension, including the cost of living bonus, of €140 per week to those pensioners who have yearly average contributions of 50. Those pensioners who have less than 50 but over 20 contributions will be paid on a pro-rata basis. Payment will be effected accordingly.</p>	<p>This measure will continue to strengthen the annual income of low to medium income contributory pensioners. After the first payment cycles of 2016, not less than 15,200 pensioners (both retired and widows) benefitted from this measure.</p>
	<p>Child Credits</p> <p>This measure aims to increase the number of credited years' entitlement for pension purposes to those persons who had to stop working due to child/ren bearing and rearing reasons. This measure aims to reduce as much as possible the impact of career breaks taken for child bearing and rearing purposes. Amendments to the Social Security Act will be carried out.</p>	<p>It is expected that more mothers will return to the labour market after career breaks. This measure will also encourage more mothers to be gainfully occupied.</p>
	<p>Other Pensions Measure</p> <p>This measure will increase the rate of pension of those persons who used to pay a high rate of social security contributions when they were employed, but then became self-employed with a lesser income with the consequence of having a lesser rate of pension. Pension rate will be assessed on the best income of a gainfully occupied person earned from employment rather than that earned from self-occupation, as long as these happen to be in the last 15 years before retirement age.</p>	<p>This measure will contribute to a better quality of life since pension will be assessed on a higher income.</p>
	<p>Drug Addicts Allowance</p> <p>An allowance will be given to all drug addicts who opt to undergo a rehabilitation programme irrespective of their or their family's income. This is due to the fact that more often than not, claimants do not have any financial resources of their own since all their money and also that of their</p>	<p>With this measure, payments effected to eligible claimants will put them in a better financial situation to care for themselves during the rehabilitation programme.</p>

	<p>families would have been used to buy drugs. Moreover, there will also be an increase in the rate of this allowance. Current Drug Addicts Allowance beneficiaries will have their rate of entitlement increased with the first payment of 2016 and new claims will be immediately paid with the new rate.</p>	
	<p>Live-in Carer – Pilot Project</p> <p>A pilot fund will be set up to help families who care for a dependent elderly who needs constant supervision. Government intends to pay part of the wages paid to qualified live-in carers employed on a full-time or part-time basis. This pilot project will be offered to those elderly persons who are already registered in a waiting list to enter elderly homes.</p> <p>The scheme was launched in January 2016 and applications are being received by the respective Departments. The related data will be collected every month and a report is to be submitted half way through the year. Finally, at the end of the year, a final report is to be drafted including overall performance, findings and the impact of this service in relation to other services, amongst others.</p>	<p>It is estimated that around 160 elderly persons will benefit from this fund.</p>